OSS Watch
and the JISC
policy on open
source
software: 9
November
2005

Randy
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- What is OSS Watch?
- Recent and future OSS Watch activities
- JISC policy on open source software

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OSS Watch: the UK open source software advisory service

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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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.

- *Building Open Source Communities*, Edinburgh
- Briefing notes on a wide range of topics
- Distribution of OSS Watch Knoppix and TheOpenCD
- Documentation relicensed under Creative Commons UK licences
- Presentations at workshops and conferences across the UK and beyond
- Direct consultation for JISC projects, Research Councils, universities and colleges etc.
- Blogging on open source in Europe for Educause
- Senior management briefing paper on open source for JISC

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- Website redesign http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/
- Launch of wiki http://wiki.oss-watch.ac.uk/
- Licensing workshops
- External evaluation of OSS Watch
- National survey on open source deployment in universities and colleges
- JISC study on models for sustainability in open source projects
- *Sustainability and Open Source Software* conference, Oxford - 10-12 April 2006

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- Open Source Software: Use within UK Government, version 2, 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
- JISC open source policy

- 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 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.

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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.

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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.

- 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.

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

UK government open source policy:

http://www.govtalk.gov.uk/policydocs/policydocs.asp

JISC open source policy:

http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=about_policy