OpenSocial

Open Social

CTSA Research Networking use of Open Social Gadgets

Background from Eric Meeks, UCSF

Eric presented his work at the 2011 VIVO Conference and has recently (February 2012) provided an update:

A little background. We've released numerous OpenSocial gadgets at UCSF (profiles.ucsf.edu) that are all based on the pre-RDF version of Profiles. A couple of other universities are currently planning to use our code to do the same, and once that happens we will be able to build and share gadgets with each other.
OpenSocial has been a great success for us but one issue that we did not like is that the machine readable OpenSocial definition of a Person doesn't contain any data relevant to a researcher. VIVO RDF, on the other hand, provides a wonderful machine readable definition of a researcher. The next version of Profiles will produce VIVO RDF so we wanted to try and find a way to make our gadgets use this RDF.
There are numerous ways to potentially do this, but a breakthrough for us was the discovery of an open source product developed at MIT called Babel. Babel will convert RDF/XML to JSON. Because gadgets are primarily developed in Javascript, this presented a great solution for our needs.

We did successfully merge Babel into our code base and created a demo gadget that works with VIVO RDF. We've tested it with RDF from our development Profiles server (which currently runs a pre-release version of Profiles that produces RDF), with RDF from Harvard Profiles, and with RDF from the Florida VIVO server.

The gadget itself is very simple (just for demo purposes) and can be found at http://dev-profiles.ucsf.edu/apps/DIRECTMatch.xml. Like most gadgets, it's just a collection of XML, HTML and Javascript.

Andy Bowline at Wake Forest has built a couple of gadgets that use keywords to find recent relevant publications from PubMed as well as targeted grant opportunities at grants.gov and we will convert these to use VIVO RDF as soon as the next version of Profiles comes out.
If VIVO ever becomes OpenSocial enabled, we could then share these gadgets with VIVO based installations as well. That's really where we want to see things go. A library of useful gadgets that can run at various institutions with various products that have standardized on VIVO RDF as well as OpenSocial.

We are putting out code in Open Source up on GitHub. It's currently
a modification of three products:
1. Apache Shindig (Java based web product) extended to work with the Profiles XML API and VIVO RDF
2. MIT Babel (java based web product) lightly modified to work with VIVO RDF
3. Profiles (Griffins .NET based product) modified to work with Shindig and Babel to make Profiles OpenSocial compliant.

Once the VIVO based version of Profiles is in production we will make further modifications to Shindig to reduce dependency on the Profiles XML API.