

IN THIS ISSUE:

- What kind of licence should I choose?
- Rave in Context
- An open letter to OSS developers: thank you!
- FAQs

Online newsletter available at:

<http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/newsletters/june2011.pdf>

Spring has most definitely sprung and we have lots to tell you about in this, our June newsletter. Our featured article this month asks, 'What kind of licence should I choose?' There are many free and open source software licences, and while they all broadly attempt to facilitate the same things, they also have some differences. In this article, Rowan Wilson groups some of the major differences into categories that should help you understand which decisions you should take in order to select a licence for your code.

Our first blog post comes from Ross Gardler, who tells us about a practical demonstration of openness as a sustainable academic research practice. Our second blog post is a guest post from Donna Reish, who says a very personal thank you to the open source community by describing what a difference open source applications make to her professional life.

It looks like the next few months could be pretty busy, as there are a fair few open source events coming up. Do take a look at the events section to see if there is anything that catches your eye.

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



News from OSS Watch



Xamarin: Novell's former open source strategist to become CEO

Nat Friedman has joined new venture Xamarin as the company's CEO and co-founder. Friedman had previously co-founded Ximian - the GNOME company that was taken over by Novell in 2003 - and had left Novell in early 2011. In his latest announcement, Friedman said, 'We believe that mobile development is in its first stages and that we can deliver an incredible mobile development experience - far better than what exists today.'

▶ <http://www.h-online.com/open/news/item/Xamarin-Novell-s-former-open-source-strategist-to-become-CEO-1250766.html>

Zarafa SummerCamp 2011 programme published

Messaging and collaboration specialist Zarafa has published the programme for this year's two-day international SummerCamp event. The annual event will take place on 30 June and 1 July in Kerkrade in The Netherlands.

▶ <http://www.h-online.com/open/news/item/Zarafa-SummerCamp-2011-programme-published-1250464.html>

Document Foundation appoints Engineering Steering Committee

With around 120 developers now working on LibreOffice code on a regular basis, The Document Foundation has announced the appointment of an Engineering Steering Committee (ESC) to direct and coordinate the efforts of the developers. The ESC will meet weekly by telephone to discuss the progress of development efforts in meeting LibreOffice's time-based release schedule and to coordinate development activities within the organisation.

▶ <http://www.h-online.com/open/news/item/Document-Foundation-appoints-Engineering-Steering-Committee-1248364.html>

JISC mobile website launched in conjunction with MyMobileBristol

The MyMobileBristol project has recently been working with the JISC communications team to produce a new beta service. The website was produced using the Mobile Campus Assistant software that the MyMobileBristol project is developing.

▶ <http://mymobilebristol.ilrt.bris.ac.uk/2011/05/20/introducing-m-jisc-ac-uk/>

Open source software, Linux to save Santos \$2.5m

Australian oil and gas exploration company Santos has switched on a critical IT upgrade set to save more than \$2.5 million by using open source software and Linux-based systems. A consolidation of hardware and software will see the company reduce its power consumption by 300,000 kW hours a year. Powerful IBM servers running Red Hat Enterprise Linux software are at the heart of new systems that will help hundreds of geoscientists scour for black gold.

▶ <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/australian-it/software-switch-to-save-santos-25m/story-e6f9gaxk-1226057034041>

Google forms WebM patent pool

Google has formed a group of technology companies who agree not to assert their patents against other members using Google's new open video standard WebM. The group includes some members of the MPEG LA H264 patent pool, such as Samsung and LG. This is particularly significant as the MPEG LA is threatening to form a rival patent pool to collect royalties on patents it says are implemented within Google's standard.

▶ http://news.cnet.com/8301-30685_3-20056579-264.html

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What kind of licence should I choose?

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

There are many free and open source software licences, and while they all broadly attempt to facilitate the same things, they also have some differences. Some of the major differences can be grouped together into categories, and this document acts as an introduction to these categories. Having read this document, you should be able to understand which decisions you should take in order to select a licence for your code.

1. Staying mainstream

The Open Source Initiative - a non-profit organisation formed to educate about open source - maintains a [list of licences](#) that they see as being 'popular and widely used or with strong communities'. The purpose of the list is to highlight those licences which are likely to answer the needs of many licensors new to open source. The list also helps to make the task of open source licence selection seem manageable; the full list of more than sixty licences can be daunting, and contains many licences which are in most ways similar in function to one or more of the 'popular and widely used' listed licences. Using a licence that many others use has some advantages. If the terms of the licence are challenged, there will be a larger pool of licensors with an interest in funding a response to the challenge. Using one of the 'popular and widely used'

All free and open source licences allow others to make modified versions of your code, and to make these modified versions available to others.

licences also makes it more likely that your licensees will already be familiar with the terms you are offering. Equally though, licensors should not feel 'locked in' to only using a 'popular and widely used' licence. Some of the features we discuss below are only present in the [wider pool of all OSI-approved licences](#).

2. Permissive and copyleft

All free and open source licences allow others to make modified versions of your code, and to make these modified versions available to others. The licence you choose can make conditions about how this happens - specifically what licences can be used on these modified versions. These conditions can help keep your code free, but they can also put some people off reusing your code. Such conditions are sometimes called 'copyleft' conditions, in a play on the word 'copyright'.

Open source licences that do not seek to control how modified code is licensed are often referred to as

'permissive' licences. While the original code covered by a permissive licence stays under that permissive licence, any modifications to it can be released under any licence that the modifier chooses, open source or not. This means that permissively licensed code can form the basis of closed source products. Some argue that this makes permissive licences more 'free' than copyleft licences, in that people who modify the code are freer to choose what they do with it. Others argue that the lack of a requirement that modifications be open source means that permissive licences are less 'free'. As discussions of ideas of freedom - and particularly the idea of compulsion to be free - are essentially philosophical they fall outside the scope of this document. It is worth noting, however, that there are differing views within the free and open source world about what 'free' in the sense of freedom really means.

Example:

As part of her astrophysics research Anne creates a standard for recording a specific kind of complex data object. She also writes code to create and parse files that adhere to the standard. Anne is keen that the standard becomes widely used, as minority standards are far less useful. Therefore she decides that she will release the code under a permissive licence. Anne believes that by allowing creators of both closed and open source projects to use the same code to create and read the data objects, uptake and efficacy of the standard will both be helped along.

3. Strong and weak copyleft

Should you choose to include copyleft licensing conditions on reuse of your code, there is a further choice to be made. Copyleft licences are broadly divided into two 'strengths': strong and weak. Strong copyleft conditions dictate that when a piece of software contains some of your code, the software as a whole must be distributed under your licence, if it is distributed at all. The effect of this will be that the source code to all additions made to the code will be available.

Weak copyleft, on the other hand, means that when software contains some of your code, some parts of the software must be distributed under your licence, if the software is distributed at all. Other parts may be distributed under other licences, even though they form part of a work which is - as a whole - a modified version of your code. One effect of this will be that the source code to some additions made by others to your software may not be available as open source. Another effect may be that people may find it easier to 'productise' your code by adding closed components and selling licences to these closed parts.

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

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Ross Gardler

Rave in Context

Published by Ross Gardler on May 21, 2011

At OSS Watch we recommend that software be split into [reusable components](#) wherever possible. Furthermore, we argue that projects should work to make their components attractive to third parties. This is good software engineering and [open development](#) practice that can lead to more [sustainable software](#) since it enables [open innovation](#).

Unfortunately, software development teams often claim that the effort required to properly architect reusable components and to build community interest in those components requires resources beyond those available within a typical research project's budget. It's hard to argue against this view when the research team is only tasked with solving the immediate problem, and not tasked with the long-term sustainability of the software involved.

Since we were not having significant success in making this point, we set out to demonstrate through practice. We wanted to show that it is possible to solve the immediate problem as well as ensure the long-term sustainability of software outputs and, perhaps more importantly, the research team. All that is required is some forward planning and some new skills.

Our first step was to work with the University of Bolton, who had implemented a W3C Widget server as part of a much larger EU project. We helped the Bolton team, headed up by Scott Wilson, to [take their code into the Apache Software Foundation's Incubator](#). Since Wookie's entry into the Incubator we've been [working to build a community](#) around the project. Bolton alone has received in excess of £700k in further funding relating to Wookie and the project itself has [received many code enhancements](#) from the community.

Our work on Wookie led directly to the extraction of more code components from three separate projects, two in the US and one in the Netherlands. This created a second project in the Apache Incubator called [Apache Rave](#), which provides a platform for the

creation of web applications built with OpenSocial Gadgets (reusing Apache Shindig) and W3C Widgets (via Apache Wookie). This is a relatively new project, but already the collaboration of all partners is leading to yet more reuse and collaboration.

One example of this is a new project (funded by the JISC) called Rave in Context. This project uses both Wookie and Rave to provide a new user interface to the popular [MyExperiment](#) scientific workflows application. By leveraging the widget features of Rave and the API provided by MyExperiment we will be demonstrating how user interfaces can self-adapt to different hardware devices and user environments. We'll also be building widgets for accessing Simal and OpenDOAR with the same interface.

Of course, this project is itself an open development project. We will be extracting a series of generic widget templates for common web application features. These templates will be donated back to the Apache Wookie and Rave projects (as appropriate), whilst feature-specific implementations will be offered to the MyExperiment, Simal and OpenDOAR projects.

It's taken us nearly two years to reach this point. Along the way various sub-projects and related teams have secured funding. Each of these projects has highlighted the open development approach as a major component of its sustainability plans. We've also engaged commercial partners in these projects, providing further resources to ensure the ongoing support of the open source code and the research teams that depend on it.

We hope that this practical demonstration of openness as a sustainable academic research practice will encourage you to budget for sustainability in future proposals. Of course OSS Watch is here to help you at [bid-writing stage](#).

PS We've just had a third project relating to the Open Grid Computing Environment (OGCE) accepted into the Apache Incubator. Watch this space for more info on Apache Airavata.

► <http://osswatch.jiscinvolve.org/wp/2011/05/21/rave-in-context/>

“ We wanted to show that it is possible to solve the immediate problem as well as ensure the long-term sustainability of software outputs and, perhaps more importantly, the research team. ”

An open letter to OSS developers: thank you!

Published on May 23, 2011

Dear OSS developers, I wanted to write to say thank you for the work that you do. Thank you for the hours you put into your projects. Thank you for developing them and updating them. Thank you for keeping them free! And thank you for thinking up and creating the tools that make my job easier.

As a freelance writer, I cannot earn a living without having excellent tools: a working computer, pens and paper, internet access, image-editing abilities, and a word processor. The health of my business depends on how well these tools work for me as I complete my projects.

At the same time, I'm appalled by the cost associated with some of the options out there. Adobe InDesign and Microsoft Office Suite are both quite expensive, and I have a hard time

“ I have found that products created as openly as possible and provided for free have done wonders for my business. ”

justifying diverting my money to pay for those when my income is already squeezed as tightly as it is.

Instead, I have found that products created as openly as possible and provided for free have done wonders for my business. I'm speaking, most specifically of course, about [OpenOffice.org](#), which, as you well know, has a writer program that more than allows me to accomplish all of my basic writing tasks.

This guest post is contributed by [Donna Reish](#), who writes on the topic of [best universities](#).

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I think one of the beautiful things about open source applications, like OpenOffice's word processor, is that they integrate with other applications almost seamlessly. In the case of word processors, I can save a document that I'm working on in such a way as to allow someone with Microsoft Word to read and edit it just as easily. When I coordinate with my clients, I don't have to jump through a lot of hoops in order to make the file a certain kind in order to help them read it or edit it. As someone who doesn't quite know how computer programming works, I treat such compatibility like a miracle on earth!

Another open sourced application that I've found incredibly helpful for my freelancing business is [GTD-free](#), an open sourced productivity application that basically helps me implement the 'getting things done' method of personal productivity management. When I freelance, I often juggle multiple projects, many of which have different deadlines and requirements. I need to have a great method of keeping all of it tracked in one place. I

used to use a Moleskine notebook, but I found that the exercise of constantly writing down things was getting to be a task in and of itself. The switch to this application made my life so much easier.

Finally, I know I owe open source developers a lot, but if you have better suggestions regarding productivity apps, feel free to share your comments! I've been really happy so far with the tools I'm using, but I'm always looking for ways to improve.

Anyhow, these are some of the real world benefits for which the work you do is indirectly responsible! Thank you again.

Sincerely, Donna Reish

Editor's note: Donna's letter is an excellent example of someone acting in the [evangelising role](#). The evangelist is an important role within an open source community and is discussed, along with all the other community roles, in the OSS Watch briefing note '[Roles in open source projects](#)'.

► <http://osswatch.jiscinvolve.org/wp/2011/05/23/an-open-letter-to-oss-developers-thank-you/>

 **STAY UP-TO-DATE**
► [OSS Watch events feed](#)
► <http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/rss/events.rs>

Events

Jun
14-15 **OSC presenting at SmartGov Live, London, 14-15 June 2011**
The Open Source Consortium (OSC) will be presenting at SmartGov Live at ExCel London in June. Over two days, this free event will provide speakers, content and networking opportunities.
► <http://www.opensourceconsortium.org/content/view/143/1/>

Jun
17-18 **Interactivism: accessibility hack weekend, London, 17-18 June 2011**
Interactivism is a two-day hack weekend that will bring together the best computer software engineer students, Googlers, designers, other social innovators and older people in crack teams to code a better web that overcomes the barriers that stand in the way of older people accessing the web. Closing date for idea submission 5pm 1 June. Selected ideas will be announced by Friday 3 June.
► <http://simpl.co/interactivism>

Jul
25-29 **OSCON 2011, Portland, Oregon, 25-29 July 2011**
Join today's open source innovators, builders and pioneers as they gather at the Oregon Convention Center in Portland, Oregon, to share their expertise and experience, explore new ideas and inspire each other. Learn first-hand how new developments in open source are shaping the future and have some serious fun with 2000+ people like you. Registration now open.
► <http://events.linuxfoundation.org/events/linuxcon-europe>

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>

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Frequently Asked Questions

Q Can I restrain commercial reuse of my code using an open source licence?

A Not directly, no. Point 6 of the [Open Source Definition](#) states that a pre-requisite for any licence to be considered open source is that it should make 'No Discrimination Against Fields of Endeavor'. Commercial exploitation is a field of endeavour.

Having said this, some open source licences make code that they cover less appealing for commercial entities to include in their products. In general, licences with some element of 'copyleft' such as the [GNU GPLv2](#) or the [Mozilla Public License](#) will compel commercial reusers to make some or all of their own code open source. Permissive licences such as the [BSD License](#) and the [Apache License v2](#) on the other hand allow the code they cover to be added to a closed source project without compelling any other code to be open source.

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

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