**Apereo Newsletter**
**June/July 2015**

From the Editor
Announcements

From the Editor:
June and July are a busy season for the Apereo community, as the abundance of items in the Announcements section of this month's newsletter attests. The end of the semester also prompts deeper reflection and assessment, for which there are some thought-provoking posts and videos highlighted in the Longer Reading and Viewing section.

A reminder, also, that we are looking for YOUR contributions to the newsletter. Examples might include (but are not limited to) articles, video clips, screencasts, graphics, or short announcements on:
-- How you're using software produced by an Apereo community at your institution
-- Major releases or minor tweaks
-- Ideas for new projects you'd like to get feedback on or gauge interest in
-- Important discussions of general educational technology issues that emerge on community email lists

Contributions of all lengths, from snippet to think pieces, are welcome. We are currently off schedule because of summer vacations, but as a general rule the deadline for content is on the 15th of each month, with expected publication on the 25th. Send your submissions (and any questions!) to newsletter@apereo.org .

But first . . .

Thought about joining the Apereo Foundation?

There are many good reasons to become a member of the Apereo Foundation. By becoming a member, you:

* Ensure proper support for software you rely on. Your membership dues enable effective licensing and IPR management practices, infrastructure support, community coordination, event support, outreach, and more. IPR management, particularly, is the bedrock free and open source software is built on. Don't depend on another organization to make the contribution needed to let software you rely on survive and thrive.

* Give your institution a vote in the way Apereo is run, and how it sets priorities. Your institution has a vote in elections for the Apereo Foundation Board, which provides strategic leadership for the foundation.

* Are able to access programs such as the Apereo Incubation Program. Have a software project you believe meets a higher education need? Apereo is the place to find partners and learn from others who've grown communities to sustain software.

* Become part of a community of peers - a global network of educational institutions working together to address common issues and solve common problems - with many opportunities to participate. In the last three years, Apereo and its predecessors have held conferences on five continents. Members can access our principle events at discounted rates.

There's a new open discussion list for all matters Apereo. Join by sending open+subscribe@apereo.org

Hold the Date!

* Apereo Unconference 30th September/1st October at HEC Montreal, Quebec. Details soon

* Sakai Virtual Conference - November 4th

-- Lucy Appert
Newsletter Editor

Announcements

1) BedeWork: Transitions into a Second Decade
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) has been the locus of Bedework activity from its beginnings almost 10 years ago, in September 2005, when it was publicly announced as a new, open source project. Bedework has been a "sponsored" Jasig/Apereo project since 2010.   Arlen Johnson, Mike Douglass and I have been active participants over Bedework's

entire history. RPI's involvement in calendaring actually goes back to 2003, when we started collaborating with the University of Washington on UWCalendar, their open source calendaring project.

In the first half of this year, Arlen Johnson  and Mike Douglass both left RPI. Mike and Arlen will stay actively involved in Bedework, as much, or perhaps more so, than ever. Mike will also stay actively involved in CalConnect, The Calendaring & Scheduling Consortium, where he serves as interop manager and ex officio board member.

I have just stepped down as chair of the Bedework Steering Committee. Eric Wittmann, our new chair, contributed as a Bedework developer when he was at Yale, and he continues to be an active participant in the project while working for RedHat. Eric is the ideal person to shepherd Bedework through its second decade, and under his leadership, Bedework will continue to evolve, and grow its community.

In March, 2007, the one year anniversary of the first production release of Bedework, I reflected on "Bedework at '1'". In March of 2009, I reflected on "Bedework at '8'", closing with, "And, although tomorrow is promised to no one, after these 8 years, "…Reflecting on Bedework at … '10'" would still be a "privilege", but it seems now more like an achievable goal than the wild dream it once was."  As I do not anticipate participating after this year, I will cheat a little, and reflect on "Bedework at '10'" now, which is both a privilege, and the culmination of that wild dream.

Bedework, the project, and Bedework the product, are both thriving. Adoption and development continue within the higher education community, as well in the commercial and non-profit sectors. Bedework components are incorporated into other products and systems, and Bedework's public event calendaring is outstanding. New features, such as consensus scheduling (ala Doodle) will be very well received additions. The Bedework "Sometime" component, originally developed at the University of Wisconsin Madison, has great potential.  Although the epicenter of Bedework development is shifting, I anticipate that Bedework development may very well accelerate.

It is said that success has many fathers, but failure is an orphan. Bedework has been successful, and continues to be successful. I need to recognize some for the institutions and people who have contributed to Bedework's success, directly, or indirectly as supporters or influencers:

Duke University, Yale University, Brown University, Columbia University, Nashville Public Library, New Haven Free Public Library, San Diego Public LIbrary,  Upper Hudson Library System, Girasole Consulting, Spherical Cow Group, UC Berkeley, Universidad Publica de Navarra, Jasig, Apereo Foundation, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Mellon Foundation, OmniUpdate, and CalConnect;

Dr. Deb Johnson,  Jeremy Bandini, Richard Outten, Cornelia Ann Bailey, Juan Cruz Ruiz de Gauna, Jonathan Markow, Ian Dolphin, Ben Oshirin, Michael Gettes, Steven Carmody, John Spadaro, Greg Barnes, Ellen Jensen, Oren Sreebny, Pat Masson, Michael Feldstein, Chris

Mackie, Cyrus Daboo, Eric York,  Andrey Postoyanets, Susan Bramall, Kyle Cook, Jenny Ellis, Patty Gertz, John Lewis, Maneesha Aggarwal, Mary Fellows, Joe Thornton, Paul Sevinç, Dave Thewlis, Bernard Desruisseaux, Mimi Mugler, Paul Fisher, Shel Waggener, John Kolb, William Gill, and Serge Goldstein.

I wish to especially recognize my colleagues on the Bedework Steering Committee - Deborah Johnson, Arlen Johnson, Barry Leibson, Mike Douglass, Eric Wittmann, Greg Allen, Carlos Alonso Vega, and Nicholas Blair for their sustained, and sustaining, support, engagement, vision, and guidance.

And perhaps most importantly, all of you for whom Bedework was created, the adopters, the contributors, and the champions.

-- Gary Schwartz
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

2) Release of Karuta Open Source Portfolio 1.1
The Apereo Karuta incubation project is pleased to announce the release of version 1.1 of Karuta Open Source Portfolio. This second release provides a much richer set of functionalities to support our core mission: provide simple and flexible tools to make learning more visible and reflexive. In this new release, designers can:
   * Streamline the actions of students or instructors (submit, hide and show).
    * Create sophisticated dashboards for individual students or group of students (reporting tool).
    * Customize the look and feel of the portfolio.
    *  Set notifications possibilities (by email or within Sakai) for various portfolios actors.
Further information is available at karutaproject.org.

-- Jacques Raynauld

3) Sakai 10.5 Release
The Sakai community is pleased to announce the release of Sakai 10.5, the latest maintenance release in the Sakai 10 series. Sakai 10.5 contains 116 new fixes and several important security fixes.

Sakai 10.5 is the community supported version of Sakai and the team highly recommends upgrading to this latest version.

72 people representing 39 institutions contributed to this release.

Sakai 10 release notes, including notes specifically on the 10.5 release are available on our community wiki.
https://confluence.sakaiproject.org/display/DOC/Sakai+10+Release+Notes

-- Neal Caidin

4) Incubation Round-up
Congratulations to Opencast and Xerte, two software communities that graduated from the Apereo incubation process in June. Opencast, a platform for capturing and managing academic media, and Xerte, an authoring environment for richly interactive and asccessible learning content, join a growing family of Apereo software communities. Welcome!

Joining Karuta and EDexchange in the Apereo incubation process are OpenLRS, OpenDashboard, and the Learning Analytics Processor projects.

The Learning Analytics Processor project is aimed at accelerating the future of predictive learning analytics through the development of a flexible and highly scalable tool that will facilitate everything from academic early alert systems to data visualizations. Along with this powerful"big data" tool will come a library of open predictive models which can be shared across higher education free of licensing costs and, most importantly, allow institutions to collaborate on enhancing and improving these models over time.

OpenLRS is an open source, Java-based Learning Record Store (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Learning_Record_Store, http://tincanapi.com/learning-record-store/) which is compatible with TinCanAPI (http://tincanapi.com/) and Experience API (http://www.adlnet.gov/tla/experience-api).

OpenDashboard is a web application that provides a framework for displaying visualizations and data views called "cards". Cards represent a single discrete visualization or data view but share an API and data model. OpenDashboard is a Java application built with Spring Boot.

Learning Analytics Processor, OpenLRS, and OpenDashboard entered incubation in June 2015. More information will follow shortly.

There's more about the Apereo incubation process and incubating projects at https://www.apereo.org/incubation, along with a discussion list for incubation enquiries and dicussion. Join by sending incubation+subscribe@apereo.org

-- Ian Dolphin

5) Future Project Ideas: University of Delaware Course Registration
At the University of Delaware, we run PeopleSoft Student Information System (dubbed UDSIS). We found the self-service registration experience provided by this system to be deficient in a number of ways: Students did not know whether they met all the requisites until they attempted to add a class, the interface was slow and clunky, the error messages students received were often indecipherable, etc.

To compensate for these deficiencies, we wrote our own Spring-based registration application. It reads directly from our student system (via direct database reads) and writes schedule changes back to the student system (via component interface calls), so it does not circumvent or compromise the integrity of the PeopleSoft system in any way.

However, it did grant us the freedom to implement a number of enhancements over the functionality delivered by PeopleSoft. An outline of these are available on request.

After being contacted by a number of vendors offering similar services for hefty annual fees, we began to suspect that other institutions might be interested in adopting our WebReg application. We are asking for community feedback about whether they would like to see WebReg developed into an open-source tool. If so, we would be thrilled to submit an incubation proposal to Apereo! If you have any feedback, questions, comments, or concerns, we would be delighted to hear from you. Please send an email to Dan Waegel, University of Delaware, at danielw@udel.edu.

-- Dan Waegel, University of Delaware

6) Unicon Announces Development for Open Source Learning Record Store (LRS) in the Higher Education Learning Analytics Process
OpenLRS is entering the Apereo Foundation's incubation as a single component of the overall Apereo Learning Analytics Initiative (LAI). The Apereo LAI community consists of higher education professionals who share a passion for open source learning analytics projects and processes. Learn more at: https://www.unicon.net/content/unicon-announces-development-open-source-learning-record-store-lrs-higher-education-learning

-- Lisa Di Pietro

7) Unicon and Marist College Selected by Jisc to Implement Learning Analytics and Student Intervention Technology
Jisc will be implementing Learning Analytics Processor, developed by Marist College; OpenDashboard; and Student Success Plan (SSP). Learning Analytics Processor and OpenDashboard are Apereo Foundation incubation projects, and SSP is a fully sponsored Apereo project. Learn more at:
https://www.unicon.net/content/unicon-and-marist-college-selected-jisc-implement-learning-analytics-and-student

-- Lisa Di Pietro

8) NEW! Apereo Teaching and Learning Group

A new Apereo Teaching and Learning google group has been created. Initially it will be used to make announcements and send out agendas about the Teaching and Learning group discussions which happen every week on Wednesday at 10 am Eastern time (currently 2 pm GMT, and 1/2 the year at 3 pm GMT due to changes between daylight savings time and standard time). Everyone is welcome to also have Teaching and Learning discussions on this new list, of course.

We anticipate that there still will be a need for a lot of Sakai specific discussion and email group traffic and for this reason we will keep the Sakai User list (sakai-user@apereo.org).

Nobody is being automatically added to the Apereo Teaching and Learning list. If you want to join, you must subscribe.

To subscribe to this new list send an email to apereoTL+subscribe@apereo.org or go to https://groups.google.com/a/apereo.org/forum/#!forum/apereoTL and click Join group.

-- Neal Caidin

9) Sakai and Google Analytics at Notre Dame
The University of Notre Dame, a Google school, upgraded from Sakai 2.9 to Sakai 10 just a month ago. One of the new features we look forward to utilizing is a series of properties unabling Google Analytics on our production data. We look forward to sharing our results and would be eager to hear how the gathered data is informing other institutions' use of Sakai.
-- Laura Gekeler

10) Jisc Code of Practice for Learning Analytics
You may have been so busy with Open Apereo 15 that you missed a valuable publication from the UK. The Jisc Code of Practice for Learning Analytics is described by Niall Sclater over at -
http://analytics.jiscinvolve.org/wp/2015/06/04/code-of-practice-for-learning-analytics-launched/
... and includes a thorough literature review in addition to the code itself.

11) Super-early advance notice Jisc / Apereo Learning Analytics Hackathon at LAK16, Edinburgh
Two organisations leading the way worldwide in developing open architectures for learning analytics are coming together at LAK16 in Edinburgh for a two-dayhackathon on April 25-26, 2016.  Jisc and Apereo will put the growing ecosystem of learning analytics products such as learning records stores, learning analytics processors, dashboards, consent systems and student apps through their paces with experimental big data coming from learning management systems, student record systems and other sources.

Testing the interoperability of the various tools, and integrating new data sources, predictive models and third party products, will help to reassure institutions that they are not going to be locked into proprietary learning analytics systems and can select the best products for their needs.

Meanwhile, getting some of the leading technical minds in the field together in a room for two days should help to expand the market for experienced vendors as well as innovative new entrants.  Jisc is inviting the developers of the various components of its basic learning analytics system to participate in the workshop, and Apereo willinput the growing infrastructure of its learning analytics initiative to the event. Vendors and developers of other learning analytics related products are welcome to sign up for the hackathon.
http://lak16.solaresearch.org/?page_id=204

-- Ian Dolphin

12) Xerte Online Toolkits
Xerte Online Toolkits has graduated the Apereo Incubation programme this month, and becomes a fully-fledged Apereo Project. Xerte Online Toolkits is a suite of content creation tools aimed at non-technical authors that want to quickly and easily create interactive and highly accessible learning resources. Xerte provides an excellent complement to the existing Apereo projects.

The incubation process has been relatively straightforward for us: we already had well-established communities of users and developers when we joined incubation, and so most of the work has been concerned with establishing a more robust framework of governance for the project, providing better information about how the project works, and working through a couple of IP issues. The piece of work that took the longest was putting in place all the contributor agreements, as the project has a long history and lots of people have contributed over the years. Graduating incubation puts The Xerte Project in really fantastic shape for the future, and we are really excited about the new opportunities that being an Apereo project will provide to grow our communities of users and developers, and to continue to advance the software.

We really enjoyed meeting many of you at Open Apereo last month, but those of you learning about The Xerte Project for the first time will find some good resources and examples below. We had some really fantastic feedback during the conference and have had some excellent follow-up since we returned.

Xerte Online Toolkits v3.0 is very nearly ready, and promises to the best version we've ever released, with loads of new features and enhancements: we are just working through the last few outstanding issues. The code is currently available in beta, and you can download it from our community web site at http://www.xerte.org.uk: we'd encourage anyone to give the software a try and let us know any thoughts before we finalise the code for release.

-- Julian Tenney, University of Nottingham

For Longer Viewing and Reading

13) The Real Meaning of Open Keynote by Patrick Masson Available for Viewing
Open Apereo 2015 brought together 12 software-based communities, one of which, OpenCast, as utilized by one of its commercial affiliates, Ncast (www.ncast.com), provided exquisite high definition video capture of key Open Apereo sessions. If you're looking for excellent material to showcase Apereo with your constituents, or if you missed the conference this year, you'll want to catch the best of Open Apereo as brought to us by Ncast. One such session, a keynote by Patrick Masson from the Open Source Initiative, I would highly recommend. You can find it on the Apereo YouTube channel here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3hM_Ud3gYU
Of course, as usual, materials from the rest of the sessions, as uploaded by presenters, are linked from the presentation description at http://lanyrd.com/2015/apereo/

-- Laura Gekeler

14) How is Sakai faring in the face of competition from Canvas?
June 25, 2015

(This was originally an email sent to the Sakai developer list)

A member of an institution that uses Sakai recently heard an interesting comment from a Canvas LMS representative:
"Sakai is such a cool concept but I do wonder where it will end up in the future as most its founding schools (and the schools putting resources into developing it) have now left and come to Canvas (for example, University of Indiana, University of Michigan, Stanford University)."

I thought this deserved a public reply.

My first observation is that a salesperson spreading FUD (fear, uncertainty and doubt) about Sakai suggests to me that they may not have a strong positive feeling about their own product.  Most salespeople will tell you that the best thing to do is focus on what makes your product strong without even talking about other products.
That aside, let me give my response to your question.   Each year I do some analytics on the developer list activity:
https://twitter.com/drchuck/status/575353312310136833

This chart shows a trend that at this point is about five years old. In the beginning early adopters such as Michigan, Indiana, Stanford, and Cambridge were pulling a lot of load as the product was literally being built and rebuilt.   Also in the earliest years, new schools were adopting Sakai continuously so a lot of the e-mail activity was helping new schools.

The early lead schools dropped in activity in 2009.   In 2009 Michigan was still the #1 participant in the dev list but a lot of increased participation was also coming from companies like LongSight and Unicon; participation from the other commercial affiliates (often using gmail.com addresses) was increasing as well.
In some ways, 2009-2011 was Sakai's period of greatest risk as a community.  A lot of things were trending downward and near the end of 2011 there was a very good chance that Sakai 2.9 would never see the light of day and it would be "last one out turn off the lights".

The future of Sakai was originally planned to be a ground-up rewrite known as Sakai 3, however, this didn't work out as planned and instead a brand new product known as Apereo Open Academic Environment (OAE) was developed. (OAE became a new type of learning platform based on social networking principles: sharing, co-editing, discovery and commenting upon content.)

But in 2012-13, there was a big turnaround with a redesigned Sakai 2.9 which included the brand new Lesson Builder tool.

Following that came consolidation with the tool-rich and innovative Sakai 10. Those who were still in the community put in a lot of effort – Michigan and Longsight were in really strong leadership positions. Other schools like Rutgers, NYU, Columbia, Duke, UNC, and others don't show up in this dev list graph but they provided much of the money and developer talent to get us through Sakai 2.9 and Sakai 10.

Interestingly in the 2013-14 timeframe we see a couple of factors at work. First the 2102-13 sprint was over – we had Sakai 10. Here is a SlideShare I did that celebrated that moment:

http://www.slideshare.net/csev/2013-0602sakaix

The upcoming Sakai 11 release is the most important release for several years, however, aside from the addition of a responsive design, it is unique in that we are not expanding functionality as much as in the past: we are actually removing more code than we are adding and doing a bunch of UI rework in tools like Lessons, Gradebook and Portal. These more design-oriented activities tend not to cause lots of traffic on the dev lists.

Another interesting trend is that now that we have weekly developer team and teaching and learning meetings with up to 20 people regularly attending: the community is coordinating verbally and collectively in these meetings therefore less email is needed.

As we emerge into 2015, activity and commitment is very strong. The commercial affiliates (large and small) are a very important part of the community. Indiana and Stanford are quite low compared to earlier levels of participation. But something interesting is happening – some of the code that was traditionally the exclusive domain of Stanford or Indiana is now being maintained by the whole community. The interesting result is that the pace of development in those areas of the code base is increasing because now the whole community can move the code forward.

More community members are stepping forward to help because they know that they no longer assume that Indiana, Stanford and Co. will pick up the slack.

During 2011-2014 as the founding institutions slowly backed away, patches and bug fixes started to pile up. Now that the community has inherited the code-base and collective responsibility, the outstanding issues are rapidly being addressed. This is not meant as a criticism of the original partners, they built the core codebase that we all have and without them, we would have nothing. We are very much in their debt.

Looking forward, our community is solid and making lots of progress every single week. We have the luxury of putting a lot of effort into the UI and catching up with applying a backlog of local improvements from places like Oxford, Dayton, Columbia, NYU, Duke, Notre Dame, and UNC. These improvements are enriching our product. In addition, schools like Valencia, Murcia, Rutgers, and UCT are continuing to make strong direct contributions to the code base.

As we see Sakai 11 coming out with its new Morpheus responsive mobile-friendly portal and all of the user interface and performance improvements, I can see why Canvas sales people might be getting a little nervous and use a bit of FUD to try to scare you to switch now.

Thanks to Adam Marshall of Oxford for his editing help on rewording this from an email to a blog post.

-- Chuck Severance
Chair, Sakai Project Management Committee

15) Perspectives on Open Learning Analytics and the Recent Canvas Data Announcement

The announcement of the launch of Canvas Data from Instructure a couple of weeks ago caught my attention because of the work that Marist has been involved in under the Apereo Learning Analytics Initiative and the strategic imperative that we, and I think other leaders in this field, see with regards to openness and Big Data..

As we see more and more of these types of announcements I think a critical question for institutions to be asking themselves is whether they see learning analytics as being of strategic importance to their future or not and how much control over this future do they feel is important. Most institutional decision makers I talk with about learning analytics say that it is a critical strategic initiative for them and that it will impact on all aspects of their institution over the next 10 years.  I agree.  Given this though, I wonder why more are not also then asking themselves if "giving" their valuable learning data to a vendor to host and exploit and then sell back the result to them is really a smart move?

One of the things that caught my attention in their announcement was the following: "Canvas clients generate more than 35 million education-related participation events every day, and with the addition of Canvas Data, it's even easier for those clients to better assess, analyze and understand complex online teaching and learning phenomena, covering everything from course design to student engagement."

Based on our work at Marist as well as the Apereo efforts I think its safe to say that Canvas will be mining all of this data, which they recognize is being generated by their clients, to create sophisticated predictive models which I'm guessing they will then "sell" back to institutions under their "premium version" of the Canvas Data solution.  This begs the logical question of why we should be paying for models that are developed using the data we and our students are generating - but I think the really ironic thing is that the machine learning techniques that have made such big data mining so powerful were developed by...yes, that's right, institutions of higher education!  So, higher education has invested, over the past 20 years, in the R&D needed to be able to do learning analytics and now we're giving our learning data away to a company that will use this knowledge to develop models that they will then sell back to us and do so under a license that will likely not allow us to

even "see" how they work, let alone our own improvements to them. That does not sound like a good strategy for higher education to me.

I think the scary thing here is that we, in higher education, know this model well, right? Think of the journal industry....higher education does the research, gives that to the publishers for free and then we buy back subscriptions to their journals.  You'd think that we'd have learned a lesson here about the value of our research and data and not repeat our mistakes. This, obviously, is why Marist (and others) are so focused on trying to make sure that the learning analytics field remains open....it's not just about a philosophy around open-source, it's about strong business strategy and a sense that the learning analytics field is going to be so significant to the future of education that we want to own and control it just like we want to own and control the campuses we work, teach, and learn on.

-- Joshua Baron
 Assistant Vice President, Information Technology for Digital Education
 Marist College


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