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Online newsletter available at:

<http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/newsletters/april2011.pdf>

Welcome to the April edition of our monthly newsletter. This month, Sander van der Waal brings us a case study of Wookie, an EU-funded project run at the University of Bolton, that went on to become accepted as an incubator project by the Apache Software Foundation. Wookie is a Java web application that allows you to upload and deploy widgets for your applications, based on several W3C widget specifications. Following on from the story of Wookie, Ross Gardler blogs about a WidgetBash event run by JISC CETIS, which focused on getting people up to speed on building widgets

We wrap up with Steve Lee telling us about an online survey where Francis Maude, Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General, is asking us which open standards we want the UK government to use. The survey is open until 20 May 2011 so you still have time to make your voice heard.

Did you manage to make it to our Open Source Junction: Cross-platform mobile apps event? If not then you catch up with everything that happened over the two days via the [live blog for day one](#) and the [live blog for day two](#). In next month's newsletter we will bring you a report reflecting on the event.

Elena Blanco, Content Editor, OSS Watch ▶ info@oss-watch.ac.uk

News from OSS Watch



Red Hat is on its way to \$1 billion in sales

The US-based Linux distributor Red Hat seems set to become the first open source software company to break through the \$1bn mark. In the last quarter of its fiscal year, which ended in February, the company increased its sales by a quarter. Year on year, quarterly sales rose from \$196 million to \$245 million, while net income increased from \$23 million to \$33.5 million.

▶ <http://www.h-online.com/open/news/item/Red-Hat-is-on-its-way-to-1-billion-in-sales-1214338.html>

Mentoring organisations for Google Summer of Code announced

The list of mentoring organisations that have been accepted for this year's Google Summer of Code programme has been announced. The list was narrowed down from 417 applications to 175 open source projects, 50 of which are new to Google Summer of Code.

▶ <http://google-opensource.blogspot.com/2011/03/mentoring-organizations-for-google.html>

Open University offers Unix certification

The Linux Professional Institute (LPI) has announced that the introductory course to Linux offered by the Open University UK (OU) will now also offer successful students CompTIA Linux+ Powered by LPI certification. The six-month OU course, from which students gain credits towards their degree, has been running for one year.

▶ <http://www.h-online.com/open/news/item/Open-University-offers-Linux-certification-1210429.html>

Free Software Foundation gets a new executive director

After six years as the executive director at the Free Software Foundation (FSF), Peter Brown is stepping down and looking for new challenges. FSF operations manager John Sullivan, who has worked at the FSF since 2003, is the new executive director.

▶ <http://www.fsf.org/news/fsf-announces-new-executive-director>

London Stock Exchange in historic Linux go-live

The London Stock Exchange has launched a new matching engine based on Novell SUSE Linux technology. The move has been billed as one of the LSE's most significant technological developments since the increasing prevalence of electronic trading led to the closure of the traditional exchange floor in 1986.

▶ http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/9209321/London_Stock_Exchange_in_historic_Linux_go_live?source=rss_applications

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Wookie: a case study in sustainability

Full article can be found at <http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/resources/cs-wookie.xml>

Apache Wookie (Incubating) is a Java web application that allows you to upload and deploy widgets for your applications, based on several W3C widget specifications. Several other APIs are also supported by Wookie, such as OpenSocial and the Google Wave Gadgets API. The project started off as an EU-funded project run at the University of Bolton, but was proposed and accepted as an incubator project by the Apache Software Foundation (ASF) in July 2009.

1. Project history

The University of Bolton started the Wookie project as part of the [TENCompetence project](#), funded by the European Union via its Framework 6 programme. The TENCompetence project ran from 2005 until 2009, and focussed on the support of life-long development of abilities of individuals, groups and organisations. This was to be achieved by developing and promoting the most suitable technical and organisational infrastructure. A central element of the project was the 'Personal Competence Manager', a portal web application that allowed people to discover competencies they would like to develop, and subsequently register for the courses that are required in order to develop this competency.

Wookie formed an element of that portal. It allowed the deployment of widgets, providing functionality within the portal and making it possible to integrate this functionality into other applications, such as Moodle or Wordpress.

The project team realised that the use of an upcoming, open standard could encourage uptake

of the software and could make it easier to integrate with external systems. Also, some members of the project team at the University of Bolton were already engaged with the through their involvement with [JISC CETIS](#) (Centre for Educational Technology and Interoperability Standards). So they decided to implement the W3C Widgets standard for [Configuration and Packaging](#) and the W3C Widgets standard on [The Widget Interface](#). W3C defines widgets as: 'Small client-side Web applications for displaying and updating remote data, that are [packaged](#) in a way to allow a single download and installation on a client machine, mobile phone, or mobile Internet device.' The project team collaborated early on with other projects that implemented the standard, such as the [IST PALETTE](#) project¹. The Wookie project operated as one of the candidate reference implementations of the W3C widget standards. Over time, it achieved one of the highest success rates among the implementations in passing the conformance test suite of the specification².

2. Growth and development

The Wookie project team recognised at an early stage that the potential applicability of the widget server was much wider than just the web portal for which they were developing the application. As a result, they managed to keep the widget server a discrete, generic application that could easily be re-used outside of the TENCompetence context. They considered the sustainability and continuing development of the project and contacted OSS Watch for advice on this. Ross Gardler from OSS Watch acknowledged that the project would be a good fit for the Apache Software Foundation, who have a strong history of hosting projects that act as reference implementations for open standards. At this stage, there was already some interest in the project from outside the core team, which made it even more important to move the project to a sustainable home.

In collaboration with OSS Watch, the project team made a plan for continuing the project after the EU funding ran out at the end of 2009. They sought a core budget in order to ensure that some of the time of the initial team of committers, consisting of three people, would be guaranteed. They estimated that about 0.2 FTE over the period December 2009 to September 2010 would

facilitate a smooth transition to the Apache Software Foundation.

The structure of the ASF is such that new projects cannot directly become a fully acknowledged, or 'Top Level' project, right from the start. Instead, a project has to be proposed and accepted into the foundation's 'Incubator' first.

During its time in the incubator, the project needs to take care of

The Wookie project team recognised at an early stage that the potential applicability of the widget server was much wider than just the web portal for which they were developing the application.

its [due diligence](#). That is, the project needs to make sure that its source code is properly relicensed (if necessary) to the [Apache License V2.0](#) and that all people that have contributed code sign a [Contributor Licence Agreement](#) to assign a copyright licence to the ASF.

The Wookie project was [proposed](#) to the Apache Incubator community in July 2009, with Ross Gardler as the ASF champion. It got an overwhelmingly positive response and was accepted on 14 July 2009. The three main project team members were also the original committers of Apache Wookie (Incubating), who took care of the IP clearance. They each signed an Individual Contributor License Agreement (ICLA) and sought CLAs and from a few external contributors that had contributed code to the code base. One Bolton employee who worked on the project did not want to sign a CLA; their code was therefore removed from the repository, with not too much effort.

▶ Article continues at <http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/resources/cs-wookie.xml>

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Ross Gardler

Widget Bashing

Published by Ross Gardler on March 27, 2011.

Last week JISC CETIS put on a WidgetBash event. OSS Watch pitched in since W3C Widgets are an area we are particularly interested in having taken some code from the University of Bolton into the Apache Software Foundations incubator as Apache Wookie (incubating).

This two day event focused on getting people up to speed on building widgets. Our approach was to give some very light touch training and then get our hands dirty on code. Overall the two days were extremely successful.

In the run up to the event I had committed a few new widget templates to Wookie in order to make it easy for people to get started. This turned out to be a great tactic. Some attendees used these templates as a base for their work, looking to enhance them, one attendee even [submitted a patch](#) to fix an error in my work (which I have now committed to the project, thanks Sam Rowley). Another attendee [reported](#) that one of the tutorials was misleading (another issue I have now addressed, thanks Simon Booth).

“Many other participants who had never built widgets before reported that they’d learned a great deal”

A team from the Manchester Metropolitan University enhanced a widget they had already created to tell students which labs had available PCs in them. Now it’s a fully [geo-locating widget](#) that sorts the results by proximity to the users position (interestingly using the tutorial Simon helped us improve). Another team from Strathclyde enhanced the [Moodle Plugin for Wookie](#); now widgets are able to get a little more context from Moodle and thus provide more targeted information to the user. We hope to see patches and contributions from both these teams.

Many other participants who had never built widgets before reported that they’d learned a great deal. There were plenty of “almost working” enhancements to our templates as well as completely new widgets. Again, I look forward to applying their patches.

Why not come and join us on the [Wookie](#) project and find out what it’s all about.

You can read more about the two days on [Sheila’s blog](#).

► <http://osswatch.jiscinvolve.org/wp/2011/03/27/widget-bashing/>



Steve Lee

UK Government Open Standards Survey

Published by Steve Lee on March 23, 2011

There’s no date on [his introductory post](#), but [Francis Maude](#), Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General, has provided an opportunity for us to state which open standards for IT we want the UK government to use. This takes the form of an on-line SurveyMonkey [survey](#) that is open until 20 May 2011.

“Government must be better connected to the people it serves and partners who can work with it – especially small businesses, voluntary and community organisations. Government ICT must play a fundamental role in making life easier and I want to ensure that it does.

One of our first goals is to organise Government data and systems using an agreed set of standards that make our ICT more open, cheaper and better connected.

If you’re a business or community organisation, helping us choose the right standards will make it easier for you to do business with Government. It will also help us open up data, better informing your decisions, and hopefully prompting innovation.”

“Open standards play well with open source software development and we encourage you to take the survey”

There’s a lot of detail in the very long list of obtuse standard numbers, but fortunately a mechanism is provided to skip sections you aren’t interested in. Otherwise you can vote on each standard on a scale between mandatory and don’t use.

Refreshingly for a survey, there are spaces for you to add your own thoughts (though you can’t add each on a new line as requested).

I spotted couple of typos and more seriously, the Microsoft originated [ISO/IEC 29500 Office Open XML](#) is incorrectly called ‘Open Office XML’. This is bound to lead to confusion as the alternatively listed [ISO/IEC 26300:2006 Open](#)

[Document Format for Office Applications \(OpenDocument\)](#) standard was originally implemented in OpenOffice (and is now implemented by LibreOffice).

[Open standards](#) play well with [open source software development](#) and we encourage you to take the [survey](#). However do bear in mind the government’s [past record in implementing open technology policies](#). You might also want to look at Glyn Moody’s related post about the [Government’s definition of open standards](#) provided in the procurement policy note.

► <http://osswatch.jiscinvolve.org/wp/2011/03/23/uk-government-open-standards-survey/>

Events



Apr
19-20 **MoodleMoot, London, 19-20 April 2011**
The popular Moodle conference returns to London and will be held at Senate House, the University of London's iconic Art Deco building. Interesting keynotes and parallel workshops showcasing Moodle usage from an administrative, pedagogical and technical perspective will alternate during the conference. A first ever, there will also be a pre-Moot developer Unconference.
[▶ http://mootuk11.org.uk/](http://mootuk11.org.uk/)

Sept
26-28 **Hackfest at PKP Scholarly Publishing Conference, Berlin, Germany, 26-28 September 2011**
The Public Knowledge Project has announced that a Hackfest will be part of the 2011 PKP Scholarly Publishing Conference taking place 26-28 September, 2011 in Berlin, Germany. The Hackfest is an opportunity for developers to gather and work with other community members and the PKP team to rapidly develop an interesting project based on PKP software.
[▶ http://pkp.sfu.ca/ocs/pkp/index.php/pkp2011/index/pages/view/hackfest](http://pkp.sfu.ca/ocs/pkp/index.php/pkp2011/index/pages/view/hackfest)

Oct
26-28 **LinuxCon Europe 2011, Prague, 26-28 October 2011**
The Linux Foundation is pleased to announce the launch of LinuxCon Europe in 2011. LinuxCon Europe will bring together the best and brightest that the Linux community has to offer, including community developers, system administrators, business executives and operations experts. It will feature speakers from across Europe and around the globe, innovative and abundant programme content, and opportunities for attendees to connect with peers. For this year only, attendees will be offered the opportunity to also attend the Embedded Linux Conference Europe (ELCE) at no additional cost.
[▶ http://events.linuxfoundation.org/events/linuxcon-europe](http://events.linuxfoundation.org/events/linuxcon-europe)

Nov
7-11 **The Apache Software Foundation's official conference, trainings and expo, Vancouver, 7-11 November 2011**
With a theme this year of 'Open Source Enterprise Solutions, Cloud Computing and Community Leadership', the conference features dozens of highly relevant technical, business and community-focused sessions aimed at beginner, intermediate and expert audiences. Registration and Call for participation are now open.
[▶ http://na11.apachecon.com/](http://na11.apachecon.com/)

Frequently Asked Questions

Q Can OSS Watch advise me on matters relating to open standards?

A Open standards can certainly help to improve interoperability but OSS Watch does not track standards development and adoption. We therefore suggest that you get in touch with a complimentary JISC innovation support centre, [JISC CETIS](#) (Centre for Educational Technology and Interoperability Standards), for further information on open standards.

Q What is a release management process and why is it important to have one clearly defined?

A A release management process defines how software is built, packaged and distributed. Having a clear process in place from the outset enables a project team to plan and schedule a release, prioritise work and address any legal issues. It also ensures that any testing can be carried out in good time and by as many people as possible, and therefore that the release is of sufficient quality to be useful to others. For more information, read [Release management in open source software projects](#) and [Best practice in release management](#).

Find answers to your questions at: <http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/about/faq.xml>

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