JA-SIG uPortal – an open source Enterprise Portal

There are many portal offerings. Most of them are vendor offerings. In those cases the back-end systems that integrate with the portal are from either the same vendor or a vendor that has partnered with another vendor. This causes problems when the portal in question is required to integrate with the software provided by either another vendor or the institution. An example of this might be integration with library services. Since it is unlikely that any one vendor can provide all of the services needed by a given campus, it becomes difficult for the campus to provide a consistent, standard way of integrating components. The goal of uPortal is to provide a software container that solves the software/content integration problem.

The technology required to achieve the goal of vendor-independence should reflect that philosophy. That fact resulted in the JA-SIG, which was founded because the Java Technology runs well on most hardware and operating system platforms. The uPortal effort follows suit. In particular, the uPortal is being constructed according to the J2EE (Java 2 Enterprise Edition) specifications. Being neutral, the uPortal must and does rely on industry standards: XML, XSLT, SOAP, XHTML, RSS, PKI, EJB, SSL and so on. Because it is not possible to predict the services that exist on a given campus, the uPortal design makes use of interfaces. This allows institutions that implement uPortal to adapt services to uPortal by mapping them to their respective interface. We have done this and by being well-defined it saves time.

The ability to deploy a vendor's application to the uPortal depends on (1) the ability to reuse the vendor's web content and (2) the quality of the middle-tier interface the vendor provides.

The uPortal technology provides a concrete way of managing the content and constituents of the electronic campus. It allows users to personalize content according to their roles and preferences.

The future for uPortal depends on the willingness of the institutions and vendors to adopt It. We have seen much interest from the institutions. There is a growing list of uPortal content that is available. There is a drive to get vendors to sign up and certify to the uPortal.

The day will come when an institution can select the content it wishes to offer and have it running on the campus in a short time.