OSS Watch
Supporting open source in education and research

▸ http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/newsletters/november2010.pdf

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

Online newsletter available at
▸ http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/ newsletters/november2010.pdf

Hello everyone and welcome to OSS Watch's November newsletter. This month we bring you a very practical article from Sander van der Waal examining the release management process in open source projects. Both in this article, and in its sister article looking at best practice, Sander gives practical advice and checklists to help you manage the process of building, packaging and distributing software. We also bring you a selection of blog pieces considering the spirit of innovation and case studies of open innovation, along with news of a new Mozilla Drumbeat project called Camelia. If you are interested in protecting the open web, then please do take a look at Camelia and vote for (or maybe even join?) the project.

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

STAY UP-TO-DATE
▸ OSS Watch news feed
▸ http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/rss/osswatchnews.rss

News from OSS Watch

Free Technology Academy and Free Software Foundation announce partnership

The Free Technology Academy (FTA) and the Free Software Foundation (FSF) have announced their partnership in the FTA's Associate Partner Network. The network aims to expand the availability of professional educational courses and materials covering the concepts and applications of free software and free standards.

▸ http://ftacademy.org/announce/fsf

Best practice in release management for open source projects

Release management is about managing the process of building, packaging and distributing software for consumption. In this document Sander van der Waal focuses on some of the best practices in release management and supplies a checklist to help you define and streamline your project's release management process.

▸ http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/resources/releasemanagementbestpractice.xml

Release management in open source software projects

Release management is about managing the process of building, packaging and distributing software for consumption. In this document Sander van der Waal explains the process of release management in open source software projects and highlights the most important steps in this process.

▸ http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/resources/releasemanagement.xml

Linus Torvalds awarded 2010 C+C Prize

The Linux Foundation has announced that this year, Linux creator Linus Torvalds is one of three recipients of the prestigious C+C Prize. According to the NEC C+C Foundation, which awarded the prize, Torvalds is being recognised for his 'contributions to the advancement of the information technology industry, education, research, and the improvement of our lives'.

▸ http://www.h-online.com/open/news/item/Linus-Torvalds-awarded-2010-C-C-Prize-1122542.html

Oracle wants LibreOffice members to leave OOo council

A group of key OpenOffice.org (OOo) contributors and community members recently decided to fork the project and establish The Document Foundation (TDF) in order to drive forward community-driven development of the open source office suite. Oracle has responded to the move by asking several members of TDF to step down from their positions as representatives on the OOo community council.

▸ http://arstechnica.com/open-source/news/2010/10/oracle-wants-libreoffice-members-to-leave-ooo-council.ars

BlackBerry Widgets renamed WebWorks and goes open source

BlackBerry Widgets, a web-based development platform released by RIM, has been renamed WebWorks, and will be an open-source project. Using the BlackBerry Web App Packager, developers will be able to create fully fledged programs using familiar web languages such as HTML5, CSS, XML and the like.

▸ http://www.intomobile.com/2010/09/27/blackberry-widgets-renamed-webworks-goes-open-source/

▸ OSS Watch online

▸ OSS Watch blog

▸ Contact OSS Watch

▸ OSS Watch twitter

OSS Watch is funded by the Joint Information Systems Committee

JISC

▸ OSS Watch online
http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk

▸ OSS Watch blog
http://osswatch.jiscinvolve.org

▸ Contact OSS Watch
info@oss-watch.ac.uk

▸ OSS Watch twitter
http://twitter.com/osswatch

Release management in open source software projects

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

Release management is about managing the process of building, packaging and distributing software for consumption. In this document we will explain the process of release management in open source software projects and highlight the most important steps in this process. We have also published a document that elaborates on the technical details of best practice in release management and provides a checklist that can be useful when making a release.

1. Introduction

In open source software projects, it is important that the software is released early and often. It is essential to have a well-defined process in place for creating these releases - much more important, in fact, than it is for most other activities in software development. This is necessary to ensure that all legal issues are addressed and that the quality of a release is good enough to be useful to users. This does not mean that a release must be complete or that it must be bug-free; in practice, this is never really the case. It simply means that the status of each release is well documented, in order to manage user expectations.

You will see that the tools that are important in an open source software project also play an indispensable role in release management. The most important tools in this respect are:

- *Mailing lists* for communication
- The *issue tracker* for release-planning and scope management
- The *version control system* for tracking and tracing the released code

There are a number of roles in the release management process. In an early-stage project, it is likely that these roles will be carried out by a single person. As a project matures, they can be separated out and delegated to different team members. The different roles in the release management process are:

- *Architect*: the person responsible for identifying, creating and implementing the release process
- *Manager*: the person overseeing the release process
- *Facilitator*: the liaison between all stakeholders in a release

Let's take a look at the most important steps in the release management process.

2. Scope and planning

There are a couple of issues that are generally important for open source projects, but become crucial when the project considers creating a release. First of all, it is essential to ensure licence compatibility of the code. It is likely the project's code depends on some external libraries, each of which will have its own software licence. The architect will have to check whether the licence of that library permits the project to redistribute it with its own code. Ideally, this will happen at the first moment this library is used in the project, but in any case should be no later than when the first release is prepared. Also, it is important for the project to make sure that all issues regarding intellectual property (IP) have been taken care of. Just as with licence compatibility, this should be done on an ongoing basis, but is especially important when preparing a release of the code.

When preparing a new release, the release manager needs to determine its scope and planning. They should involve the committers and users and seek some level of agreement from them about the scope and planning of the release. This is because the users will play a very important role in testing the prospective release and adopting the release once it has been made final. For this reason, all communication about the scope and planning of the release should be publicly accessible, for example via a public mailing list. While this process is usually overseen by the release manager, it may be controlled by the facilitator.

> **This does not mean that a release must be complete or that it must be bug-free; in practice, this is never really the case.**

Central to the release-planning process is the *issue tracker*. This tool is used to document the status of all issues relating to the project and provides a means of scheduling and keeping track of which issues will be in which release. How the scope and planning of the release is achieved depends largely on how the project is governed. From a technical perspective, it will usually be the architect who will need to analyse the list of unresolved issues prior to release. In collaboration with the release manager, they will decide which issues will be resolved in this release and which will be moved to a later release. They should not attempt to fix all issues in any given release. *This is a sure way of ensuring that the release never happens*. Any issues that are to be delayed should be moved to a later release in the issue tracker so that a known issues list and a roadmap for the release can be created. If the issue had previously been scheduled for a release but after consideration is being delayed, this should be recorded in the release documentation so that users will know that this part of the schedule has not been met.

Slippage of an individual issue is not always a bad thing, so it is generally not a problem if issues are moved to a later release. It will serve as a reminder to the project's users about what they can expect in the next release. If the release manager clearly indicates that the active developers will not address a given issue in a given release, users can decide just how important it is to them. If it is important enough, they can contribute to the project themselves by providing a patch. This is just one example of why communication is essential for keeping everybody informed throughout the process.

▸ Article continues at http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/resources/releasemanagement.xml

▸ OSS Watch online
http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk

▸ OSS Watch blog
http://osswatch.jiscinvolve.org

▸ Contact OSS Watch
info@oss-watch.ac.uk

▸ OSS Watch twitter
http://twitter.com/osswatch

The spirit of innovation

Published by Elizabeth Tatham on September 10, 2010

In his article 'The secrets of changing the world', Stephen Sackur explores the characteristics that he believes unite genuine innovators. To identify the common qualities that 'seem to separate us sheep from the innovative goats', he draws on interviews he has conducted over the years with some of the world's great innovators, in spheres as diverse as business, science and art:

• an indestructible will

• passion beyond reason

• outrageous optimism

• a super-sized ego

• the rebel spirit

This got me thinking about how I might expand the list – you could add creative thinking and self-discipline, for example – and about people I know who possess these traits, and how they use them. But what I found most thought-provoking, not to mention disturbing, about Sackur's article is the suggestion that 'most of us, in our youth, have the capacity to be innovators, free-thinkers, resolute refuseniks when it comes to accepting the status quo', but that we

'figure out from an early age that it's easier to conform than rebel'. If this is true, what can we, as parents, do to keep that spirit alive without creating monsters?

But that's a debate for another day. Here at OSS Watch, one of the ways in which we foster the innovative spirit is by promoting open innovation. Open innovation is a specific form of innovation, which recognises that in the modern world no single organisation has a monopoly on invention. Accordingly, it advocates the sharing of inventions and/or innovations across organisational boundaries, by such means as licensing, joint ventures and spin-offs.

Open innovation was one of the themes we explored at TransferSummit. If you missed it, catch up by reading Sam Jordison's blog post on the innovation track, or his report on the whole event. You can also find out more about open innovation in our briefing document 'Open source and open innovation'.

> **Open innovation is a specific form of innovation, which recognises that in the modern world no single organisation has a monopoly on invention.**

▸ http://osswatch.jiscinvolve.org/wp/2010/10/19/the-spirit-of-innovation/

Case studies on open innovation from academic projects

Published by Sander van der Waal on October 25, 2010

CERN is an organisation with a major track record in terms of openness, going back to the very start. The declaration from the 1953 CERN Convention states: *"the results of its experimental and theoretical work shall be (…) made generally available"*. Well known is the history of the world wide web and the role of Sir Tim Berners-Lee played, who was working at CERN at that time.

Last week I attended and presented at a workshop on 'open source software with TT Perspective', organised by the Technology Transfer Network at CERN. Given their long history of developing and using open source software, the TT network was interested in getting to know more about issues related to the commercial exploitation of open source software.

I presented two case studies of projects that originated from academia and managed to generate a lot of interest from the commercial sector. The first one is Apache Wookie (Incubating), a project OSS Watch is working closely with. Wookie started off as part of the TENCompetence project but the people at Bolton University realised that there was value in the widget server they developed as a separate project. By bringing the project to a foundation and working on a W3C standard it attracted the attention of many new potential partners, both from the academic and the commercial sector. Some of these have resulted in collaboration both on the project itself and in new collaborations with Europe.

The other example I presented was TexGen. By open sourcing this modelling tool, the university of Nottingham found many new collaborators. Commercial partners, for example from the aviation industry, were interested in this tool and in the expertise that Nottingham had developed. The open source project turned out to be a very good marketing tool and as a result new investments were made.

> **The open source project turned out to be a very good marketing tool and as a result new investments were made.**

These examples show how open source software projects are an excellent example of bringing open innovation into practice. Cross-collaboration between the academic and commercial sector can thrive in these projects and the examples mentioned show that there is not a single best way of achieving this. Wookie and TexGen are quite different projects: Wookie is centred around widgets, which is a very generally applicable technology, and the project carries a permissive licence. TexGen on the other hand is operating in the niche market of modelling the geometry of textile structures and their licence is GPLv2. But in both cases the commercial sector was interested and willing to invest in the project. Being open and making their work generally available as an open source project was a key factor. This involves much more than just choosing a licence and dumping your code; by using the open development methodology projects can become a true platform for open innovation.

▸ http://osswatch.jiscinvolve.org/wp/2010/10/25/case-studies-on-open-innovation-from-academic-projects/

Protecting the open web

Published by Ross Gardler on October 17, 2010

The Mozilla Foundation is a non-profit organization that promotes **openness, innovation and participation on the Internet**. Just under a year ago the Mozilla Foundation launched Mozilla Drumbeat to keep the web open: "*We want to spark a movement. We want to keep the web open for the next 100 years. The first step: inviting you to do and make things that help the web.*"

Today I submitted a project to Mozilla Drumbeat. The goal of this project is to take what we have learned about enabling and educating the UK academic sector about open source and applying this to the open web as a whole.

The project aims to adapt the support model we have developed here at OSS Watch and apply it within the Mozilla Drumbeat movement. We will work with existing projects and competency centres relating to the open web, we will share experience and knowledge through a series of practical support activities and we will take these lessons to the open web community, both within and outside the academic sector.

For more information checkout out the Camelia project on Mozilla Drumbeat. There's a couple of videos introducing the project, the first is less than 90 seconds long. Hopefully you will be motivated enough to vote for the project or even volunteer as a contributor (don't worry we're not holding you to any commitments).

By showing your support you are helping to ensure that we can attract infrastructural and financial support from the Mozilla and Shuttleworth foundations, so let's get this thing going.

▸ http://osswatch.jiscinvolve.org/wp/2010/10/17/protecting-the-open-web/

Events

STAY UP-TO-DATE
▸ OSS Watch events feed
▸ http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/rss/events.rss

Nov 8-10

fOSSa conference 2010, Grenoble, France, 8-10 November 2010

The second fOSSa (Free Open Source Software for Academia) conference will take place at the École de Management in Grenoble from 8 to 10 November 2010. This year's conference focuses on key aspects of open source, looking at its impact on neighbouring sectors such as hardware. fOSSa 2010 will welcome various European decision-makers and well-known free software organisations, including Apache, Arduino, Debian, Eclipse, Gnome, Red Hat, Ubuntu, FossBazaar and HP, as well many academics that use, produce and teach open source. fOSSa days are open to everyone, with free registration.

▸ http://fossa2010.inrialpes.fr/

Nov 23-24

NGS Innovation Forum '10, 23-24 November 2010: call for abstracts

The NGS Innovation Forum will be held at STFC Rutherford Appleton Laboratory on 23-24 November 2010. The two-day event will showcase the impact that the NGS has had on research in the UK, allow delegates to find out more about using the NGS in applied research and enable IT staff to find out how their institution can benefit from the NGS.

▸ http://www.ngs.ac.uk/events/ngs-IF10

Frequently Asked Questions

Q Do you accept guest blog posts?

A We not only accept guest blog posts, we welcome them! OSS Watch advises UK HE and FE on open source development, and this is at the heart of our blog. If you would like to contribute a guest post please point us to a few pieces you have written recently and let us know what experience in the area of open source you could bring to a blog piece.

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

▸ OSS Watch online
▸ OSS Watch blog
▸ Contact OSS Watch
▸ OSS Watch twitter

OSS Watch is funded by the Joint Information Systems Committee

JISC

▸ OSS Watch online
http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk

▸ OSS Watch blog
http://osswatch.jiscinvolve.org

▸ Contact OSS Watch
info@oss-watch.ac.uk

▸ OSS Watch twitter
http://twitter.com/osswatch