Refinements to Lesson Builder User Interface

Lesson Builder represents a very well thought out and sorely needed way to structure activity for instructional purposes and provide a bridge between the tool silos. What follows is a proposal to work on essentially the surface stack of the tool to polish the inevitable rough edges of über tool that is so broad in scope.

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General Notes

Need to make LB UI look more like the rest of the environment. This needs to be done in a way that will cause a minimum of disruption to current LB-using institutions as well as make it as easy as possible to new adopters. This has several parts:

1. Some of the LB UI idioms/components have a Sakai correlate - use the Sakai one instead for consistency when makes sense. An example: a tabular data table.
2. Some of the components that are unique to LB can be adjusted so that there is a family resemblance to components in Sakai that are roughly analogical.

Additionally – although it looks like the tool has been consciously designed with accessibility in mind – do a second review (with actual AT users) and editing where necessary.

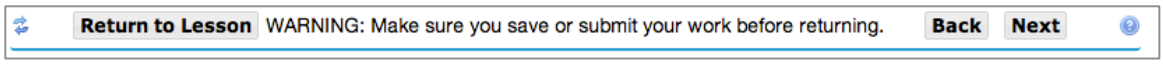
Specifics

Top Navigation

Top bar in LB renders like the default Sakai top bar. This is tricky to change because it lives in the LB tool iframe. We need to explore ways in which this component obeys the same rendering rules as the same thing in the portal. This will allow LB's top bar to follow the institutional look. See below as it looks in CTools. CTools uses different colors, fonts and icons for this component.

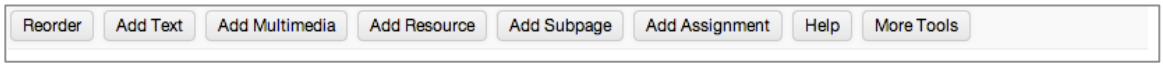
Top Navigation Buttons

Top bar buttons – would like to explore some possible renderings that will be a bit more neutral – or allow for better fit with the institutional skin.



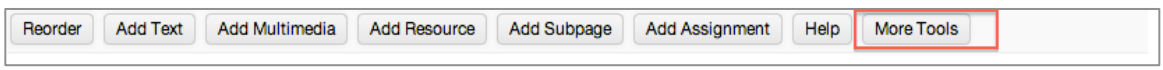
Toolbar

Order of buttons on tool is unclear ("Reorder", "Add Text", "Add Multimedia", "Add Resource", "Add Subpage", "Add Assignment", "Help", "More Tools") – would like to explore some alternatives that may make this list more parse-able.



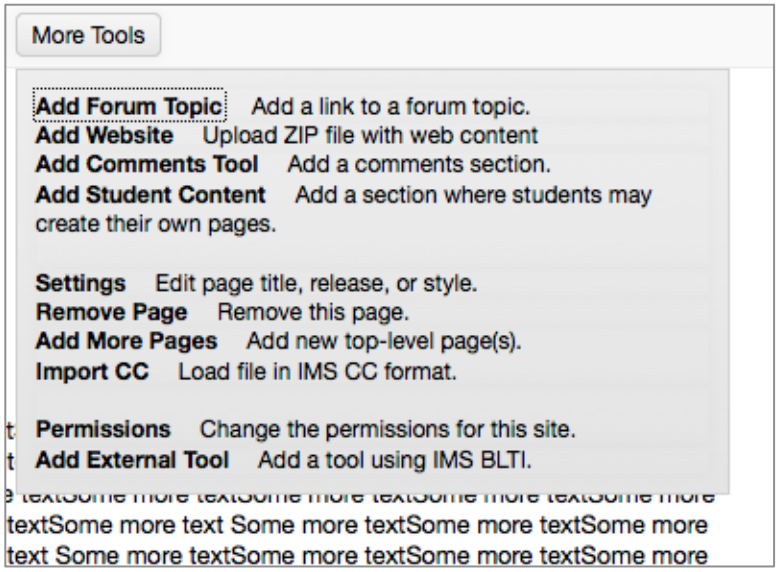
"More Tools" button

should signal that it opens a menu. Needs a differentiator vis a vis the other buttons – something as simple as a Unicode downward pointing triangle to flag that it is a menu control?

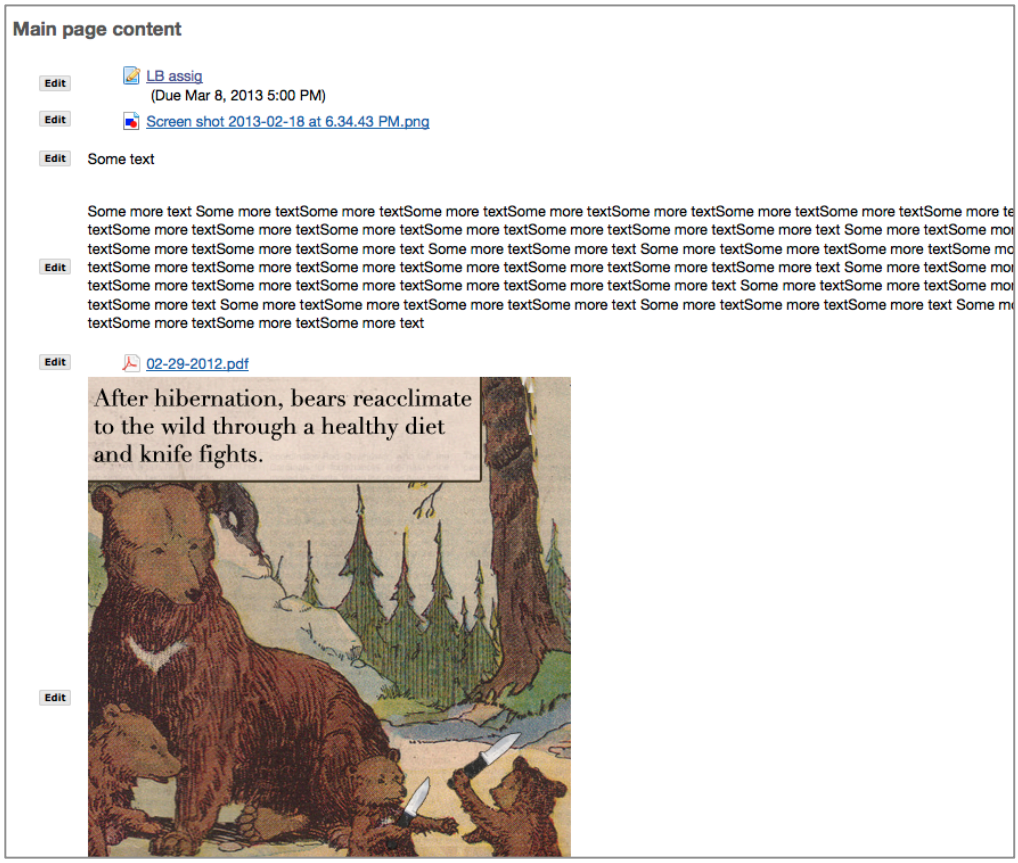


More Tools menu

1. Links could use more affordance – perhaps default to the skin link renderings?
2. The v and h spacing and typography could be tweaked for readability, parsing.
3. The implicit columns (action/description) could be made explicit. The grouping into three was probably the result of a careful study, but maybe it is worth revisiting (another card sorting exercise?).
4. The menu container may have correlates elsewhere. Would like to explore the possibility of using the same rendering.



Content Display



Making sense of the page

Following applies to both edit and read modes of the content display.

Would need to explore ways to enhance the ease of parsing the different parts that may compose a page.

- Vertical and horizontal spacing adjustments could be tweaked
- Maybe even consider subtle borders or separators.
- Explore also the possibility of enhancing the semantics of the markup if needed.
- Proof against long unbroken strings (like urls) that will break the layout.
- Activity icons (assignments, forums, correspond to standard Sakai icons for those tools as they are rendered in the portal.
    - But an institution may choose to use different icons in the portal skin so we will have a mismatch. This is unlikely but not impossible.
    - The icons may profit from being larger (so that user at a glance can tell what a given page is all about
    - Both points above would suggest exploring the possibility of more generic, larger icons.

- Finally – explore the possibility of including a TOC if the page complexity/richness crosses a specific threshold. This could be done so that the TOC is unobtrusive or only visible on demand. Constructing the TOC could be done client-side, for which the page element semantics may need to be enriched.

Element edit controls

While in edit mode the following may be considered:

The Edit control and the Edit target could be more closely aligned. Instead of centering the control place midway of the element, align it with its top. We may also want to consider several strategies to background the control till the user demonstrates an intention to edit. This will allow the page to be both an editing locale and a preview of the page as it will appear to users. Some possibilities:

- Dull the control till the row is hovered over.
- Move the control elsewhere, perhaps position it inside the element itself and reveal or foreground on hover. Like Jira description or Test Plan text blocks, for example.
- Explore changing the control rendering to make more consonant to similar Sakai controls

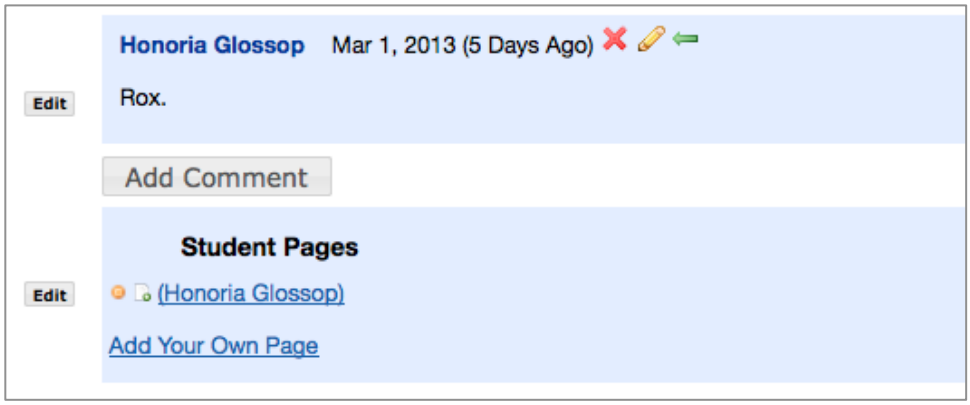
Element type distinction

Should we distinguish on edit and read modes the different types of elements based on their function? Again – this is necessary to be able to tell at a glance what a page is about: each element block should respond to the questions "What is this? What am I required to do about it?" in a very clear and lightweight fashion. The following broad categories are apparent:

1. Content to consume
    a. Inline (text/html blocks)
    b. External (downloads)
2. Activity to perform that is external to the tool (I will be leaving the tool to do so): assignments, forum activity, etc.
3. Activity to perform that is integral to the tool via tool widgets (comments, student pages, etc.)

Not sure how valid the distinction between 2 and 3 is. In any case the proposal is to explore the possibility of adding subtle flags that would train the user to distinguish between them.

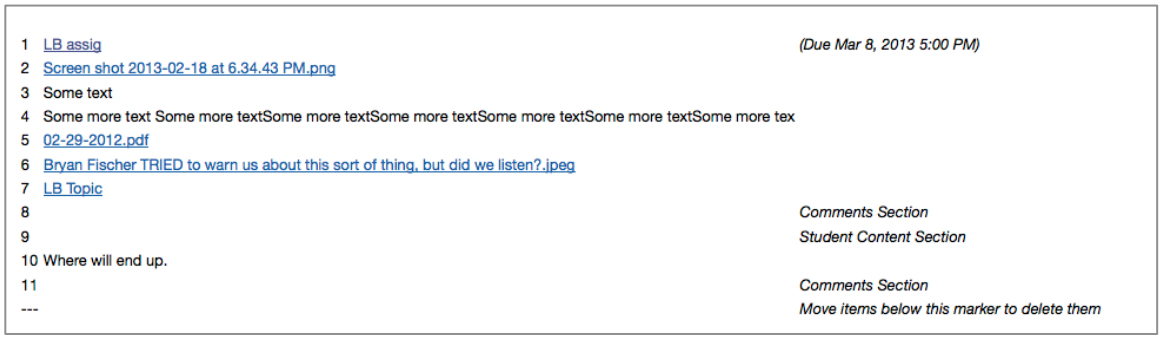
Comment and student page widget display



Widget container

1. There are container correlates in the Sakai skin scope that would make the containers fit better (palette, whitespace, shape) and respond to tool skins.
2. The function of the two containers is could be made more explicit via iconization, titling perhaps
3. Conversely the two containers could also profit from being made more similar in certain aspects
    a. entry title typography, placement
    b. formatting and placement of the “Add Comment / Add Your Own Page” control
4. Affordance for Icons for Comment (Delete, Edit, Respond) could he heightened
5. Icons for Student pages (New, New Content) could be clearer

Reorderer



1. Would be great to decorate elements with the same flags that differentiate them in the page view so that the user can at a glance can tell that this is dehydrated view of the later and what each element is in essence (a bit of inline content, a link to a file, an assignment, a block of comments, etc).

2. Purpose of the numbers is unclear – suppose they are an indication of the stage of the elements prior to being rearranged?
3. Imagine purpose of the two columns is to provide due dates where meaningful to help user avoid orders that are contradictory. If this is the case we should move the “Comments Section” and “Student Content Section” to the first column?
4. Some whitespacing changes (coordinated with needs of 1 above) would make the list easier to parse and the Fluid reorderer easier to operate (more grabbable areas, droppier drop targets)
5. Reconfigure "Move items below this marker to delete them" to make easier to work with and more apparent (a drop target with a trashcan icon?)
6. Do not fully understand "Add items from another page" - but seems like a menu item or at least something that should be more closely associated with the list itself, is a bit lost there at the bottom, if understood correctly?

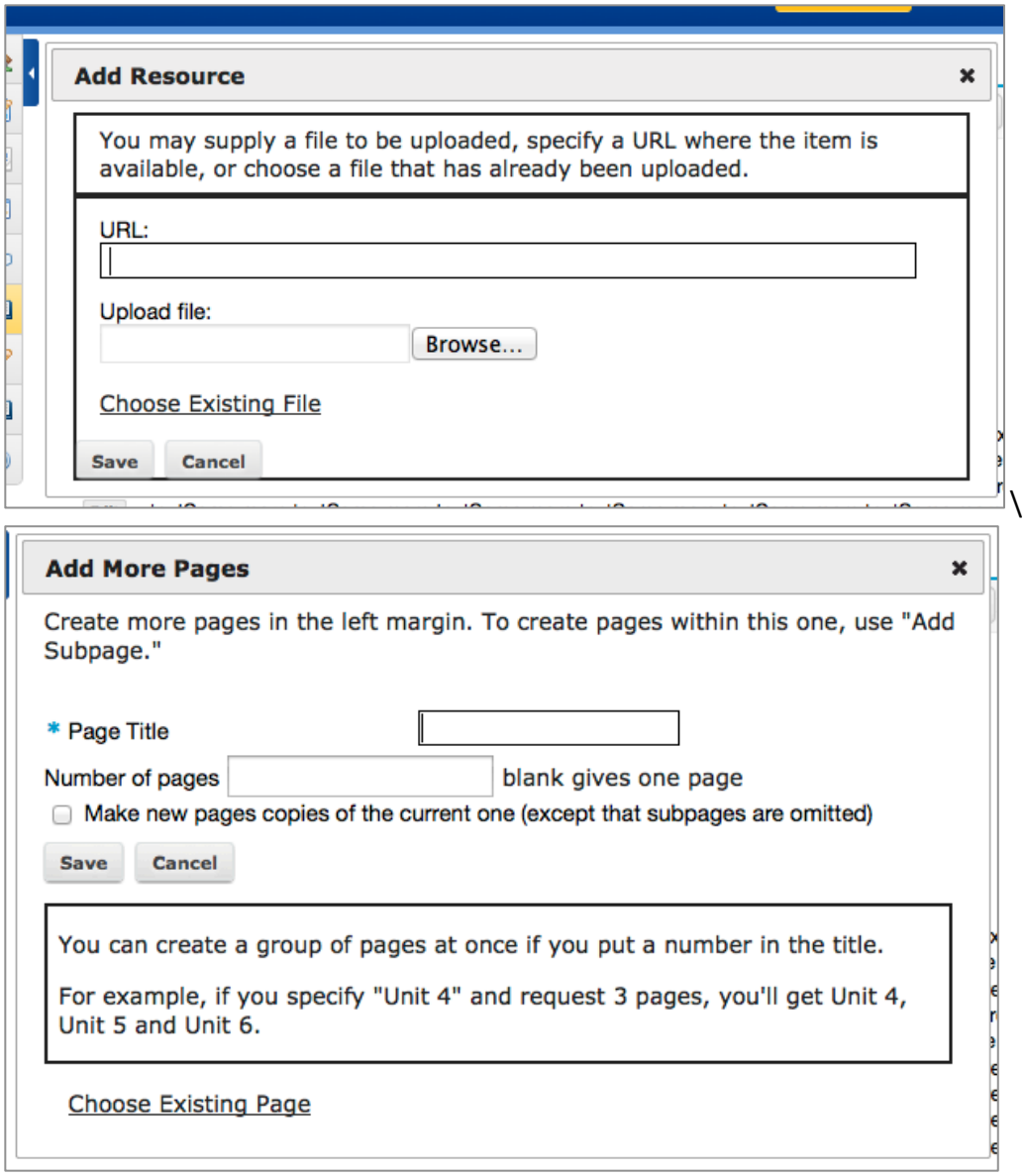
Adding items

Add text

Making this a modal interaction would be best – but otherwise a bit of sakaification would be good – an h3 header, for example , taking the place of the pseudolabel for the RTEDitor

Add items (modal)

This involves adding a multimedia, resource, subpage, website, edit page settings, remove page, remove page, add more pages, import cc modal dialogs.



These modal presentations could use some presentation refinements involving whitespace, borders, typography to make them easier to operate.

Add items (non modal)

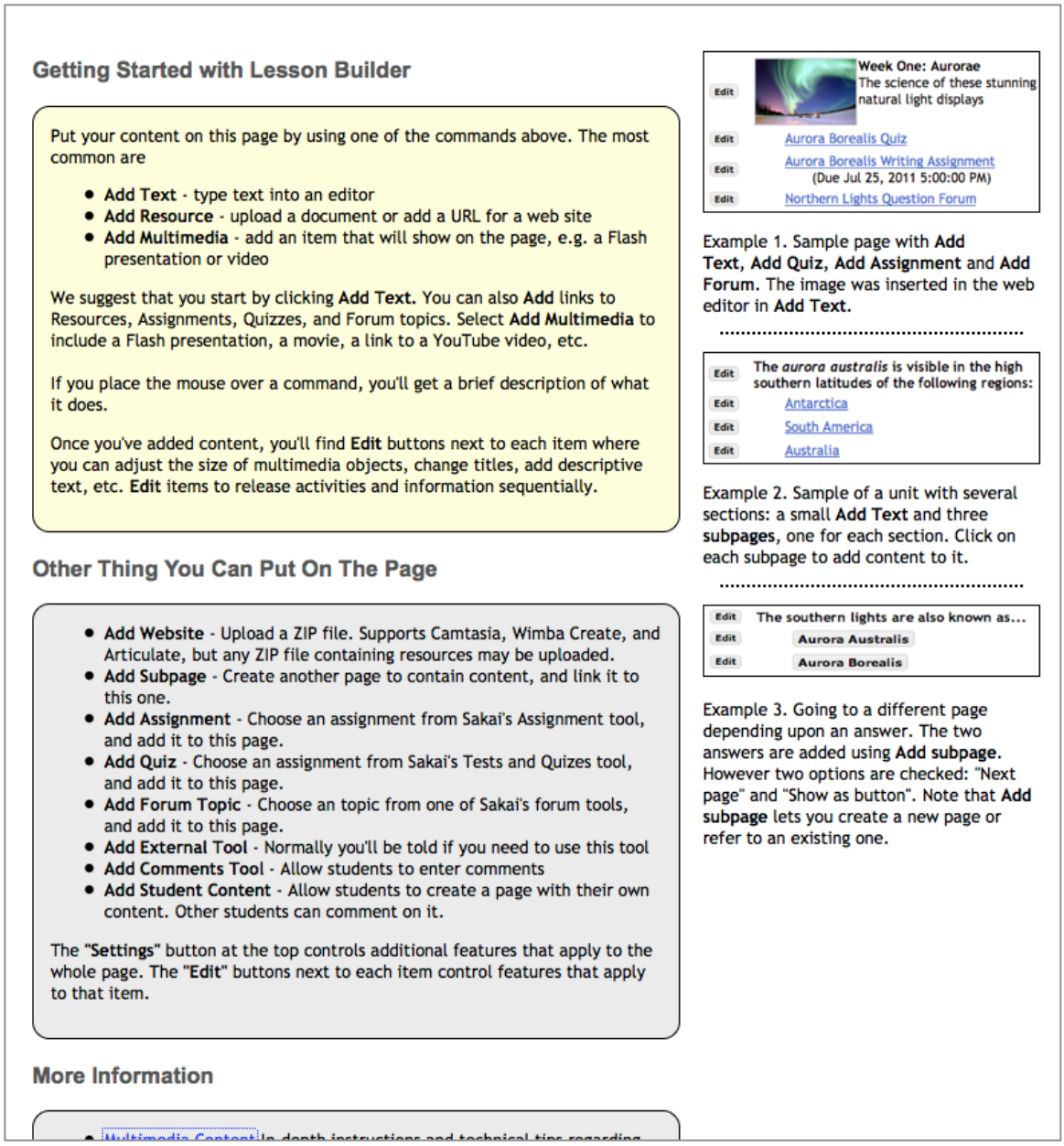
This involves adding assignment, forum, add external tool. The LB supplied picker could benefit from:

1. some formatting changes to bring is more inline as much as possible with similar functionality elsewhere in Sakai
2. bringing the presentation within the scope of the tool skin, so that these views would also look like the institutional choice

Index of Pages

Formatting changes. The note: "The following pages are currently not in use. (No other page refers to them.)" is unclear – it is displayed when nothing shows underneath it. Hide if there are no items listed below it?

Help



Getting Started with Lesson Builder

Put your content on this page by using one of the commands above. The most common are

- **Add Text** - type text into an editor
- **Add Resource** - upload a document or add a URL for a web site
- **Add Multimedia** - add an item that will show on the page, e.g. a Flash presentation or video

We suggest that you start by clicking **Add Text.** You can also **Add** links to Resources, Assignments, Quizzes, and Forum topics. Select **Add Multimedia** to include a Flash presentation, a movie, a link to a YouTube video, etc.

If you place the mouse over a command, you'll get a brief description of what it does.

Once you've added content, you'll find **Edit** buttons next to each item where you can adjust the size of multimedia objects, change titles, add descriptive text, etc. **Edit** items to release activities and information sequentially.

Other Thing You Can Put On The Page

- **Add Website** - Upload a ZIP file. Supports Camtasia, Wimba Create, and Articulate, but any ZIP file containing resources may be uploaded.
- **Add Subpage** - Create another page to contain content, and link it to this one.
- **Add Assignment** - Choose an assignment from Sakai's Assignment tool, and add it to this page.
- **Add Quiz** - Choose an assignment from Sakai's Tests and Quizes tool, and add it to this page.
- **Add Forum Topic** - Choose an topic from one of Sakai's forum tools, and add it to this page.
- **Add External Tool** - Normally you'll be told if you need to use this tool
- **Add Comments Tool** - Allow students to enter comments
- **Add Student Content** - Allow students to create a page with their own content. Other students can comment on it.

The "**Settings**" button at the top controls additional features that apply to the whole page. The "**Edit**" buttons next to each item control features that apply to that item.

More Information

Edit **Week One: Aurorae**
The science of these stunning natural light displays
Edit Aurora Borealis Quiz
Edit Aurora Borealis Writing Assignment
(Due Jul 25, 2011 5:00:00 PM)
Edit Northern Lights Question Forum

Example 1. Sample page with **Add Text**, **Add Quiz**, **Add Assignment** and **Add Forum**. The image was inserted in the web editor in **Add Text**.

Edit The *aurora australis* is visible in the high southern latitudes of the following regions:
Edit Antarctica
Edit South America
Edit Australia

Example 2. Sample of a unit with several sections: a small **Add Text** and three **subpages**, one for each section. Click on each subpage to add content to it.

Edit The southern lights are also known as...
Edit Aurora Australis
Edit Aurora Borealis

Example 3. Going to a different page depending upon an answer. The two answers are added using **Add subpage**. However two options are checked: "Next page" and "Show as button". Note that **Add subpage** lets you create a new page or refer to an existing one.

The content of this page, is it configurable by institution? Does it respond to what specific tools are deployed? This is outside the scope of this proposal, I think, but highly

desirable.

The following is regarding the default main and subpages

1. It would fantastic if the Help (Help 1) boilerplate content presented on an empty lesson could be different than the Help (Help 2) available when one is constructing a lesson. This would allow including a clear top level note warning that Help 1 will disappear as soon as an item is added but that Help 2 is available via the Help button.
2. The separation of the Help page into “Instructions” and “Example” panels would he heightened with a bit of whitespacing, border, background changes – as well as some titling.
3. Some formatting, typography changes inside each of the subpanels of both would also help parse the information. Screenshots included would need to reflect in as much as possible the actual rendering if the work above is carried out, except muted so that institutional skin choices do not interfere with the user’s understanding.