Folks,

I have just spent M-W of this week at the UK e-Science all hands
meeting in Nottingham followed by a two-day extreme programming
session with Rob Crouchly and Adrian Fish at Lancaster University.

Nottingham:

The AHM was very very very much about JSR-168 and portals for
eScience. Sakai is of great interest, but it seems that in the short
term science portal projects put up uPortal, GridSphere, or
StringBeans and write a few JSR-168 portlets and declare victory.
Having JSR-168 as a standard makes this an easy choice. Even though
folks claim that there portals are always "interim" - they end up
keeping whatever JSR-168 portal the 3 grad students picked on
"Project X" for a long time.

The folks at Lancaster demonstrated Sakai TPP tools for blog,
multipoint audio, multipoint video, shared display, shared whiteboard
and a search capability for the Sakai research tool. They are very
keen on Sakai because it provides so much more than JSR-168 in terms
of context, security, grouping, etc when compared to JSR-168.

This disparity between standards/features was starting to create a
rift between the "purveyors of 168" and the "purveyors of Sakai" as
if there needed to be a knock-down drag-out battle to declare one or
the other a winner. With Sakai outgunned in that fight in the UK by
about 5 to 1 and with Sakai branded as a "US thing" it seemed like a
battle to the bitter end was not a good plan :)

WSRP has always been imagined to be the "savior" - but as we drew
some pictures describing the reality of WSRP, folks were a bit
disappointed because they hoped for something more "magical" - it was
disappointing that WSRP has no real provisioning mechanism where
somehow Sakai miraculously is peppered throughout any JSR-168 portal.

So then we started talking about the Sakai/JSR-168/WebServices
approach where there is auto-login, auto-provisioning, and
portability between portals. This seemed like a good way to go
forward and not force anyone to alter their portal installation choices.

After these discussions, the folks from Lancaster suggested that I
spend my two free days up at Lancaster (they had a car) reviewing
their TPP tools and fooling around with the JSR-168 portlet to see
what progress could be made.   I had no better plans so I tagged along.

Lancaster:

The first day I reviewed the maturity of their TPP tools (blog,
whiteboard, audio, video, shared desktop, etc). They are certainly
working demos but will need quite a bit of work before they can
become part of even a "stealth" release. This code is well done, but

there are issues of performance and dependence on included Open Source elements that themselves are unreliable and hard to configure. Some work will be needed to make sure that the software works in a clustered environment, work with multiple databases, and scale sufficiently for production use.   These tools will be improved during the next few months and they will be presented in Austin if things go well. We might invest some time to help them with integration into Sakai after the first of the year. The team is relatively small and is in a big hurry to produce all these tools to a level to deploy in a set of smaller production environments (e-Science demonstrations) with less than 50 simultansous users per server before they stop to think about the "bigger picture" of their tools within Sakai.

They have even one more really cool tool they might build based on my Sakai Desktop Portal which I wrote in VB - they want to write a Sakai "notifier" that site in a system tray and lets you know when things happen inside one or more Sakai servers/sites that you are tracking using Sakai's internal events capability. This tool has not yet started.

The second day, we attacked uPortal and Sakai working together via JSR-168 and web services. We started with uPortal 2.5.1 and Sakai 2.0 and the pre-release version of my JSR-168 Sakai portlet. It turned out quite nicely. I have attached a screenshot. You can log in as admin/admin and push the Sakai tab to see it in action.

The folks at Lancaster were very pleased and see a lot of potential now in ways they can use web services.

All in all a really good week. Next week is the Sakai UK Developer's meeting.

/Chuck

References: http://www.allhands.org.uk/
http://e-science-dev.lancs.ac.uk:8081/
uPortal/ admin/admin

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Attachments:

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https://ctools.umich.edu/access/content/attachment/aff6a236-0f90-4683-005a-90aa856029cb/pastedGraphic.tiff

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This automatic notification message was sent by CTools
(https://ctools.umich.edu) from the Mellon Sakai site.
You can modify how you receive notifications at My Workspace > Preferences.

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