

Life and times in the Apache community

OSS Watch: Building Open Source Communities
Edinburgh, 4th July 2005

... with thanks to several Apache members.
Standing on the shoulders of giants, again!

Background

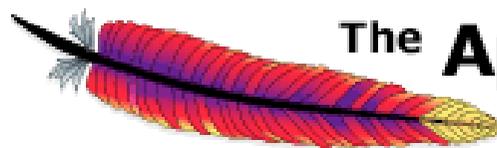
- Andrew Savory:
 - Free Software since 1994
 - ALUG, AFFS, etc.
 - Managing Director, Luminas

Enter Apache

- 1999: Spotted Apache Cocoon
- 2000: Active in the community
- 2003: Apache Cocoon Committer

What is this Apache thing?

- A bunch of code
- A group of people
- The ASF

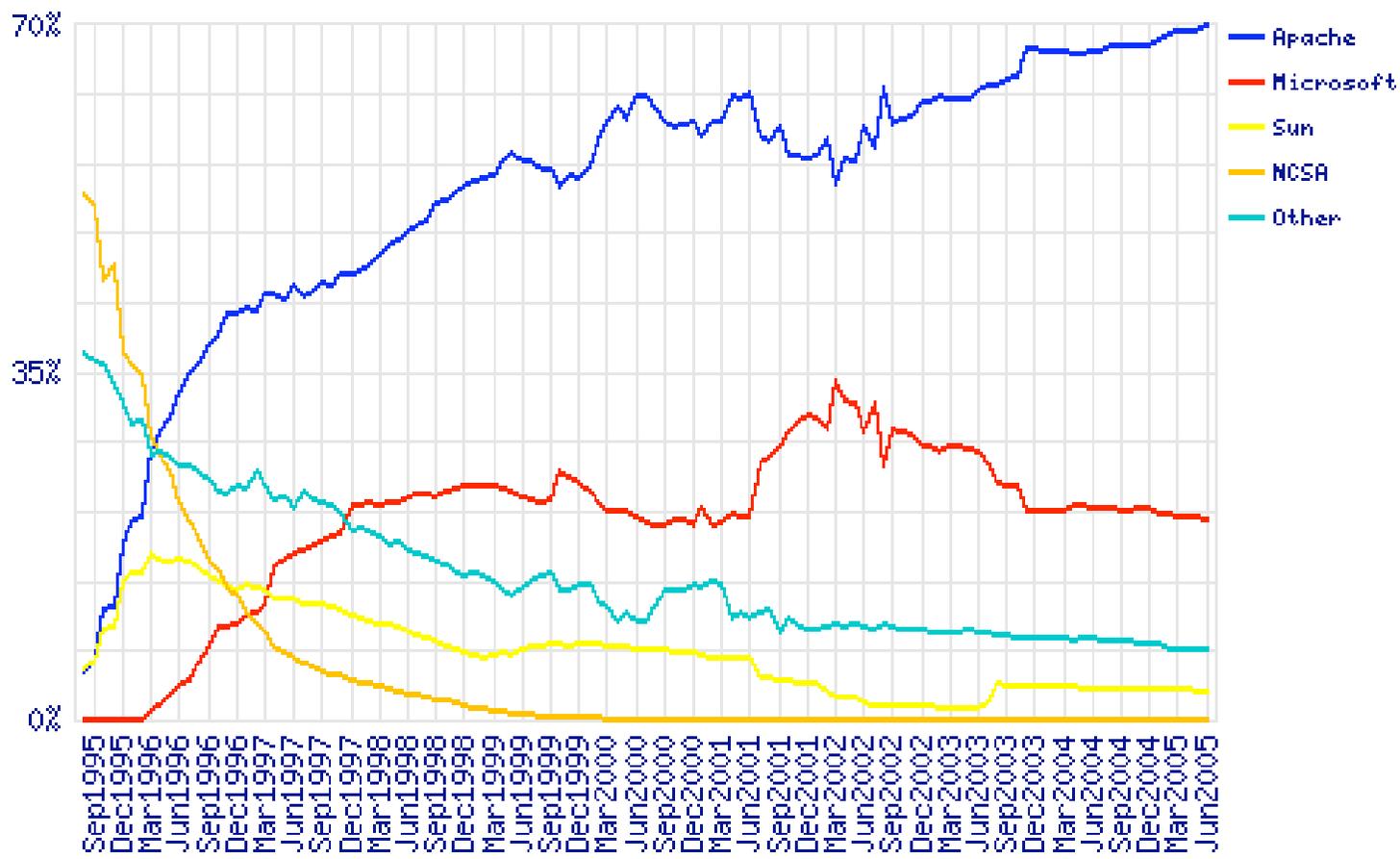


The **Apache Software Foundation**

<http://www.apache.org/>

ASF Timeline

- 1995: A group of developers release “a patchy webserver”
- Early 1996: number one webserver
- 1999: ASF founded



The ASF

The commercial perspective

The ASF is ...

- ASF stands for Apache Software Foundation
- A non-profit organisation incorporated in the state of Delaware, USA

Why the ASF?

- provide a foundation for open, collaborative software development projects by supplying hardware, communication and business infrastructure

Why the ASF?

- create an independent legal entity to which companies and individuals can donate resources and be assured that those resources will be used for the public benefit



I believe our neutrality, both real and as perceived by the market, is key to being able to marshal the greatest amount of investment to bear on specific projects.

- *Brian Behlendorf*



In my experience this is especially true when trying to convince companies to 'give something back' to an Apache project. Commercial entities are more likely to feel easier about 'giving something away' if they don't feel they are giving it away to another commercial entity.

- Matthew Langham

Why the ASF?

- provide a means for individual volunteers to be sheltered from legal suits directed at the Foundation's projects

Why the ASF?

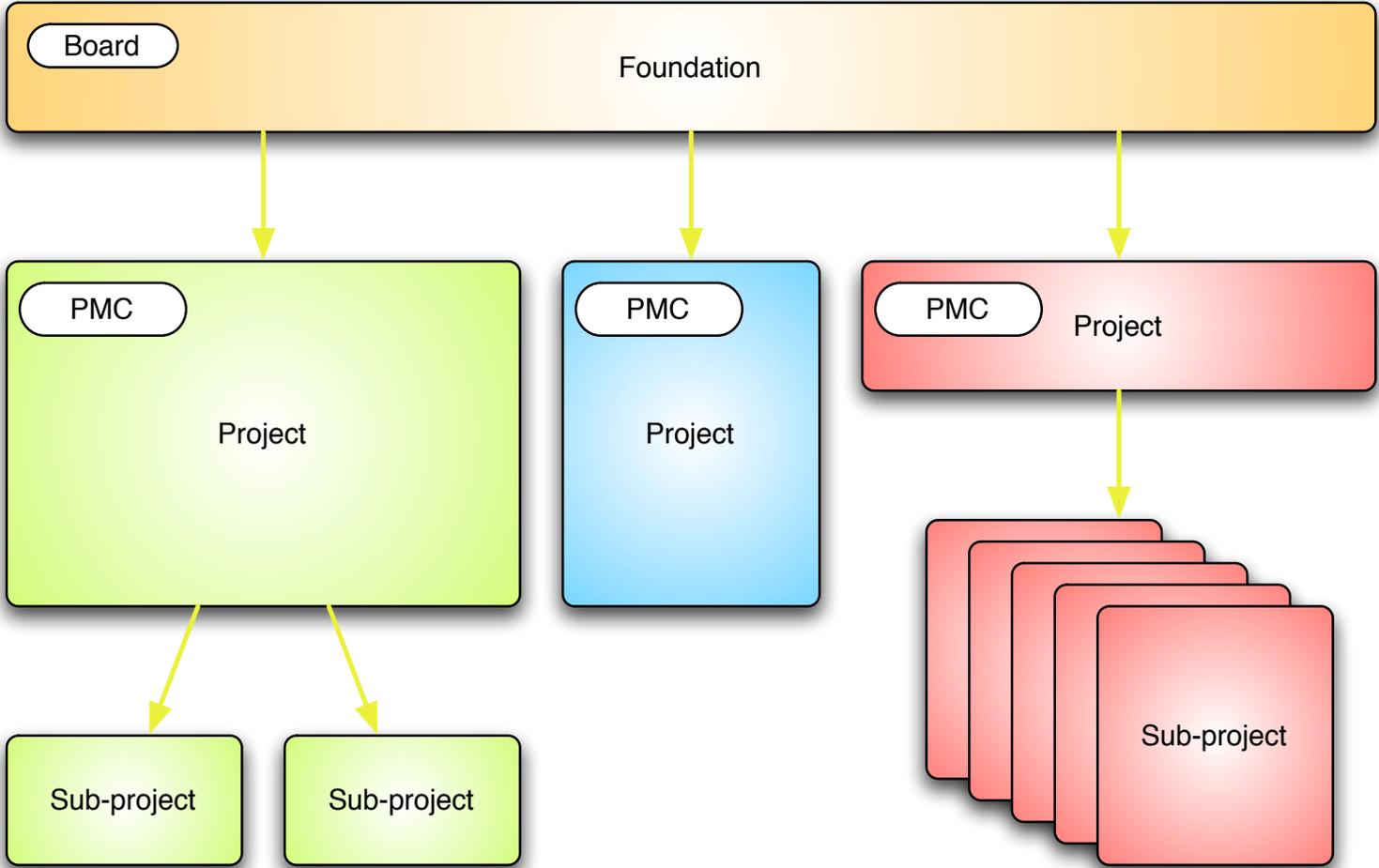
- protect the 'Apache' brand, as applied to its software products, from being abused by other organisations

The ASF

The community perspective

Organisation

- Projects and sub-projects
- Project Management Committees
- The Foundation



The board

- Manages and oversees corporate assets (funds, intellectual property, trademarks and support infrastructure)
- Allocates corporate resources to the various projects
- 9 members elected each year
- Makes no technical decisions!

The PMC

- Manages a project (and eventual sub-projects) subject to the direction of the board
- Each PMC can establish its own set of rules and procedures for day-to-day project management ...
- ... but many share the same

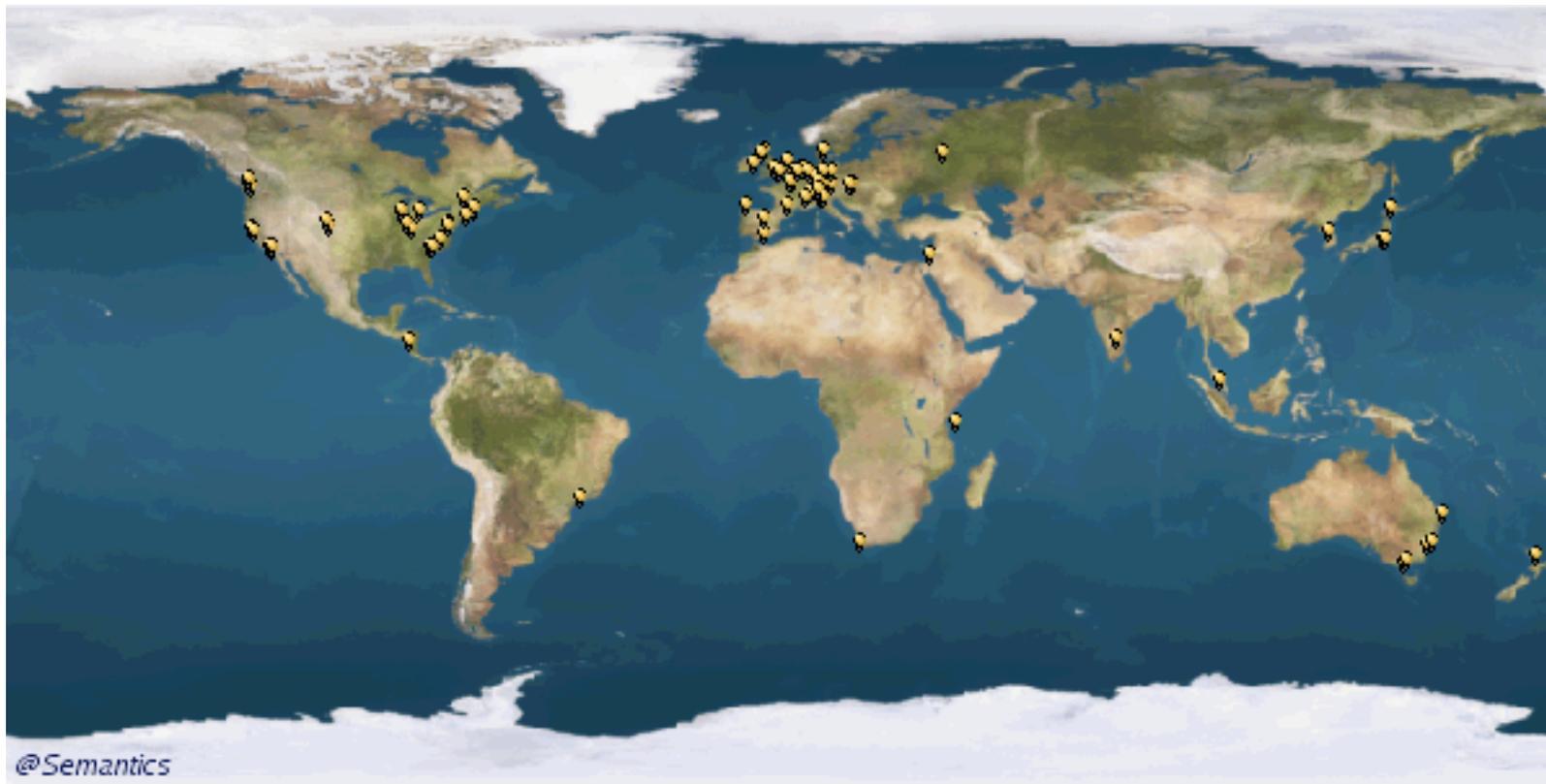
The Projects

Geronimo	HTTP Server	Forrest
Incubator	Ant	Gump
James	APR	Jakarta
Logging	Cocoon	Lenya
Maven	DB	Lucene
Perl	Directory	MyFaces
SpamAssassin	Excalibur	Portals
Web Services	TCL	Struts
XML Graphics	XMLBeans	XML

The ASF

- It's about people
- It's a meritocracy

The People



Meritocracy



The User

- Anybody who uses the software...
 - passive: does not contribute directly to the project (aka “lurker”)
 - active: contributes directly to the project (aka “contributor”), either with patches, feature requests, bug reports, answering questions on the mailing lists, etc...

The Committer

- An active user elected for merit, and for this receives:
 - an @apache.org account
 - write access to project repositories
 - binding vote
 - the ability to propose others for committership

The Member

- A committer that was elected for merit in the evolution of the foundation
- shareholder of the foundation
- can propose committers for membership
- can elect the board and be a candidate
- can propose new projects for incubation

Community

- community@apache.org
- party@apache.org

Agora

What does a virtual community look like?

<http://www.apache.org/~stefano/>



If we had to be judged for every little divergence from common practices and perfect taste, well, this would be the emptiest community ever :-)

- *Stefano Mazzocchi*

The ASF

The developer perspective

Management

- Communication
- Decision making
- Operation
- Philosophy

Communication

- Mainly through asynchronous media (mailing lists)
- Archived for future reference
- Supports geographic distribution

Decision making

- Lazy consensus
- Voting rules:
 - +1 yes
 - 0 abstain (+0 agree but no time)
 - -1 no (with reasons)

Operation

- All work is voluntary (no developer gets paid directly by the foundation)



In Open Source, keeping a good balance between commercial interests and community-based development is the hardest thing ever.

The Apache Way goes a long way to make it easier.

- *Gianugo Rabellino*

The Apache Way

“reduce conservative resources to a bare minimum”

The architecture of participation

- Tim O'Reilly,

http://tim.oreilly.com/articles/paradigmshift_0504.html

Philosophy

- collaborative software development
- commercial-friendly license
- high quality software
- respectful, honest, technical-based interaction
- faithful implementation of standards
- security as a mandatory feature

Evolution of collaboration

- Robert Axelrod,

<http://pscs.physics.lsa.umich.edu/Software/CC/ECHome.html>

The Cocoon Community: Get Together and Hackathon



The key finding: sometimes you need to get them all working, not in the same building, but in the same room.

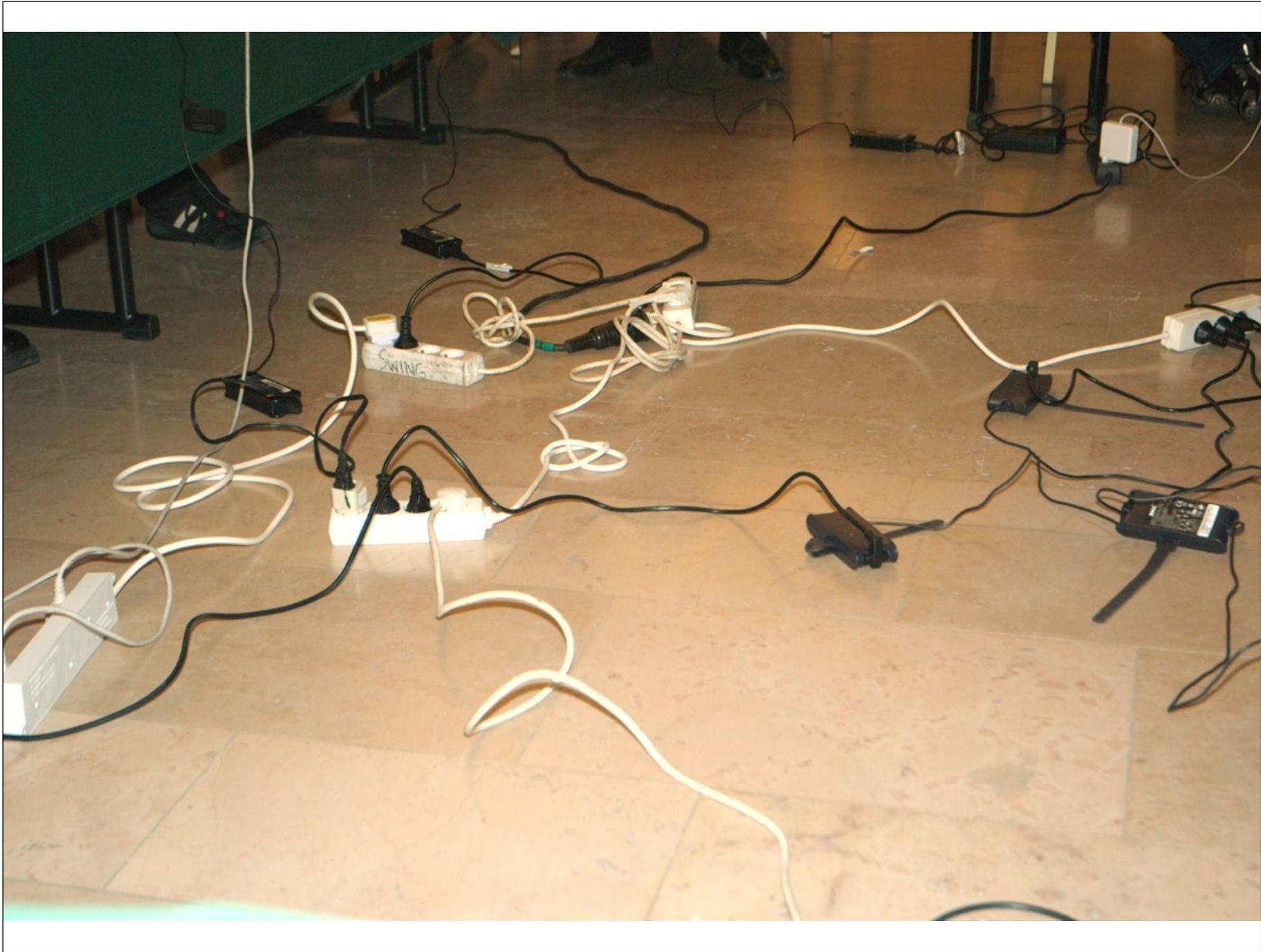
That's a lesson I won't forget.

- Tim Marsland, <http://blogs.sun.com/tpm/20050614>

Requirements

- Bugs
- People
- Power





And one other thing ...



The ASF

The marketing perspective

But the biggest barrier to effective marketing for open source projects is the, 'Our stuff is great, and great stuff doesn't need marketing. And marketing is nothing but lies anyway,' attitude so many FOSS people seem to have.

- *Robin 'Roblimo' Miller*

Don't worry about people stealing your ideas.
If your ideas are any good, you'll have to
ram them down people's throats.

- *Howard Aiken*

How to get involved

- Read the lists
- Ask questions
- Offer patches
- Engage with the community

"The real value of open source software is that it allows communities to work together and solve problems"

- *Irving Wladawsky-Berger,*

<http://www.itconversations.com/shows/detail495.html>

Thank you.

Questions?