The 20th Anniversary of Open Source

Overview

The Open Source Initiative (OSI) is celebrating its 20th Anniversary in 2018. This is a huge milestone for everyone involved with technology. The OSI is organizing several activities along the year to commemorate this special occasion, including the launch of Opensource.net and worldwide celebrations in conjunction with major tech conferences.

Key Activities:

1. Celebrate the 20th Anniversary of Open Source Software
   [Multiple locations globally, throughout 2018]
   Commemorate the success of open source and the Open Source Initiative's role in building awareness, adoption and communities over 20 years.

2. Share Your Open Source Success Story
   [Online via Opensource.net, throughout 2018]
   Highlight the significant accomplishments and contributions that have made open source software a valued asset and community for your organization.

3. Join the OpenSource.Net Community
   [Online via Opensource.net, in 2018 & ongoing]
   Connect with a global network of highly qualified peers to exchange ideas and create solutions. Your experience and leadership will help build the “next 20 years” of open source.
Background

Open Source Software — yes, in fact we did coin the term, and started the movement — is now ubiquitous, recognized across industries as a fundamental component to infrastructure, as well as a critical factor for driving innovation. But it wasn't always so...

The “open source” label was created at a strategy session held on February 3rd, 1998 in Palo Alto, California. That same month, the Open Source Initiative (OSI) was founded as a general educational and advocacy organization to raise awareness and adoption for the superiority of an open development process. One of the first tasks undertaken by OSI was to draft the Open Source Definition (OSD). Till this day, the OSD is considered a gold standard of open-source licensing.

Although adoption of the term “Open Source” had support from many, including the founders of Linux, Sendmail, Perl, Python, Apache, and representatives from the Internet Engineering Task Force, and Internet Software Consortium, interest in the late 90’s from industry was... well, less than enthusiastic.

The OSI’s focus for the past 20 years has been to address open source F.U.D., while promoting best practices in community, collaboration, and co-creation. Now that so many agree “Open Source has Won,” we think we’ve been successful.

More importantly to recognize at this point in our shared history is the remarkable success of the open source software movement, and the inspiring fellowship of developers, maintainers, businesses and communities engaged in innovative efforts across so many technology sectors, supporting just about every company and community.

Our 20th Anniversary is a celebration of the open source software movement itself. We hope you’ll join us in celebrating the code and communities.
Celebrate the 20th Anniversary of Open Source Software

The 20th anniversary of open source is a huge milestone impacting the global tech community. Celebrations will be held worldwide in conjunction with the leading open source conferences.

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Share Your Open Source Success Story

As part of our mission, we want to promote the success stories from companies that are investing in open source software and community in order to increase adoption and development even more broadly.

In our anniversary website, supporters will be able to share events, videos, interviews, articles, timelines, and social media.

We’ll be sharing these stories with the community and media throughout the 2018 celebration.
OpenSource.Net Community

To celebrate the 20th Anniversary of Open Source Software, the Open Source Initiative is launching the OpenSource.Net, which will serve both as a community of practice and a mentorship program. The goal is to further promote adoption of open source software over the next twenty years as issues shift from open source’s viability/value to issues around implementation and authentic participation.

OpenSource.Net connects those that “get it” and “did it” with a global network of highly qualified peers across industries. Some open source themes which we want to explore include:

1. **Development**: How has open source benefited code development at companies in terms of costs, quality, customization, security, support, and interoperability? How companies manage open source development/contributions?
2. **Business**: What business practices align best with open source? How companies collaborate with others to enhance products and services while creating new business opportunities?
3. **Brand Awareness**: How a company's commitment to open source helped promote their brand among the open source community, their market, and their industry?
4. **Community Building**: How has open source helped companies connect with developers, businesses, non-profits, government, and/or educational institutions.
5. **Talent Nurturing**: How has participation in the open source community helped companies attract and retain the best talent?
6. **Innovation**: How has open source, both from a legal perspective (e.g. the OSI-approved licenses) and social perspective (culture of collaboration), helped companies to embrace open innovation?
7. **Leadership**: What's the future of open source? What are the challenges and opportunities for the next 20 years? How will open source shape different industries?
Message from Simon Phipps

Simon Phipps is a digital economy specialist and founder of Public Software CIC and Meshed Insights Ltd. As well as OSI, he is also a pro bono director of the Open Rights group and of The Document Foundation. He worked with OSI standards in the 80s, on collaborative conferencing software in the 90s, and helped introduce both Java and XML at IBM. In 2000 he joined Sun Microsystems where he oversaw the conversion to Free software of the Java platform, Solaris UNIX, the SPARC architecture and the rest of Sun's portfolio, all under open source licenses. His personal home page and blog is http://www.webmink.com.

The third decade of open source software starts in February 2018.

How did it rise to dominance, and what’s next?

20 years ago, in February 1998, the term “open source” was first applied to software, Soon afterwards, the Open Source Definition was created and the seeds that became the Open Source Initiative (OSI) were sown. As the OSD’s author Bruce Perens relates,

'Open Source' is the proper name of a campaign to promote the pre-existing concept of Free Software to business, and to certify licenses to a rule set.

Twenty years later, that campaign has proven wildly successful, beyond the imagination of anyone involved at the time. Today open source software is literally everywhere. It is the
foundation for the Internet and for the worldwide web. It powers the computers and mobile
devices we all use, as well as the networks they connect to. Without it, cloud computing and the
nascent Internet of Things would be impossible to scale and perhaps to create. It has allowed
new ways of doing business to be tested and proven, allowing giant corporations like Google
and Facebook to start from the top of a mountain others already climbed.

Like any human creation, it has a dark side as well. It has also unlocked dystopian possibilities
for surveillance and the inevitably consequent authoritarian control. It has provided criminals
with new ways to cheat their victims and unleashed the darkness of bullying delivered
anonymously and at scale. It allows destructive fanatics to organise in secret without the
inconvenience of meeting. All of these are shadows cast by useful capabilities, just as every
human tool through history has been useful both to feed and care and to harm and control. We
need to help the upcoming generation to strive for irreproachable innovation. As Richard
Feynman quoted,

To every man is given the key to the gates of heaven. The same key
opens the gates of hell.

As open source has matured, so the way it is discussed and understood has also matured. The
first decade was one of advocacy and controversy, while the second was marked by adoption
and adaptation.

1. In the first decade, the key question concerned business models – “how can I contribute
freely yet still be paid”, while during the second more people asked about governance –
“how can I participate yet keep control/not be controlled”.
2. Open source projects of the first decade were predominantly replacements for
off-the-shelf products, while in the second decade they were increasingly components
of larger solutions.
3. Projects of the first decade were often run by informal groups of individuals, while in the
second decade they were frequently run by charities created on a project-by-project
basis.
4. Open source developers of the first decade were frequently devoted to a single project
and often worked in their spare time. In the second decade, they were increasingly
employed to work on a specific technology – professional specialists.
5. While open source was always intended as a way to promote software freedom, during
the first decade conflict arose with those preferring the term “free software”. In the
second decade this conflict was largely ignored as open source adoption accelerated.
So what will the third decade bring?

1. **The Complexity Business Model** — *The predominant business model will involve monetising the solution of the complexity arising from the integration of many open source parts, especially from deployment and scaling. Governance needs will reflect this.*

2. **Open Source Mosaics** — Open source projects will be predominantly families of component parts, together being built into stacks of components. The resultant larger solutions will be a mosaic of open source parts.

3. **Families Of Projects** — More and more projects will be hosted by consortia/trade associations like the Linux Foundation and OpenStack and by general purpose charities like Apache and the Software Freedom Conservancy.

4. **Professional Generalists** — Open source developers will increasingly be employed to integrate many technologies into complex solutions and will contribute in a range of projects.

5. **Software Freedom Redux** — As new problems arise, software freedom (the application of the Four Freedoms to user and developer flexibility) will increasingly be applied to identify solutions that work for collaborative communities and independent deployers.

The [OSI Board of Directors](https://www.osi.org) and many [Board Alumni](https://www.osi.org) will be expounding on all this in conference keynotes around the world during 2018. Watch out for [OSI's 20th Anniversary World Tour](https://www.osi.org).

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1. What does "open source" mean to you, and what do you think its most significant impact has been?

My understanding of the term open source is of course rooted in the OSI's Open Source Definition, which you can read in its entirety at https://opensource.org/osd. For me, the most important aspect of these principles is that developers can create software that is of value to themselves and others, then make it available to everyone for their own use. The greatest value of open source lies in the fact that anyone can make use of it provided they have the knowledge to do so, and they may also make improvements to that software that benefit themselves and others.

In terms of overall impact, I'm delighted to see that companies have adopted the open source model as a cornerstone of their businesses. Without open source languages, libraries, operating systems and frameworks, the technological innovations we see today would have taken much longer or, perhaps, have been cost-prohibitive. Now anyone with a great idea can
start a successful company by building a compelling application atop an open source stack and bring that idea to market quickly.

It's easy to point to the importance of open source software in building large corporations like Google - without the gratis and open source LAMP stack, the company arguably would not exist today - but for me open source's impact on business is more compelling at the individual and small business level. Small businesses can thrive producing open source software and/or supporting its use; just take a look at the huge number of SMBs supporting say the Drupal content management system or the great success that Basecamp (formerly 37signals) has had creating their products with Ruby on Rails. Not to mention the great success they have achieving work-life balance for their employees whilst profiting handsomely!

2. Over the past 20 years, what do you feel has been some of the key developments in the open source software movement that has led to its success? What do you think is still missing?

The adoption of open source software by businesses has been one of its key success factors. Most companies no longer believe the bad press that open source software is dangerous or that open source licenses can harm their business. Even Microsoft now loves Linux (and Go, and Python, and ....)!

While we're still in the early stages of adoption, I think that a greater acceptance of InnerSource principles by companies will be the next great step for open source. (For those unfamiliar with the term, the idea is to develop software behind the corporate firewall as ‘open source’ - with everyone having access to the code repositories to follow development or even contributing, regardless of where they sit in the organization.) By entrusting an organization's technical team's to work in The Open Source Way, companies have become demonstrably more efficient in their development practices, saving time, money and, most importantly, making their employees feel a greater sense of ownership and empowerment over their work. People who feel a great sense of autonomy and mastery produce beautiful things.

3. How has the OSI been able to further the awareness and adoption of open source software, development, communities? What should the OSI be focusing on in the future?

The OSI's advocacy work over the years has been a crucial part of ensuring that the Open Source Definition (OSD) applies to a given work. We've seen a ton of “open washing” - companies claiming a work is open source even when it does not conform to the OSD - as the idea of openness and transparency has gained popularity with developers and consumers alike.
The OSI works to make sure that the freedoms promised to a particular person under the OSD are present in a product when its called “open source”; it’s not just a PR ploy.

For the future, I would love to see the OSI focus on improving the overall ecosystem for open source projects in a variety of ways: helping to make our communities more diverse so that the software available meets the needs of the greatest number of people; sharing the knowledge of 20 years of history with technologists so we can live up to open source’s great promise of not constantly reinventing the wheel; championing the values of openness and transparency not just in how they impact software development, but also as a model for all of society.

4. What are your expectations for open source software and communities over the next 10 or even 20 years?

I believe there are two big challenge currently facing open source communities: cultivating empathy and sustaining maintainers. (You can argue that the second is actually a subset of the first point, but I believe it’s critical to analyze the two separately.) We are in the earliest stages of solving both problems.

Cultivating empathy in open source is crucial as it seems that everything - well, almost everything - is built upon open source software. While the old adage is that good open source developers scratch their own itch, when creating works that are used so widely, we must always be aware that not everyone shares our “itches,” meaning our life experience. (While neither is open source, consider two hot button issues of today: abuse on Twitter and issues with the facial recognition feature of the new iPhone, both criticized as a result of their creators’ not sufficiently understanding use cases and life experiences beyond their own.)

Regardless of differing life experiences, humans have the need to solve the same problems with software. The more that we see empathy blossom into a key feature of our development practices, the more we will see that the resulting technology provides benefits to wider swathes of people. The benefits for users who do not have our same itches provide benefits to all users, making products better.

Supporting maintainers in their work must be more effective to make open source software production sustainable. There are a large number of people working unpaid on various mission critical pieces of software; an unsettlingly large number, actually: open source maintainers working as individuals simply cannot sustain what has been coined open source's “free rider problem.” (I highly recommend Nadia Eghbal's excellent research under the auspices of The
No person or small group of persons can be relied upon to create and support software used by thousands of people without financial support, not to mention project management assistance, quality health care, and the opportunity to take a break from one’s work. The general interim solution has, thus far, been for large corporations to hire key developers and pay them to continue work on their open source project, but this solution has been problematic. It works wonderfully when the developers’ and company's interest converge, but these developers may find themselves at odds with their company's expectations for prioritizing feature development or even demonstrating the importance of funding their work when a particular tool or language is no longer in vogue at that company. We need to figure out a reasonable way to ensure that those creating important works of software are compensated and cared for beyond traditional employment relationships.

Fortunately, this problem is being actively addressed by a number of smart folks so I’m confident we’ll see a more sustainable approach to open source development in the coming decade. We’ve seen developers get support via crowdfunding sites like Patreon or Librepay, but I think that programs & platforms targeted specifically at open source developers will meet with greater success than those focused on supporting creators in general. The folks at GitHub have created a program focusing on support for open source maintainers, led by the aforementioned scholar Nadia Eghbal. There are start ups focusing on helping maintainers create sustainable small businesses, such as Tidelift (not coincidentally founded by open source developers), and even co-op models for maintainer support, such as snowdrift.coop.
1. What does "open source" mean to you, and what do you think its most significant impact has been?

I have discovered open source when I was 50, while searching for an alternative to the proprietary office suite. Today, after 14 years, I could not work without FOSS even if I completely miss the technical background of the typical open source advocate, because FOSS is better than proprietary under every point of view (and most users are simply not aware of the advantages). In addition, open source software is educating people about the advantages of open standards not only in the technical environment but also in the area of simple office documents. FOSS has disrupted the software environment to the point that even some proprietary advocates are declaring their love, although they still fight FOSS on the desktop with every available weapon.

Open source software has changed the high-tech industry for the better, but there is still a big communication gap to fill, especially with basic users who consider the PC, the tablet or the smartphone a simple tool (and do not want to invest a lot of their time to know the technology behind the tool). Summarizing we can say that the impact - although huge - has been lower than the potential, and the challenge for all of us is to reduce the communication gap.
2. Over the past 20 years, what do you feel has been some of the key developments in the open source software movement that has led to its success? What do you think is still missing?

I think that open source software has shown the potential of knowledge sharing and collective intelligence for innovation. Today, no one would dare to say that a bunch of developers in a closed room can produce a better software, although marketing can sometime distort the reality and convince end users of the opposite. The fact that the top supercomputers are all running Linux and many of the largest R&D labs are also running Linux should be enough to convince people of the quality, but we know that the product alone is often not enough.

Open source has been able to reach the market leadership in enterprise software, but has overlooked the fact that most users are familiar only with desktop software and develop their awareness and perception based on desktop software. As a consequence, we live in a world where most services are based on open source software, but the majority of computer users think that everything is based on Windows and macOS just because these are the operating systems they use. We should be better at telling people the advantages of open source software, and sharing with them our achievements.

3. How has the OSI been able to further the awareness and adoption of open source software, development, communities? What should the OSI be focusing on in the future?

OSI has been instrumental for the growth of open source software, and for the adoption at enterprise level. The process of approving licenses has been key for the credibility of the open source ecosystem, while the affiliation and membership programs have helped local communities and individual advocates to aggregate around a common belief. The next steps are based on the evolution to a more structured organization, where the activities are backed by people compensated to get the ball rolling. I would personally focus on helping affiliate organizations to do some focused activities in their geographies, but the focus could be on other issues as well: lobby, education, advocacy, relations with governments, etcetera.

4. What are your expectations for open source software and communities over the next 10 or even 20 years?

I hope to see open source software recognized on the desktop, as much as it is recognized in the enterprise infrastructure. It is not a question of market share, but of simple awareness. I also hope to see standards adopted by governments, for the benefit of citizens.
Message from Bruno Souza

Bruno Souza is a former Director of the Open Source Initiative (OSI), served as President of the innovation-focused Campus Party Institute, and coordinated Nuvem, the Cloud Computing Lab of LSI/USP. He helps Java developers improve their careers and work on cool projects with great people. He is the creator of Code4.Life. Bruno is a Java Developer and Open Source Evangelist at Summa Technologies, and a Cloud Expert at ToolsCloud. Developer communities are a personal passion, and Bruno worked actively with Java, NetBeans, Open Solaris, and many other open source communities. As founder and coordinator of SouJava (The Java Users Society), one of the world’s largest Java User Groups, Bruno leaded the expansion of the Java movement in Brazil. Founder of the Worldwide Java User Groups Community, Bruno helped the creation and organization of hundreds of JUGs worldwide. A Java Developer since the early days, Bruno participated in some of the largest Java projects in Brazil. When not in front of a computer, Bruno enjoys time with his family in a little hideout near São Paulo. An amateur in many things — photographer, puppeteer, father — he strives to be good in some of them.

1. What does "open source" mean to you, and what do you think its most significant impact has been?

I love Simon’s Phipps definition that "Open Source is the natural way developers work in a networked environment".

This is really powerful. It is not about licensing, it is not about rules. It is not even about results. It is about creating the environment that allow us to work together. And in that environment, what can we create? Anything we want.
For me, this is the impact of Open Source: creating an environment where things are possible. And nothing makes this better than the free, voluntary wishes of large groups of people willing to put the effort.

Open Source brings this to the software developer world.

2. Over the past 20 years, what do you feel has been some of the key developments in the open source software movement that has led to its success? What do you think is still missing?

The key thing for me is the sharing mentality. Open Source was like a spearhead into the sharing culture. It was not alone in this, and it was not even the first by far (humans have been sharing for ages). But Open Source brought it to an important part of the new economy. Open source's success in the business domain helped every other sharing activity be highlighted and experimented. I think this has made the world better.

The danger we are running right now is to be complacent, and assume this mentality is now "predominant". It is far from it, and we need to keep pushing it forward.

3. How has the OSI been able to further the awareness and adoption of open source software, development, communities? What should the OSI be focusing on in the future?

I think OSI's role has been to be the stake in the ground where things can be rooted. The vast majority of the real work is done elsewhere, but OSI is there, to keep things together, many times through invisible, behind the scenes support and encouragement.

What I'd love to see OSI focusing on is in keeping the software environment conducive of a sharing mentality. That means not only working on the rules, but working on skills and mentality of developers, influencers and community leaders in the software industry. Rules are important, it grounds us in reality and keeps us playing the same game. But improving the skills of the players is what we need to take the game to a new level.

4. What are your expectations for open source software and communities over the next 10 or even 20 years?

Open Source is a community of communities of communities... The complex relationships between people involved in all levels is staggering. Very little happens in the core on a daily
basis. Everything happens in the communities. It all works because the rules are simple (the OSD is simple enough), the participation is voluntary, and the results are compatible with your level of involvement.

When does such a large society like this fail? When large amounts of people that don't (or don't want to or can't) understand the core values become part of it, and start to alter the meaning of those values. I think Open Source is going through a bit of this problem. When large amounts of people started to join shared repositories like GitHub, sharing took a different meaning, and Open Source seemed unnecessary. The same happened with the rush of the startups movement, and even government involvement, where Open Source started to mean using it, but not so much sharing... Once we start to play by different rules, things start to fall apart...

In the past, we were able to successful overcome those obstacles. For the next 10 to 20 years, we need to continuously support communities to increase the sharing skills of their members. If we do this right, no amount of newcomers will invalidate our core values, and we will continue to foster an environment where things are possible.

This is not a given. But it is a work we are very able to do! And OSI has the credibility and the authority to lead us into it.
Message from Fabio Kon

Fabio Kon is a former board member of the Open Source Initiative and Full Professor of the Department of Computer Science of the University of São Paulo, Brazil. He is the primary contact for the University of São Paulo FLOSS Competence Center. Dr. Kon is a well published researcher.

1. What does "open source" mean to you, and what do you think its most significant impact has been?

Open Source means creating possibilities for collaboration among industry, academia, and government to develop robust and effective software solutions to meet the demands of society.

The greatest value that the open source community brought was to show that by sharing knowledge, rather than hiding it, we can go further and benefit everyone.

2. Over the past 20 years, what do you feel has been some of the key developments in the open source software movement that has led to its success? What do you think is still missing?

Now, open source solutions are the standard top-quality choice when it comes to programming languages, development environments, and middleware systems. Quality operating systems are either open source or based on open source components. In the next 20 years, I hope to see more advances in documenting the best practices and identifying the conditions that lead to successful projects so that we learn better what leads a project to succeed or to fail.
3. How has the OSI been able to further the awareness and adoption of open source software, development, communities? What should the OSI be focusing on in the future?

The OSI has been a key organization, showing the importance of having good, well-defined licenses that enable the safe sharing of software. The OSI has also an important role in being a representative of the open source community in interactions with government and industry. I hope that it strengthens its role and work to show the benefits of open source to companies of all sizes and governments all over the world.

4. What are your expectations for open source software and communities over the next 10 or even 20 years?

I believe open source will continue to grow in size in the next decades but, more importantly, it will become even more robust and reliable. In that sense, it will be an effective means to share knowledge in society, enabling the spread of wisdom and democracy.
Message from Nnenna Nwakanma

Nnenna advocates for open data, open government and the open web across Africa, bringing together local and international stakeholders to advance the open agenda. She works to drive forward the Africa Data Consensus, the Africa Open Data Network, the Africa Open Data Conference and the African Declaration on Internet Rights and Freedoms. She represents the Web Foundation at a number of international fora, including the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data. Her career has allowed her to work closely with many civil society organisations, the African Development Bank, the Digital Solidarity Fund and has seen her involved in many phases of the UN’s Africa Information Society Initiative. As well as leading a highly regarded consultancy platform, Nnenna has in recent years co-founded The Free Software and Open Source Foundation for Africa, and served as a board member of the Open Source Initiative. She has lived and worked in five African countries and is fluent in English, French and a number of African languages.

1. What does "open source" mean to you, and what do you think its most significant impact has been?

The most important part for me is the "Open" portion. Beyond software, hardware or processes, the fundamental ideology of openness is the most valuable for me, in vision, in meaning and in impact. The hundreds of tech hubs across the world and thousands of tech communities cannot be overlooked. We owe those to open source.
2. Over the past 20 years, what do you feel has been some of the key developments in the open source software movement that has led to its success? What do you think is still missing?

People no longer look at us in a bizarre manner when they hear "open source". The notion, the practice and the vision have all become mainstream. So, opening of minds and mentalities is the biggest win. The open web and its power to drive inclusion, participation and global impact can also not be underestimated. And mobile technology.. aie aie aie!! That has been a game changer.

On the flip side, as open source advocates, we need to update our strategy and embrace emerging issues in the "openness" spectrum: open data, open government, the crypto world, and Artificial intelligence.

3. How has the OSI been able to further the awareness and adoption of open source software, development, communities? What should the OSI be focusing on in the future?

The OSI has definitely been a trailblazer in the domain, especially in building expertise, in policy leadership and in community engagement. But hey, when you have a child who is 20, you know s/he is an adult and will create own dreams, ambitions and communities. The future? Do what parents of adults do: enjoy the fruits of the labour, let the new adults take charge, let them grow bigger than us, let them hack the world.. and make it suitable for themselves. But never let go. Keep the legacy on tracks and make sure it stays "open".

4. What are your expectations for open source software and communities over the next 10 or even 20 years?

Openness must lead to inclusion. Openness must lead to poverty alleviation. Openness must contribute to social justice. It is not about software. It's about human development. Sustainable human development that leaves no one behind.
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Allison Randal, OSI President, Open Source Strategist, SUSE; Distinguished Engineer, HPE; Board Member, OpenStack Foundation, Perl Foundation
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