

Leaders in Learning Analytics and Open Source Software Hold Open Learning Analytics Summit For Public Distribution



April 10, 2014 - With learning analytics poised to become a mainstream technology, higher education leaders from around the world came together following the Learning Analytics and Knowledge (LAK) 2014 conference in Indianapolis, Indiana, for an Open Learning Analytics (OLA) Summit. The Summit, supported by the Society for Learning Analytics Research (SoLAR), Marist College, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, was organized to bring together representatives from the learning analytics and open source software development fields as a means to explore the intersection of learning analytics and open learning, open technologies, and open research.

The Summit, facilitated by George Siemens, Executive Director of the LINK Research Lab at The University of Texas at Arlington; Josh Baron, Senior Academic Technology Officer at Marist College; and Kimberly Arnold, Evaluation Consultant, University of Wisconsin-Madison, spanned two days and focused on open system architectures and how source communities can accelerate the full potential of learning analytics to provide powerful new tools for understanding learning and improving the learning experience and teaching practice.

Building on prior work in the area of OLA by both SoLAR and Apereo, the open-source foundation formed through the merger of Sakai and Jasig in 2012, participants from both communities, as well as others, worked to identify projects to further the field and move toward producing a range of open-source learning analytics services and products.

"Having helped to draft, along with many other colleagues, an initial concept paper on open learning analytics in 2011, it was exciting to see leading researchers in the field come together with those who have more than a decade of experience working on open-source software higher education projects", said George Siemens, "My sense is that we will see some rather

concrete projects emerge from the summit which could have a significant impact on both the field of learning analytics and higher education as a whole”.

One of the major outcomes of the Summit was the identification of a number of “domains” for the OLA community in which future work would be conducted. These OLA domains included: open research (e.g. open datasets, open predictive models, etc.), institutional strategy and policy issues, and learning sciences/learning design and open standards/open-source software. Leads for these domains will be working to document the findings from the Summit as well as developing implementation plans. For example, the open standards/open-source software group are now defining the scope and technical details of an open learning analytics architecture, which will be platform-agnostic, as well as identifying and reaching out to additional research and corporate partners. At the same time, representatives from both SoLAR and Apereo will collaborate on updating the prior Open Learning Analytics concept paper from 2011 to incorporate the Summit outcomes.

“The launch of the Apereo Learning Analytics Initiative a few months ago demonstrates the level of strategic interest in learning analytics that exists within the Apereo ecosystem”, said Josh Baron, who is currently serving on the Apereo Foundation Board of Directors, “which will be significantly enhanced by our collaboration with world renowned researchers and practitioners from the SoLAR community.”

Building on the success of this first OLA Summit, the organizers are also planning for future face-to-face gatherings which will include informal meetings at the 2014 Open Apereo conference in Miami, Florida (June 1 - 4) as well as other venues. In Europe, the Learning Analytics Community Exchange (LACE¹) project is organizing a series of community events in schools, universities, and the commercial sector that will emphasise the importance of the OLA objectives within the European LA community. The group is planning to hold another major OLA Summit at the 2015 Learning Analytics and Knowledge conference, which will be hosted by Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York (March 16 - 20)².

“We are extremely excited to be hosting the 2015 LAK conference on our campus”, said Dr. Dennis J. Murray, President of Marist College, “not only because of the strategic importance that Marist places on the emerging field of Learning Analytics but because of the role we believe this field will play in transforming higher education over the coming decade. With this in mind, I would like to extend a personal invitation to institutional leaders from around the world to be part of this important event and join us in Poughkeepsie in 2015.”

¹ <http://www.laceproject.eu>

² <http://lak15.solaresearch.org>

For organizations and individuals that would like to get involved in the OLA initiative, please contact gsiemens@gmail.com. Or, to receive regular updates, you can subscribe to the OLA Google Group: <https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/open-learning-analytics>

Those interested in learning more about the Apereo Learning Analytics Initiative can contact Alan Berg, the community officer for the initiative, analytics-coordinator@apereo.org

About SoLAR

SoLAR exists to ensure that there is an expansive, transformative vision for what analytics might mean for the future of learning and to promote critical practice-based research and discourse . SoLAR is a non-profit organization.

SoLAR activities include:

- Overseeing the annual Learning Analytics and Knowledge conference and the Journal of Learning Analytics,
- Engage in collaborative research, particularly in the development of Open Learning Analytics Architectures,
- Publications on the state and future of analytics in learning, training, and education
- Consultations with educational leaders and policy makers on analytics deployment and evaluation
- Shared research with vendors and analytics providers

About Apereo

The Apereo Foundation (<http://www.apereo.org>) was formed by the merger of Jasig (<http://www.jasig.org>) and the Sakai (<http://www.sakaiproject.org>) Foundation in late December 2012. Jasig and Sakai had pioneered the production and adoption of open source software for higher education for over ten years. Apereo will take that work further, providing a more rational and improved organizational umbrella for a range of projects and software communities serving higher education. The core mission of the Foundation -- to "assist and facilitate educational organizations which collaborate to foster, develop, and sustain open technologies and innovation to support learning, teaching, and research" -- is discussed, along with the rationale for the merger, in more detail in the white paper "[The Value of a Common Foundation: The Case for Apereo](#)".

In Support:

Shirley Alexander, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia
Kimberly Arnold, University of Wisconsin-Madison

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Cable Green, Director of Global Learning, Creative Commons
Stian Håklev, University of Toronto, Canada
Jim Helwig, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Sandeep Jayaprakash, Marist College
Linda Jorn, University of Wisconsin-Madison
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Zachary A. Pardos, University of California, Berkeley
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Perry Samson, University of Michigan
Jose Luis Santos, KU Leuven, Belgium
Simon Buckingham Shum, The Open University, UK
Shady Shehata, Desire2Learn Incorporated, Canada
Mika Seppala, Florida State University and WEPS, LLC.
George Siemens, University of Texas at Arlington
John Stamper, Carnegie Mellon University
Chris Teplovs, Problemshift Inc.
Craig Thompson, University of Saskatchewan, Canada
David Wiley, Lumen Learning
Philip H. Winne, Simon Fraser University, Canada