

Where do we go from here? The future of OpenOffice.org

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Topics

- The present state of OpenOffice.org
 - Community structure: Projects, people
 - Infrastructure: Political and Technical
- Future
 - Technical
 - Political

Present: community structure

Projects

- We have several categories of projects, Accepted, Native-Lang, Incubator. Each category has seen strong growth and maturation, with the most growth in Native-Lang
- The process of moving from Incubator to Accepted projects is well understood; Native-Lang projects are represented by overall leaders
- This representative structure has allowed us to maintain project coherence
- Without a limited voting scheme and without the limiting constraints imposed upon project creation, OpenOffice.org would be suffering from a dissolution of identity
- Instead, we have a community of endusers and developers who are collaborating in several languages, on several fronts, and doing so in a way that has strengthened community identity

- Political de-centralization
 - Project leads organizing efforts of project members. For technical projects the coordination is ideally done according to larger roadmap designs
 - Non-technical projects (Marketing, Documentation, Native-Lang) have similarly been articulating work per project. But overall work has not been fully coordinated
 - Limiting chaos, however, is the requirement that any project must demonstrate a user base and relevance. This is not the same as a specific plan

Technical infrastructure

- History: OpenOffice.org was established using an early form of CollabNet's SourceCast. In July 2001 OpenOffice.org moved to SourceCast, allowing an enormous escalation as well as other features that allow members to form groups that free members to form cross-alliances. For example, one can create meta-projects that associate any set of projects, and any member can be associated with any number of meta-associations
- At present project scalability is virtually limitless. But so is the possibility for confusion. Technological and political solutions are required

OpenOffice.org uses not only SourceCast but also other systems.

- OpenOffice.org on SourceCast anchors the project and is where the most work is done. SourceCast is being upgraded
- OpenOffice.org on other sites allow user flexibility, downloads and so on not offered by SourceCast

The SourceCast Upgrade

- Allows more flexible local and general project administration
- User interface and site navigation is much improved; as well, site-wide search is enhanced
- Resources and tools, such as the new project tracker, provide an alternative to the (enhanced) IssueZilla

- Project tracker: alternative to IssueZilla
 - Track project artifacts for a single or multiple projects
 - Unified site-wide search
 - Easily locate projects and assets
 - Provides a fundamental tool for promoting reuse
 - Version control/issue tracking integration
 - Providing a mechanism to determine what changes take place in the source code and why
 - Issue numbers entered on CVS commit are validated and the commit message is entered into the Project tracker issue comments

Community servers

- We can include any number of community servers into the OpenOffice.org name (e.g., services.openoffice.org, stats.services.openoffice.org)
- These servers can operate what they wish and can be branded with OpenOffice.org identity. They can run Zope, they can use PHP. The only drawback is minimal integration with SourceCast
- This means that issues, permissions, privileges—all the identifying traits—are not automatically mapped to the servers
- The servers operate as nodes for user activity. They anticipate a near future in which the project has hundreds of thousands of members, millions of downloads
- Users wanting locally manipulable content, wanting only downloads, can use these servers
- Users wanting to develop the product and use the tools made available by SourceCast can use the actual project website

Several political efforts under way to enhance effective collaboration and innovation. Among them:

- The Community Council
- Greater integration among the Native-Lang projects
- More incubator projects for add ons to core product
 - That is, the greatest growth in technology will probably come in the add-ons created by community members
- User groups (locale not language-based)
- Business development project, integrating elements of Marketing, Native-Lang

- OpenOffice.org in two years will grow to hundreds of thousands of registered users working on dozens of localizations, ports, add-ons, marketing, and business development areas (such as normalizing distribution packages)
- To support this level of activity OpenOffice.org will need not only:
 - Political infrastructure capable of handling hundreds of projects in many areas;
 - Technological integration to handle millions of downloads and address user and developer needs (e.g., multi-lingual support); but also
 - A structure for soliciting and accepting donated funds