

Cluug at the SemTech2010, news from the Semantic Industry

Submitted by Leo Sauermann on Thu, 07/01/2010 - 15:03 in

(<http://www.flickr.com/photos/leopard/4737502514/>) **What has changed about Semantic Technologies in the last year? Where are we now?** Last week we were at [SemTech2010](http://semtech2010.semanticuniverse.com/) (<http://semtech2010.semanticuniverse.com/>) presenting [Cluug](http://www.cluug.com) (<http://www.cluug.com>) and [Organik](http://www.organik-project.eu) (<http://www.organik-project.eu>) and also learning what other companies are doing with Semantic Technologies. Some things I (Leo Sauermann) noticed during the conference:



- We have **really Cool UIs** now based on [Excel](http://www.cambridgesemantics.com/products/anzo_for_excel) (http://www.cambridgesemantics.com/products/anzo_for_excel) (a close phonetic match to [Cool URIs](http://www.w3.org/TR/cooluris/) (<http://www.w3.org/TR/cooluris/>) which we had before already). **This is a breakthrough.** Why? Because the godfathers of Artificial Intelligence predicted that an Excel-Like interface is going to be the killer app, for example read this [2005 article by Jean Rohmer](http://www.artificialmemory.net/doc/AMC_20061124_075831_21_Rohmer_Semanticdesktop_final.pdf) (http://www.artificialmemory.net/doc/AMC_20061124_075831_21_Rohmer_Semanticdesktop_final.pdf) where he says exactly this (he was the first prolog guy in france, leading Bull's AI department for many years). Lee Feigenbaum's 5 minute pitch bout Anzo's Excel plugin was breathtaking - at least for me.
- It took **10 years of pitching by Tim Berners Lee and the SemWeb posse to convince people that putting data on the web is a good idea.** It was worth it. [Best Buy](http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/w3c_pleased_with_semantic_web_adoption.php) ([story on readwriteweb](http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/w3c_pleased_with_semantic_web_adoption.php)) (http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/w3c_pleased_with_semantic_web_adoption.php) and [Facebook](http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/w3c_pleased_with_semantic_web_adoption.php) ([story on readwriteweb](http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/w3c_pleased_with_semantic_web_adoption.php)) (http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/w3c_pleased_with_semantic_web_adoption.php) are using RDFa now, which is considered a breakthrough.
- New Buzzwords appear now all the time, diluting the brand and standards already created. **I hate new Buzzwords and broken Standards.** I love the word "RDF" because it is a set of great standards that work great together: SPARQL, RDFS, RDFa, RDF/XML, TRIG - its all one data format. Great. The [W3C in the Semantic Web Education and Outreach group](http://www.w3.org/2001/sw/sweo/public/CommunityProjects.html) (<http://www.w3.org/2001/sw/sweo/public/CommunityProjects.html>) did intentionally help [Linking Open Data](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linked_Data) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Linked_Data) in marketing and publicity because it is well aligned with the standards and in general a great project (by people we all respect a lot, like Chris Bizer and Richard Cyganiak). I would not consider it random that Tim did shout "**Raw Data Now**" in his famous TED talk (http://www.ted.com/talks/tim_berniers_lee_on_the_next_web.html). What I **hate is a word like "Open Graph Protocol"** (<http://developers.facebook.com/docs/opengraph>) by Facebook. First of all, its not a **protocol** but a metadata markup. So the term is wrong. Second, they did break with RDFa best practices of other RDFa publishers. That is a high-nosed attitude. It means, the data you published already is useless for facebook and you have to markup everything twice - once for facebook, once for standard and community-compliant (like, dublin core) clients. If other companies follow, this is going to be a standards war. In their talk, they had the excuse that "this is easier for developers", but I oppose this. ATOM feeds are also not super-easy to do, and still people manage to write them. You just need to give them a template to copy-paste from. As facebook also gives a copy-paste template, they could have also given a best-practice compliant one.
- About buzzwords, I am neutral on "**Personal Data Locker**" (<http://thepowerofpull.com/pull/foundations/personal-data-locker>). Its a buzzword by David Siegel which he **pushes** in his book "**Pull**" (<http://thepowerofpull.com/pull/blog>) (below a picture).

(<http://www.flickr.com/photos/leopard/4736808389/>) Ok, you need to buy [David Siegel's](http://www.flickr.com/photos/leopard/4736808389/) book "**Pull - The power of the semantic web to transform your business**" (<http://thepowerofpull.com/pull/foundations/personal-data-locker>)! **Its the marketing brochure of the semantic web.** It contains some examples and good ideas. To the right is a picture of me "pulling" a copy away from David Siegel. Ha! I have a Pull on the book, it mentions our great project [NEPOMUK](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NEPOMUK_%28framework%29) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NEPOMUK_%28framework%29) on page 177! Sadly, David missed the point that this is the biggest and largest in-daily-use Semantic Web deployment so far. We (that is, Sebastian Trüg from [Mandriva](http://www.mandriva.com/) (<http://www.mandriva.com/>)) integrated [Virtuoso](http://virtuoso.openlinksw.com/) (<http://virtuoso.openlinksw.com/>) to the KDE desktop and there are now thousands of these neat triplestores on desktops, that is, altogether, many more triples than in LOD. There is something missing - what he calls "**personal ontology**" is actually standardized as "**Personal Information Model PIMO**" (<http://www.semanticdesktop.org/ontologies/pimo/>) also part of that operating system - and is also part of [Cluug.com](http://www.cluug.com) (<http://www.cluug.com>). So much for missing what has been around since 2006 and was deployed in a major operating system... but of course, our fault, we developers/scientists don't use our time for marketing but for delivering... which is probably because us Europeans have a different genome that USA people when it comes to marketing. I need an american in my company.



I love the word "Personal Data Locker" because it exactly reflects what I have invented in 2003 and been implementing in the Semantic Desktop standards and which we later have been rolling out at nepomuk.kde.org (<http://nepomuk.kde.org>) since 2008 to an audience of millions of KDE people. Technically, the only difference from the Social Semantic Desktop to

David's idea is that we need a server counterpart, but that is what we are building with [Cluug.com](http://www.Cluug.com) (<http://www.Cluug.com>) and some open source people also had that idea before (we called it the "Gnowsis server" all the time internally at DFKI). I hate the word **"Personal Data Locker"** because its a buzzword. I also hate the sentence **"the personal data locker is a new concept by David Siegel"**. The right phrase in my stubbornly scientific ear would be **"An E-Memory or Memex or Social Semantic Desktop is a concept that has been around since 1945 and the concept Personal Data Locker by David Siegel adapts it to contemporary people"**. In my eyes, there is no invention here. Of course, that is nitpicking by me who has been talking about it since 2002 and me being envy of not giving a keynote on SemTech :-). Of course, it may be that the word fades away like Memex/Xanadu did... and if you want to try out what it could mean, [Cluug.com](http://www.cluug.com) (<http://www.cluug.com>) will be the first commercial personal data locker, once we are beyond alpha and beta stages.

I finally met Michael Bergman with whom I have been exchanging mails since sometime like 2006.

(<http://www.flickr.com/photos/leobard/4736876539/>)



So in general I love the industry uptake of the Semantic Web, I personally hate the buzzwording of marketing. Well, to put it ironically there is some marketing *pull-s**** available now which really helps us to explain the good working RDF and Semantic Web parts to the normal people from the street! Which is good. Buy the [PULL book](http://thepowerofpull.com/pull/foundations/personal-data-locker) (<http://thepowerofpull.com/pull/foundations/personal-data-locker>) and give it away, dear readers.

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