# 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

## **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