

Open Source Mainstream: 12 October 2005

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OSS Watch

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12 October
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- What is OSS Watch?
- What does "mainstream" mean?
- What does "open source" mean?
- Mainstream use vs understanding
- Examples
- Final thoughts

OSS Watch: the UK open source software advisory service

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Mainstream:
12 October
2005

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OSS Watch provides unbiased advice and guidance on free and open source software for UK higher and further education.

- strategic IT decision-makers
- IT managers and technical staff
- software developers
- academic end-users

OSS Watch is funded by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) and based within the Research Technologies Service at the University of Oxford.

OSS Watch is *not* an advocacy group. There are many other groups across the world who fulfil the advocacy function, e.g.:

- Free Software Foundation
- Open Forum Europe
- SchoolForgeUK
- and many more

OSS Watch's role is to promote awareness and understanding of the legal, social and economic issues that arise when educational institutions engage with free and open source software.

OSS Watch's key focus for 2005-6 is *sustainability*.

- 10-12 April 2006 **Sustainability and Open Source Software** Oxford

Mark your diaries

What does "mainstream" mean?

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12 October
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There is no useful definition of *mainstream* but some helpful markers might be:

- IT departments use it regularly
- governments encourage its use
- research councils fund its development
- schools begin using it
- the BBC uses and develops it
- your granny uses Firefox

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Some numbers

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12 October
2005

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- 6317 registered Moodle sites in over 130 countries
- over 50,000 registered Moodle users
- more than 90 million Firefox downloads
- 69.89% of web servers run Apache - Netcraft web server survey, October 2005
- 965 Linux desktops at the University of Oxford

What does "open source" mean?

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Open source software is software released under an Open Source Initiative (OSI) certified licence.

There are currently 58 OSI certified open source licences.

The OSI is **not** a legislative body. Its authority resides entirely in the fact that the open source community

- recognizes it as the maintainer of the Open Source Definition (OSD)
- is willing to participate in the OSI certification process
- has not set up a viable alternative

Criteria of the Open Source Definition

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12 October
2005

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- free redistribution
- source code
- derived works
- integrity of the author's source code
- no discrimination against persons or groups
- no discrimination against fields of endeavour
- distribution of licence
- licence must not be specific to a product
- licence must not restrict other software
- licence must be technology-neutral

Mainstream use vs understanding

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12 October
2005

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Understanding what open source software is, its connection to open source licences and consciously deploying it as open source software is more challenging than merely using open source software.

Are universities and colleges using open source software?

Yes

Does everyone use it everywhere?

No

OSS Watch scoping study in 2003 found that more than 65% of UK institutions were either using or were looking seriously at open source software. Of course this *use* was taking place at many different levels.

Institutional use (2)

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12 October
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Open source software has tended in the past to be used primarily within institutional infrastructure - e.g. mail servers, web servers, authentication systems etc.

More recently the rise of quality open source desktop applications, especially in the ubiquitous area of web clients, email clients, and office productivity suites has seen awareness of open source begin to spread to ordinary users of ICT.

OSS Watch's 2003 study revealed that almost no institution surveyed explicitly considered or mentioned open source software in its IT Strategy.

Many institutions **do** make reference to the use of open standards.

Open source is **not** the same thing as open standards. However, open source projects tend to use and promote open standards.

The number 1 reason why higher education institutions investigate open source software: interoperability.

The principal document setting the context for open source in the UK is

- Open Source Software: Use within UK Government, version 2, 28 October 2004

Also of note:

- Open source software trials in government - final report, 28 October 2004
- BECTA report on open source software in schools, 13 May 2005
- Open Source Academy - funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (upcoming)
- JISC open source policy (upcoming)

UK government open source policy (2)

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12 October
2005

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The open source policy **does not** mandate the use of open source software either in procurement funded by the government, or as a licensing model for research and development outputs.

It does identify it as one possible route for exploitation and as a comparative to consider in procurement.

On 13 May 2005 BECTA issued a report on open source software in schools.

The report concluded that *open source can offer a cost effective alternative to proprietary software.*

JISC open source policy (upcoming)

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JISC policy is an implementation of the UK government policy. Again, it **does not** mandate the use of open source software. It also **does not** insist that software outputs from JISC funding be released under an open source licence.

It does, however, require projects to declare the exploitation route for software outputs at the start of a project, and to justify the licence choice for those outputs.

In effect, this is merely an example of good practice in software development.

The BBC does open source

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12 October
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The BBC both uses open source software and releases software under open source licences.

The various BBC open source projects have been brought together at one site <http://www.bbc.co.uk/opensource/>

Open source software development is an extension of our Public Service remit. Releasing open source software helps our audience get additional value from the work they've funded, and also get tools for free that they couldn't get any other way. It also allows people outside the BBC to extend projects in such a way that may in future be used in the BBC.



Firefox - Rediscover the web - Mozilla Firefox

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rediscover the web

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Why Use Firefox?

["Beware of spyware. If you can, use the Firefox browser."](#) - USA Today

["Better than Internet Explorer by leaps and bounds."](#) - FORBES

Popup Blocking
Stop annoying popup ads in their tracks with Firefox's built in popup blocker.

Tabbed Browsing
View more than one web page in a single window with this time saving feature. Open links in the background so that they're ready for viewing when you're ready to read them. [Find out more...](#)

Privacy and Security
Built with your security in mind, Firefox keeps your computer safe from malicious spyware by not loading harmful ActiveX controls. A comprehensive set of privacy

Resources and Links

- [Get Extensions and Themes](#)
- [Spread the Word!](#)
- [Support Forum](#)
- [MozillaZine](#)
- [Firefox Help](#)
- [Project Information](#)
- [Knowledge Base](#)

Firefox Features

- Live Bookmarks
- Extensions
- Themes

Done

Firefox and my granny (2)

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More than 90 million downloads of Firefox.

But my granny and I still just talk about baking when I see her. It just doesn't matter to her that she is using open source software.

Open source in the mainstream

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Open source **is** undeniably a **part** of the mainstream.

Of course, just because open source is **in** the mainstream is by itself no reason to use it.

And the same applies to proprietary software.

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12 October
2005

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For more information on open source software development and deployment, visit <http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/> or write to info@oss-watch.ac.uk