

Johns Hopkins University - Open Source Programs Office

2023 Annual Report

2023 was an exciting year for the Johns Hopkins University Open Source Programs Office (OSPO). Inspired by a commitment to cultivating an engaged, sustainable, and collaborative open source community on campus, the OSPO achieved significant milestones including welcoming Megan Forbes, the Office's first dedicated Program Manager, supporting the production release of the rebuilt PASS software, and launching the Free and Open Source Software Project Fund (FOSSProF), providing direct support to open source initiatives on campus.

Needs Assessment

Sustainable programs grow from community needs. In order for the OSPO to grow and thrive, it requires a better understanding of the types of services and support campus open source software (OSS) practitioners need. Shortly after starting at JHU, Program Manager Megan Forbes launched "Project Rolodex" - an initiative to identify and speak with OSS practitioners on campus to learn more about their interactions with the OSPO (if any) and how the OSPO could help them effectively use, create, and contribute to OSS. Dozens of meetings with a wide variety of stakeholders - faculty, staff, post docs, grad students, and researchers - identified myriad opportunities for the OSPO to provide services around training, sustainability consulting, student success, commercialization, and more. Project Rolodex will continue in 2024, with a focus on the stakeholder groups identified during recent strategic planning discussions as high priority for the current calendar year.

Communications

Johns Hopkins' Open Source Programs Office (OSPO) aims to be the central hub for open source activities on campus. To move toward this goal, OSPO staff developed a comprehensive communications plan to raise awareness of the OSPO and its services, promote collaboration among campus open source programs, encourage participation in open source development, and highlight the successes of existing projects. The plan kicked off in November with the launch of a dedicated OSPO website offering information on services, news and events, and an open-source licensing FAQ: <https://ospo.library.jhu.edu/>. Looking ahead to early 2024, the OSPO is set to launch an interactive visualization platform showcasing campus open source projects.

Free and Open Source Project Fund (FOSSProF)

In 2020, the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation funded the OSPO to launch an experimental FOSS Contributor Fund, designed to provide university OSS practitioners a means for contributing to the open source projects they depend on. Unfortunately, without an inventory of open source software projects or individuals participating in open source, it was very difficult to perform the outreach necessary to generate interest in the opportunity.

In October 2023, the Sloan Foundation approved a proposal to pivot the FOSS Contributor Fund to a new FOSS Project Fund (FOSSProF), which is open to all groups at Hopkins working on creating, developing, or contributing to open source projects. The redesigned program will allow the OSPO to provide funding, project design, execution support, and community building opportunities to participating programs. Fifteen proposals from six academic divisions were submitted to FOSSProF, requesting close to \$500k in funding support. Proposals selected for funding will be notified in February 2024.

Strategic Planning

Following a November strategic planning session with diverse university representatives, the Open Source Programs Office (OSPO) outlined its priorities for the 2024 calendar year. The session identified key stakeholders (research faculty, labs, and students) and prioritized activities for the upcoming academic year. Planned initiatives include training modules, open-science community connections, consulting services for sustainable research models, faculty events, and a shared resources directory for open-source projects. Building on these insights, the OSPO will refine needs analyses for prioritized groups, develop project briefs to establish roadmaps, and maintain open communication with stakeholders for feedback and adaptation. This approach aims to enhance support for the university's open-source ecosystem and research, strengthen stakeholder engagement and collaboration, and provide a clear roadmap for future OSPO work.

OSPO Services

The OSPO provides a number of services to students, faculty, researchers, and staff working in the open-source ecosystem. This set of services is expected to grow based on discovered needs. In 2023, the OSPO focused effort on the following two services:

[GitHub Enterprise](#)

A university-wide GitHub Enterprise account is available at no cost for all Johns Hopkins affiliates and organizations. The number of Hopkins-affiliated accounts in the Enterprise grew from approximately 225 at the end of 2022 to 825 at the end of 2023, a 250% increase. With increased outreach and communications about the availability of GitHub Enterprise, the OSPO

expects these numbers to continue to increase in 2024. The OSPO is working with interested academic divisions, departments, and labs to take full advantage of the benefits of GitHub Enterprise, including integration with the Canvas Learning Management System, and through a collaboration with the Technology Innovation Center, a trial run of the CoPilot AI paired programming service.

Consulting

The OSPO has launched a new consulting service, offering guidance in governance planning, community engagement, financial and human resourcing strategies, and sustainable technology development. The current services offered are based on Program Manager Megan Forbes' experience providing similar services to a number of academic open source programs. This type of service is exemplified by Forbes' engagement with [FETCH](#) (Finding Environment for Collected Holdings) to support the creation of a project governance model.

In 2024, the OSPO will work to increase awareness of consulting services through targeted presentations and communications at the academic division and department level and expanding the OSPO website to include case studies and best practices. OSPO staff will include questions about consulting in their bigger picture needs analysis, potentially leading to the expansion of offerings around new topics such as code quality or licensing.

PASS

The Digital Research and Curation Center (DRCC) and OSPO continued to support the ongoing open source development of the Public Access Submission System (PASS) software in 2023, with all core functionality from the first version of the software ported over to the new, more robust application framework. To boost community involvement in PASS, in the fall of 2023 the DRCC brought together a pilot group of institutions and service providers interested in implementing or supporting future versions of the application. The pilot group provided valuable use cases, described key hurdles to implementation, and built the groundwork for a stronger engagement model. The OSPO will continue to support the DRCC in developing strategies for engaging the PASS stakeholder community in 2024.

Academic Open Source Community

The OSPO is actively engaged in cross-institutional, collaborative efforts to build a thriving community of practice around academic open-source software. These efforts include participating in the Community Health Analytics in Open Source Software (CHAOSS) Academic Working Group, which is focused on metrics, Open Source is Tech Transfer, a collaboration among OSPOs and tech transfer offices, and Community for University and Research Institution OSPOs (CURIOSS), a Sloan Foundation-funded group focused on university-based OSPOs - now a cohort of 12 at US universities. Through these initiatives, the OSPO hopes to help foster a sense of community across institutions, participate in the creation of shared resources around

open source development, and contribute to the sustainable growth of open source within academia.

Bill Branan, Senior Manager of the DRCC, and Program Manager Megan Forbes represented the OSPO at several events in 2024. Bill spoke at the Coalition for Networked Information's (CNI) spring member meeting on the topic of "Early Lessons Learned from University Open Source Programs Offices." The full video for the panel is available on the [CNI website](#). Bill also represented Johns Hopkins at the United Nations-hosted event "OSPOs for Good - Building and Designing Cooperative Digital Infrastructure." The final report for the event can be found at [this link](#). In October, Megan participated in the University of Vermont's Interdisciplinary Open Practices Workshop. This event is part of an NSF-funded project to establish the state of knowledge on open work across different fields and build interdisciplinary collaborations to explore unanswered questions. A final report for the workshop is forthcoming from the organizers.