Sakai Newsletter

June 26, 2008

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1. From the Executive Director

I arrived in Paris yesterday to get ready for the 9th Sakai Conference here. The weather forecast is good, the hotel is excellent and the staff of both the Sakai Foundation and the Université Pierre et Marie Curie (UPMC) have put a lot of preparation into the conference. If only the dollar were stronger it would be just about perfect. For those of you who aren't with us I'll be doing a few blog posts during the week. For those bloggers who are here, please tag your posts (or photos!) with "SakaiParis08".   I'm looking forward to what promises to be an excellent week.

Michael Korcuska
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2. Paris Sakai Conference on Second Life

The University of Michigan Medical School has generously agreed to host a conference in Second Life that will run in parallel with the Sakai conference in Paris. There are a few things you need to do to participate:

1. Create a Second Life account if you don't already have one:

  http://secondlife.com/

2. Create a Sakai Jira/Confluence account if you don't already have one:

  http://bugs.sakaiproject.org/jira/secure/Signup!default.jspa

3. Sign up for access to Wolverine Island (U-M's Second Life space) on the Confluence wiki setup for this purpose. (You need to fill out the Access portion of the page; the Greeter and BOF sections are optional.)

  http://confluence.sakaiproject.org/confluence/x/ioCzAQ

U-M folks: Because you will need to manually add your avatar to the access list, there may be a delay between when you add your avatar info to the wiki and when you get access to Wolverine Island. Please be patient :-)

Sean DeMonner
demonner@umich.edu

3. IMS ePortfolio Standard Implemented in New Sakai Tool

Greetings Sakai colleagues,

The IMS ePortfolio specification was created to make e-portfolios interoperable across different systems and institutions. Portfolio4u, a Sakai commercial partner in the Netherlands, has been examining this standard for some time. Starting in December 2007, we sponsored a development effort to make the e-portfolio import/export available in OSP/Sakai. With some financial support from Kennisnet Nederland (a Dutch semi-governmental IT in Education support organization) and with the programming talents of Edia, developers for Sakai based in Amsterdam, an e-portfolio implementation in Sakai has now been realized!

Last week, we participated in a 'Plug Fest' with eight other vendors of e-portfolio and CMS software available in the Netherlands. During the Plug Fest, the newly developed

tool successfully imported 6 of 7 'random' input files (now it does 7/7!), changes were successfully made in the portfolios, and good exports following the standard were then also achieved.
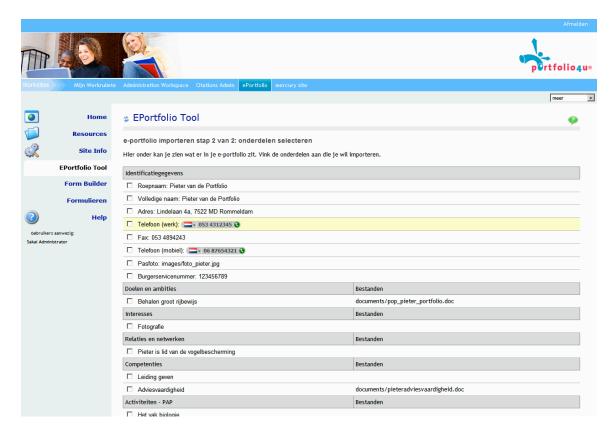
The UI is designed to give 'full control' over what is imported and exported. (The following screenshot gives idea of how a student selects desired items within the 'Portfolio Parts' before import. The tool is currently implemented in Dutch, so you'll have to use a bit of imagination to 'interpret' the screenshot.)

During the Tech Demos at the upcoming Paris Sakai conference, Portfolio4u and Edia will demonstrate the software to anyone interested. Thereafter, we will make the code available in 'Contrib'.

In September 2008, we will be testing the e-portfolio import/export with 'real users' at a community college in Rotterdam. Students will be exporting their portfolios for later import by a significant local employer. So we aim to use this functionality to allow students to pass information about themselves and their qualifications to the job market.

Best regards,

Jim Doherty
jim@portfolio4u.nl

4. New Pilots and Production Upgrades Added to the Sakai Map

Over the last few months I've added a number of new pilots and production upgrades to the Sakai map:
http://www.sakaiproject.org/index.php?option=com_wrapper&Itemid=588

The new entries include:

Central America
- Universidad del Valle de Guatemala, production

Europe
- Institutio Politecnico de Braganca, Portugal, pilot
- Institute of Development of Regional Education, Russia, pilot
- Newcastle University, UK, pilot

North Africa
- Annaba University, POLLES project, Algeria, production
- International Institute for Higher Education (IHEM), Morocco, pilot

North America
- Brock University, Ontario
- Catholic University of America, District of Columbia, production
- Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising, California, production
- LaGrange College, Georgia, pilot
- Specs Howard School of Broadcast Arts, Michigan, production
- State of Hawaii, Department of Public Safety, Education Unit, pilot
- University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, pilot
- University of Wyoming, pilot

South Asia
- Lahore University of Management Science, Pakistan, production

Southern Africa
- Gert Sibande College, Ermelo, ZA, production
- Midrand Graduate Institute, Midrand, ZA, pilot
- North-West University, Mafikeng, ZA, production

If you have a pilot or production installation of Sakai that is not yet on the map and you would like to publicize its presence, please contact me at your earliest convenience.

Anthony Whyte
arwhyte@umich.edu

5. U.S. Sakai Meetings in November and December

Just a quick reminder to add yourself to the list if you're interested in attending a Sakai meeting in the Eastern or Western U.S. later this year. You can find the wiki page with the details at:

http://confluence.sakaiproject.org/confluence/x/HYCoAQ

Best,

Michael Korcuska
mkorcuska@gmail.com

6. Unicon Upgrades Free Sakai Test Drive to Support Version 2.5

Unicon, Inc. has announced an updated test drive program for the Sakai Collaboration and Learning Environment. This Unicon-hosted site allows colleges and universities to evaluate Sakai 2.5, the latest version of the community source software. The free, 90-day program will provide instructors and IT personnel at colleges, universities, and K-12 with a fast, easy way to evaluate Sakai. The test drive allows users to experience Sakai without incurring the cost of software licensing fees, development time and resources, or hardware purchases. Since Unicon first started the test drive program at the beginning of 2006, over seven thousand users have registered at the site. To test drive Sakai for Free, visit: http://www.testdrivesakai.com.

Highlights of the Sakai Test Drive -- This special test configuration is on the latest Sakai Version 2.5 gives users a full 90-day period to experience a broad range of Sakai's features and power, including:

- Using the extensive Sakai toolset
- Online tutorials to help get started
- Learning best practices by viewing populated courses and project worksites
- Full instructional privileges in a personal worksite

Growth of Open Source Technologies in Higher Education -- As educational institutions face increasing costs of proprietary software licenses and maintenance fees, open source technologies for online campuses and classrooms are rapidly gaining in popularity with higher education. Adding to this trend, recent vendor consolidation in the industry has given institutions even fewer purchase options and they have very serious choices to make for their long-term future. Open source solutions have been successfully implemented at many of the largest universities and colleges around the nation. Besides reducing dependency on software vendors, open source solutions allow institutions to

customize and enhance the software specifically for their needs. Now higher education organizations can implement more sophisticated technology solutions utilizing open-source technologies, reducing their spending budget significantly.

Joe Waldygo
President TopSpin Communications
joe@topspincommunications.com

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7. Fundraising to Improve the Sakai Reports Tool Documentation

Many schools deploying OSP as a portfolio system want to use custom reports to aggregate data for institutional purposes. The reports that the community has included in the OOTB experience have little to do with the type of data that schools would actually want to report about. Building custom reports for your institution makes a lot of sense, but very few schools have been successful at it because they just don't know how.

I would be interested in investigating and writing related community documentation in Sakai confluence if anyone is interested in funding my independent effort to do so. My initial guess is that I will probably need to also document the job scheduler and the data warehouse in order to successfully move the documentation forward. While it is difficult to promise a "complete package" will result from my effort, I feel that a few good interviews and some time devoted to understanding and disseminating the capabilities (and limitations) of the report tool functionality would benefit the entire Sakai community.

If your institution is interested in funding such a project, visit: http://www.fundable.com/groupactions/groupaction.2008-06-24.4996262458 to commit resources to the project.

Sean Keesler
sean@keesler.org

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8. Job Opening: Oxford University

VLE Support Officer
Grade: 7 Salary: £27,466 -£33,780
This is a two-year post.

Do you have:

- Experience of the Sakai Virtual Learning Environment?

- Demonstrable experience in developing VLE training materials and delivering VLE training courses to University staff members?
- Excellent communication, organisational and IT skills?

If so, you may be the person we are looking for to join our Learning Technology Group to help with the introduction of a new Sakai-based VLE service. You will be working with academic staff and students to help them to effectively use the VLE for teaching, learning, research and administration. If you have a degree, the ability to design, document and deliver training and the enthusiasm to keep abreast of new developments please get in touch with us.

OUCS offers facilities, training and advice to members of the University in all aspects of academic computing.

Please obtain further details and an application form from: The Personnel Office, Oxford University Computing Services, 13 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6NN, tel: 01865-283289, email: recruitment@oucs.ox.ac.uk.

Alternatively you can download further details and an application form from the main jobs page.

Completed applications must be received by 12 noon on Thursday, 3rd July 2008. Interviews will be held on Friday, 11th July 2008.

As an Equal Opportunity employer, we positively encourage applications from people of all backgrounds.

Adam Marshall
adam.marshall@oucs.ox.ac.uk

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9. Job Opening: University of Hawaii

Folks, We have a position opening for a Sakai developer to support our local Sakai instance at the University of Hawaii. If you've ever considered a move to Hawaii, please take a look. Closing date: July 7th.

http://workatuh.hawaii.edu/zoom_job.php?9702

Thanks,

Kenwrick Chan
kchan@hawaii.edu

10. 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:

"smart" sorting in resources   DEV
AuthZ Groups   DEV
bug or feature? Can't publish a wizard without pages   UI, PORT
Chat Room Issue   DEV
CM academic session question   DEV
Content Conversion from 2.4.1 - 2.5.0   DEV
ContentHosting.jws   DEV
Dejavue Fonts   DEV
feature enhancement template available for enhancements to Wizard main page   UI
How do you put something into contrib ?   DEV
Language Preference   PORT
Mailtool vs. Messages -- Which one and why?   USER
OpenedPractices.org Enhancements   PED
osp.reports -> sakai.reports   UI, DEV
Polls   USER
Portfolio "schema" documentation   PORT
Post-2.5 Branches?   DEV
Potential issue with Assignments tool   PORT
Private sharing of resources between internal users!   DEV
proposed implementation on direct forms in wizard, SAK-13799   PORT
Query frequency in Sakai 2.5"smart" sorting in resources   DEV

Report tool community documentation effort proposal   PORT, UI, USER
Resources mouse over question   DEV
SAK-13745: patch to display owner.getDisplayName() for wizard-pages/matrix-cells
(v2.5.x)   UI
sakai GIT howto   DEV
Sakai map: recent updates   USER
Sakai on WebSphere   DEV
sakai2.5 installation problem (source)   DEV
Scalable Sakai and some peer reviewing   DEV
Simplicity   UX
Skin experiments   UX
Survey of institutions running Gradebook 2.5.0/2.5.x   DEV
SVN 1.5 released   DEV
Teaching with Sakai Award Recognition   PED
Transaction errors [Major production issue]   UI
UX Improvement Planning Survey   UX
VLE Support officer   PED
vote for issue SAK-13810   UI
wizard structured data evaluations   PORT
XSD and XSLT editors   PORT
Your views on community source   PED

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11. Events

9th Sakai Conference
Université Pierre et Marie Curie
July 1 - 3, 2008
Paris, France
https://sakai.educonference.com/paris/index.php

ONLINE EDUCA BERLIN 2008
14th International Conference on Technology Supported Learning and Training
December 3 - 5 , 2008
Hotel InterContinental Berlin
Berlin, Germany
www.online-educa.com

Here are email addresses to contact if you encounter problems with
various Sakai Community systems:
Collab -- collab-admins@umich.edu
Confluence -- confluence-admins@collab.sakaiproject.org
Jira -- jira-admins@collab.sakaiproject.org