Open Code for Digital Government

Moderator: L Jean Camp
Open code has long been a force in networking and system integration. Yet in the last 18months with the completion of multiple office productivity suites and investments from IBM, Dell, and Sun, open code is ready for the desktop. However, it is not a magic bullet. This panel will address:

- What are the risks and potential for open code?
- How can an organization determine which elements of its systems should use open code?
- What are the management and policy questions?
- How can an organization move seamlessly to open code?

Prof. Camp's introduction pointed out the widespread global adoption of open code (Germany, Mexico, Iceland, India) in national governments and at the local level (Somerville, Houston, Munich). She described the benefits as being software costs, security, control of upgrades, compliance costs, savings on hardware, flexibility, and ability to share across agencies and with citizens. The costs are for initial training, transition costs, and limits on package availability. During the Internet boom there was a limited availability of Linux-trained technical personnel;however, now that is no longer the case. For more on Professor Camp's work see **http://www.ljean.org**

Patrick McCormick CIO, City of Somerville
Mr McCormick described a series of projects using open code and old hardware to upgrade the network. For example, there was fiber between the schools and City Hall. Using 386 machines and Linux to create routers, and 486 machines for servers the town was able to implement a broadband network at a fraction of cost of a proprietary solution. Mr. McCormick described how Somerville is migrating to an open code environment.

Alan Borning, Professor, University of Washington
Prof. Borning is an expert on value-sensitive design. Prof. Borning stressed the value of open code in value sensitive design. In particular open code enables processes that must be transparent in traditional practice to remain transparent in virtual implementations. Open code also allows government activities to be cooperative in that individuals can offer technical contributions that can be reviewed and then adopted as appropriate by the larger community. Open code allows for sharing of software; for example, between a housing agency and a not-for-profit seeking to help the homeless.
Work by Alan Borning can be found at **http://www.cs.washington.edu/homes/borning/**.

Terry Bollinger , MITRE
Mr. Bollinger is the primary author of "Use of Free and Open code Software in the Department of Defense", the most comprehensive report of the use, promise and problems of free and open code in the Federal Government. Slides describing the work are available **http://techcenter.gmu.edu/programs/conferences/mitre_mar03.pdf**

while the report itself is available at http://www.egovos.org/pdf/dodfoss.pdf

Mr. Bolliger was committed to attending but a last hour event made it impossible,

T. Temin, Sr VP Post Newsweek Tech Media
Mr. Temin described the expansion of open code, from a footnote in government to a force, as observed from his position as a journalist with a focus on the digital government. Mr. Temin was known to most participants from his work with Government Computer News. (Government Computer News is available at **http://www.gcn.com/.)** Consideration of open code alternatives is not ubiquitous in the Federal Government, yet the awareness of the potential of open code is widespread. Mr. Temin noted that the SCO Linux intellectual property case could have a chilling effect regardless of its legitimacy.

Carlos Osorio, Doctoral Candidate, MIT
Mr. Osorio illustrated that the factors that influence adoption of open code across the globe are all extant in the United States. These factors include income, locally available support, appropriate design for the community, and level of network usage in the community. He provided a statistical description of the municipalities and local governments in the United States. He illustrated that the vast majority of local and municipal governments are very small markets, too small to negotiate with proprietary providers with any strength. Thus specialized support and custom system development are too expensive for these municipalities supporting adoption of open code. In contrast, the communities may not have any internal expertise to enable full utilization of open code. Copies of Mr. Osorio's work can be found at
http://web.mit.edu/cosoriou/www/Research.htm.

Tom Rabon, RedHat
As the Vice President of the leading distributor of open code products Tom Rabon understand the value of open code to government, and the importance of government to open code. Currently the Government Technology Services, Inc. offers Red Hat as part of its GSA IT Schedule.
One project of RedHat, partnering with Oracle, is to obtain EAL 4 certification under the Common Criteria. Red Hat's Advanced Server version currently has the Defense Department's Common Operating Environment (COE) certification. Information about RedHat implementations in the public sector are available at
http://www.redhat.com/solutions/industries/government/