

Open source software and the VLE

Randy Metcalfe

OSS Watch

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These are the points to take away from this talk:

- open source software is a viable and cost-effective option
- open source software is **not** a panacea
- always choose the best solution for your needs

In this talk

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the VLE

Randy
Metcalfe

- OSS Watch
- Open source software
- Impact points
- Key message

OSS Watch: the UK open source software advisory service

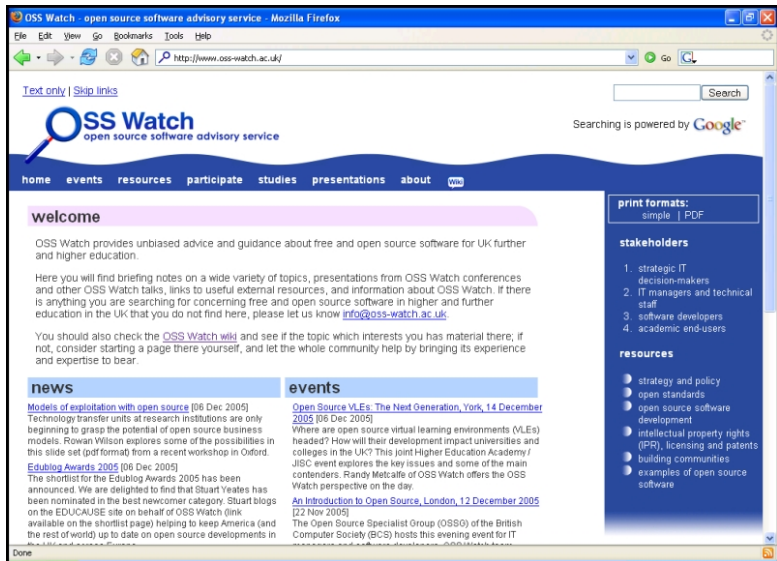
Open source
software and
the VLE

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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.



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welcome

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

Here you will find briefing notes on a wide variety of topics, presentations from OSS Watch conferences and other OSS Watch talks, links to useful external resources, and information about OSS Watch. If there is anything you are searching for concerning free and open source software in higher and further education in the UK that you do not find here, please let us know info@oss-watch.ac.uk.

You should also check the [OSS Watch wiki](#) and see if the topic which interests you has material there; if not, consider starting a page there yourself, and let the whole community help by bringing its experience and expertise to bear.

news

[Models of exploitation with open source](#) [06 Dec 2005]
Technology transfer units at research institutions are only beginning to grasp the potential of open source business models. Rowan Wilson explores some of the possibilities in this slide set (pdf format) from a recent workshop in Oxford.

[Edublog Awards 2005](#) [06 Dec 2005]
The shortlist for the Edublog Awards 2005 has been announced. We are delighted to find that Stuart Yeates has been nominated in the best newcomer category. Stuart is on the EDUCAJSE site on behalf of OSS Watch (link available on the shortlist page) helping to keep America (and the rest of world) up to date on open source developments in

events

[Open Source VLEs: The Next Generation, York, 14 December 2005](#) [06 Dec 2005]
Where are open source virtual learning environments (VLEs) headed? How will their development impact universities and colleges in the UK? This Joint Higher Education Academy / JISC event explores the key issues and some of the main contenders. Randy Metcalfe of OSS Watch offers the OSS Watch perspective on the day.

[An Introduction to Open Source, London, 12 December 2005](#) [22 Nov 2005]
The Open Source Specialist Group (OSSG) of the British Computer Society (BCS) hosts this evening event for IT

print formats:
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stakeholders

1. strategic IT decision-makers
2. IT managers and technical staff
3. software developers
4. academic end-users

resources

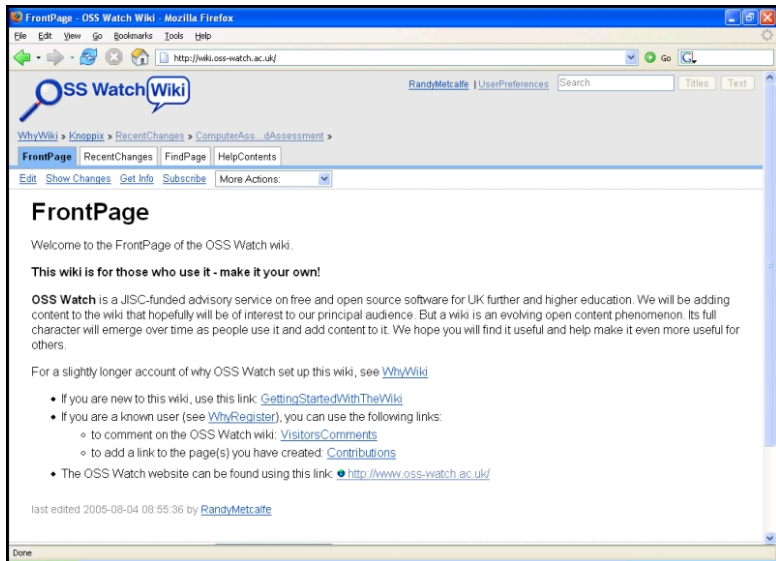
- strategy and policy
- open standards
- open source software development
- intellectual property rights (IPR), licensing and patents
- building communities
- examples of open source software

Done

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, technical and economic issues that arise when educational institutions engage with free and open source software.



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FrontPage

Welcome to the FrontPage of the OSS Watch wiki.

This wiki is for those who use it - make it your own!

OSS Watch is a JISC-funded advisory service on free and open source software for UK further and higher education. We will be adding content to the wiki that hopefully will be of interest to our principal audience. But a wiki is an evolving open content phenomenon. Its full character will emerge over time as people use it and add content to it. We hope you will find it useful and help make it even more useful for others.

For a slightly longer account of why OSS Watch set up this wiki, see [WhyWiki](#)

- If you are new to this wiki, use this link: [GettingStartedWithTheWiki](#)
- If you are a known user (see [WhyRegister](#)), you can use the following links:
 - to comment on the OSS Watch wiki: [VisitorsComments](#)
 - to add a link to the page(s) you have created: [Contributions](#)
- The OSS Watch website can be found using this link: <http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/>

last edited 2005-08-04 08:55:36 by [RandyMetcalfe](#)

Done

- Website <http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/>
- Wiki <http://wiki.oss-watch.ac.uk/>
- Briefing notes and guidance materials
- Conferences and workshops
- Consultation
- Research
 - national survey on open source software use in HE and FE
 - JISC study on models for sustainability in open source projects

[Open source and sustainability, Oxford, 10-12 April 2006](#)

open source is not a self-certification scheme

Either your software is released under an Open Source Initiative (OSI) certified licence or it is **not** open source software.

There are, at present, 58 OSI certified licences.

The first question you should ask of any software claiming to be *open source* is, what licence is this software released under?

All certified licences meet the 10 criteria of the Open Source Definition <http://www.opensource.org/docs/definition.php>

Open source software (2)

Open source is also about a lot of other things than just the licence:

- freedom
- community
- software development methodologies

but remember, if it does not have an open source licence, it is not open source software.

- Procurement
- Deployment
- Support

Have you thought through the IPR issues around how technical staff will be able to contribute patches and small chunks of code to the larger open source project?

Adding an open source option into the mix when selecting a future VLE is excellent. But how do you compare open source VLEs against proprietary VLEs?

- Stay focused on the technical and end-user requirements
- Get out and explore the development and user communities
- Consider the *Business Readiness Rating* (BRR) of the software
- Choose the best solution for your needs

The BRR is a proposed open standard to facilitate the assessment and adoption of open source software.

<http://www.openbrr.org/>

All deployments of software demand serious planning for their roll-out and take-up.

Open source software does not differ from proprietary software in this. If you do not have a plan fully backed by senior management yet, stop now and get your home team behind you.

Most VLE deployment failures have little to do with whether the software is open source or proprietary.

Open source software is not *volunteer* software. Serious businesses (IBM, Sun Microsystems, Redhat, etc.) are building a substantial portion of their business model around open source software.

These businesses are **not** making money by selling you a licence to use their software.

They make money by selling you *support contracts*, bespoke implementations, special feature development, etc.

Open source VLEs often do not have huge marketing departments for their commercial service support businesses. But support, in a variety of forms including service contracts, is usually available.

- Open Source Software: Use within UK Government
<http://www.govtalk.gov.uk/policydocs/>
- Policy on Open Source Software for JISC Projects and Services
http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=about_policy

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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