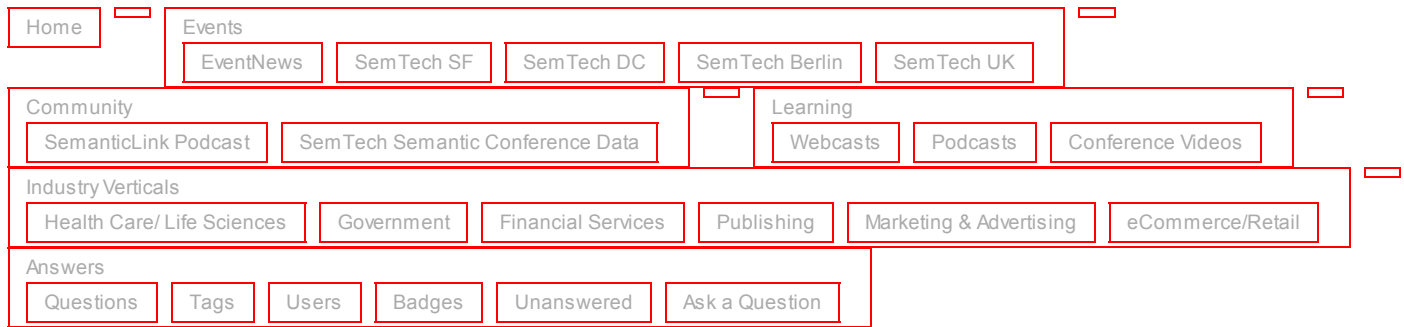




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Refinder Gives Project Team Collaboration A Boost

By Jennifer Zaino on November 30, 2011 1:17 PM



This fall Gnowsis' project team collaboration and communications tool [Refinder](#) took second prize in Elsevier's Apps for Science competition (see story [here](#)). Refinder has its roots in the [NEPOMUK](#) (Networked Environment for Personalized, Ontology-based

Management of Unified Knowledge) social semantic desktop project that concluded as a European research project in 2008, but continues through the efforts of Sebastian Trüg who's trying to continue additional development through donor contributions (see story [here](#)).

There's more coming from Refinder, which lets project team members collect information from different desktop and online applications in one place (or collection, in its terminology), filter the data, find relevant information, and share their knowledge.

It understands the information collected in relation to the things it talks about, so that you can seamlessly link to affiliated information and get recommendations that make sense in context. Next year it will begin charging for its service, which has been in beta. The production version is expected to add features such as the ability to bundle multiple client accounts into one area for individuals collaborating across teams in the enterprise, and improved filtering and automatic tagging to make it easier to categorize and discover information.

"We extended the vision that was based on the semantic desktop," says Leo Sauermann, founder and CEO, of the solution. "We have actually a lot of overlap between the social semantic desktop and Refinder." From the practical side, he says, data is imported and exported as RDF. And the social semantic desktop ontologies of Nepomuk remain in place (and Gnowsis continues to collaborate on their maintenance as a SourceForge project), as does the KDE implementation of core concepts.

Incarnated as enterprise social software with semantic underpinnings, Refinder aims at enabling people to more easily exchange information and communicate in order to better do

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their jobs. To that end, it has built connectors to software such as Outlook, so that users can click on elements to import data into their Refinder collections and bring Refinder functions to those applications' user interfaces so that they can directly access information as part of their workflows. Other integration enhancements, in addition to the Sciverse connector for which it was awarded the Elsevier prize, include connectors for delicious, browsers including Chrome, Internet Explorer and Firefox, and File Explorer for Windows.

On the roadmap is Sharepoint integration and it's also experimenting on integrations with Twitter, Evernote, Facebook, Google Docs and Gmail. "In the enterprise market the connectors are a big thing," says Sauermann. So Refinder hopes to deepen its integration with Elsevier and make the Outlook integration more productive, as well. It has been asked to integrate with Microsoft Active directory to more easily sign up people, for instance.

The big semantic trick, he says, is around making relations among the data. As an example, say a colleague adds to a collection a blog post about goals when employing enterprise 2.0 technologies, which gets tagged. Then, "this blog post is linked to other related information, to topics, to people, to web sites, to events," he explains. "For everything you add to the system, we give recommendations; we can recommend stuff for collections." It also can make available some customizations it's built to connect to semantic sources such as DBpedia, so that if you look at anything on the web and there's a DBpedia topic related to it, then it should be recommended as a topic.

There's a Facebook-look and feel to the system, and that's by intention, Sauermann says. "If a semantic web system looks like Facebook, that's a good start. But it goes beyond that because you can filter and search the information."

Sauermann says Refinder is open to partnerships with others in the semantic web community. "It would be nice to have scrapers that get RDF out of a web site or parse microformat or schema.org data," he says, as an example. "We're very open for collaboration with semantic technology providers."

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