Sakai Newsletter

October 30, 2008

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1. From the Executive Director

I'm excited to be able to announce that Pete Peterson will be the new QA Director for the Sakai Foundation, effective November 10. Pete has worked for the University of California, Davis for the last 20 years. During his tenure there he has worn many hats including support coordination, technology training and web design. For the last several years Pete has been deeply involved with the Sakai support, development, and implementation efforts at UC Davis where he served initially as the Tier 2 Support Coordinator and later as the QA Manager. Pete's diverse background provides him with both a programmer's and a user's perspective to the Sakai application development process.

Pete brings much knowledge, experience, and enthusiasm to his new role as the QA Director for the Sakai Foundation. As the Sakai QA Director, Pete's primary duty is to ensure that Sakai software exceeds industry norms for defects, reliability and scalability as well as coordinate the QA efforts of the Sakai community and staff. He plans to make this transition as smooth as possible for the Sakai Foundation and all the educational partners, with the support and guidance of the outgoing QA Director, Megan May.

Pete will be attending the Sakai conference at Virginia Tech. We're thrilled to have him on board! Please join me in offering congratulations to Pete.

Cheers,

Michael Korcuska
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2. Submit Nominations for Sakai Board by Sunday, November 2 at 5pm EST!

I want to encourage everyone to submit nominations for the Sakai Board of Directors and remind you that the deadline is this Sunday, November 2 at 5pm EST. Please get those nominations in to sakaielections@umich.edu

Regards,

Michael Korcuska
Executive Director, Sakai Foundation

Nominations are open for two positions on the Sakai Foundation Board of Directors. The current terms for John Norman (Cambridge), Chris Coppola (rSmart), and Mara Hancock (Berkeley) expire in December.   Ian Dolphin had previously stepped down earlier this year as a result of his new position with eFramework. We are only electing two new board member, instead of three, because the Board of Directors plans to reform the by-laws to allow for appointed board members. More information about the proposed reform will be forthcoming. Electing two new members still provides us with more than the required minimum of seven board members.

The Sakai Foundation is dedicated to the design and development of collaborative, open source software in support of education, research and related scholarly activities. The

Board of Directors provides leadership for the Sakai Foundation by serving the interests of the entire Sakai community, promoting the objectives of the Sakai Foundation, representing and coordinating Foundation projects, ensuring that project management is consistent with the Foundation's mission, and that the Foundation operates within its fiscal resources.

The Board of Directors meets at least twice a year at such times and places as designated by the Chair. Board members regularly conduct Board business electronically. Monthly audio conferences have been the norm. Board members are not compensated for their work but expenses will be reimbursed in line with Foundation policies. Nominees will be expected to confirm that their institutional leadership approves of this commitment of time if elected. Board members shall serve for a term of three years. Board members may serve only two consecutive terms. More detailed information about the Sakai Foundation and the responsibilities of the Board of Directors can be found in the Bylaws of the Sakai Foundation.

Nominations must be emailed to sakaielections@umich.edu no later than 5:00 PM EDT (GMT-4) on Sunday, November 2, 2008. Anyone can be nominated to stand for election to the Board. Self-nominations are   also allowed. Receipt of any nomination you submit will be confirmed. The Elections Work Group will notify all nominees, explain the expectations for board members and confirm their   willingness and ability to run for election. If they agree, additional information about them will be solicited.

Board members will be elected by the institutional and corporate   representatives as specified in the Sakai Foundation bylaws. A current list of institutional and corporate representatives has been posted at http://www.sakaiproject.org/portal/site/sakai-foundation.

The election is scheduled to be conducted online in November with results announced in December.

Thank you very much for helping us present the most qualified slate of candidates. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sakai Elections Working Group
Carl Jacobson
Mary Miles
Joseph Hardin

3. JForum 2.5.0 With Support for Grading Now Available!

The Etudes team is pleased to announce the release of JForum 2.5.0.

The highlight of this release is the implementation of grading of forums and discussion topics, optionally integrated with the gradebook. JForum 2.5.0 was deployed onto the Etudes production last Friday, October 17, 2008. It has been received with *great* enthusiasm by our faculty.

Browse through the following slides for an overview of the new, exciting JForum 2.5.0 features: http://etudes.org/release/discussion/2.5/

NOTE: We will have another JForum release in mid-December with several grading enhancements that didn't make it in 2.5.0, so you can wait for the December release to deploy it. However, we wanted to get 2.5.0 out in the hands of eager, earlier adopters who want to benefit from the grading features sooner.

DOWNLOAD JFORUM 2.5.0 -- Instructions on how to download and build JForum 2.5.0 can be found at: http://etudes.org/release/discussion/

At the above web page, you'll also find links to download user documentation and tutorials, and a list of the features and issues addressed in this release.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT -- For information on future development, feature requests, and bugs, see: http://etudes.org/jforum_features.htm

CREDITS -- Many thanks to Murthy Tanniru, lead JForum Senior Java Developer with Etudes for his focused, hard work over the past year to implement the grading features and other enhancements in JForum 2.5.

I also want to thank our users for the in-depth input on the desired features and requirements for grading of discussions. It is what guided our work.

Many thanks also go to the following QA testers: Vivie Sinou and Kathy Fransham, Etudes; Sarah Phinney, Porterville College; Margie While and Norah Glover, College of the Siskiyous; and Kathleen O'Brien, Foothill College.

Additionally, we are most grateful to the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office for their generous funding to support JForum development.

QUESTIONS? -- To report issues or ask questions, send a message to: dev@etudes.org, or sakai-dev@collab.sakaiproject.org or sakai-user@sakaiproject.org.

Vivie Sinou
Executive Director, Etudes, Inc.
http://etudes.org/

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4. Register Now for the AuSakai 2008 Conference!

Dear Sakai/Australasian educational community,

Only 3 weeks to go before the AuSakai 2008 Conference!

If you have not yet registered, registrations are now open and the conference program is available at:

http://www.monash.edu.au/eeducation/ausakai08index.html

The conference will be held on 27-28th November, with pre-conference workshops on 26th November at the Monash Caulfield Campus. This year's theme is: "Open Education: Community-Developed Learning and Teaching Tools."

If you have any questions about the conference, please do not hesitate to ask.

We look forward to seeing you in Melbourne!

Kind regards,

Christina Thor
christina.thor@adm.monash.edu.au

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5. Call for Proposals: eLearning Africa 2009

The Call for Proposals for the eLearning Africa 2009 conference programme is open. You are cordially invited to submit a proposal for a session, presentation, workshop or discussion.

Please send us your proposal by December 5th, 2008, using the online submission form at www.elearning-africa.com.

You can send your suggestions on the following topics:

- Learning, eLearning and Pedagogy
- Designing eLearning Systems
- Sector Strategies
- Infrastructure and Access Solutions
- Capacity Development
- Content Development and Delivery
- Research, Monitoring and Evaluation
- Reaching the Education for All Goals
- Resource Mobilisation and Partnerships
- Policy and Planning

Call for Proposals: http://www.elearning-africa.com/proposals.php

Anja Megel-Rouloff
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6. What Are Your Institutions' Top Five Issues / Problems With Sakai?

During the last End-User Support conference call, we discussed various ways that suggestions for improvement within Sakai are collected and acted upon within institutions. As there are issues that cut across tools, beyond the development abilities of the institution, etc., we are seeking help from the community!

We are asking you to take a few minutes and list your institutions' Top-Five problems or issues with Sakai, as reported by your end-users via help requests, training sessions, surveys, etc. Please list these issues on this Confluence page: http://confluence.sakaiproject.org/confluence/x/LACeAg

These issues will be collated and discussed at our Nov. 18 conference call. Appropriate action will then be solicited or advocated by the End-User Support group as a whole.

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7. rSmart Fuels Growth in Sakai Adoption by Educators Worldwide

rSmart has announced additional growth for its Sakai collaboration and learning solutions. rSmart is very pleased to contribute to Sakai's growth by supporting adoption of this open source platform by institutions around the globe, including:

Antioch University
Apeejay Education Society (India)
California Northstate College of Pharmacy
Holmes Corporation
La Salle University
Performance Learning Systems
Shepherd University
TAFE New South Wales (Australia)
TAFE North Sydney Institute (Australia)
The Earth Institute at Columbia University
University of Baltimore
University of California, Merced
University of Hawaii
Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania

These new clients are using the Sakai CLE's powerful course management tools, ePortfolio functionality, and other collaboration features to enable and support innovative approaches to teaching and learning. Some of these institutions are augmenting existing systems in order to get specific best-of-breed functionality that Sakai offers. Others are using Sakai as a comprehensive replacement for an existing LMS such as Blackboard or WebCT. All of these organizations are relying on rSmart to support their innovations.

"As a company that provides a multitude of educational services focused on teacher and faculty development, Performance Learning Systems has unique requirements of its learning platform. We picked Sakai because of the control, flexibility and cost advantages offered by this open source solution," says Pam Vreeland, Director of Online Instructional Design, Performance Learning Systems. "Partnering with rSmart has allowed us to get up and running very quickly. Just as importantly, it has given us the certainty that comes from having an accountable support partner. By working with rSmart, we have freed our resources to focus on delivering the best learning experience possible to our learners."

The 14 organizations noted above join the world's largest base of commercially supported Sakai installations. They also join a growing list of institutions (now numbering more than 160 worldwide) using Sakai as they strive to make the most of their IT budgets in increasingly difficult economic times. These organizations have found that community-driven innovation and software development produce the best platform for collaboration

and learning and that rSmart ensures that any institution can take advantage of Sakai without adding IT resources. "Often IT leaders on campus believe that to benefit from open source software like Sakai they have to add development and IT staff," says Chris Coppola, President of rSmart. "This just isn't the case. The implementation and ongoing support and maintenance that rSmart provides ensure that any institution, regardless of size or capability, has access to this important open educational resource." In addition to announcing these new clients, rSmart also announces that it experienced a 90% renewal rate this past year for its client support and maintenance subscriptions. "Many of our clients start with small pilot implementations consisting of a few courses or a department using Sakai," reports Karen Crawford, rSmart's Director of Client Support. "We're very pleased to see these pilots succeeding. Their success has increased usage and adoption of Sakai, and this increase is reflected in our strong renewal rate."

The rSmart Sakai CLE is the company's fully packaged, tested and supported distribution of the Sakai software. Similar to the way RedHat distributes and supports the Linux operating system, rSmart distributes and supports Sakai. The CLE provides a feature-rich, fully scalable, enterprise-ready software application that is unique in its ability to support teaching and learning, project collaboration, group interaction and ePortfolio construction. The rSmart Sakai CLE is available immediately for hosted or on-site deployments. To experience the rSmart Sakai CLE please visit http://www.sakaisandbox.com and sign up for a free account or download a full, easy-to-install version free of cost from rSmart's website.

Megan Perrone
Marketing Specialist
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8. Interested in a Post-2.6 Forums Branch?

Hi all,

University of Cape Town is deploying Sakai 2-6-x in mid-December for our start of 2009 academic year in Feb 09.

We have some requirements for Forums functionality that we want to deploy, which exceed what is currently in the 2-6-x branch or trunk. We are therefore planning to do some of this in our own branch of post-2.6 / post-trunk Forums.

We'd like to establish what interest there would be from other Sakai sites in running this branch with us (and also participating in QA for it, etc.).

The key areas of work that we either plan to implement/fix or merge from existing work by others are:

http://jira.sakaiproject.org/jira/browse/SAK-12754
Modify Forums interface (UM changes)

http://jira.sakaiproject.org/jira/browse/SAK-12754
Statistics page very slow

http://jira.sakaiproject.org/jira/browse/SAK-10559
Originally by Hull, but we are reimplementing as view number of people who have read a message

http://jira.sakaiproject.org/jira/browse/SAK-5568
Make discussion forum content available for search

http://jira.sakaiproject.org/jira/browse/SAK-11740
Stanford changes for email notification

http://jira.sakaiproject.org/jira/browse/SAK-10869
Displaying all messages should mark them as read

We would hope that these changes would make their way back into trunk (say for 2.7), but it's possible that this might not happen, in which case we'd maintain this branch as a fork of Forums and set up a contrib project for it.

Regards

Stephen Marquard
Learning Technologies Co-ordinator
Centre for Educational Technology, University of Cape Town
stephen.marquard@uct.ac.za

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9.   rSmart Upcoming Webinar: Portfolios Made Easy with Sakai

Join us November 13, 2008 at 11:00 AM PST

Is your institution grappling with an ePortfolio project? Are you unsure about which system to use or how to get started? Come join rSmart and Serensoft, two experts in ePortfolios, to learn about using Sakai's open source portfolio capabilities for your ePortfolio project. The rSmart / Serensoft ePortfolio solution combines rSmart's expert Sakai support and maintenance program with Serensoft's leading ePortfolio expertise. Together, we can jump start any ePortfolio project quickly and efficiently and cost-effectively support it for the long term.

TOPICS TO BE COVERED:

- Introduction to Sakai's powerful ePortfolio capabilities
- Recommendations for how to get started with Sakai for portfolios
- How rSmart and Serensoft are working together to make ePortfolios easy

Seating is limited! To Register: https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/879352808

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10.   Unicon Announces Services for Shibboleth for Secure Single Sign On and Authentication

Unicon, Inc. has announced it is providing implementation, integration, and customization services for the Shibboleth(r) System, a standards-based, open source software package for Web single sign-on across or within organizational boundaries. As security, privacy, and identity theft grows more prevalent throughout the Internet, it is important that academic institutions have the technologies, tools, and solutions to implement state-of-the-art safeguards for its students, faculty, and administrators.

Unicon's higher education services group is experienced with implementing secure authentication and identity management solutions based on open source technologies, including JASIG's Central Authentication Service (CAS). Shibboleth and CAS can be highly complementary solutions by providing both localized secure authentication as well as meeting federated standards.

"We're pleased that a company with Unicon's extensive experience and strong reputation will now be offering services for Shibboleth," said Ken Klingenstein, Director of the Internet2 Middleware and Security Initiative. "Unicon is already a leader in implementing open source solutions for higher education institutions. This move will be a great benefit to the Shibboleth community and also for organizations needing commercial services for their Shibboleth implementation."

"We've hit the tipping point this year where there are enough valuable services requiring SAML assertions for user access that forward-thinking institutions are now eager to implement Shibboleth as part of their Identity Management strategy," said John A. Lewis, Chief Software Architect for Unicon, Inc. "These institutions will experience a greater ability to collaborate beyond their own organization while also securing and simplifying management of their confidential personal data."

Unicon Services for Shibboleth Include:

- Implementation planning
- Branding and user experience
- Installation and configuration

- Custom development
- Shibboleth integration with uPortal, Sakai, and other applications

About Shibboleth: The Shibboleth System is a standards-based, open source software package for web single sign-on across or within organizational boundaries. It allows sites to make informed authorization decisions for individual access of protected online resources in a privacy-preserving manner. The Shibboleth software implements widely used federated identity standards, principally OASIS' Security Assertion Markup Language (SAML), to provide a federated single sign-on and attribute exchange framework. Shibboleth also provides extended privacy functionality allowing the browser user and their home site to control the attributes released to each application. Using Shibboleth-enabled access simplifies management of identity and permissions for organizations supporting users and applications. Shibboleth is developed in an open and participatory environment, is freely available, and is released under the Apache Software License. For more information, visit: http://shibboleth.internet2.edu/

Shibboleth Single Sign-on and Federating Software addresses the challenges of:

- Multiple passwords required for multiple applications
- Scaling the account management of multiple applications
- Security issues associated with accessing third-party services
- Privacy
- Interoperability within and across organizational boundaries
- Enabling institutions to choose their authentication technology
- Enabling service providers to control access to their resources

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11. Job Opening: Senior Learning Technologist

Do you have:
- Experience of teaching and training in Virtual Learning Environments?
- An enthusiasm for staff development and user support?
- Demonstrable success in promoting the use of learning technologies in traditional university settings?
- Excellent communication, presentation, and organisational skills?

If so, you may be the person we are looking for to join our VLE team. You will work alongside VLE developers and learning technology support officers in the Learning Technologies Group (LTG) to promote the service and support the growing user community. As an experienced user of VLEs with a strong grounding in learning technology you will identify models of good practice in VLE use to support Oxford University teaching and help to plan strategic improvements to the service. If you have a track record of success in designing, documenting and delivering training and the enthusiasm to keep abreast of new developments please get in touch with us.

The LTG forms an important section within Oxford University Computing Services, which is home to many interesting initiatives to support teaching and research. Benefits include flexible working, a good pension, excellent career prospects and holiday provision.

This post is offered for two years in the first instance.
Grade: 8 Salary: £36,532 - £43,622 pa

Further details and an application form may be obtained from The Personnel Office, Oxford University Computing Services, 13 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6NN, tel: 01865-283289 or email: recruitment@oucs.ox.ac.uk. These are also available from the main jobs page (http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/jobs/).

Completed applications must be received by 12 noon on Friday 14th November 2008. Interviews will be held on Thursday 27th November 2008.

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

12. 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.x problem building   DEV
an user support group?   PED
Anonymous access of site content   DEV
Are all tools created equal in Sakai 3.0?   DEV
browse folder permission and SAK-13917   PORT
EntityBroker direct URLs   DEV
Feedback on network configuration modifications to Sakai Jira/Confluence   Final
Suggested judges for TWISA   PED
Finding and deleting dependencies   PORT
Fluid Infusion 0.6beta1 released!   DEV
Forums and readability   DEV USER
gap analysis: help needed   UX
Gradebook 2.5   USER
groupwise calandar integration with sakai email archive   USER
Have you redefined types and roles in project sites?   PED
Improving the CLE 1 - Create a Site (a follow-up project)   UX
Interest in a Turnitin-Sakai Integration?   USER PED
Interested in a post-2.6 Forums branch?   DEV
jforum 2.5.0 question   DEV
JForum 2.5.0 With Support for Grading Now Available!   USER
list of evaluations already submitted   PORT
Minutes of OSP Conference Call 10/27/08   PORT
More course management / site creation fun   UX
NIH Syndrome (was RE: Integrating Sakai with open source wiki)   DEV
Nuggets of Sakai functionality at the end of a URL (tm)   DEV
Option for Maven 2 to deploy .svn directories   DEV
OSP 2.6 Resolved Issues List   PORT
Osp portal styles   PORT
Permission Definitions (Was: Re: Anonymous access of site content)   DEV
Possible problem with oracle conversion for 2.6?   DEV
Questions about site contact   UX
Sakai Edutools Review   USER
sdata installation   DEV
Search tool indexing xml files   DEV
usernames beginning with "test"   DEV
UX project check in for Monday 10/27   UX
Web Content refresh button   DEV
What are the Top Five Problems / Issues?   USER

10. Events

Sakai Fall Regional Conference
November 11 and 12, 2008
The Inn at Virginia Tech
Blacksburg, Virginia
https://educonference.com/sakai/virginiaTech/index.php

AuSakai 08
26 - 28 November 2008
Monash University, Caulfield (Melbourne)
http://www.monash.edu.au/eeducation/ausakai08index.html

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

The OPEN Forum for Higher Education Executives
December 7-9, 2008
Palm Springs, California
http://theopenforum2008.com/index.html

2009 JASIG Spring Conference
March 1-4, 2009
The Sheraton Dallas Hotel
Dallas, Texas
http://www.ja-sigorg

eLearning Africa 29
May 27 – 29, 2009
Le Meridien President
Dakar, Senegal
www.elearning-africa.com.

10th Sakai Conference: Boston
July 8-10, 2009
Cambridge Hyatt
Cambridge, Massachusetts

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