

Open Source Software

What is it?

- It's just like any other software except -
- The source code of the software is released in to the public domain, with a license that allows it to be modified.
- This encourages individuals and organisations to customise, enhance and develop the programme.
- Modifications and enhancements made by individuals and organisations must, in turn, be released in to the public domain.

How is it developed?

- Often by a team of enthusiasts, working without remuneration.
- Sometimes by a single company, with a supportive user-base.

Benefits to a school and pupils.

- It is usually free to use - all the open source programmes used by the CDT department at Royal High are free.
- Pupils may also use it at no cost at home.
- Many programmes are available in 'portable' editions, allowing pupils to run them from their USB stick, on any Windows computer in school.
- Most programmes are 'multi-platform'. This benefits Mac and Linux users. Some of our pupils use Macs at home, and we use Linux in school for some tasks.
- Many programmes are high in quality and easy to learn to use, comfortably providing all the features that school pupils will need.
- You always have access to the up-to-date version of a programme, with all the latest features, because you don't need to hold off upgrading due to cost constraints. In fast developing areas like 3D surface modelling, sculpting, fluids and hair, this can be important.

The most common argument against using open source software...

- ...is that pupils should be using 'industry standard' packages in schools, so that they are prepared for industry.
- However, very few pupils will go on to use, for example, Adobe In-Design, in their careers but they may need a good DTP programme from time to time. In this case, Scribus is ideal for them.

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