What is the status of the JA-SIG uPortal Project? When can we expect uPortal 2? What features can we expect in 2? Where can we find information about uPortal? These are questions that members of the JASIG-PORTAL list have been asking. These questions also came up at the latest JA-SIG Conference held February 4,5,6 in Destin, Florida.

Several of the active uPortal developers (Bill Brooks, CalPoly; Russ Tokuyama, U of Hawaii; Paul Zablosky, UBC; Michael Barton, Princeton University; Ken Weiner, IBS; Bernie Durfee, IBS; John Laker, U of Delaware; Dirk Herr-Hoyman, U of Wisconsin-Madison) met at the JA-SIG Conference to discuss the questions and issues surrounding uPortal and started making plans to ensure that development of uPortal 2 continues and that the product is available for use by Summer 2001.

The group came to several conclusions regarding the uPortal project.

Communication

The uPortal developers have decided that several mailing lists will be created to segregate the postings into different categories.

jasig-portal	The general uPortal list open to all. This list is for users to post issues concerning support of new and existing uPortal implementations.
jasig-dev	This list will be limited to those actively developing for uPortal 2.
jasig-announce	This list will be used to post general JA-SIG issues and is not exclusive to the uPortal project. The uPortal Project Team will be responsible for posting regular updates of the uPortal project to this list.

In the future a separate mailing list for content developers may be useful as well.

uPortal Website

The table below is a list of the items expected to be placed on the uPortal website. The list also represents the support tasks that need to be maintained to keep the uPortal website current.

uPortal Website

Statement of Purpose	The "mission" of uPortal.
Documentation	All of Bill Brooks' and Michael Oltz' writings as well as other documents discussed in the Project Tasks list.
uPortal Project Status/News	Bullet items of status of the various tasks. This news should also be posted to the jasig-portal list and possibly the jasig-announce lists.
Project Task list	Responsible developer, status, tasks with no owner listed as "Help Needed" and status is "Open"
Mailing Lists	Description of the various lists, how to join, how to leave.
CVS Repository	Maintain and document the source branches. Provide link(s) for access to each branch
Release Builds	Developer Releases - build of the current source, not deployment ready. Intended for quick install of latest source for developers) User Release -stable build, intended for deployment by those not necessarily intending to develop anything more than content
Bugzilla	uPortal bug tracking system using Mozilla's tool.

Task Management

To deal with the issues of uPortal project management, several things were announced at the JA-SIG Conference. First was the announcement that the University of Delaware has received grant money from The Mellon Foundation for support of the uPortal effort. This will allow the project to obtain resources as needed for the continued progress of the uPortal project.

To that end, Jim Farmer of instructional media + magic, inc, has been contracted to provide oversight and guidance of the uPortal project.

The uPortal developers agreed that there was a need to assign a senior technical project lead.

Many times in the course of the development of uPortal, there have arisen technical issues that can be resolved in different ways. This has often led to "merry-go-round" discussions of ways to address a technical issue. The senior tech will act as arbiter in these discussions. The senior tech will designate the development path that the uPortal project will follow when there is an impasse among the uPortal developers.

This decision making process should not be seen as suggesting that "better" or "more ideal" technical solutions will be disregarded and abandoned. Rather that there are times when a technical decision cannot be reached among the uPortal developers and it will be the responsibility of the senior tech to "break the tie," or suggest a process to resolve an issue, in order to keep the uPortal project moving.

This led to Paul Zablosky's discussion of incorporating a taxonomy of design documents on the website. These included: White Papers, Requirements, RFC's, and Specifications. There will be some designs, which are assigned but not published, which will be catalogued as "Coming Soon". Designs that have been identified, but not assigned will be cataloged as "Needed".

This store of design documents should be looked at as a way to encourage developers who foster technical interests that vary from the stated direction of uPortal to independently work on those interests and present them to the uPortal developers for review and potential contribution to the uPortal project.

A senior technical project lead has not yet been named and will be an item for discussion at the next uPortal developers meeting the week of February 19th, at the University of Delaware.

Organization

Nothing has been more apparent to the potential uPortal developer than how difficult it is to find all the information and resources of the uPortal project. Due to the collaborative nature of the uPortal project, the various pieces of the project, cropped up at different institution websites as they contributed to the uPortal effort. As uPortal 2 development reaches critical mass, so does the need to collect all the pieces of the uPortal project into a single well-maintained site.

The uPortal developers who met at the JA-SIG spent a good deal of their time together discussing how to address organizing all the uPortal information. It was felt that the needs of two audiences had to be addressed now. The audiences are uPortal developers and uPortal users. As community involvement in uPortal grows, a third audience, content developers will have to be addressed as well.

uPortal developers need to be able to obtain the source code and relevant documentation including, How To Become a Developer, The uPortal Framework Developer Guide, The uPortal Channel Developer Guide. Developers also need to be able to find out what project tasks there are and who has accepted responsibility for a particular task, how to report bugs and submit fixes for review. If there are project tasks that do not have support, these tasks need to be listed and the potential developer needs to know how to volunteer to take responsibility of a task.

uPortal users are defined as those institutions that are interested in investigating uPortal as a tool to meet their web portal needs, but do not necessarily have the resources to commit to be a contributing uPortal developer. The needs of this audience will be different than that of the uPortal developer. uPortal users need to be able to obtain a stable, easily installable build of uPortal, and documentation including but not limited to, How To Setup uPortal, The Channel Developers Guide, and a uPortal Administration Guide.

Content developers will encompass uPortal developers and uPortal users as well as incorporate a new group of people. Those that will want to create a channel to meet a higher education need. These people will need the uPortal Channel Developer Guide and will benefit from the Channel Development Tool that is mentioned in the Project Tasks list that follows.

Project Tasks

The list below has defined by the uPortal developers as areas that need to have development support. This list is by no means all-inclusive. Several of the tasks may overlap in various degrees and it may be that a single developer will be working on related tasks at the same time.

During the next uPortal developers meeting scheduled for the week of Feb 19th, it is expected to be part of the agenda to solidify this list, post the list to the uPortal website, complete with the names of those who volunteer to be responsible for the task and the status of the task. Those tasks that have no support will be marked with a "Help Needed" and a status of "Open".

General	
Logging	Review/update uPortal Logger.
Exception Handling	Review/update all code in the uPortal framework verifying handling of all exceptions.
Caching	Implementation of caching for content with the potential for inconsistent availability. This would include RSS and HTML channels that render content from a site outside the control of the uPortal host site.
Usability	Testing usability of uPortal on a variety of clients (browsers, PDAs, cell phones), server platforms (Sun, Windows NT/2000, Linux) and servlet engines (WebLogic, Resin, WebSphere)
Performance	
Regression Testing	
Channel API (Contract)	Definition and refinement of the interface between the channel and the portal, the

	channel and its data sources, the channel and other channels. This would directly to the Channel Developer Documentation
Channel Development Tool	It is expected that as uPortal development continues, there will be a natural increase in focus on Channel development. To that end, the creation of a tool that facilitates Channel development without the need for a full-blown uPortal implementation is seen as a necessary part of the uPortal project.
Publish	
Personalization	
Database	
RDBM Management	Review/update RDBM management to allow higher level of platform ambiguity.
Database Design	Re-evaluate the current database implementation; propose modifications to the current implementation with the intent being an increased level of database platform ambiguity.
Connection Pools	
Security	
Authentication	
Authorization	
Single signon	Not feasible to implement in uPortal 2. Potential users of uPortal have asked about the ability of uPortal to support password aggregation as a way to achieve single signon.
Documentation	
How To Become a Developer	
Framework Guide	Conceptual overview of the uPortal framework. What are the components of the Framework? How do they interact? This includes but is not limited to the uPortal JavaDoc.
Channel Developer Guide	How to create a custom channel.
How To Setup uPortal	
UPortal FAQ	
RFC	Request for Comment. Design documents. Documents that open for discussion the current and future directions of technologies and features implemented within uPortal. An example of this is the UBC Database Design document. This is a

	document they produced to suggest a better database implementation for uPortal and the advantages of such an implementation.
Administration	
Delegated Administration	Design and implementation of process to provide the capability to delegate management of categorized content to one or more individuals
Instrumentation	
Monitoring	
Control	
Administration Utility	A tool, perhaps a channel, which facilitates management/maintenance of the portal.

Other Items to Consider

- Although it was not discussed, several potential users of uPortal have asked about the ability of uPortal to support aggregation as a way to achieve single signon. This suggestion has policy implications that may be inconsistent with the uPortal objectives.

- There was discussion about generating frequent builds. The latest build would not be considered "stable", but intended for developers. We need a clear definition of "stable release" and what that means to the various audiences (uPortal developers, uPortal users, and content developers).

uPortal Development Team Tasks
(With contributions from Paul Zablosky and others)
- Propose architectural solutions
- Discuss, debate, and refine architectures
- Select best architectural solutions, publish them
- Prepare designs based on architectural guidelines
- Publish designs
- Write code based on designs
- Post code
- Refine code and publish stable releases
- Monitor email lists
- Confer regularly (teleconferences, meetings)
- Report regularly to the wider list