OSS Watch "reinvented"?

The world has changed, is it time
for OSS Watch to change?

Key Activities

- ## 2003 - 2006
  - "You need a policy with respect to open source"

- ## 2006 - 2008
  - "Open source is software released under an OSI approved licence"

- ## 2008 - 2010
  - "Sustainable open source is openly developed software"

What are the key activities for 2010-2012?

New funding proposal needed by March 2010

Evaluation of current activities

Legal advice

- Largely routine enquiries
- We are not lawyers
  - OSS Watch advice often overruled by lawyers
  - Legal departments often ignore non legal issues
    - E.g. Oxford recommends CUDDL (incompatible with most other licences)
- Hand off to JISC Advance?
  - Real legal advice?
  - Need to understand and communicate licence impact on community
  - can be separated from legal issues

Procurement Support

- Policy in place in > 55% of institutions
- Open source only considered equally alongside closed source in 15%
- Why no level playing field?
  - Lack of professional suppliers? Lack of reach?
    - Escalate to Business Innovation and Skills?
  - Niche market?
    - Shared services?

Materials Production

- Web
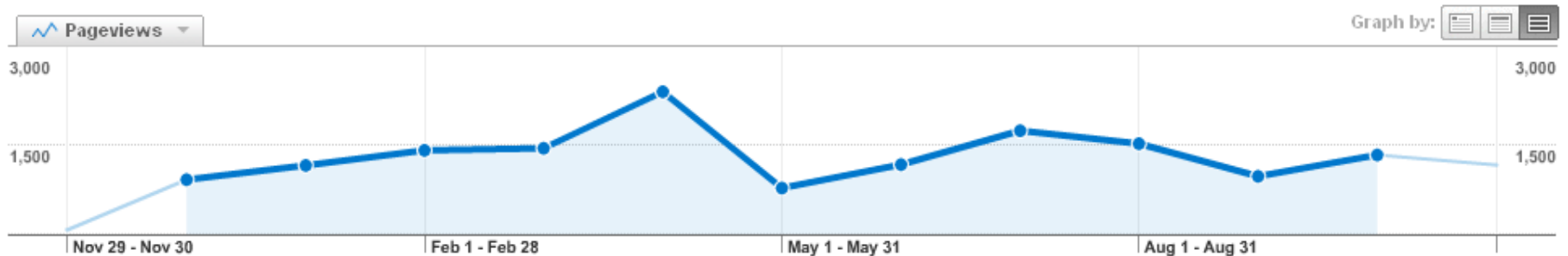 - 8,000 – 10,000 visits, 12,000 – 14,000 unique views per month

Nov 29, 2008 - Nov 29, 2009
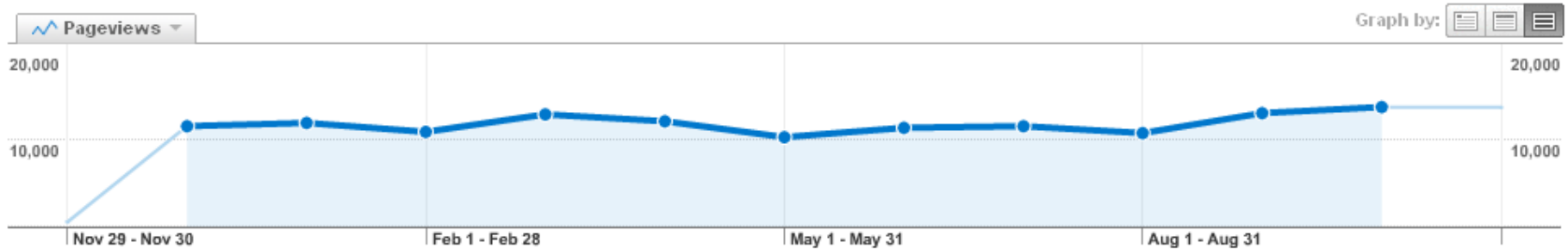
- Blog
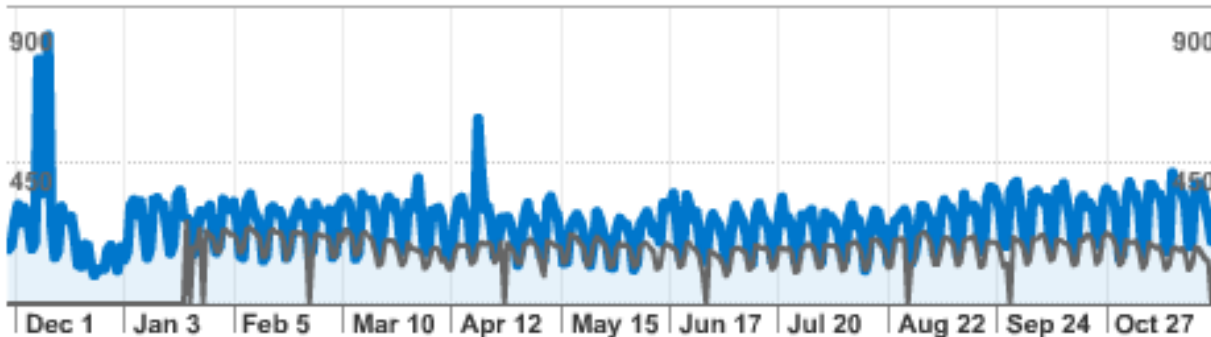 - 800-1000 visits, 1,100 – 1300 unique page views per month

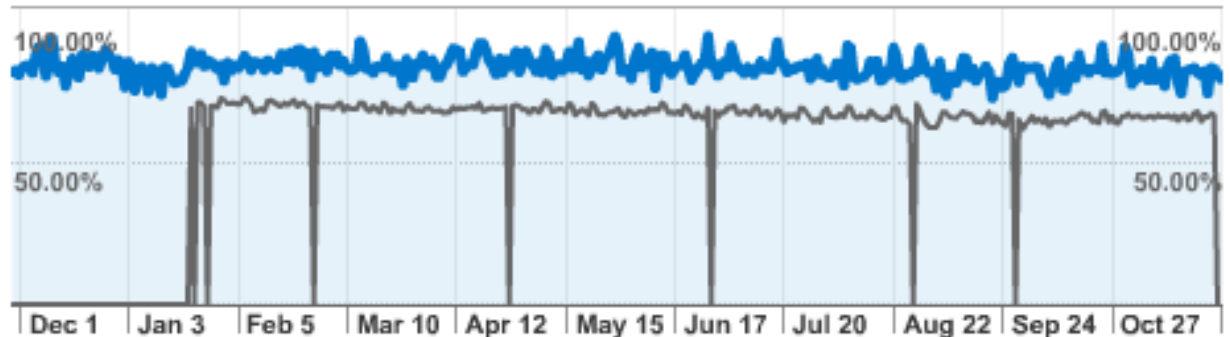Nov 29, 2008 - Nov 29, 2009

Comparison with Similar sites
The Good

Comparing: **Open Source sites of similar size** ⑦   Open category list

94,001 Visits
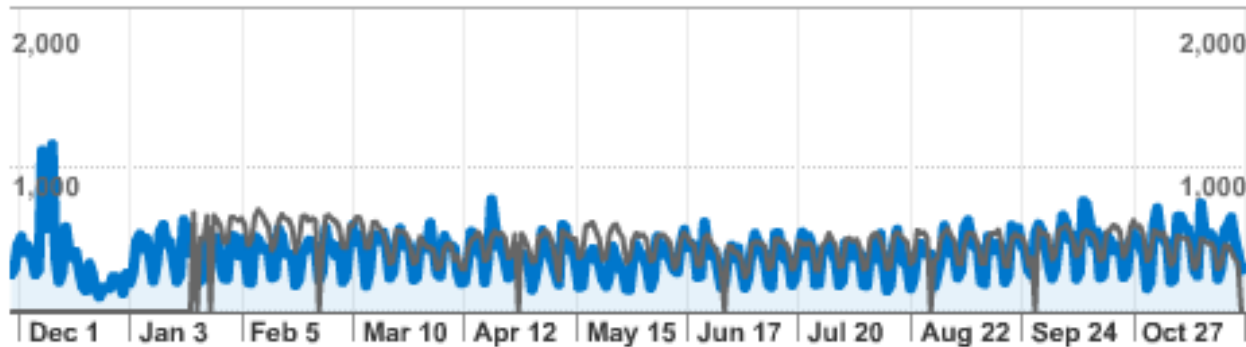Benchmark: 53,264 **(+76.48%)**

83.57% New Visits
Benchmark: 67.81% **(+23.24%)**

Comparison with similar sites
The Bad

144,190 Pageviews
Benchmark: 146,265 (-1.42%)
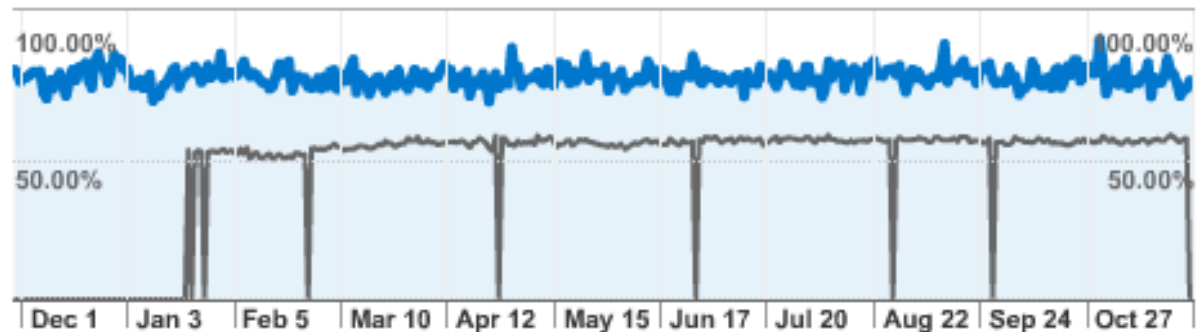
80.21% Bounce Rate
Benchmark: 56.53% (+41.89%)

Consultations

- Legal
  - Unable to say "use X" (we're not lawyers)
    - Leads to frustration
  - IP management in projects often ineffective despite our advice
- Sustainability
  - Presenting theory not helping practice
  - Community development usually avoided
- < 5% proposals consult with OSS Watch

Sustainability of Software

- Strategic projects (mentoring) very successful, for example:
  - Apache Wookie (Incubating)
    - opening innovation
  - Opencast Matterhorn (13 international inst.)
    - Mellon Foundation funding
  - Study Bar (Southampton)
    - new centre of expertise?
  - Maavis (Sheffield)
    - technology transfer funding
  - Shuffl (Oxford)
    - Rapid innovation project with third party contributions
- Lack of internal resources/skills
  - Attempting to create community leaders

Community Development

- Lack of community leadership
  - Academic leadership does not mean community leadership
- Strategic projects are producing leaders
  - But not fast enough
- Need to demonstrate academic benefits for community leader role
  - Case studies working well
    - need more

Open Innovation
A focus for the sector

Idea

Implementation

Operation

Barriers to Innovation

Barriers to Idea Generation

- **Starting point**
  - Finding a point to start from
  - Avoiding "not invented here"
  - Software production secondary to research interests
- **Sharing expertise**
  - Connecting expertise
  - Avoiding "it's my research"

Barriers to Internal Implementation

- Building on previous software outputs
  - Often poorly managed
  - Often invisible
  - Often unclear IP position
- Cost analysis
  - Often cheaper to hack a solution to the research problem than to build a real solution on others work
  - Prototyping rather than implementation

Barriers to External Implementation

- All of the above, plus
- Prototypes not build on one another
  - No central expertise
  - No point of contact for all work
- Lack of openness in projects
  - Limited transparency of knowledge
  - Limited transparency of skills
  - Significant coordination overhead

Barriers to Operation

- Knowledge transfer models are patent led
  - e.g. ISIS in Oxford routinely recommend the re-writing of open source components
- Academics often uninterested in exploitation
- Mistrust of commercial engagement in research activities

Opportunities we see

Opportunities for OSS Watch: Analysis

- What's hot in research?

- What problems are relevant in the commercial sector?

- Valuable software outputs in the sector
  - Measured in terms of Sustainability Maturity Model

Opportunities for OSS Watch: Incubation

- Incubation
  - Communities
    - Common problems
    - Complimentary Expertise
    - Research Outputs
  - Hand outputs off to most appropriate home
- Open development mentoring
  - Project leaders
  - Students

Opportunities for OSS Watch: Exploitation

- Clearing house for software outputs
- Independent management of software outputs
- Collaboration space
- Legal umbrella

Open Questions

Widening the questions to narrow
the opportunities

Open Questions: Focus

- Maintain a software focus?
  - What about open content?
- Maintain a broad focus?
  - Specialise in a domain area?
- Maintain legal advisory?
  - Specialise in community?
- Theoretical focus or practical support?
  - Are materials important?

Open Questions: Implementation

- **More hands on support?**
  - Mentoring
  - Software development
- **Engage students?**
  - Teaching FOSS development models
  - Students in research projects
- **Engage with third party projects?**
  - Mentoring upstream contributions

Open questions: A Foundation?

- For incubation?
  - Move on to a new home outside the sector
  - Incubating what?
    - Communities
    - Software
    - Business ideas
- As an independent home?
  - Shared services support
  - Commercial collaboration

Open Questions: ??????

What should the key activities be for 2010-2012?

Answering the questions

- Round table discussion until lunch (12:30)
- 1:30 – 2:00 3 groups discussing issues of interest to group
- 2:00 – 2:30 Feedback and round table
- 2:30 – 2:45 Individual top priorities
- 2:45 – 2:55 AOB
- 2:55 – 3:00 Date of next meeting (telecon)
  - Suggest last week of Feb
- 3:00 - ???? Beer, coffee and food
  - for those with time to spare

Group 1

- John Norman
- Jo Shields
- Paul Walk
- Scott Wilson

Group 2

- Lou Burnard
- Matthew Dovey
- David Flanders

Group 3

- Stormy Peters
- James Governor
- Steve Loughran