

## **Open Source with Christopher Lydon**

Website Request For Proposal

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### **Narrative**

Open Source needs a new website. The current site, run on a branch of Word Press 1.5 developed specifically for the show, has been modified enough that we're unable to alter it. Essentially, we've reached a point where even small improvements to the site require a fundamental rebuild.

Given that, we're looking for a partner to help us rebuild the site in the smartest way possible, one that will allow the site to continue to grow over the medium term (two to three years), taking advantage of the wealth of open-source plugins available to:

- Make the most of community that exists among the Open Source comment threads, offering the community more and better options for conversation, both in direct support of the show and to whatever end the community chooses (e.g. local meetups).
- Better display audio and photos on the site, through embedded players and closer integration with Flickr, whence most of our images come.
- By surfacing recent comments, and through clearer organization, give a better and more immediate sense of the deep well of conversation already happening on the site every day.
- Through tagging and RSS, better link the site to the semantic web.

Though we're open to advice, we think we'll most likely have to get there in two steps.

- Phase 1: We'll recreate a site that behaves on the surface more or less like our current one, with a more robust CMS underneath.
- Phase 2: Using plugins or modules and building on a more efficient CMS, we'll begin modifying the site to reflect longstanding wishes, both our own and the community's.

Most likely the two steps will bleed together -- it would be impossible to recreate the site without improving it somewhat -- but we would like to get through the first step without spending the time it takes to fundamentally re-imagine the site.

Not least because we call ourselves "Open Source," we're committed to doing this on an open-source platform, in an open-source way. We intend to release whatever modifications or plugins are created under an open-source license and work wherever possible through existing plugins, using bounties where necessary to modify code or create it from scratch.

We are agnostic on CMS, but suspect that we will have to rebuild the site in Drupal.

We're looking for a programmer or a shop that can work intensively with us on the first phase, and then scale back to integrating improvements step by step from there. We're open to the possibility as well of hiring a full-time single programmer/manager to help us become more responsive; as we better learn how to produce this show, we recognize new ways to mold the site almost every day.

The deadline for a proposal is XXXXXXXX; please feel free to contact Brendan Greeley at [brendan@radioopensource.org](mailto:brendan@radioopensource.org) with any questions.

### **The Current Site**

Open Source runs right now on a unique theme and a heavily modified version of Word Press 1.5. The modifications have been made to both the source code and the underlying database; below a complete list.

- Every post has an extra field, titled “teaser,” where we leave the promo for each show. This also populates the “description” tag in the xml feed for our podcast.
- Archives have been altered to display on a calendar the three main content elements of the site: shows, features and in-house blog posts. Not only has this become unwieldy, it doesn’t automatically generate archives for new years, so we’re currently missing the year 2007.
- Category archives – which we see as necessary for new podcast feeds, better series display and more useful RSS behavior, have been cannibalized to create the current date-based archives.

The registration process, user management and user display pages have been heavily modified. We collect a zip code with each registration; encourage users to fill out a number of extra contact fields – phone numbers, IM and Skype addresses, Flickr and del.icio.us usernames – to allow us to track them down for the show; and offer users the option of uploading a picture (which right now displays awkwardly)

We’re happy to provide, on demand, access to a copy of the current site and database.

### **Phase 1 Fixes**

We anticipate that, in recreating the current site, it’ll be hard to avoid fixing a couple of things. A few in particular bug us on a daily basis:

- User display: We need to audit the way our users display on the site, restricting photo size, displaying location with comments and, for authors, creating a post archive by author.
- We need to distinguish producers, show guests and guest bloggers among the users in the comment threads through some visual cue, e.g. highlighting.
- Category archives: We need to do a better job of displaying our series, which are run through categories, and we need to be able to create category archives for each type of content: shows, features and in-house blog posts.
- Better organize, explain the significance of and distinction between post creation date and air date.

- Better explain and distinguish among show posts, features and in-house posts.
- RSS behavior: RSS right now is a nightmare of alterations made for iTunes; we'd like a more sensible RSS engine that allows us to create feeds by category, enabling iTunes compatibility as necessary.
- Improved search: Right now the most efficient way to search on the site is to restrict a google search to the domain radioopensource.org. We need to be able to search comments and user profiles as well as posts.
- Page titles: They show up awkwardly in Google results
- A simple aesthetic redesign; look at relative size, color palette, etc.
- Add basic social media networking: digg, reddit, del.icio.us, "email this."

Much of what's in Phase 2 may bleed back into Phase 1; perhaps the best way to distinguish them is to do some usability testing as we begin the rebuild.

## **Phase 2 Improvements**

The wish list here seems impossibly long, but we have faith that a better CMS will make each of these easier to implement. It's possible, as mentioned before, some of these will prove to be possible as part of phase 1, but – wary of how development timelines stretch into the future – we'd like to keep the rebuild of the site as contained as possible.

- Tagging by topic, display of a tag cloud of all topics covered
- Integrate del.icio.us into the site, using existing radioopensource tag/account and tags created for each show. Consider creating and displaying our daily reading lists using del.icio.us
- Offer reading lists as an RSS/OPML feed
- Display an embedded audio player for each show; offer an embeddable audio player for each show to bloggers
- Map community members by zip code/country/city information collected through user profiles
- Display most recent comments, most active discussions

- Better integrate photo management, possibly using Flickr; currently photos are copied and pasted as html into the post fields
- Organize, display static “About” information more cleanly
- Create a better way to pitch shows, respond to pitches and organize the show pitch archive
- Better organize guest display; currently guests are copied and pasted into post fields. We’d love to be able to find shows by guests.
- Create, display a list of the blogs we read, by subject and/or region.
- Fundamentally re-conceive comment behavior through some or all of the following: Adopting bulletin-board-style comment threads, displaying stubs of comments that expand to full-length, allowing community members on a limited basis to edit their own comments, ranking and displaying some comments more prominently through community voting and/or editor’s choice.
- Examine editing permissions for producers, simplify and obviate the need for multiple logins.
- Create, offer to bloggers embeddable RSS feeds for reading lists, upcoming shows, “shows I’ve contributed to,” etc.