

Open Source Culture

Looking (a little) Beyond Software

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<http://www.broofa.com/presentations/OpenSourceCulture.pdf>

What Is Open Source Culture?

The rise of open-source culture in the twentieth century resulted from a growing tension between creative practices that involve appropriation, and therefore require access to content that is often copyrighted, and increasingly restrictive intellectual property laws and policies governing access to copyrighted content

- Wikipedia, "Open Source Culture"



Open Source Culture describes communities where ...

- Emphasis is on sharing and collaboration
- Consumers expect to be able to modify and redistribute freely
- Organization and control are meritocratic
- Content creators are community members, not owners

Open Source History

'85: **Free Software Movement** founded by Richard Stallman

'91(ish): Linus Torvalds creates Linux

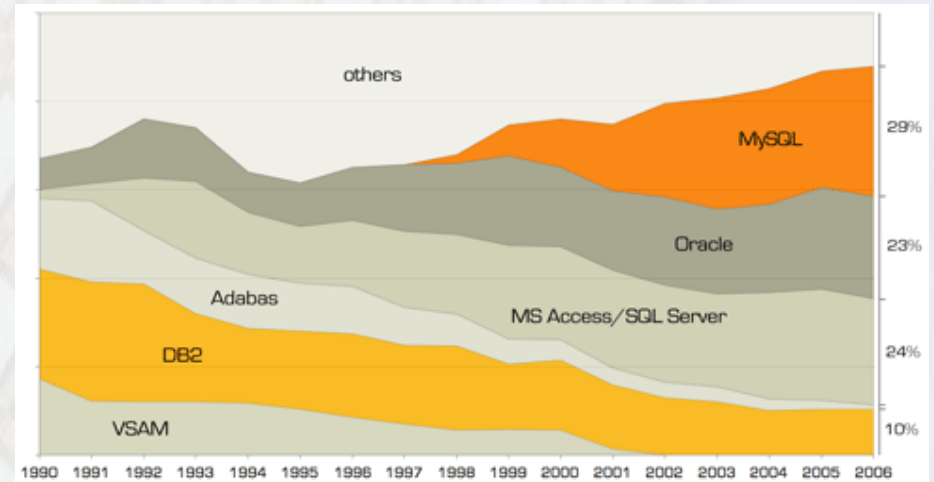
'97/'98: Eric Raymond publishes The Cathedral and the Bazaar.
Open Source Initiative (OSI) founded. “Open Source” enters
common lexicon.

Present Day: “Open” mindset is spreading beyond software ...

- Decline of industries where value is in distribution channels
- Daily news about litigation around intellectual property issues
- Consumer expectations about content ownership changing in fundamental ways

Open Software

- Open source software is ...
 - "Copy-left" protected
 - Community controlled & supported
 - Often backed by a company or non-profit org... but not always



- Examples
 - Linux - Displaced Sun Microsystems
 - MySQL - Replacing Oracle & IBM databases
 - Apache - Dominates web server market
 - Open Office – Microsoft Office, but free (and not quite as usable)

Open Artists

E.g. [Jonathan Coulton](#)

- Programmer-turned-musician with 7 self-published albums
- Music sold as DRM-free, hi-fidelity MP3s
- Creative Commons licensing enables “[Secondary Creativity](#)”
 - Home brewed videos ([Code Monkey](#)), remix contests, karaoke tracks, etc..
- Grassroots marketing
 - "Thing A Week" Podcast series
 - Free song giveaways



Open Content (a.k.a “Crowdsourcing”)

The Rise of **iStockPhoto.com**

- Stock photographers sell photos for \$200-\$300
- iStockPhoto.com sells photos for \$1
- **Lise Gagne**, the #1 iStockPhoto artist:
 - 467,934 downloads from 2003 to 4/15/2007
 - ... x 20¢/download = **\$93,500 earned**
 - ... x \$200/photo = **\$93.5M lost to stock photo industry**



... and it's eminent fall?

- Flickr.com + Creative Commons

Open Business

“Any sufficiently complex or expensive technology will eventually be replaced by two guys working over a weekend to come up with a better solution.”

- anonymous

- Open communities are tough competition ...
 - Success is not defined in economic terms
 - Burn rates (if any) are extremely low, if not \$0.00 all together
 - Market share, if lost, is lost to other open communities
- Successful open businesses ...
 - Monetize via secondary strategies (support, advertising, partnerships)
 - Embrace, drive, nurture standards and open technologies
 - Hire members of open communities that are vital to their business
- **How To Create Competitors**
 - No open API, No free version, Distancing customers

Open Programmers

- ... are socially adept
 - Open projects require people who are able to interact with strangers to overcome challenging, poorly defined, design and development tasks.
- ... read more, program less
 - They rely on ever growing “stack” of open technologies
 - Involved in multiple standards organizations and projects
- ... have complex notions of loyalty, prestige, and compensation
 - Loyalty lies with open communities than with companies
 - Value community opinion more than company evaluation
 - ***Continue to work on open projects regardless of employer***

Open Issues

Moderation in Open Content communities

You are only as trustworthy as your users (see [wikipedia issues](#))

Managing Open Development

How do you get volunteers to do the dirty work? (see [the most-voted-for bugzilla.mozilla.org bugs](#), some of which have been open for 5+ years!)

When users revolt

If your core business is built on an open community, how do you keep the inmates from running the asylum? (see [Digg.com HD-DVD controversy](#))

Contributing to Open Projects

Adding new functionality is easy(ish). But getting changes to existing code, requires dealing with the [informal] owner of said code... who may or may not see things your way. (sorry, no good links for this one – just personal experience)

On the Horizon

- OpenID – Distributed identity system for the web
 - It's coming, probably within the next 18-36 months (???)
- ODF - Open Document Format
 - Finally, a platform neutral document format... in theory. Not quite there yet, but stay tuned.

Some other reading ...

- [What You Should Know About Open Source Software](#) (pdf)
- [How To Create Competitors](#)
- [On the Rights of Molotov Man](#) - An Essay on the Moral Ambiguity of Copyrights

- And a couple questions to ponder ...
 - The music & movie industries under siege, but not the video game industry. Why is that?
 - Does Microsoft's reputation impact their ability to play in the open source space? How so?
 - What's the time frame for being able to monetize new content, before it is co-opted by the open community?

“DRM”, from XKCD.com

Dear Sony, Microsoft, the MPAA, the RIAA, and Apple:

Let's make a deal. You stop trying to tell me where, when, and how I play my movies and music, and I won't crush your homes under my inexorably advancing wall of ice.

