KINETICODEX™

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CONTACT US

Kineticode, Inc.

+1 415 972 2800

+1 503 331 5956 fax

www.kineticode.com

info@kineticode.com

IN THE NEWS

Kineticode at the Open Source Business Conference

Kineticode president and Bricolage lead developer David Wheeler will be participating in a panel discussion entitled "Meet the Community: Who They Are, How to Work with Them," at the Open Source Business Conference on Wednesday, April 6, 2005 at 3:30 pm. Wheeler will be joining Perl creator Larry Wall, CollabNet founder Brian Behlendorf, and "other influential members of the open source community, helping attendees to understand how different open source projects operate and how to contribute to them."

The Open Source Business Conference (www.osbc.com), taking place April 5-6 at the Westin St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco, touts open source as "more than a software development methodology—it is an astute business strategy. OSBC is the place for you to learn what's now, what's next, and what must be overcome to get there."

Kineticode Implements Bricolage-Powered Solution for Vibe/Spin

Kineticode has been working with Vibe/Spin Ventures, LLC, to implement a Bricolage-powered solution for the management of the SPIN and VIBE magazines Web sites. Kineticode won the deal through a competitive RFP process, and is now hard at work replacing the existing PostNuke system. The new Bricolage-powered www.spin.com should be launched by the time you read this, with www.vibe.com to follow.

Kineticode at OSCON

David Wheeler will be giving two presentations at this year's O'Reilly Open Source Convention in Portland, Oregon. The first talk, "What's New in the Bricolage Content Management System," will cover the new features in Bricolage 1.10, which will be released in time for the conference.

Wheeler's second talk, "How to Move Object-Relational Mapping Into the Database," will reveal some amazing new new techniques for creating "polymorphic database designs." This novel approach to object/relational mapping makes use of advanced database features to simplify application design and development while speeding performance.

Visit http://conferences.oreillynet.com/os2005/ for session information and conference registration. We'll see you there!

CASE STUDY: **RADIO FREE ASIA**

*Multilanguage Support and Strong Workflow Management Equal
a Win for a Major News Site*

R adio Free Asia (RFA, www.rfa.org), an organization funded by the U.S.
Congress with a mandate to broadcast exhaustive, unbiased news to
Asian countries that lack free media, also publishes a large number of
Asian news articles to its Web site. The busy publishing schedule—which
includes 100 new stories a day, plus approximately 60 supporting audio files
derived from radio broadcasts—had long been supported by a custom-built
site management application. But when RFA realized that it needed a new
site design—in part to meet the accessibility requirements of Section 508 of
the US Rehabilitation Act (www.section508.gov)—the existing solution could
not easily be adapted, since it was hard-coded for the old site design.

Given RFA's mandate, finding a suitable replacement proved to be a challenge,
according to RFA's Director of Program Delivery, Hal Creech. "We needed a
content management solution that would allow us to manage a single site
that was, functionally, divided into 10 separate sections, each using a
different language and frequently a different character set," said Creech.
"Not only that, it had to account for both Unicode-based and non-Unicode
based scripts." With over 150,000 existing documents to manage, RFA had
aggressive scalability requirements, as well.

Finding a content management system that met all of its criteria proved a
challenge for RFA. "We sent RFPs to many companies that we learned of
either through trade magazines or Internet searches," said Creech.
"Bricolage was the only CMS we found that had the scalability, character set
support, competitive pricing, and combination of Linux, Perl, and Mason
support that we needed. The impressive list of Kineticode customers and
the positive reviews in trade magazines helped seal our decision to select
Kineticode to provide us with a Bricolage content management solution."

Kineticode provided end-to-end consulting for the RFA content management
project. An initial needs analysis led to a detailed technical specification for
the project, outlining the structure of each type of document on the site, as
well as planning for the XHTML and RSS templates to render its content.
Kineticode then implemented the complete solution, building the Bricolage
server, creating the document models, and writing the templates to format
content for output. Thanks to the semantic XHTML inherent in the design of
the new site, the templates were able to be completely uniform across the
RFA language services—including Uyghur, a language with a right-to-left
text direction.

Business Challenge

Implement an expandable,
customizable content management
solution that enables dozens of users
with different workflow and approval
processes to manage and publish a
single site in 10 different languages.

Solution

A Bricolage-powered content
management implementation
by Kineticode, backed by a
comprehensive needs analysis and
specification of custom document
models, and delivered with a solid
set of Mason formatting templates
that generate semantic XHTML.

Kineticode also designed the Bricolage workflow processes for RFA, including the development of new features to ease the management of a multilingual user community. These included user preferences, so that individual users could elect to input content in character encodings other than Unicode, as well as cascading style sheets for each language used by RFA. These sponsored improvements were contributed back to the Bricolage project so that the entire community of Bricolage users could benefit, as well as to simplify upgrades to the RFA Bricolage server.

"We needed a content management solution that would allow us to manage a single site that was, functionally, divided into 10 separate sections, each using a different language and frequently a different character set."

As a result of Kineticode's thorough planning and implementation, the launch of the new, Bricolage-powered Web site has been a solid success for RFA. RFA Webmaster Joshua Edelstein highlighted Bricolage's scalability and workflow processes. "The Bricolage workflow support has enabled us to add more professional review of content," said Edelstein. "The flexible and powerful templating allows for easier design modifications and the preview functionality prevents the publication of mistakes to the main site. This power enabled us to really take advantage of the workflow features, allowing more people to contribute content to the site without losing control over editorial or interface integrity."

Creech and Edelstein agreed that Kineticode's work was crucial to the success of the RFA Bricolage project. "One of the impressive things about Kineticode is that it's a small company with big customers," said Edelstein. "This fact is not only indicative of the ease of use of the software, but also the ease of interaction with the company."

The project has been a great success for RFA, and the organization plans to continue to collaborate with Kineticode to improve its site and add new features in the years to come.

Visit www.kineticode.com to read other case studies.

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BENEFITS

- Comprehensive support for multiple languages and character sets
- Ability to output semantic XHTML and RSS
- Uploading of media files through the CMS browser interface
- Complete workflow and permissions allow more professional review and more persons to contribute content
- Flexible templating for easier modification of page display
- Versioning system makes tracking and/or reverting to old versions of content easier
- Logging system allows people to see who made what changes to content, configuration, or preferences
- Scalability for management of over 150,000 documents

BRICOLEUR: **WHY XHTML/CSS**

by David Wheeler

Q: I've been hearing a lot about Web standards. Can it benefit me to use semantic XHTML and cascading style sheets with Bricolage?

A: You bet. We all remember the necessity of creating table-driven layouts to get things to look just the way we wanted in HTML back in 1999. Fortunately, that party's over. All of today's browsers have excellent support for strict XHTML 1.0 and XHTML 1.1 plus cascading style sheets—two of the cornerstones of Web standards. This means that your XHTML templates can use what's commonly called "semantic XHTML."

Semantic XHTML uses only the XHTML tags that mark the structure and meaning of the content it represents. For example, rather than embedding paragraphs in the second column of an embedded table, you can just use the standard `<p></p>` tags, and then use CSS to style and place their contents appropriately.

From the point of view of Bricolage, the use of semantic XHTML in your templates has a number of advantages, including:

- Much cleaner template code, with less HTML clutter, making templates far easier to maintain.

- Reduced need for changing templates and republishing documents, because you can often just tweak your style sheets to transform presentation of your site.

- Greater reuse of subelements, because even if they look different in different contexts, thanks to the power of CSS, the XHTML need not be different.

For more information on the use of Web standards for improved browser support, accessibility, and reduced bandwidth consumption, I highly recommend "Designing with Web Standards," by Jeffrey Zeldman; www.zeldman.com/dwws/).

To submit questions for future Bricoleur columns, email us at bricoleur@kineticode.com.

"Bricolage is quite possibly the most capable enterprise-class open-source application available. The Web content management application features excellent administration capabilities, and it is highly extensible and capable of managing even the biggest and most complex Web sites. As an open-source product, Bricolage is free, and companies can now purchase support and development services from Kineticode."

—Jim Rapoza, *eWEEK*

2.0 UPDATE: **WHAT'S TO COME**

In the last few months, we've been hard at work developing the foundational API for Bricolage 2.0. Since this is a ground-up rewrite, we've been taking the time to really get the API right. At this point, we have the metadata architecture in place, and have developed the data store API to support SQLite 3.x and PostgreSQL 7.5 and later. The data store API is a real winner in the design of Bricolage 2.0, not only because of the multi-database support, but also because it allows far more sophisticated searches for objects in Bricolage, with support for "AND" and "OR" searches, as well as regular expressions.

In the coming months, we'll be creating the first business classes and starting work on the new user interface. The goal is to have a completely functional application that a user can log in to, search for user records, and can change user names, passwords, and other user data. We'll then incrementally build on top of this foundation, using the same foundational tools, until all features have been implemented.

BRICOLAGE HACKS: **IMPORT CONTRIBUTORS**

by David Wheeler

One of the most requested features for the Bricolage SOAP server has been support for importing and exporting contributors. Seeing as it hasn't happened yet, we contributed a nice hack sponsored by the RAND Corporation to solve the immediate problem.

Bricolage 1.8.3 and later comes with a new contrib script, `bric_import_contribs`. For input, it expects a tab-delimited file with a list of contributors, one on each line. The fields for each contributor include prefix, first name, middle name, last name, and suffix. Contact fields are supported in additional columns via the `–contact-field` option, and custom field values are supported in additional columns via the `–custom-field` option.

You can load only one type of contributor at a time with `bric_import_contribs`. In principal, this isn't a problem, because different types of contributors can be listed in different files.

Take, for example, a file named *writers.tab* that contains a list of all of the writers on your site. The parts of each contributor's name take up the first five columns, the primary email address is in the sixth column, the business phone number is in the seventh, and the bio is in the eighth. With this file, you can import all of the contributors like this:

```
% bric_import_contribs\
–username rufus\
–password sekrit\
–contrib-type Writer\
–contact-field 'Primary Email'\
–contact-field 'Business Phone'\
–custom-field Bio\
writers.tab
Added Mark Twain
Added Ben Franklin
Added Bill Clinton
```

As you can see, you can specify multiple contacts by using the `–contact-field` option multiple times. The same is true of the `–custom-field` option. Just be sure to always put contacts into columns *before* any custom field values. Also, this script uses the Bricolage API directly, so you'll need to make sure that you run it on a system that has the complete Bricolage API installed. You'll also need to run it as the Bricolage system user so that it can access the temporary files created by the Bricolage server itself.

ABOUT KINETICODE

Founded in 2001 by Bricolage lead developer and maintainer David Wheeler, Kineticode is the leading provider of services for the Bricolage content management system. Our deep understanding of Bricolage and extensive experience with the content management needs of content-heavy organizations in the public and private sectors has enabled us to develop comprehensive services that include planning, implementation, and development offerings, as well as training and technical support.

OUR SERVICES

- Needs Analysis & Specification
- Installation & Configuration
- Template Development
- Migration Services
- On-Site Training
- Custom Development
- Project Management
- Templating Support
- Technical Support