

Person1: I'd like to know from your point of view, what is sustainability in terms of software?

Person2: Um, well, I mean, I guess I think there's probably quite a few things that spring to mind. Um, the first, uh, I guess is around sort of maintainability. Um, the fact that co-bases if you don't sort of keep them up-to-date and keep developing them, they tend to go stale. Um, and it's sort of very hard to resurrect them. Um, so, it's sort of about sort of designing software in such a way that it won't go stale. But, how to do that without continuous developments, I'm not sure.

Um, there's then, another aspect would be, um, sort of financial point of view. Um, I mean that's ... I guess this is sort of, especially, from like a university context where you get a grant to do something. You produce some software but then when the grant expires there's no one ... there's no money for someone to support the software for doing web fixes. Um, and so without any sort of model for, um, for sort of funding that software going forward, um, it will just naturally complement because no one will be around to actually do anything with it.

Person1: And what other aspects or features of the software itself lead you to believe that it's sustainable?

Person2: Um, I guess documentation helps. But, more than that is just well-structured code and the sort of kind of self-documenting. Because, it's the biggest problem is when then someone new needs to come in and pick up the software.

Person1: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Person2: It needs ... too often what happens is that the piece of software isn't well-structured or well-documented than the, the response is, "Well, it's going to take me X amount of time to actually get up to speed and fully understand this. Where as I could just start something from scratch." And, I could probably do that in a, in a similar length of time or maybe a bit longer but I'll understand it far better. Um, so, yeah, it's about making sure the code is sort of structured in a sort of like a standard way. Um, and reason well documented, well documented was in the code itself so that you don't have to reset the document to find out what's going on.

Person1: Um, regarding the software that you've developed. Was sustainability a consideration?

Person2: Um, so the piece of software we developed when we first started out. Um, so in, in our centre we have ... there's, there's a group called Group1 and they are a not for profit organisation that tries to be self-funding. And the idea is that software that's developed in our centre as research projects, if it's seen as being viable, it can be transferred over to Group1 and then they will adopt it and work out how best to keep it going. And that might be through generating income by, um, licensing it, um, or providing it free but providing paid support. Um, or just making it open source and trying to establish a community.

Person1: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Person2: To, to continue the development. Um, so, yes we're also quite fortunate in that regard. In that there is this outlet where software we develop [inaudible 00:05:19] be parcelled up and passed on to another group who will then be responsible for sustaining it.

Person1: Uh, was it a consideration from the beginning? Sustainability?

Person2: Um, no, I don't think so. Um, I guess, to begin with there was no thought of that at all. Um, and then I think there was probably other projects met the, this [inaudible 00:05:45] Group1 reformed and then at that point, and I suppose as funding for the project came to an end it became apparent that that would be a good avenue. Um, to keep it maintained.

Person1: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Uh, have you worked on any, uh, projects that were not sustainable?

Person2: Um, um, I suppose at the same time we were also wrote a separate piece of software which, for whatever reason, it was decided not to pass it over to this other group. Um, and so that, sort of, basically, work on that stop claim funding stopped.

Person1: Uh, were there any consequences of it not being sustainable?

Person2: Um, uh, I, I guess ... because there was a group in the university who were trying to ... who wanted to use the tool. Um, and they kept on wanting us to make little changes and book fixes and there came a point where we just had to say, "We're sorry. We can't develop this anymore."

Person1: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Person2: Um, so, I mean ideally, they'd have ... our support would have carried on and could be tweaked as to what happened I'm not too sure because it, it's a different group. And, and once, once we said we can't really do anything more for you than we haven't really had any contact since then.

Person1: I see. Well, that's all I have for your today.