Beyond What's In It For Me:

How Appalachian Colleges
Trusted Each Other Enough to Share
a Single Hosted Instance of Sakai

Beyond What's In It For Me

Educause 2007

This brief document captures the essence of a poster presentation made by Martin Ramsay and Charlie Ramsay of CEATH Company at the Educause international convention in Seattle, Washington on October 24, 2007. While a poster presentation is interactive and non-linear, this linear document captures much of the information provided.

LAMP

LAMP is the Learning Asset Management Project of the Appalachian College Association. It is a collaborative community of learners linked together via a common software platform and shared learning and collaboration philosophy across five states (Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia) in the Central Appalachian Mountains. Currently twenty institutions participate in LAMP.
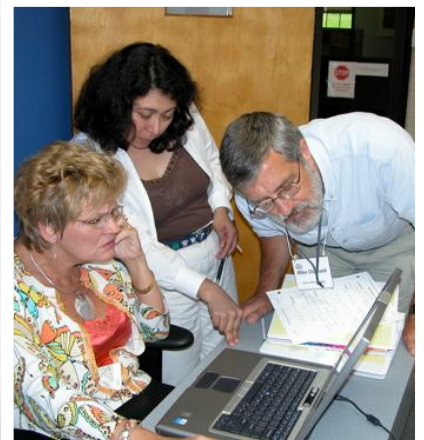
A Single Instance of Sakai

LAMP is remarkable in that the 20 participating schools share a single hosted instance of Sakai, the open source learning management and collaboration system. As of October 2007 the system contained over 10,000 users, making it a significantly large implementation in the worldwide Sakai community.

LAMP went live on April 28, 2006 with eleven schools and has continued to add member institutions and users at a significant rate.

A Variety of Uses

LAMP member colleges use the system for many purposes, including providing mission-critical distance education to students who are off campus, providing enhanced educational opportunities for students who are on campus, and collaborating with colleagues remotely on a variety of projects. For example, in addition to using LAMP to teach traditional on-campus courses or for supplying course materials to distance education students, LAMP users are using the system to ensure wide participation in developing an institutional strategic plan, developing shared course materials between institutions, and collaborating to develop critical thinking assessment rubrics. Student government and campus clubs use Sakai to support their work. The uses of LAMP are limited only by its members' imaginations. The fact that LAMP is a single instance of Sakai make inter-institutional collaboration easy.

LAMP works because its members have built a community of mutual trust.

The LAMP community goes the extra mile to ensure its members stay connected with each other. Summer workshops that emphasize pedagogy and the appropriate use of technology to support teaching and learning enable faculty from member colleges to work together in a face-to-face environment. An annual LAMP Lighters conference for campus LAMP liaisons serves to bring the leaders from each member campus together. A monthly web conference further draws the community together. These monthly web conferences enable local campus liaisons to resolve issues and make policy decisions by consensus. Overall leadership for LAMP is provided by CEATH Company.

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Financial Sustainability

LAMP also works because it is financially self-sustaining. It does not require external funding to continue; each member school pays a membership fee based on the number of users it has in Sakai.

The costs of LAMP are minimal. Sakai is open source software, so there is no software licensing fee.

LAMP does make use of an external hosting service, The Longsight Group, to host Sakai. Longsight provides more than hosting, however. The company has become a trusted business partner, working hand in hand with the Appalachian College Association and with CEATH Company to provide a robust, highly functional system. Longsight frequently participates in LAMP monthly web conferences where it advises the community on technical issues as well as serving as tier-two support. LAMP would not be as successful as it is without The Longsight Group's support.

The only costs that LAMP member schools must pay is for the hosting services provided by Longsight and for leadership and management services provided by CEATH Company. Costs are allocated to LAMP members on a per-user basis. The result is an affordable, sustainable and transparent community.
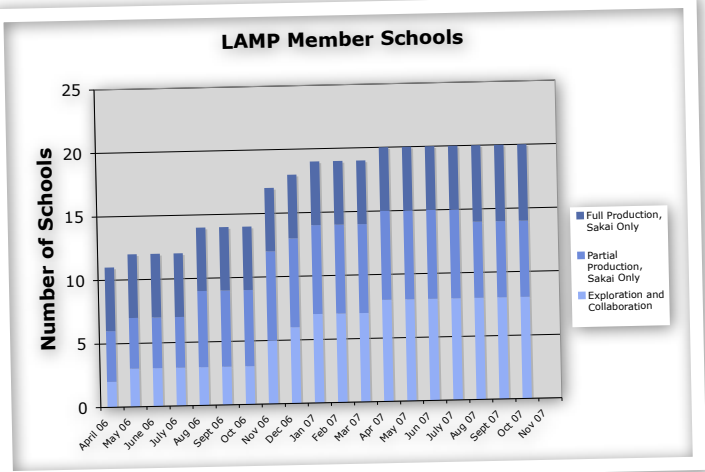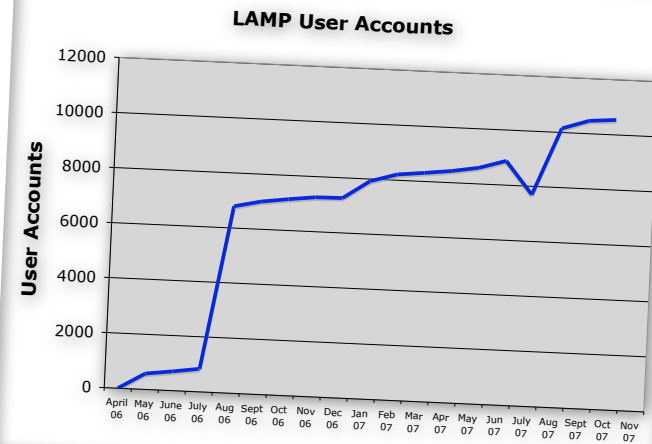
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Remarkable Growth

In the time since going live on April 28, 2006, LAMP had grown remarkably, as the graphs on this page show. The number of schools participating in LAMP has grown 82% since the project first began to twenty institutions.
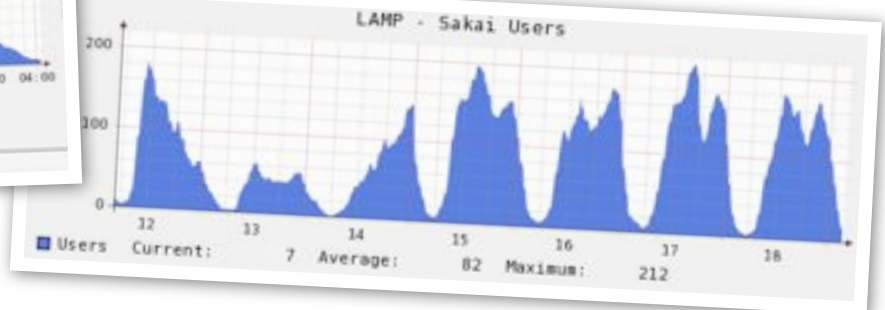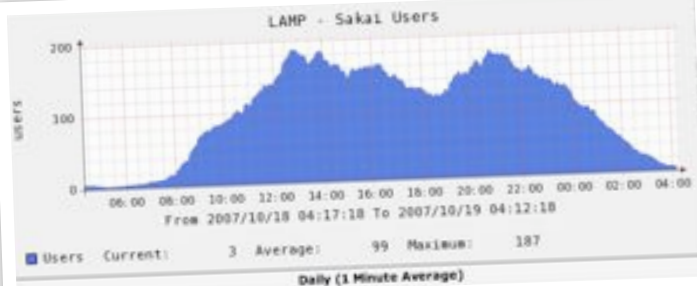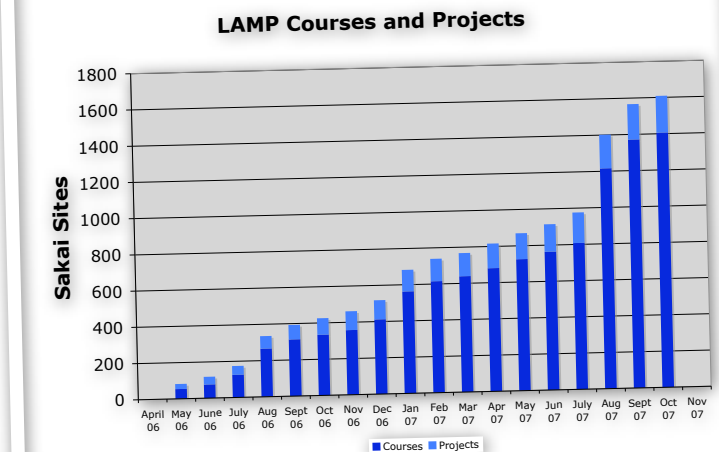
The number of users accounts is now over 10,000, making this instance of Sakai, certainly not the largest in the world, but larger than many.

LAMP Member Schools

The LAMP community now has over 1,600 sites (courses and projects) launched in its instance of Sakai.

LAMP User Accounts

LAMP Courses and Projects

Further, the daily usage of Sakai is substantial as the two graphs at the bottom of the page show. The number of users in the system during the day and even into the evening hours approaches 200 at any given moment. On a weekly basis, the pattern is repeated, with Saturday being the day of lowest usage.

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We're like a **bundle of sticks**. Individually a single stick is relatively weak. But collectively, a bundle of sticks is strong.

The bond that holds our bundle of sticks together is LAMP, our shared instance of Sakai.

— Martin Ramsay