

# Open Source: The Third Decade

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# Origins

Before Open Source  
*Open Source Is Free*  
*Software*



# Origins



**“Free software is software that gives you the user the freedom to share, study and modify it. We call this free software because the user is free.”**

<https://www.fsf.org/about/what-is-free-software>

Software Freedom Defines A Personal Ethical System

Use

Study

Improve

Share

# Open Source Is 20 Years Old

“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.

Christine Peterson ... suggested “Open Source” as a way to promote Free Software without the stigma of “free” in the English language.

Bruce Perens<sup>1</sup>, Co-Founder of the Open Source Initiative

1: <https://perens.com/2017/09/26/on-usage-of-the-phrase-open-source/>



Open Source enabled  
software users and developers to  
advance software freedom  
at work as well as in private

# The First Decade

Open Source 1998-2008  
*Advocacy & Controversy*

Upstart Advocacy

Open Source Licensing

Open Source Business Models



# Open Source Initiative

The Open Source Initiative (OSI) is a non-profit corporation, founded in 1998 with global scope, formed to educate about and advocate for the benefits of open source and to build bridges among different constituencies in the open source community.

OSI is the steward of the Open Source Definition and the community-recognized body for reviewing and approving open source licenses.

Open source enables a development method for software that harnesses the power of distributed peer review and transparency of process. The promise of open source is higher quality, better reliability, greater flexibility, lower cost, and an end to predatory vendor lock-in.

## Decade One Timeline - *Advocacy & Controversy*

- 1998 Term coined as rebrand for software freedom; OSI formed
- 1999 Open Source Definition published: licenses standardised
- 2000 Most open source is a proprietary replacement
- 2001 “Linux is a cancer” - Microsoft<sup>[1](#)</sup>
- 2002 Rush of new licenses
- 2003 SCO sues IBM over Linux<sup>[2](#)</sup>
- 2004 Last of Microsoft’s “Halloween Documents”
- 2005 Unix now open source (Sun Solaris)
- 2006 Open Standards Requirement (OSR) published
- 2007 Java now open source
- 2008 Most CIOs understand open source as a benefit

# What Made Open Source Licensing Succeed?

- Crystallization of Consensus
- Multilateral vs Unilateral
- Creating Safe Spaces

# Crystallization of Consensus In Action

- The License Review Process triggered business adoption of open source
- Licenses for approval are posted to [license-review@opensource.org](mailto:license-review@opensource.org) according to the rules at <https://opensource.org/approval>
- Open public discussion leads to license improvement
- When the discussion quiescens, approval consensus then crystallized via OSI Board validation & approval
- OSI is not “King” - it is “Speaker of the House”

Bilateral?

“A license describes the  
environment for a  
business relationship”

*Corporate Lawyer*

**Multilateral!**

"Licenses are  
constitutions for  
communities"

*Eben Moglen*



Open source licenses  
are the  
**multilateral consensus**  
of the  
**permissions and norms**  
for a  
community

## Creating Safe Spaces

- Mitigating Control Points
- Business model isolation
- Code for the unknown others

# Mitigating Ownership Of Control Points



&



# Open Source Doesn't Have Business Models

- ... companies do!
  - Your business model is your responsibility alone
  - Project norms create safety from business models
  - Open Source licenses isolate communities for their members' business models
  - Yes, Open Source projects protect their members from each other!
- Hence OSI will not make exceptions when approving a license to accommodate a business model



# First Decade Summary

Open Source won because:

- Reuse beats reimplementation
- Collaborative development beats reuse
- Both are chilled by permission-seeking
- Software freedom grants all rights in advance
- OSI approval of a license reduces uncertainty that rights are granted
- Developers don't validate against the OSD; they check for OSI approval and then proceed.

# The Second Decade

Open Source 2008-2018  
*Adoption & Ascendancy*

Broad Enterprise Adoption

Software Patents

GPL Enforcement

## Decade Two - *Adoption & Ascendancy*

- 2008 Most open source is “hidden” infrastructure
- :
- 2011 Open source enabling web service business wave
- :
- 2013 Open source powering cloud/container revolution
- :
- 2015 “Microsoft ❤️ Linux”
- :
- 2017 Open source at the heart of most new software

Lessons so far...

The landscape  
is changing...



# Open Source's *Real* Value

- Innovate without needing to ask first
  - Start where others reached
  - Stay in control of your own resources
  - Share upkeep of your innovation
  - Influence global ecosystems
  - Be protected from others doing the same
- 
- ✓ All derived from software freedom

A dramatic sunset scene over a body of water. The sun is low on the horizon, partially obscured by dark, heavy clouds. Bright rays of light fan out from the sun, illuminating the sky and the water. Several sailboats are visible on the water, their silhouettes against the bright horizon. The overall mood is serene yet powerful, with a mix of deep blues, oranges, and yellows.

New Technologies  
Only Possible  
With Open Source

# Permissionless<sup>1</sup> Cloud Scaling Flexibility

1: i.e. there was no need to ask permission; it was granted in advance

# Permissionless IoT Device Firmware

# The Third Decade

Open Source 2018-2028  
*Assimilation & Authenticity*



The OSI Affiliate Program allows non-profit and not-for-profit organizations to become OSI members.

Affiliate membership is an ideal way for open source projects and the communities that support them to support the mission of the OSI and contribute to the continued awareness and adoption of open source software.

# Affiliate Membership

*A "who's who" of open source communities*



So what's coming...?

## 3rd Decade Predictions

1. Ascendancy of Community
2. End of single-project companies
3. Licensing stabilisation & consolidation
4. Rediscovery of software freedom
5. New roles for OSI

# 1. Community Styles

First decade:	interest-focussed projects
Second decade:	professional specialists in charities
Third decade:	professional generalists in consortia

## **> Create Cultures Of Contribution**

- Contribution leverages all IP for growth & innovation, not just what's licensable
- Contribution results in others maintaining your innovation, freeing you for more
- Contribution seeds the innovation of others, allowing you to benefit from those not on your team

## 2. Single Project Companies

First decade:	“Open Source Business Models”
Second decade:	Release-train vs release-when-ready
Third decade:	Differentiation by managing complexity

> Complex assembly of simple parts



> Complex assembly of simple parts



> Complex assembly of simple parts



## **> Complex assembly of simple parts**

The know-how to put it together, make it work at scale and keep it working is today's open source monetizable advantage.

### 3. License Consolidation

- First decade:* Everyone wants a license of their own
- Second decade:* Reciprocity compliance is the problem
- Third decade:* Other compliance will dominate

## > Automate & Accumulate



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- Accumulate author acknowledgement history (BSD, MIT etc) as well as ensuring copyleft compliance
- Add continuous compliance to continuous integration.
- Use only OSI-approved licenses

## 4. Rediscovery of software freedom

First decade:	Open source as amoral methodology
Second decade:	Open source as pragmatism
Third decade:	Ethical compass solves new applications of open source (cloud, containers, coins)

Or B: repeat all the old mistakes...

## 5. New Roles for OSI

Crystallising consensus...

First decade: ...on licenses

Second decade: ...against licenses

Third decade: ...on communities and authenticity

> Join charities as well as consortia

- Consortia and “Trade Associations” are the new normal
- But open source still relies on the community charities like OSI, FSF and Software Freedom Conservancy too
- So please remember to support and promote them!

## Third Decade Lifestyle

- > Create Cultures Of Contribution**
- > Complex assembly of simple parts**
- > Compliance: Automate & Accumulate**
- > Cherish Software Freedom**
- > Cultivate both charities & consortia**

# Conclusions

- Software freedom remains the essential core of software projects that succeed.
- The future of open source is the future of software freedom. What unites us must overshadow differences if we are to avoid its abridgement.
- The third decade of open source needs those who have done to pass on experience to those who will do.
- And of course! <https://opensource.org/join>

Happy Birthday!



# Thanks for listening!

Contact e-mail: [president@opensource.org](mailto:president@opensource.org)

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