What You Should Know About Open Source Software

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Commercial Software

- Built with understandable words called Source Code

- When software is sold, we can't see the Source Code

- We can use the program, but can't see how it's built or change it

- License may forbid us to change it or resell it

Open Source Software

- The license allows you to see, change and distribute the source code

- There are different licenses that provide degrees of freedom and responsibility

- Open Source Initiative approves licenses to make sure they really are open source

http://www.opensource.org/

Open Standards

- Standards provide clear descriptions of how to exchange data and programs behave.

- Open Standards can be built into any program so that data exchange is easy

- Example is IMS (Instructional Management Systems) which various commercial vendors have pledged to follow

Open Source Applications	Closed Source Applications
Open Standards	

http://www.educationau.edu.au/papers/open_source.pdf

Who Is Using Open Source?

- Businesses large and small – (Linux, Apache)
- Education – infrastructure
- Education – an interest in OS applications (Moodle, Sakai)
- Developing countries

Who is Using Open Source?

70%

35%

0%

October 1995   April 2005
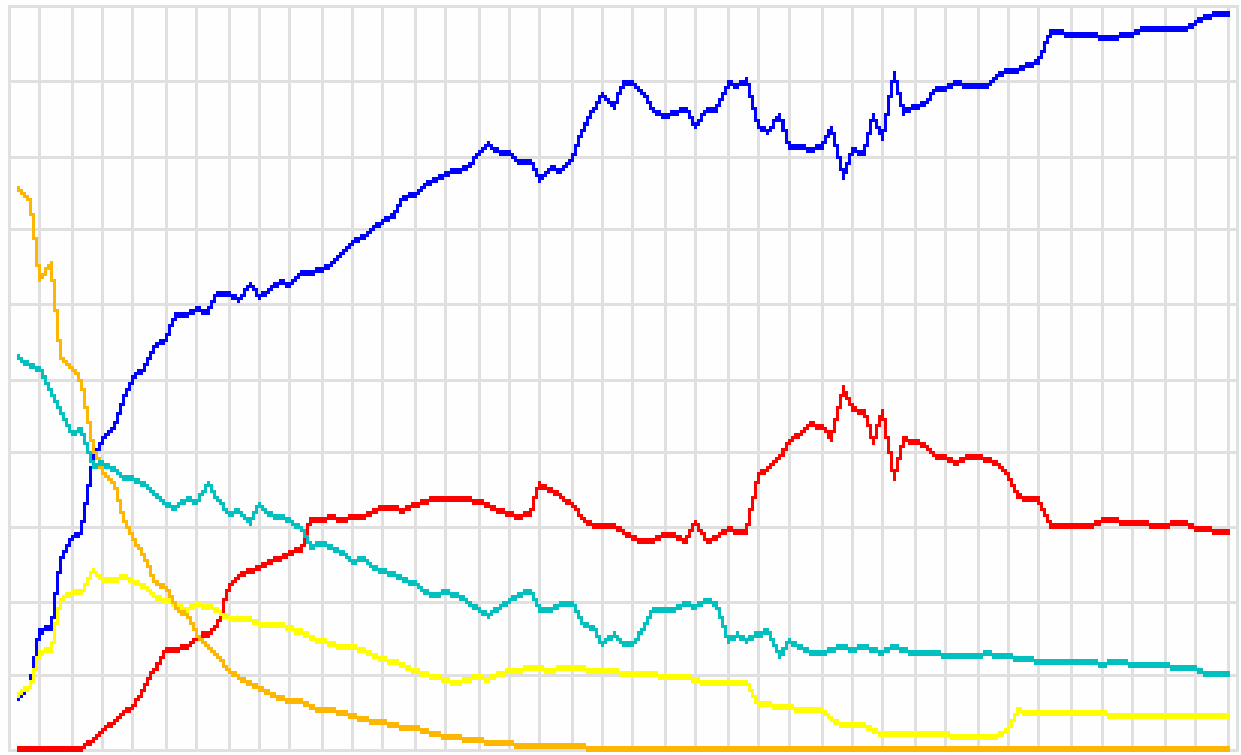
Apache   Sun

Microsoft IIS   NCSA

Other   http://news.netcraft.com/archives/web_server_survey.htm

What is Available?

- Many "backbone" or infrastructure programs such as Linux, Apache, MySql
- Applications such as OpenOffice
- Recently many programs exclusively for education
  - Moodle, Sakai, Lon-Capa
  - Open Source Portfolio Initiative
  - uPortal
  - Other – ELGG, Wikis

Why Have OS Applications Caught the Eye of Higher Ed?

- Most HE institutions have big investment in proprietary software. Why change?
- Large demand for educational software that is expensive if purchased through vender
- IT has become pervasive for administration, teaching and learning, thus a shift to OS can save real money
- Now there is a choice!

Why Have OS Applications Caught the Eye of Higher Ed?

- The OS movement correlates well with established academic freedom. Some faculty have had a tradition of sharing resources (MERLOT)

- Countercurrent of commercialization. Blackboard and WebCT both began university projects.

Reasons to Adopt

- No license fees – cost containment
- You are free to add additional feature or change existing features, change the interface
- Development is a community process where everyone benefits
- Quick bug fixes

Reasons to Adopt

- Open so that your IT staff can validate security is built in

- Written to open standards so that data exchange is easier

- Innovative products that commercial vendors could not take a chance on

Educational OS Software

- Someone has an idea and develops an application with help from community of volunteer developers (Moodle)

- A group of universities forms a consortium based on need – development is top down (Sakai)

The Volunteer Model

- OS application developed by a team
- Usually one or more highly respected leaders with second level contributors
- A third level of testers, bug reporters, small time programmers
- Leaders lead because of respect from others and ability to lead
- How can this work?!

Reasons Not to Adopt

- Only for the technically advanced?
- It costs time and money to switch applications
- How will application be supported?
- Not all OS development projects will thrive and continue to produce mature products

Tips on Selecting OS

- Check its reputation – Google search
- Check the version number
- Is there evidence a community is working on it?
- Are there plans for future releases?
- Does it conform to standards?

Tips on Selecting OS

- Are there links to companies that provide support?

- Is there documentation?

- Do you and your staff have the right skills?

- What, exactly, does the license allow you to do?

October 1994 CIO Survey

We are actively tracking open source application development projects (Sakai, ePortfolio, uPortal, etc.)

Strongly agree	24%
Agree	43%
Neutral	17%
Disagree	13%
Strongly disagree	4%

http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/html/CSD3488.html

October 1994 CIO Survey

We have a clear IT strategy regarding the non-use of open source application software

Strongly agree	6%
Agree	20%
Neutral	37%
Disagree	29%
Strongly disagree	8%

http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/html/CSD3488.html

Thank You