



Sakai Newsletter

January 24, 2008

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1. From the Executive Director

Amidst what looks to be, at least where I sit in the rainy San Francisco Bay Area, a fairly tough cold and flu season, there is one very important non-technical discussion on the Sakai lists that you might want to look at if you haven't already.

As you may know, we are about to create Sakai 2.5 Release Candidate 1, an important milestone on the way to Sakai 2.5.0 in February. The addition of Release Candidates (and betas) for 2.5 happened somewhat spontaneously and we've been discussing how to officially move forward. There was a lot of discussion about this at the Newport Beach conference and a healthy amount on the lists before and after the conference. Recently the Sakai Foundation staff crafted a new proposal for releases and we are soliciting feedback from the community. We need to get the feedback in by January 31st so we can begin scheduling future releases.

So please take a look at <http://confluence.sakaiproject.org/confluence/x/NgBL>. You can post your comments there or send them to the management list (management@collab.sakaiproject.org).

A quick second item as well. The 2008 Sakai Foundation budget was approved at the last board meeting. I summarized this on my blog. The best way to read my blog, and all the others in the community who blog, is to follow www.planetsakai.org. This blog aggregation, run by Steven Githens, is a great way to get a little taste of lots of things that are happening in the community.

Stay healthy (or feel better!)

Michael

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2. Mneme - Test Center 1.0 Deployed in ETUDES Consortium

On December 28, 2007, Mneme - Test Center 1.0 was successfully deployed in ETUDES, a Sakai-based system, supporting 23 California Community Colleges.

Test Center is now the default assessment engine in ETUDES in **all** winter 2008 and spring 2008 sites -- a total of 1,641 sites. Tests & Quizzes was removed from the latter, and it is now in stealth mode in our production. T&Q remains enabled only in past term sites for reviewing scores and migrating questions.

Less than a month since our deployment, Test Center is buzzing with activity, as more colleges are going live with their spring 2008 terms, and is holding up well!

Some stats include the following:

Pools: 6,612
Questions: 129,152
Assessments: 2,749
--- Published: 1,923
--- Live: 944 (accessed by students)
--- Completed student submissions: 22,984
--- In-Progress student submissions: 800

The transition has been incredibly smooth and trouble free. Over 540 faculty have converted their tests and pools from Tests & Quizzes. Everyone kept asking, "Is that all there is to it?" "Am I done?" as they imported their T&Q questions into Test Center in a

couple of clicks. We haven't heard the words, "I Love it!" this often in our support forums ever before.

Mneme is running on ETUDES with Sakai 2.3.x on MySQL and has been tested with Sakai 2.4, as well. We are now in the process of working on Oracle support and adding a few more features that didn't make the 1.0 internal release.

University of Michigan will follow Foothill College in adopting Mneme - Test Center (pre 1.1), as soon as we have Oracle support (early February).

We expect to put out an official public release (Mneme 1.1) in early March.

For more information, visit: <http://etudesproject.org/mneme> (will update for 1.1!)

Vivie Sinou Dean, Learning Technology
ETUDES Project
Foothill College
<http://etudesproject.org/>

3. Assistance in 2.5 Testing Needed

Hi everyone,

With the beta2 tag, it's really important that we verify the changes that have been merged in are working and that they aren't creating any regressions. We really need to work on reducing the list of issues awaiting verification at <http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/jira/secure/IssueNavigator.jspa?mode=hide&requestId=11510> to 0. We started with over 70 and are now down to 45. We've been doing a really great job and I want to emphasize the importance of eliminating this list!

Also, in the coming RC tag, we'll need to be ready to test that there is no adverse impact with the addition of the JSR-170 jackrabbit implementation. I'd really to see the community focus on this until 2.5.0 is released. Once we're past that milestone we can then shift our focus to testing this enabled. Near term, we need:

1. Those with read access to the servers file system, logs, and database to run through manual verification (script on attachments page at <http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/confluence/display/QA/Test+Conditions+and+Scripts>)
2. Someone to run validation test against live server. There are three variations to use that you can read more about at <http://confluence.sakaiproject.org/confluence/x/PoKi>

The testing needed is likely going to need to be done by one of the QA admins or by someone at the hosting institution that can be granted access. Please let me know if you are able to assist in this type of testing.

As always, I welcome any questions, comments or voices of dissent :)

Megan May
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4. Assignment2 project

Hello all,

IU and Georgia Tech have come together to develop a second-generation assignments tool, and while it's been discussed elsewhere the project may not be widely known. We have an interest in seeing it developed in the open, drawing others in where they are so moved, and so some introductory remarks to a wider audience may be in order.

The considerations which brought us to this point were many and varied. Speaking from the Georgia Tech side, it started with production problems last October. An analysis further revealed that Assignments was our most heavily used tool, while focus group sessions exposed a profound ambivalence: it was both loved and hated. It became clear that it at once represented a big threat and a big opportunity, and it was where our attention needed to go. To be sure, there was more than one available path. Michigan has done much to improve performance in recent months, and Mneme will have an assignment component to its assessment functionality. BOFs and other conversations honed our thinking in Newport Beach, but we finally came to the conclusion that a deeper reexamination of what assignments meant in Sakai was really at issue for us, while we were pleased with RSF's potential for easing partnerships between designers and developers. IU was already going down this road, with similar concerns and timelines, and that sort of inter-institutional collaboration is exactly why we're in this community.

We are, I'm happy to say, shaping rather broad coalitions at our respective institutions. Teaching and Learning centers on both campuses are coming together to work on functional requirements, QA resources on both sides will be engaged throughout, parcels of students are involved in cleaning up interface design and doing other forms of testing. Beyond that, Steve Githens has helped work out a new breed of gradebook helpers, Daphne Ogle has provided design feedback, Zhen's invaluable work on post-2.4 assignments is what has allowed us the breathing room to take this on, Fluid and OSP have (and will) inform our treatment of the problem space, while other schools have expressed interest in either helping to shape requirements or assist QA.

A first iteration is now in hand (focusing mostly on the RSF conversion, better gradebook integration, and unit test coverage), and will begin testing this week. A second iteration will be completed mid-March, with an eye toward piloting the tool at both IU and Georgia Tech during the Summer sessions, and, if all goes well, a third iteration will be running in production by August. A second and overlapping track to this effort will be looking further ahead to what assignments should be, and more fundamental changes to the user experience. It is already clear that Assignment2 will never be a "drop-in" replacement for the current Assignments tool, and therefore assignment2 will not be to assignment what chat2 was to chat. But it is the aim to match and then supersede the functional space that Assignments currently inhabits.

I'll stop for now, and just close by saying that some effort will also go into maintaining the Confluence space, for those who may be interested in keeping track or participating: <http://confluence.sakaiproject.org/confluence/x/2oGI>

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P.S. Yes, about the name. We know. Take that creativity to the Fluid lists :P

5. "Uses of Sakai" on Confluence

This is a page to gather together the various ideas about how to use Sakai that people have placed on the lists. This is variously thought of as "Uses of Sakai," "Project Site Uses of Sakai," "Beyond the LMS," or "Collaborative Uses of Sakai." In short, any uses of the Sakai Collaborative and Learning Environment that stretch beyond the typical classroom use. Feel free to reorganize or add to this page, or append materials such as talks, research papers, or whatever helps us capture the variety of uses that people are putting Sakai to.

<http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/confluence/display/USER/Uses+of+Sakai>

Joseph Hardin
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6. rSmart Webinars for February

The rSmart Group will be conducting some important webinars in the month of February. All are encouraged to register!

** Featured Webinar 1: Marist College's Sakai Journey: A Story of Innovation

A large research institution uses Sakai with 19 resources. Marist College uses Sakai with 2 resources.

Join Josh Baron, Director of Academic Technology at Marist College, to learn about Marist College's use of rSmart Sakai CLE. Josh will talk about how this support is enabling them to free up their limited resources to focus on teaching and learning innovation. He will share the drivers that led Marist College to evaluate CMS options, the decision-making process and criteria, the transition planning process, and the results they have seen thus far.

February 12, 2008

1:00 P.M. Eastern Standard Time

TO REGISTER: <https://rsmart.ilinc.com/register/tpkyvp>

**** Featured Webinar 2: Why Sakai is the right CMS for Higher Education**

Let's face it -- no one knows teaching and learning better than you do. It is at the heart of what you do! That's why Sakai is the right course management system for higher education. Built by higher education for higher education.

Today, Sakai is evolving at a faster rate than any other CMS. Come join Chris Coppola, Sakai Foundation board member and President of The rSmart Group, to learn about Sakai's robust functionality and the service and support models that make it the right choice for your faculty, your students and your institution.

February 26, 2008

1:00 P.M. Eastern Standard Time

TO REGISTER: <https://rsmart.ilinc.com/register/frwtwb>

**** Rhode Island Sakai Conference**

SAVE THE DATE FOR THIS IMPORTANT EVENT!

The Rhode Island Network for Educational Technology (RINET), in association with The rSmart Group and the Sakai Foundation, will be hosting the first annual Rhode Island Sakai Conference April 8-9, 2008 in Rhode Island (exact location TBD).

Who should attend: Pre-conference Workshop (April 8, 2008): Anyone interested in creating and participating in a national work group to inform and support the development of Sakai as a Collaborative Learning Environment for K-12. Rhode Island Sakai Conference (April 9, 2008): Anyone interested in learning about enhancing teaching and learning with the Open Source Sakai Collaborative Learning Environment

to support Rhode Island's Proficiency Based Graduation System, High School Course Credit Retrieval, Virtual Courses, Professional Development and more.

At this conference, attendees can also expect to:

- See RI students and teachers demonstrate how they use Sakai to manage coursework.
- See RI students and teachers demonstrate how they provide evidence of proficiency to Rhode Island's Proficiency Based Graduation requirements.
- Learn how Sakai tools including calendar, chat rooms, resources, discussion forums, glossaries, wikis, assignment and portfolio tools, drop boxes and more and can be used to provide a distance learning environment, credit recovery classes, and professional development.
- Learn about new tools that will soon be available in Sakai to support classroom instruction.

More details are to follow, along with information on how to register for this event. In the meantime, make sure to SAVE THE DATE on your calendars. If you are interested in learning more, or would like to receive information regarding registration, please email: events@ri.net.

If you have any questions, please contact:

Megan Perrone
mperrone@rsmart.com

7. Job Opening: Senior User Interaction Designer

Department: Educational Technology Services
Job Title: Programmer Analyst III
Position Title: Senior User Interaction Designer
Percent Time: 100% Fixed
Hiring Salary Range: \$59,676 - \$ 85,656
Supervisor: Mara Hancock, ETS Associate Director for Learning Systems

Job Description: UC Berkeley is looking for an energetic and teamwork-focused Senior User Interaction (UI) Designer to play a key leadership role on the international open source Kuali Student Services System Project <http://www.kuali.org/communities/ks/>. This role is part of a dynamic team of UX designers, business analysts and developers at UC Berkeley who are working to develop the next generation of user-centered open source academic systems for higher education.

Responsibilities: As an integral part of the Educational Technology Services User Experience (UX) Team, the incumbent will be the primary UX expert for the Kuali Student Services System project <http://www.kuali.org/communities/ks/>. He or she will

lead the UX effort for Kualu Student, participating in meetings and design activities with an international multi-institutional team of software developers and business analysts who are working to define requirements for the functionality and usability of Kualu Student Systems. As the primary UX design resource for Kualu Student, this position receives working priorities from one or more of the Kualu Student Project Managers and works closely with the systems architecture and functional team leads to establish UX work priorities and activities.

The Senior User Interaction Designer will design the User interface & user interaction layer and UI components for the Kualu Student Service modules. This work will include a range of activities including, but not limited to, user experience research, interaction design, and visual interface design. He or she will work in conjunction with cross-functional teams of business analysts and system architects to produce user-centered interaction components and interfaces for both end-users and administrators from a wide range of institutional models.

The incumbent will utilize aspects of the user-centered design process needed for various phases of the project. Activities may include completing user research, creating user models (such as personas and scenarios); performing usability evaluations, and user testing; using and creating design patterns and UI components; layout and visual design; creating wireframes and working prototypes; and generally applying their deep knowledge of best practice design principles. The incumbent will work in partnership with the Fluid Project (<http://fluidproject.org>) in establishing and contributing to these best practices and will represent Kualu UX activities to the Fluid project (<http://www.fluidproject.org>).

The ideal candidate will also have experience in managing and overseeing User Interaction design and development activities and mentoring staff such as business analysts to carry out a variety of UI activities. The incumbent will establish and articulate which user centered design methods are best applied to specific projects, ensure adherence to these methods, and guide the project leadership in regards to the resources necessary to accomplish these tasks.

The Senior UI Designer collaborates with users, user interaction and interface designers, instructional designers, project managers, and educational technologists across the Fluid and Kualu projects. The Senior UI Designer will translate functional requirements into wireframes and prototypes that programmers use to build web-based applications. The position is responsible for specifying the user interaction and functional behavior of Kualu Student applications, as well as conducting user testing to ensure their usability. The Senior UI designer is engaged in each project to which they are assigned throughout the development cycle, using their expertise to define which activities in the UX toolkit are required for each activity. The incumbent will work closely with the project manager to ensure product direction is in alignment with project goals and timeline.

Requirements & Qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree or equivalent work experience in IT related field required
- Master's degree in related field (Design or Information Science) is desirable
- Five years of work experience in software development
- Three + years of experience in developing and managing client relationships
- Excellent communication, presentation, interpersonal and facilitation skills required
- Must be able to communicate abstract design ideas clearly using storyboards, wireframes, flowcharts, and working prototypes. 4 years experience in web design and production
- Demonstrated expertise and knowledge of XHTML and CSS Knowledge of XML and related implementations including XML Schema and XSLT Demonstrated expertise using the following types of applications:
 - Graphics applications such as Adobe Creative Suite and Fireworks
 - Web design applications such as Adobe Go live, Dreamweaver and BBEdit
 - Diagramming and flowcharting applications such as Omnigraffle and Visio
- Javascript, Flash and AJAX experience desired
- PHP/mysql experience a plus
- Demonstrated understanding of W3C and Section 508 web standards
- Strong understanding of user-centered design methodology and usability testing

Other: Please submit cover letter with your application.

8. Job Opening: rSmart Opening for a Sakai Functional Consultant

rSmart is currently looking for a Sakai Functional Consultant to join our team. Functional Consultants play a vital role on our Professional Services team by providing expert assistance and advice to institutions running the rSmart Sakai Collaborative Learning Environment (CLE).

The position requires a background in e-learning and pedagogy and a strong functional understanding of course management and ePortfolio systems. For more information on joining the rSmart Team, please see:

<http://www.rsmart.com/about/jobs>

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9. Recent Email Group Discussions

Here are some topics that have been discussed in the last couple of weeks in Sakai email groups. Most of these discussions can be found at these Nabble URLs:

- Sakai-dev - <http://www.nabble.com/Sakai---Development-f18040.html> (DEV)
- Sakai Portfolio - <http://www.nabble.com/Sakai---Portfolio-f18155.html> (PORT)
- Sakai Pedagogy - <http://www.nabble.com/Sakai---Pedagogy-f24248.html> (PED)
- Sakai UI - <http://www.nabble.com/Sakai---User-Interaction-f25634.html> (UI)
- Sakai Migration - <http://www.nabble.com/Sakai-Migration-Group-f27621.html> (MIG)
- Sakai Announcements - <http://www.nabble.com/Sakai---Announce-f28489.html> (ANN)

To join an email group, go to <http://www.collab.sakaiproject.org>. While you are in your workspace, click the "Membership" link in the left-hand menu and then click the "Joinable Sites" link. Click "Join" next to any of the groups.

Discussions:

- 2.5 Testing QA
- Admin users with no access to the Administration Workspace? Sakai 2.4.1 USER
- Assignments and Sakai 2.4 DEV
- Bug report summary from 2- 5- x in production QA
- Calculating discrimination for MCQ questions PED
- Campus Technology Article by Joe Shedd PORT
- can't create course worksite unless you're an 'instructor'? USER
- can't open email archive in sakai- user on collab cutting down on subscriptions? USER
- Clustering Sakai DEV
- Copyright in Sakai DEV USER
- direct link to a joinable site? DEV
- Group release & item analysis features in T&Q DEV
- How should Help be displayed? USER
- Logout notification in Sakai DEV
- Maven Build Errors DEV
- Maven transitive dependencies DEV
- Melete 2.4.5 and Sakai 2.5.x/maven2 DEV
- MessageService: Integrating JMS with Sakai DEV
- Migration from WebCT 4.1: Calculated Questions MIG
- Portal Http Unit Testing DEV
- Portfolio Admin Worksite Roles PORT
- rwiki and URL rendering in the 2.4.x branch DEV
- (SAK- 9678) Adopt consistent terminology for delete / remove UX
- Sakai and Object Repositories - Links and More Info? DEV
- Sakai QA network bug reporting live and more DEV

- Sakai2.4.x_D2 Q1 is ready on sakai- c QA
- Selectable Matrix/Wizard form links PORT
- Teaching a course in a Public Manner - www.si182.com PED
- tomcat 6 support DEV
- trying to create a new course (2.5.x): Exception calling doSite_type DEV
- Ubuntu Colab DEV
- Ubuntu Tomcat5.5 DEV

10. Events

e-Learning 2008

February 16-19, 2008

St. Petersburg, Florida, USA

<http://www.itcnetwork.org/elearning2008.htm>

Sakai China

March 1, 2008

HuaZhong Normal University

Wuhan, China.

JA-SIG Spring 2008 Conference

April 27 - 30, 2008

St. Paul, Minnesota

eLearning Africa 2008

May 28 - 30, 2008

Accra International Conference Centre Accra,

Ghana <http://www.elearning-africa.com>

Portal 2008 "Measurement & Assessment" Conference

Gettysburg College

June 3-6, 2008

Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, USA

<https://biz.gettysburg.edu/it/portal08/index.cfm>