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http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/newsletters/august2010.pdf

OSS Watch

Supporting open source in education and research

http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk

IN THIS ISSUE:

Online newsletter available at
http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/newsletters/august2010.pdf

Welcome once again to the OSS Watch monthly newsletter. As you know we are here to help **you** so why not put us to work? This month's featured article comes from Steve Lee who explains how to engage OSS Watch in support of your project bid. The full version of Steve's article, available on the OSS Watch website, also includes a checklist designed to be used as you work on your bid. In his blog piece Sander van der Waal talks about how OSS Watch has helped the Wookie project sustain itself beyond its initial funding period. To round us off Rowan Wilson brings us a chilling tale about what happens when the debates around software licensing meet the realities of using a pacemaker. Scary stuff.

As ever, do let us know if we can help you by emailing info@oss-watch.ac.uk.

Elena Blanco, Content Editor, OSS Watch http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk

News from OSS Watch

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Open source software provider launches on-demand version of vtiger CRM solution

vtiger, a leading provider of open source customer relationship management (CRM) solutions, unveiled the cloud-based version of its popular tool: vtiger CRM On Demand. Unlike other cloud-based CRM offerings, *vtiger* is a true open source solution, providing the benefits of the cloud while allowing clients to customize or extend their own unique versions.

http://www.prweb.com/releases/2010/07/prweb4304764.htm

Google opens up Android development (a bit)

Speaking at OSCON 2010, Google Android open-source and compatibility program manager Dan Morrill announced that in the future third party contributions to the the Android code base would appear within the publicly-available Android source tree. Currently contributions go into Google's private Android source tree to be incorporated (or not) at Google's discretion. However Google will continue to be keep new versions of Android entirely private until release, citing concerns that handset manufacturers might otherwise release poorly tested new code to appear more 'advanced' than competitors.

http://www.theregister.co.uk/2010/07/22/android_open_development/

Vodafone open sources location and navigation software

Vodafone Group has made the majority of all the location- and navigation-related software developed at Wayfinder Systems, a fully owned Vodafone subsidiary, publicly available under a BSD licence. This includes the distributed back-end server, tools to manage the server cluster and map conversion, as well as client software, for example Android, iPhone and Symbian S60.

http://www.vodafone.com/start/media_relations/news/group_press_releases/2010/open_source_wayfinder.html

Firefox is default browser at IBM

Firefox has become the default browser for nearly 400,000 IBM employees, a big coup for the open source project during a time of increasing browser competition. 'All IBM employees will be asked to use it as their default browser,' Bob Sutor, vice president of open source and Linux at IBM's Software Group, said in a blog post Thursday. 'Firefox is enterprise-ready, and we're ready to adopt it for our enterprise.'

http://news.cnet.com/8301-30685_3-20009387-264.html

Linux Foundation delivers new licensing terms

The Linux Foundation has announced the release of IAccessible2 for Windows under the BSD licence. It has also announced the availability of AccProbe, a new desktop application testing tool, under the BSD licence. The change to BSD makes it easier to integrate open source AT into proprietary software, making programs more accessible to computer users with disabilities.

http://www.linuxfoundation.org/news-media/announcements/2010/07/linux-foundation-delivers-new-licensing-terms-testing-tools-accessi

Chris Hofstader appointed as GNU access technology director

The Free Software Foundation has announced the appointment of Chris Hofstader as director of access technology software for its GNU Project, and the publication of the GNU Accessibility Statement. GNU Accessibility is a free software pan-disability initiative to create features that can be used by people with disabilities.

http://www.fsf.org/news/chris-hofstader-gnu-access-technology-director

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How to engage OSS Watch in support of your project bid

Full article can be found at http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/resources/bidsupport.xml

One of the criteria that funders consider when assessing project bids is the project's approach to sustainability. In particular, they will assess the project's ability to continue after the funded period without relying on continuation funding. Different funders and calls will have different criteria for assessing sustainability plans but requirements commonly include plans for reuse of previous software outputs and/or the provision for reuse of new outputs via collaboration with other community members and projects. This document describes how OSS Watch can help you plan for sustainability in your project bid.

> **The open development method is one proven way of achieving sustainability through collaboration across project boundaries.**

The open development method is one proven way of achieving sustainability through collaboration across project boundaries. OSS Watch provides advice for project bids and will guide you through the process of deciding if the open development approach is appropriate for your project. We can do this while you are preparing your proposal, by helping you fully understand open development and its potential for your project. If you decide to follow open development, we can help you to make sure your proposal reflects this decision by adjusting the section on sustainability and possibly some of the resource allocation details. In addition, we will provide support after a successful bid, as the project work progresses.

Even if you have already decided to follow open development, or have some experience with open source, this document will help you to understand what is required to ensure the best chance of reaching sustainability. It takes you through the support available from OSS Watch and highlights the key areas you need to consider before making an informed decision. The first five sections describes activities you should undertake and the resources available to you, and identifies the concepts that need to be understood. This is followed by a checklist designed to be used as you work on your bid.

1. Contact with OSS Watch

The first step in initiating OSS Watch support for your project is to email us at info@oss-watch.ac.uk. Use this as an opportunity to introduce yourself, your team and partners and your proposal. Providing an early draft of your proposal as soon as one is available will allow us to begin to understand your project and so provide the best possible advice. One of our team will then work with you, as described in Advice for project bids. If required, a face-to-face consultation can be arranged so that we can discuss and advise in more detail. Details of all the ways in which you can contact or interact with OSS Watch and the wider community can be found on the contact information page.

We have a wide range of excellent resources, including those on open development. We will, where appropriate, refer you directly to those resources that are most relevant to you. However, we do encourage you to browse at your leisure.

2. Become familiar with open development

In order to make an informed decision as to whether to follow open development or not, you need to understand the principles and how they apply in successful projects. OSS Watch provides many resources that introduce these concepts by answering common questions, providing in-depth guides and presenting case studies and interviews. These can be found on the website (quality controlled), the wiki (under development) and the team blog (opinion pieces). We also provide RSS feeds and a Twitter channel to notify you of new articles, news and events.

In addition to gaining a good grasp of the principles of open development, you need to be familiar with the following key topics:

- sustainability and exploitation
- governance models
- copyright, IP and open source licences
- contributor licence agreements
- community development and essential online tools
- build and release processes

3. Understand the advantages of open development and its application to your project

Once you have a basic familiarity with open development, you will be in a position to compare it with a closed development approach. You will also be able to see how to apply it to your individual project, and gauge the costs and benefits that may be involved. Only when you understand these factors will you be able to reach a useful decision as to whether to follow the open development method. In addition, you will need to be clear on what you must do in order to fully embrace it.

OSS Watch is here to help you develop your understanding of the benefits of open development and what you will need to do. Once we have your proposal, we can work with you on this. Our aim is to enable you to make a clear decision on which way to proceed, having fully understood all the possible effects of following the open development method.

4. Understand sustainability models and document your decisions in the proposal

One of the most important issues to consider is the long-term sustainability of your project. This requires a clear understanding of the models of sustainability that apply to your project. Understanding sustainability options will also inform your decision as to whether open development is right for the project. OSS Watch will provide feedback on your initial thoughts and make appropriate suggestions.

Article, including a helpful checklist, continues at http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/resources/bidsupport.xml

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My pacemaker will not be tweeting just yet

Published by Rowan Wilson on July 23, 2010

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June 2007: the Free Software Foundation (FSF) publish their third 'discussion draft' of their proposed new licence, the GPL version 3. Alongside this new draft is published a so-called 'rationale', which helpfully explain the changes made since the last draft. Originally the FSF had planned to require all forms of encrypted GPL software to be accompanied by appropriate decryption keys, to prevent device manufacturers from putting GPL software in their products but making it impossible to end users to modify it. Many people had complained about this however, saying that it undermined a lot of legitimate uses of cryptography on software code. The FSF responded by limiting the requirement only to 'User Products' in its next draft, and went to a lot of trouble to define this subset of GPL-containing items. In the rationale document (pdf), they commented:

We considered including medical devices for implantation in the human body in the User Product definition. We decided against this, however, because there may be legitimate health and safety regulations concerning inexpert and reckless modifications of medical devices. In any case, it will probably be necessary to convince medical device regulators to allow user-modifiable implantable medical devices. We plan to begin a campaign to address this issue.

Some commentators made fun of this aspiration. Ed Burnette of ZDNet commented:

This paragraph demonstrates both the pragmatism that is creeping into the FSF (concerns for 'reckless modifications') and the 'tin-foil hat' eccentricity that has always been a part of Stallman's free software movement. If nothing else, the activities of the FSF and its colorful leader will continue to give us plenty to talk about in the years to come.

Well, years passed and there was little public evidence of this campaign… until this week. On Wednesday the Software Freedom Law Center (SFLC) published research which argues that the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) should require all manufacturers of Implantable Medical Devices (IMDs) to publish the source to the code in their products. The paper cites many chilling examples of software reliability and security problems with IMDs:

While there has yet to be a documented incident in which the source code of a medical device was breached for malicious purposes, a 2008-study led by software engineer and security expert Kevin Fu proved that it is possible to interfere with an ICD (implantable cardioverter defibrillator) that had passed the FDA's premarket approval process and been implanted in hundreds of thousands of patients. A team of researchers from three universities partially reverse-engineered the communications protocol of a 2003-model ICD and launched several radio-based software attacks from a short distance. Using low-cost, commercially available equipment to bypass the device programmer, the researchers were able to extract private data stored inside the ICD such as patients' vital signs and medical history; "eavesdrop" on wireless communication with the device programmer; reprogram the therapy settings that detect and treat abnormal heart rhythms; and keep the device in "awake" mode in order to deplete its battery, which can only be replaced with invasive surgery.

In one experimental attack conducted in the study, researchers were able to disable the ICD to prevent it from delivering a life-saving shock and then direct the same device to deliver multiple shocks averaging 137.7 volts that would induce ventricular fibrillation in a patient. The study concluded that there were no "technological mechanisms in place to ensure that programmers can only be operated by authorized personnel." Fu's findings show that almost anyone could use store-bought tools to build a device that could "be easily miniaturized to the size of an iPhone and carried through a crowded mall or subway, sending its heart-attack command to random victims."

Chilling stuff indeed. The paper goes on to argue that FOSS is inherently more secure than closed source, and that source code for IMDs ought to be available for all to see both for greater security and to avoid problems if a device manufacturer goes bankrupt and disappears.

This is not quite the campaign promised back in 2007, however. Notable by its absence is a call for IMDs to actually be user-modifiable:

Specifically, we call on the FDA to require manufacturers of life-critical IMDs to publish the source code of medical device software so the public and regulators can examine and evaluate it.

The paper uses the argument that FOSS is more secure to underpin a request for publication, not full FOSS-licensing. Presumably any errors detected in the code would have to be notified to the manufacturer for actual repair. This is, of course, not particularly surprising. Calling for the FDA to allow individuals to flash their pacemakers to tweet their heart rate would probably attract the same kind of ridicule that Ed Burnette engaged in three years ago. While some activists – including possibly Stallman himself – may regret this reticence, it is probably necessary in order for the request to be taken seriously.

http://osswatch.jiscinvolve.org/wp/?s=pacemaker

Why it makes sense to sustain your project beyond its initial funding

Published by Sander van der Waal on August 3, 2010

Scott Wilson from CETIS, University of Bolton showed in a very compelling way at TransferSummit/UK 2010 how it can be strategically important to sustain your publicly funded software project beyond its initial funding period. The figures in Scott's slides say it all: by investing a tiny survival budget to sustain their Wookie project after the funding would run out they managed to secure about £700k of new funding from two European (FP7) projects.

> **'…by investing a tiny survival budget to sustain their Wookie project after the funding would run out they managed to secure about £700k of new funding'**

How they achieved this? Their overall project, although being a bit specific, implemented the emerging W3C widget standard which is relevant to a wider community. They managed to attract some interest from outside the initial project group. OSS Watch helped them with community development and identifying potential sources of value and funding. A good home for the project was found at the Incubator of the Apache Software Foundation, thereby attracting much more interest and contributions from parties inside and outside the academic sector.

Currently, Apache Wookie (Incubating) is a thriving project and has seen many bugfixes and new features contributed by the community. It resulted in a lot of visibility for the University of Bolton outside the regular channels, leading to new partnerships with the commercial sector and universities inside and outside of the UK. Last but not least they managed to secure a lot of new project funding from European sources.

Sustaining your software project beyond funding is not just morally right or something that should be done so your money is not spent wastefully. Scott's example shows that it is very much in the interest of the institutions and the project team to sustain the project. So think about how your software development project can be sustained after the funding has run out or which part of it is most potential to generate a viable community. And get in touch with OSS Watch; we are here to help.

http://osswatch.jiscinvolve.org/wp/2010/08/03/why-it-makes-sense-to-sustain-your-project-beyond-its-initial-funding/

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AUGUST

Events

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Aug 10-12

LinuxCon, Boston, USA, 10-12 August 2010

LinuxCon, the Linux Foundation's annual technical conference, will take place in Boston on 10-12 August 2010. LinuxCon aims to bring together the best and brightest that the Linux community has to offer, including core developers, administrators, end users, business executives and operations experts. The event is co-located with a variety of mini-summits taking place on 9 August 2010 which may well swing the balance for those deciding whether to travel to North America from the UK.

http://events.linuxfoundation.org/events/linuxcon

Oct 19

JISC event: The future of Research? - London, 19 October 2010

JISC is running a one day conference entitled 'The future of Research?' at the Congress Centre in London on 19 October 2010. The event will examine three major challenges facing education institutions involved in research today: institutional reputation; efficiency and effectiveness; and collaboration in a competitive environment. The programme is aimed at vice chancellors, pro vice chancellors and senior managers in education institutions involved in research today.

http://www.jisc.ac.uk/Home/events/2010/10/futureofresearch.aspx

Oct 19

Open World Forum, Paris, 30 Sep - 1 Oct 2010

The Open World Forum will take place in paris 30 Sep - 1 Oct 2010 with a theme of 'Open is the Future: Open Innovation, Open Enterprise, Open Society'. The conference promises to be a worldwide hub for open innovation with 36 keynotes, workshops and think-tanks. The event is free to free and open source stakeholders and registration is now open.

http://www.openworldforum.org/

Frequently Asked Questions

Q Can you help us share an application developed within our department as an open source solution?

A We can certainly help you maximise the chances of getting the most from your initial investment in creating the software by managing it as an open source project. In return for your effort of adopting a governance model, setting up some basic software development processes and tools, and clarifying the project's IPR framework, you maximise the opportunities for contributing to your software in an open development fashion. The key to making your project sustainable in the long term is building a thriving community of users and developers around it by reducing barriers to adoption and encouraging and rewarding all forms of contribution.

Q When was OSS Watch created and why?

A In 2003 when OSS Watch started there was very little understanding in the UK academic sector about what open source is and how one would engage with it. OSS Watch was set up to examine the state of play and to make recommendations that would enable the sector to fully benefit from open source software.

Over the years the focus has moved from creating a base level understanding, through to detailed legal, procurement and engagement advice and support. More recently we have emphasized how open source software can be sustained, and how business models can be built to ensure that software developed in HE and FE is available, customisable and supported with minimal costs for as long as possible.

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

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