

▶ <http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk>**IN THIS ISSUE:**

- Find out about our software survey
- How OSS Watch can help with bid writing
- Keep an eye on upcoming events
- Highlights from our blog

Online newsletter available at
▶ <http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/newsletters/august2009.pdf>

Welcome to the first OSS Watch newsletter. We thought that we would try putting together a newsletter in place of our traditional update email to our announce list. The newsletter aims to give you a taster of the sort of things that you can find on our [website](#) and our [blog](#).

We welcome your ideas and comments on what you'd like to see more of and even what you would like to see less of. Let us know what you think!

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

News from OSS Watch

Launchpad is now open source

Launchpad is Canonical's code hosting and collaboration platform and is used by Ubuntu.

It is designed to manage the extra complexities of distribution management, such as supporting many upstream projects. It is now, at long last, open source.

▶ <http://blog.launchpad.net/general/launchpad-is-now-open-source>

Open source: facing a skills shortage

Open source software has emerged as one of the most important IT movements in recent times. Ross Gardler looks at the growth of open source in the UK, and considers the possible effects of this skills shortage on the long-term success of open source, and how the problem might be addressed.

▶ <http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/resources/skills.xml>

GNOME Foundation Annual Report 2008 released

The third annual report of the GNOME Foundation is available for download. The report provides a summary of GNOME community activities in 2008. It includes a review of the year, accounts of various community activities and events around the world, and foundation development actions during the year.

▶ http://foundation.gnome.org/about/gnome_annual_report_2008.pdf

Reuse Readiness Rating

Software reuse can save time, save money, and increase the reliability of resulting products. But how can we evaluate whether software is mature enough to be reused? The NASA Earth Science Data Systems Software Reuse Working Group is developing its own maturity model, the Reuse Readiness Levels. Ross Gardler tells us more.

▶ <http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/resources/reuseReadinessRating.xml>

Google announces Chrome OS

Google has announced its forthcoming operating system Google Chrome OS, an open source, lightweight operating system that will initially be targeted at netbooks. Later this year Google will release its code as open source, and netbooks running Google Chrome OS will be available for consumers in the second half of 2010.

▶ <http://googleblog.blogspot.com/2009/07/introducing-google-chrome-os.html>

The Open World Forum unveils program

The Open World Forum, taking place in Paris 1-2 Oct 2009, is a large global summit bringing together decision-makers from across the world to discuss the technological, financial and social impact of open technologies. With more than 100 speakers from 20 countries, and a 1,200-strong international audience, the Open World Forum highlights the influence that FLOSS (Free/Libre/Open Source Software) will have on the implementation of tomorrow's major technological advances.

▶ <http://www.openworldforum.org>

Microsoft release open source plug-ins for Moodle

Microsoft have released a set of two open source plug-ins for Moodle, that allow some integration of the open source virtual learning environment with Windows Live™ Services. Where installed, they enable logging into Moodle with a Windows Live ID, and the display of Windows Live Services on a Moodle site. The services available are Windows Live Hotmail®, Calendar, Messenger, Alerts, and Bing search. The plug-ins are licensed under the GNU General Public License V2.

▶ <http://port25.technet.com/archive/2009/07/07/codeplex-10-000-hosted-projects-and-counting.aspx>



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OSS Watch National Software Survey 2008

During 2008 OSS Watch once again conducted a national survey to assess the state of software policies and usage in HE and FE in the UK. This was the third time that the software survey has been conducted and so the report is able to identify trends and draw comparisons with data from previous years.

An overview of open and closed source procurement in FE and HE

In broad terms, closed source software has been more popular than open source in Higher Education (HE) and Further Education (FE) institutions. This situation will probably continue for the foreseeable future.

On the other hand, there has been a significant trend towards increased awareness and usage of open source software in FE and HE. Looking from different perspectives, this trend appears more or less strong. For example, around 10% of all institutions will stop using closed source software only, on desktops, and a similar number will use open

and closed source on equal terms. For servers, around 15% of FE institutions will do something similar, while the change in HE will be smaller. Another sign of increased engagement with open source is that while in 2006 only

a quarter of institutions mentioned open source explicitly in their policies, at present it is over half of all institutions that do so. But from another viewpoint, open source appears more popular than policy suggests, because no matter what is stated in policy, in practice most institutions consider open source for procurement anyway. However, only a fifth of institutions consider open source equally to closed source, and contribution to open source projects remains unregulated, and possibly ignored. From this perspective, open source software still has a lot of ground to cover before it catches up with closed source.

Traditionally, HE institutions have led in engaging with open source software. This possibly follows from HE institutions having ICT departments that are approximately seven times larger than those of FE, and staff that generally have better technical qualifications. Nonetheless, some indicators suggest that FE institutions are catching up. And in some particular cases, as with the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) Moodle, engagement has been clearly led by FE.

The main obstacle for engaging with open source software by FE and HE institutions seems to be a perception of difficulty and a need for more resources and highly skilled staff. Another main obstacle appears to be the perception that open source software is not supported. Even though most institutions rely on in-house support of their systems, the survey suggests that they also want somebody they can contact in case of trouble. ■

▶ <http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/studies/survey2008.pdf>

“...there has been a significant trend towards increased awareness and usage of open source software in FE and HE”

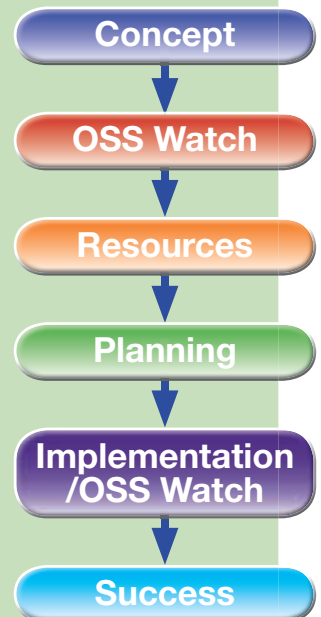
Writing a funding bid

▶ <http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/resources/adviceforprojectbids.xml>

JISC funding calls recommend that OSS Watch is engaged to ensure that open source software and open development options are considered at the bid stage. The reason for this is that projects often fail to consider the resource implications of implementing the JISC Open Source Policy.

It is a very common misconception that making software available under an open source licence will be sufficient to satisfy a funder's requirements to address sustainability during the bid stage. However, there is much more to it than that. One needs to engage in 'open development' by addressing IPR management, community engagement, project governance and exploitation options. All this requires planning and resources. Fortunately, these activities will contribute to the running of a well managed software project as well as to the potential sustainability of any outputs.

By consulting with OSS Watch you ensure that you consider the resource implications of producing sustainable open source software at the earliest possible moment. ■



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Feast or famine

Published by Elena Blanco on July 7, 2009 in development and community.

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 ▶ <http://osswatch.jiscinvolve.org/feed>

“**... OSS Watch strives to be an authoritative source of information on matters relating to open source**”

Sometimes you could be forgiven for thinking that OSS Watch publication production line has stalled. It can seem like we haven't published any of our own material on the website for a while even though we have been blogging. And then a few articles pop out in quick succession. Take the last four weeks for example. We have published a case study on EduApps, a case study on TexGen, a substantial article

on the open development method, and a report from an OSSWatch workshop looking at business and sustainability models around free and open source software. Why has there been a recent flurry of publications?

Very early on in OSS Watch's history we decided that we would take the quality of our written outputs very seriously, perhaps more seriously than anyone expected us to. All documents that we write adhere to a stringent authoring and publication workflow that has been designed to offer the best quality assurance that we can muster. Some of our documents are drafted by one individual, others are written collaboratively from the start. Some others are commissioned from external authors. However all documents move to final draft

status collaboratively, all members of the team comment on the first draft and the document is refined iteratively until consensus is achieved. And this is where the process takes as long as it takes and, as a result, you may observe a famine if several documents are moving through this iterative process. We believe that this process really does need to take as long as it takes as we use it to iron out not only factual issues but also to come to team consensus on matters like bias and advocacy. Settling these big issues using argument and counter argument can take time, changing a view or position through discussion often requires a period of reflection. However, we feel (and hope) that this process makes our documents better. And because this process is not artificially bounded several documents may appear at the other end in quick succession. A publication feast.

Once a document is published our workflow doesn't stop there. The Web is littered with "write once, review never" information. You know the sort of thing, a topical article written three years ago that still turns up in a Google search and gives outdated information because no-one has ever updated the information within it. Since OSS Watch strives to be an authoritative source of information on matters relating to open source, we don't think that outdated information is acceptable, particularly if

other organizations and services rely on it. So all our documents are reviewed every six months. We check not only facts and links but we also check for relevancy and for missing content, ie has something happened since the last review that should be mentioned. Sometimes we retire a document that is no longer relevant and this is then preserved in an archived state. Sometimes we completely rewrite a document. However most times we tweak and refine each document at each review and we often add new information. This review process is time consuming and all OSS Watch staff are involved in reviewing documents each and every month. Is it worth all the effort? We think it is.

And finally, we don't want our documents to be the result of a collaborative process involving just the members of OSS Watch. We welcome comment and feedback from you. We often develop documents in the OSS Watch wiki, a public resource where all collaboration is welcome to get the document to its first draft and where you can see the status of all wiki documents being developed for publication on the website. Even, and perhaps especially, when a document has entered the formal QA process and has subsequently been published on the website we welcome comments, just drop us a line at: info@oss-watch.ac.uk.

▶ <http://osswatch.jiscinvolve.org/2009/07/07/feast-or-famine/>



Wookie Accepted into Apache Incubator

Published by Ross Gardler on July 17, 2009 in development, software, standards and community.

Wookie is a Java server application that allows you to upload and deploy widgets for your applications. Wookie is based on the W3C

Widgets specification, but widgets can also be included that use extended APIs such as Google Wave Gadgets and Open Social. It was originally created at the University of Bolton as part of the European Commission funded Ten Competence project.

In January Scott Wilson attended an OSS Watch workshop on software sustainability at which I and my colleague Rowan Wilson presented a number of models for managing open source software in a sustainable way. After my presentation Scott approached me to ask what was involved with entering the Apache Incubator.

I'm pleased to announce that the Wookie proposal has now been accepted into the incubator. There is still some work to do before the code actually appears there, but it won't be long.

This is great news for all involved. OSS Watch hope that Wookie will go on to provide our first significant use case demonstrating that software developed in the UK academic sector can, and should, become useful beyond our sector. I congratulate the Wookie team on clearly separating the domain specific features of their work from the generic code that will be useful beyond their core team. It is this, and the teams awareness that restricting their code to a niche market would restrict the pool of contributors, that has enabled OSS Watch to assist Wookie as it worked towards entry into the Apache Incubator.

I truly believe that the University of Bolton, and any other project or institution that adopts the Wookie code, will benefit significantly from this move. Already we are seeing interest from many third parties, indeed, it is a long time since a proposal passed with such a large number of positive votes. ■

▶ <http://osswatch.jiscinvolve.org/2009/07/17/wookie-accepted-into-apache-incubator/>

[DISCLAIMER: I am a Member of The Apache Software Foundation, but this has no bearing on the choice of the ASF as a home for Wookie. The justification for the ASF is that it has a track record of producing reference implementations for open standards]

“**I congratulate the Wookie team on clearly separating the domain specific features of their work from the generic code...**”

Events

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Aug
24

IWOCE 2009 workshop - 24 August 2009, Amsterdam

The International Workshop on Open Component Ecosystems (IWOCE) 2009 will be held in Amsterdam on 24 August 2009 as a satellite event of the 7th joint meeting of the European Software Engineering Conference and ACM SIGSOFT Symposium on the Foundations of Software Engineering (ESEC/FSE 2009). The goal of this workshop is to gather together both researchers and practitioners active in open source software engineering, software composition, algorithms, constraint programming, and model-driven engineering to discuss, debate, exchange ideas, and outline common solutions to the problem of static and dynamic component aggregations in software ecosystems.

▶ <http://www.iwoce.org/>

Sept
18-20

EuroBSDcon 2009: September 18-20 September 2009, Cambridge

The European BSD community's annual event to meet, share and interact across the projects will take place 18-20 September 2009 at the University of Cambridge. The conference will consist of a day of tutorials followed by 2 days of conference talks covering a wide variety of BSD related topics. Discounted Early Bird registration runs until 2 September 2009.

▶ <http://2009.euroBSDcon.org/>

Sept
29

Open Source Search event, 29 September 2009, Cambridge

Why not join Open Source Search at the Friends Meeting House in Cambridge for a chance to hear informal presentations from users and developers of open source search systems, followed by ad-hoc discussion and hacking. It is open to any and all members of the open source search communities - whether developers or users. Tickets for the day are free but advance registration is essential.

▶ <http://searchevent.org/>

What is OSS Watch?

OSS Watch is an open source software advisory service for the UK higher and Further Education sector. We are funded by the Joint Information System Committee (JISC), and our services are free to the HE and FE sector.

We help institutions and education related projects in the use and development of free and open source software. We provide a variety of services including:

- ✓ authoring and publishing information about open source
- ✓ consultancy services for those considering, adopting or producing open source software
- ✓ assistance with the evaluation of open source software in procurement
- ✓ advising on community development, business models and sustainability of open source software
- ✓ providing speakers for events
- ✓ hosting of events



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For more information visit:

▶ <http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/about/>