

ALT workshop proposal

Semantic Technologies in Education – exploring the practitioners' perspective

Abstract

This workshop will collect and share insights into current understandings and future applications of semantic technologies in education.

This workshop will :

- augment the findings of a recent JISC survey on semantic technologies in education;
- calibrate the findings against the experience and understandings of members of the ALT community;
- use feedback to further develop the survey's technology roadmap.

JISC commissioned an investigation into semantic technologies in learning and teaching (SemTech) due for completion early in 2009¹. The SemTech Project Website² summarises information about semantic technologies in education and contains an analysis of the technologies and applications thus far identified.

Following a brief overview of our investigation of semantic technologies in education the workshop will consist of structured group discussions from a selected perspective (educational, technical and organisational).

The workshop structure will be fine-tuned to match the participants, who will work in groups of eight using flip charts to produce a poster for a two-minute poster pitch. A second peer review group activity will comment on each poster. A plenary session will identify next steps

Each participant in the workshop will receive a copy of the SemTech report, plus detailed activity guidance notes which they can also take away and use in their own institution. Participants will use the workshop to:

1. establish a base level of awareness of current developments in semantic technologies and the way in which they can be used in education
2. establish a basic understanding of current range and use of semantic technologies in education, as identified by the SemTech study
3. Identify and share knowledge of semantic technologies in UK education.
4. comment on and add to findings in the JISC report on Semantic Technologies in Education
5. Identify colleagues at other institutions who share their interest in semantic technologies in education
6. Discuss and agree future collaborations to further their interest in semantic technologies in education

¹ <http://jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/projects/semanticttechnologies.aspx>

² <http://www.semtech.ecs.soton.ac.uk/overview/index.php>

A summary record of the discussion will be available to participants after the event, and will be subsequently published electronically, via the SemTech wiki and a workshop blog-post

Basic Structure – total 90 minutes

<p>1. Welcome and Overview of method (workshop team) Individual introduction plus explanation helping participants understand the role of their contribution.</p>	<p>10 minutes</p>
<p>2. Introductions - Tables amongst themselves (7 mins) 3. Tables will each have been labelled with clear flag to encourage workable set formation (see activity 5 below)</p>	<p>5 minutes</p>
<p>4. Scoping of the proposed activities and tasks (Su White) familiarising participants with the proposed structure of the workshop).</p>	<p>5 minutes</p>
<p>5. Findings thus far/Context Hugh Davis, Sheila MacNeill, Thanassis Tiropanis,</p>	<p>10 minutes</p>
<p>6. Small group activities (table groups of eight participants) <u>Overall Question:</u> What is our understanding of the actual and potential role of semantic technologies in education? Note: Guest discussants will be allocated to help lead table discussions. These additional contributors, beyond the workshop team, are not yet formally identified they will be identified/invited through a call for participation Groups will each be tasked with producing a flipchart poster summarising their discussion/finding. After the discussion there will be a two minute poster pitch from each group These contributions will reflect the expertise and interests of the participants and are likely to range across the spectrum of educationally led to technically led. Groups will be encouraged/directed to form around like interest areas exact size and number of groups will depend on number of participants and the range of interests, but groups will be table sets of ~eight. Max nine groups groups can choose to select one of the following focus areas from three predominant perspectives of educational, technical or organisational:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Exploratory:</u> Identifying potential benefits accrued from the introduction of semantic technologies in their teaching/institution; • <u>Application oriented:</u> Identifying additional technologies and applications for the survey; • <u>Technically Led:</u> Discussing ways of augmenting or enhancing existing applications; • <u>Socio-Technical:</u> Identifying and discussing use cases (e.g. semantic technologies for distance education; the international student; the work place learner; • <u>Organisation Challenges:</u> Identifying and discussing 	<p>15 minutes</p>

<p>barriers and drivers to greater use of semantic technologies in educational activities.</p> <p>Groups produce flipchart poster summarising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their perspective /discussion • Any proposed next steps/action plan 	
<p>7. Small Group feedback via Poster Pitch</p> <p>Two minutes per group - Groups to display FlipCharts on wall ready for peer review.</p>	20 minutes
<p>8. Comment/feedback Round – Peer Review using post it notes for annotations (each group will be allocated another group’s poster to read/discuss and review)</p>	10 minutes
<p>9. Plenary feedback/discussion Next Steps and Action Plan (Su White)</p>	15 minutes

Facilitating the workshop and ensuring success

An experienced educational developer who has run many events of this type on previous occasions is leading the session facilitation.

The workshop will be advertised to the wider learning and teaching community before the ALT-C2009 conference via a range of media including direct email, the ALT-C CrowdVine, Twitter, Blogs, the SemTech Blog and personal blogs of the workshop leaders. This advertising will also be used to identify any players who have emerged as active contributors since the publication of the SemTech report, or any players who are particularly keen to participate in this area.

It is proposed that the participants will work in small groups during the discussion phase using Flipcharts and pens to capture their contributions. During the annotation phase, they will use post-it notes to add comments and observations of the findings of the other groups. We will initially capture high quality photographic images of the flip charts (before and after annotation).

It may be that this information is also reprocessed into alternative digital formats if that is considered to be particularly helpful/constructive.

Throughout the workshop a pair of colleagues will act as rapporteurs for the whole process, capturing the discussions and outputs for publication on the SemTech wiki (<http://wiki.semtech.ecs.soton.ac.uk>) and via an ALT-C09 blog posting.

Information will be captured as images of the outputs as well as notes of the discussions with extensive linking to referred information/resources.