

What does
open source
mean for the
institutional
web
manager?

Randy
Metcalfe

What does **open source** mean for the institutional web manager?

Randy Metcalfe

OSS Watch

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These are the points to take away from this talk:

- *open source* is more than just a copyright licensing paradigm
- no one needs to tell you to use open source software
- good policy helps embed best practice
- standards, especially open standards, are a good thing
- pragmatism is also good

openness is...a warm puppy

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- OSS Watch is...
- open source software is...
- policy frameworks
- institutional policy versus practice
- openness

OSS Watch: the UK open source software advisory service

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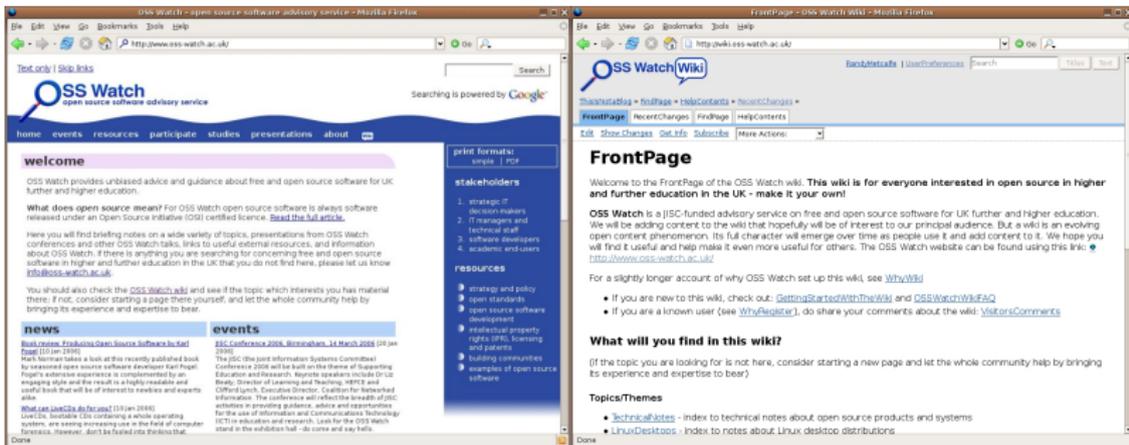
OSS Watch provides unbiased advice and guidance on free and open source software for UK higher and further education.

- 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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The image displays two side-by-side browser windows. The left window shows the OSS Watch website homepage. It features a search bar at the top right, a navigation menu with links like 'home', 'events', 'resources', 'participate', 'studies', 'presentations', and 'about', and a main content area with a 'welcome' section. The right window shows the FrontPage of the OSS Watch wiki. It has a search bar, navigation tabs for 'FrontPage', 'Recent Changes', 'FindPage', and 'Help/Contents', and a main content area with a 'FrontPage' section. Both windows show the URL 'http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk'.

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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

open source is...

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- a copyright licensing paradigm
- a marketing term for *free software*
- a software development methodology
- all about community
- a business model

open source is also...a warm puppy

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open source is a copyright licensing paradigm

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



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

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<http://www.opensource.org/docs/definition.php>

- 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

open source is about freedom

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- The freedom to run the program, for any purpose
- The freedom to study how the program works, and adapt it to your needs
- The freedom to redistribute copies so you can help your neighbour
- The freedom to improve the program, and release your improvements to the public, so that the whole community benefits

The Free Software Definition

<http://www.gnu.org/philosophy/free-sw.html>

open source is a development methodology

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Open source development *may* include:

- programmer commitment, because the programmer is also the user
- rapid change, because programmers want to see results
- unconstrained specifications, because there is no external client
- collective maintenance of the code
- response to change, dictated by (perhaps unexpected) users

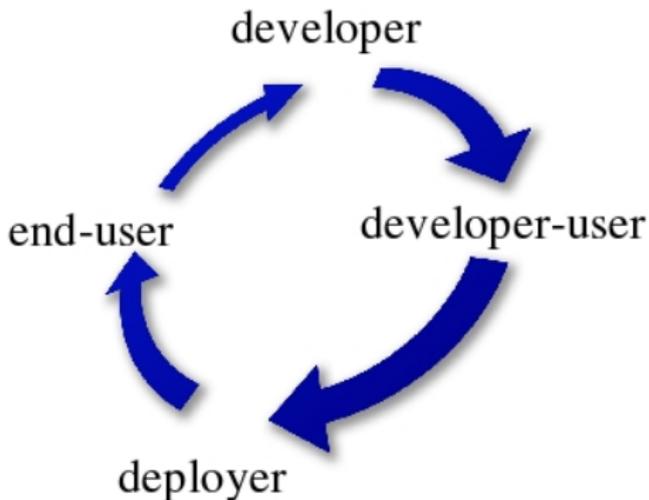
Eric Raymond famously characterised this apparent new development paradigm in his monograph *The Cathedral and the Bazaar*.

open source is about community

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Those who *merely* deploy open source software are also part of the open source community.



It's the community, not the code, that's important.

open source is a business model

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Any business whose business model depends upon the use or development of open source software is an open source business.

This leaves plenty of room for many different types of businesses:

- consultation
- business process analysis
- implementation support
- bespoke module development
- ongoing support contractor
- training
- hosting
- and more!

open source = openness?

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policy framework in the UK

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

UK Government open source policy (1)

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- UK Government will consider OSS solutions alongside proprietary ones in IT procurements. Contracts will be awarded on a value for money basis.
- UK Government will only use products for interoperability that support open standards and specifications in all future IT developments.
- UK Government will seek to avoid lock-in to proprietary IT products and services.

UK Government open source policy (2)

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- UK Government will consider obtaining full rights to bespoke software code or customisations of COTS(Commercial Off The Shelf) software it procures wherever this achieves best value for money.
- Publicly funded Research and Development projects which aim to produce software outputs shall specify a proposed software exploitation route at the start of the project. At the completion of the project, the software shall be exploited either commercially or within an academic community or as OSS.

JISC open source policy (1)

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- Advice and guidance to the communities JISC serves must be neutral and unbiased, and must not discriminate between open source and closed source software products.
- Calls for funding, the bidding process, the award of funding, the administration of awarded funding and the evaluation of funded projects and services must not discriminate between between open source and closed source software, unless the purpose of the projects or services specifically requires it.
- Where open source and closed source software are evaluated against one another, value for money over the expected lifetime of the system must be compared.

JISC open source policy (2)

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- Projects must maintain an IPR register, listing all contributors to their software and who owns the copyright on contributions.
- The ownership of code which is to be developed in joint projects must be established before work begins.
- Copyright of software, documentation, design materials, user interface and source code must be released under an OSI-approved open source licence, unless the bid explicitly argues why this should not be the case and proposes an alternative licence.

JISC open source policy (3)

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- Projects must state in their bid whether they foresee the project continuing beyond the timespan of funding, and if so whom they see participating in the project.
- Projects should engage with end users and other parties to encourage and build self- sustaining communities.
- Projects should accept bug reports, patches, translations and feedback from contributors outside the project.

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In October 2003, the open source virtual learning environment (VLE) Moodle did not even register on OSS Watch's initial national scoping study.

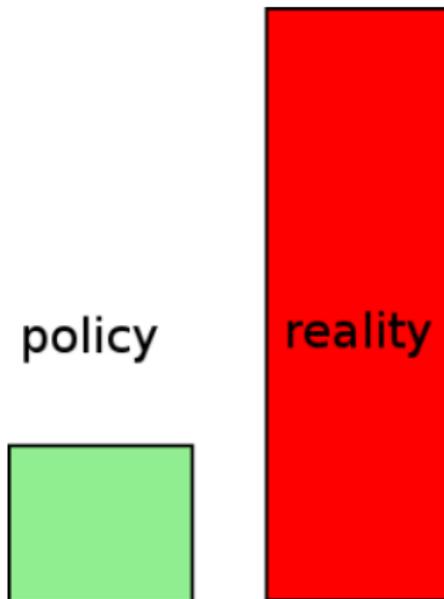
By March of 2006

- 56% of further education colleges reported they are using Moodle.

policy versus practice

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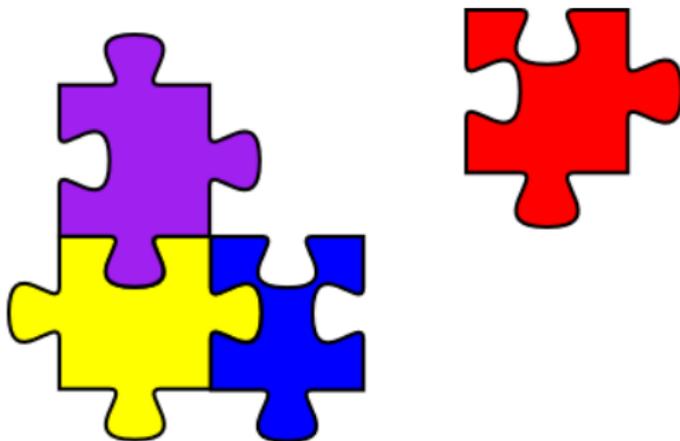
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what will openness mean for institutions?

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joining the community

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Further Information

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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

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