

# Getting Started in a FOSS Project

COMP8440: FOSSD  
Lecture 2

# Researching the project

- So you've chosen a project
  - How do you find out more?
  - What do you need to know?
- Common sources of information
  - Manual page/documentation
  - Binary package description
  - Web search
  - [freshmeat.net](http://freshmeat.net)

# Key Project Attributes

- Try to find out:
  - Who does the development?
  - How is it organised?
  - How is it licensed?
  - How is the source code managed?
  - How are stable releases done?
  - What communication methods are used?
  - How are bugs tracked?
  - How does it interact with other projects?

# Project Structure

- How is the project structured?
  - Is there a project team?
  - Is it part of a larger project?
  - Does it have any corporate involvement?
  - Is there any formal legal framework?
  - Who makes decisions?
- 'Cathedral' or 'Bazaar'?
  - Priests in a tower or a milling bazaar?

# Making contact

- Do your homework!
  - Don't ask questions that are answered on the website
  - Read the “Asking smart questions” FAQ
  - Read the mailing list for a while first
- When asking questions
  - Check that nobody has asked it before
  - Include enough information for an answer to be possible
  - Don't be demanding, ask nicely
  - Show that you've put some effort in to find the answer yourself

# Contributing a patch

- Research first!
  - What patch format is wanted?
  - Against what version of the code?
  - How much explanation is wanted?
  - Are tests and documentation expected?
  - Is there a developer guide?
  - What happened with other patches?
- Testing!
  - Make sure the patch works
  - Check it doesn't break anything else
  - Is it portable?
- Calm and patient
  - It may take a lot of time to get a patch integrated

# Case Study: vlc

- vlc – video player
  - What does it do?
  - Who maintains it?
  - How is the project structured?
  - How do the developers communicate?
  - What has happened recently?
  - How do I build it?
  - How do I contribute?

**Let's look at vlc .....**

# Exploring vlc

- vlc main page
  - developer wiki
  - coding howto
  - sophisticated website
- source code
  - git directions
  - multiple repositories
  - gitweb interface
  - high development speed
- communication
  - user and separate devel lists
  - commit msgs to devel list
  - development and user forums
  - IRC channel



# vlc packaging

- Binary packages
  - project offers binaries for several platforms
  - offers tips on repositories
  - detailed project description
  - package separation
  - 'skins' for customisation
- Dependencies
  - build dependencies
  - runtime dependencies
  - exploring dependencies with synaptic

# vlc team

- team page
  - Details on major contributions
  - Map location
  - svn login details
  - sub-project teams
  - legal contact
- team events
  - team meetings at conferences
  - development days