

ELAG 2003

Workshop 9

# **The use of Open Source Software for Libraries**

# Workshop Participants



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# Common questions

- What is open source software?
- What kind of open source software is available?
- What could be the advantages of the use of open source software?
- What could be the advantages of development of open source software?

# What is open Source Software?

- It does NOT mean: free software
- Source code is available to everyone
- Many licenses
  - Only limitations on re-selling and re-development
  - Generally no limitations on use

# Is the Library world interested in an open source software?

- They are, because:
  - Flexibility (can be blessing or curse)
    - Preferable by changing parameters
    - Also by changing Source code
  - Price
  - Open Standards
- Already organizations ask for open source software

# What kind of software is available

- Development tools
- Data management tools
- System management tools
- Applications

# Advantages of Open Source Software

- Source texts are available
  - Functionality is verifiable
  - Source code is documentation
  - Changes are possible
  - Less dependent on supplier
- More control over installed software
- Cooperation of Libraries would be more simple and straightforward (libraries are no competitors)
- New software versions are released quickly
- Can be secured more effectively

# Disadvantages

- Suitable open source software may be hard to find
- Open source software is sometimes more difficult to install and configure
- New software versions are released quickly

## How to handle disadvantages

- Finding software
  - Use of software repositories (freshmeat, sourceforge)
  - Use of [oss4lib.org](http://oss4lib.org) for new library projects
- Difficulty in installing and maintenance
  - Education/Information

# What kinds of software

- Complete System
- User interfaces

# Complete system

- Disadvantages
  - A new system will not easily be accepted
  - Expensive in time and people
  - Implies redeveloping functionality that already exists
  - Long development period
  - Cooperation with others is necessary
- Advantages
  - Distributed development possible
  - More likely to get the desired system

# User Interfaces

- Flexible forms
- Flexible display of results
- Provider must cooperate
- Exchange standards
  - ODBC
  - Z39.50
  - Open Archive Initiative
  - Open URL
  - XML

# What makes an open source project work

- Common Interest
- Someone must take leadership
  - Person
  - Organization
- Distribution of knowledge and responsibilities

# An organization should be ready for using Open Source Software

- Why?
  - Open source software needs specific knowledge and skills
- How?
  - Encouragement
  - Information
  - Education

# Suggestions for new projects

- Library portals
- Personal Library Page
- Disclosure of distributed data

# Conclusions

- We like all good working software
- We love Open Source software

# To be added

- Some interesting links