



Open Source Software and Community Collaboration – Options, Considerations and Examples

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*A Roundtable Discussion by **Sohodojo****

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Founders and Research Directors

Raleigh, NC USA



Our goals for this session are to give you some information from our experience and to talk with you about your needs.

- Getting on the same page – Open Source, Free Software and other definitions
- What is Community Collaboration and how can OSS technology support it?
- Quick survey of Open Source technologies of interest
- Don't overlook the free web services!
- Dissecting the NARFI web site
- Let's talk about your web sites and projects...



What is Open Source and Free Software? Aren't they the same? What else should I know about?

- Open Source is software licensed under one of a variety of industry standard Open Source software licenses. It's about source access and “community ownership/responsibility”. It doesn't have to be free.
 - http://www.opensource.org/docs/definition_plain.html
- Free software is... right, free.
 - <http://www.gnu.org/philosophy/free-sw.html>
- OSS and Free Software are related but different...



Our emphasis here is on “free” as in “cost of ownership/operation” because most grassroots organizations have limited budgets.

- More to “cost of ownership/operation” than the license fees.
- Complexity of installation and maintenance
- Hardware and server requirements
- User training

Since most of us aren’t active OS software developers, our emphasis is on technology as a means to your ends. How to get folks in your community working together.



Before you go on a technology search, think about what kind of collaboration you want in your community.

- Is the goal to get folks talking and sharing ideas?
- Do you want to accomplish one or more specific projects within your community?
- Are you reaching out to establish a relationship with the “outside world”?
- Is there conflict or other friction to deal with?



What kinds of Open Source and Free Software Support Community Collaboration?

- **Communication facilitators:** “slash-dot” frameworks, chat servers, discussion boards, newsgroup servers, mailing lists, polling, Wiki...
- **Project Planning/Management:** “virtual office” groupware, TODO lists, task managers, document sharing, issue tracking
- **Outreach Website:** “slash-dot”, other content mgt., open directories, Wiki... key to all Keep It Simple!



Where to look for quality Open Source and Free software? Which are some of the “Usual Suspects”?

- Start at credible OSS clearinghouses
 - <http://freshmeat.net/>
 - <http://sourceforge.net/>
 - <http://schoolforge.net/>
- Some of our favorites
 - In the ‘slash’ category: <http://phpwebsite.appstate.edu/>
 - In the Open Directory area (shareware, but free for NPO) <http://www.gossamer-threads.com/scripts/links/index.htm>
 - “Trust metric” community platform: <http://advogato.net>



Don't forget about the ultimate good deals... free web services. No software to install, their servers, pinch me!

- Our absolute all-round favorite – **Master.com**
 - discussion boards, community calendar, site search, personal homepages, auction/classified service, news scan, GREAT polling/surveys, feedback manager, etc. based on Thunderstone TEXIS technology
- Free or very inexpensive project management
 - eProject.com Express, planonthenet.com, 1WorkGroup.com
- Don't forget about language translation for outreach!
 - FreeTranslation.com, WorldLingo.com

What can you do on a shoestring? Let's look at MSU-N's NARFI web site we designed and created...

- Max use of Master.com
 - Site search, calendar, news scans, discussion groups
- Gossamer Threads' Links 2.0 Directory
- All this on a \$20/month minimal server account!



Site search helps users find your content on your site. Don't think searching is just to get folks to your site...

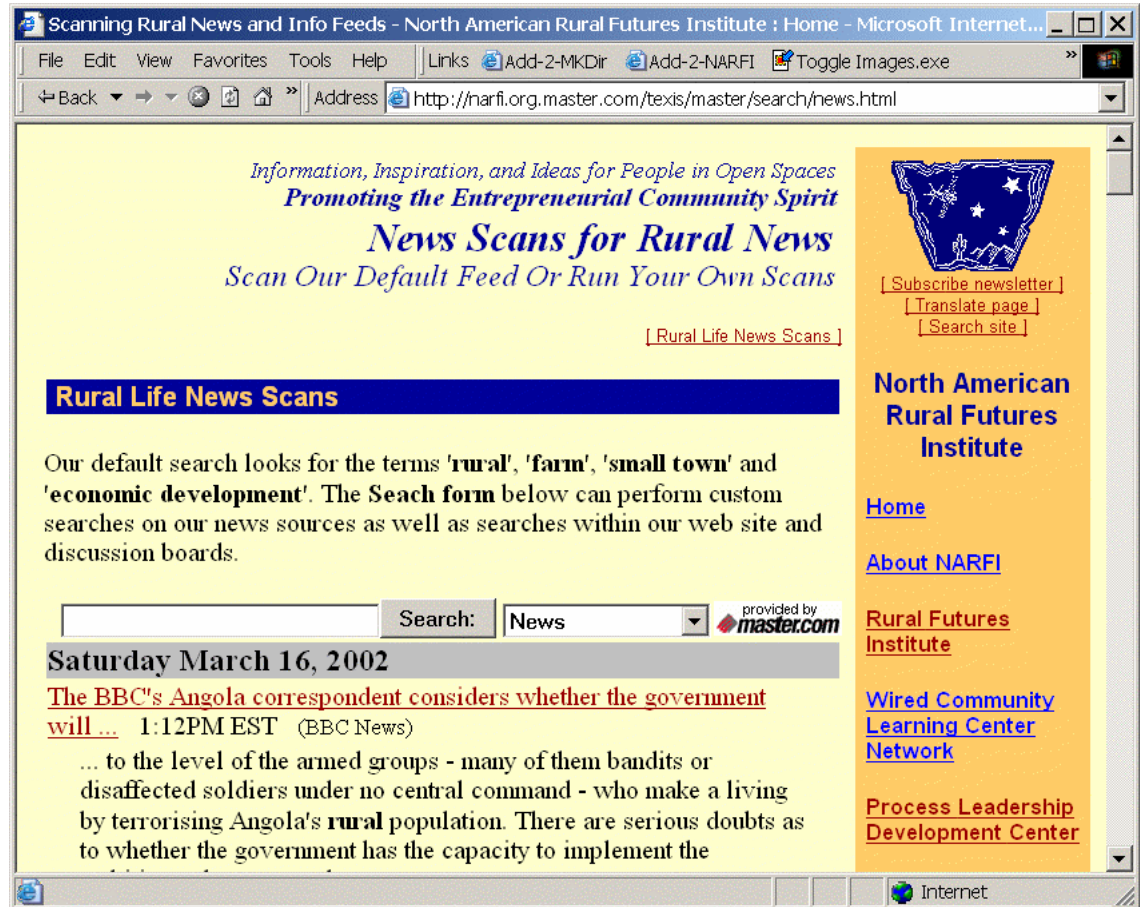
- Master.com is excellent, but Atomz.com and even Google offer site-specific search.





Custom news scans give community members a bee-line source for information of interest.

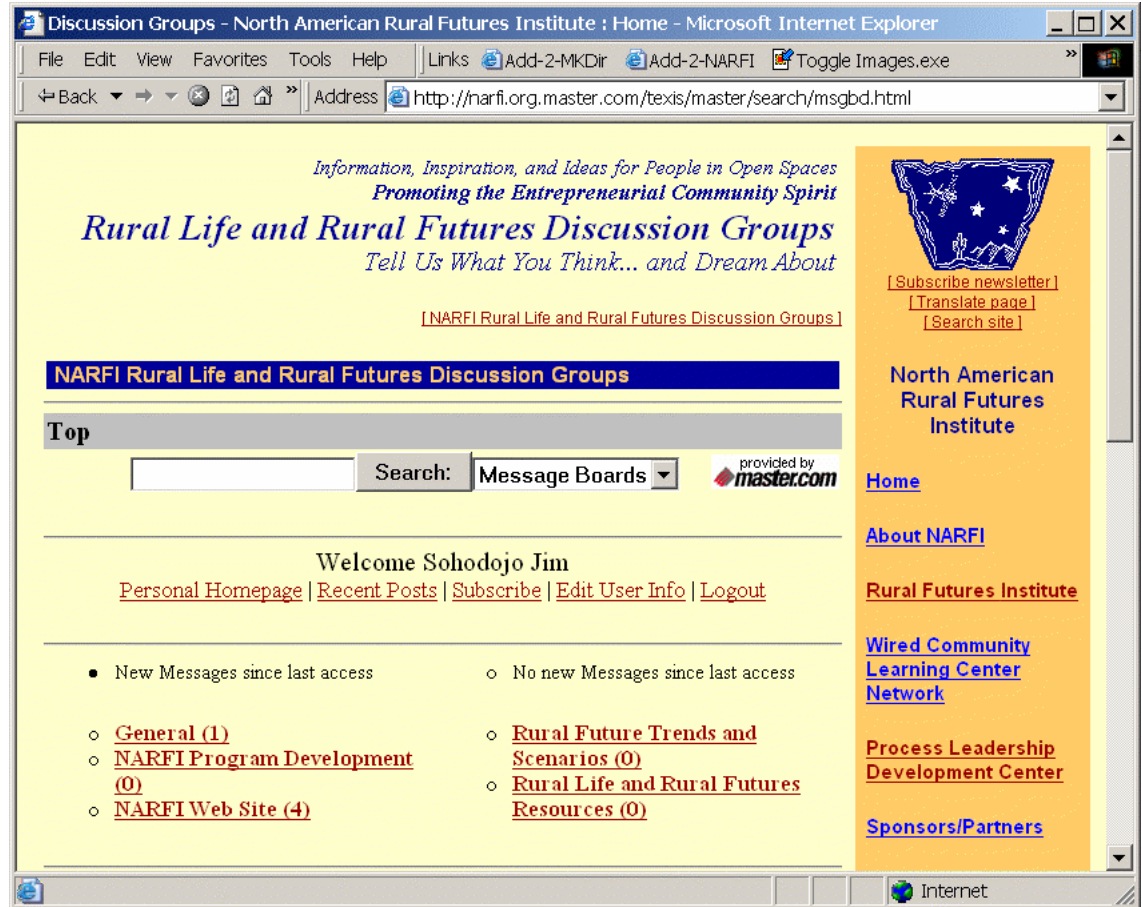
- Give your community members reasons to come back to you site.
- Give them info to stimulate discussion.





Discussion groups can be central to building community and doing outreach... and can be an pain admin

- Master.com's are a dream... no set-up, no database admin, public/private, email notification of postings, etc.





A group calendar can help spread the word about all kinds of community activity.

- Master.com's can be set public or moderated
- Notice how we sized text to show more... can your site do this!?

Information, Inspiration, and Ideas for People in Open Spaces
 Promoting the Entrepreneurial Community Spirit
Calendar of Rural and Rural Futures Events and Announcements
 A Public Calendar for Sharing Information

[NARFI Calendar of Rural Events and Announcements]

NARFI Calendar of Rural Events and Announcements

View By Saturday, Mar 16 03:31 PM EST provided by master.com

Welcome Sohodojo Jim [Add Event](#) | [Set Timezone](#) | [Logout](#)

March 2002							April 2002							May 2002							June 2002							July 2002						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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24	25	26	27	28	29	30								26	27	28	29	30	31	30							28	29	30	31				
31																																		

To schedule an event click the date links. To view an event click the event title.

March 2002						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9



A Yahoo!-like Web Directory can be a valuable community resource and support outreach. Can be admin pain, too.

- Links 2.0 is Perl-based, no d'base.
- Tons of interactive features generate visitor and contributor loyalty.
- Great way to support reciprocal link relationships.



Polls and surveys can stimulate community communication. Here are two examples from our other sites...

- Master.com's poll/survey feature is extensive.
- **Sohodojo's** PhpPoll's Extras Goodie Pack is great, too!

The top screenshot shows a browser window titled "Polls and Surveys at the Medfield-Kingsbrook Neighborhood Web Site : PopQuiz-01 - Microsoft Internet...". The address bar shows "http://medfield-kingsbrook.org.master.com/texas/master/search/+/form/PopQuiz...". The page content includes a calendar for March 2002, a navigation menu with "Polls and Surveys", and a note: "Note: You've already filled out this form. response." Below the note, it states "Total number of responses: 14" and "Number of unique respondents: 14". The poll question is "1) If Liberty Corner in the photo was in C of the town's sign ordinance?". The results are: 2 (7.1%), 3 (28.6%), and 4 or more (64.3%).

The bottom screenshot shows a browser window titled "Sohodojo/NFIB: North Carolina Small Business Issues Voter Information Center - Microsoft Internet...". The address bar shows "http://nfib.sohodojo.com/poll-results.php?sectID=1". The page features the "BIG IDEAS soho dojo small business" logo and "nfib.com". The main heading is "North Carolina Small Business Issues Opinion Poll Results". It includes a table of results for two questions:

Question	Response	Percentage	Count
Q1. Reduce corporate income tax rate.	Favor	53.68 %	(102)
	Oppose	26.84 %	(51)
	No opinion	19.47 %	(37)
Total votes: 190			
Q2. Enact 100% deductibility of health insurance costs for the self-employed.	Favor	54.14 %	(72)
	Oppose	27.82 %	(37)
	No opinion	18.04 %	(31)



Community collaboration can take on many forms. We've looked at some and software to support it... Now, your needs

- Tell us about what has/hasn't worked for you.
- Tell us about your current sites/projects and solicit ideas for incorporating collaboration into them.
- Whatever is on your mind, it's Q&A time!



Thanks. **Sohodojo** appreciates talking with you about Open Source Software and Community Collaboration.

- E-mail is welcome, especially creative proposals for technology development collaborations:
mailto:hosts@sohodojo.com
- Visit **Sohodojo** (<http://sohodojo.com>).

Thank you.