

A ResourceSpace guide

# The big DAM debate: Open source VS. proprietary software



ResourceSpace

[resourcespace.com](http://resourcespace.com)



When you're choosing digital asset management software (DAM), you're likely to be considering the features that are available, factors such as costs and departmental budgets, and whether to host your new DAM system in the cloud or with an on-premise solution. But when making your choice between vendors, have you reflected on the differences between open source and proprietary software?

Programmers create and modify software using source code. The term 'open source' describes software whose source code is freely available on the internet, accessible for anyone to use without charge and to adapt and develop to their own needs. In contrast to this, 'proprietary software' is sold as a physical or digital product without revealing the details of the source code that has been used, meaning that it is used at cost, and can't be edited.

Open source software offers a flexible and community-based approach, presenting possibilities and potential beyond its original incarnation, whilst proprietary software must be used 'as is', as a paid for service. If the progressive and buildable nature of freely available code appeals to you, let ResourceSpace talk you through some of the benefits of open source software, whether you're an IT novice, or an experienced coder.

# Open source software

## Customisable

Because the source code is freely available, anyone can modify open source software. This allows for additions and customisations beyond what was originally envisaged and built by the vendor. You'll be able to have the code performing exactly as you need it to, and discover a vast array of possibilities for extending and personalising the software's capabilities.

## Ready out of the box

Because open source software is often praised for its highly customisable nature, you may question whether you have the expertise to use it. But whilst it has advanced potential for those who are able to develop software, you don't need to be an IT professional or savvy with coding in any way to use it on its original level. Your open source digital asset management software will come with powerful features which are ready to use out of the box, and you'll see an easy to use interface that is user friendly for all members of your team.

Should you choose not to customise your open source software further, you'll still be working with a high performance and complete product offering that favourably competes with alternatives from proprietary vendors.

Choosing open source simply means that you have the ongoing option to modify should you wish to, and to benefit from the modifications built by others, on top of an already strong and comprehensive DAM product that is ready to use in its immediate format.

## No license fee

Open source software can be used without paying a license fee, and there's no vendor lock-in, representing a low cost method of using feature-rich software.

## Faster rate of innovation

Because open source software actively encourages users to bring their own ideas and experiences to the product, new advancements and improvements often occur at a much faster pace. It's often argued that such a diverse range of skilled users are able to produce more exciting and limitless versions of software than in-house teams of employee engineers used by proprietary vendors, who may be concentrating on generating revenue or holding and gaining market share.

Because modifications are being undertaken by those who are on the front line of using the software, customisations are often insightful, productive and useful to others who are facing the same challenges and require similar extended capabilities.

## Be part of something

Part of open source's widespread appeal is that in modifying code made available via the internet, you can join a community of like-minded coders. Promoting a collaborative approach, you can compare the modifications you've made, and benefit from the work created by other developers from across the world. Individuals can come together to decide how the software could be made better, and to form solutions and upgrades that would not otherwise be available in a more rigid proprietary format. Open source products are often supported by forums and other social platforms where users can learn new things and communicate with each other.

## More to learn

Many users of open source software products report that they are able to learn wider coding and IT skills than they are able to with proprietary offerings. Rather than simply working through a pre-defined user journey that only allows you to become familiar with a vendor's system, you'll be able to experiment and collaborate with a vast collective of fellow developers. The open source abilities that you pick up using your DAM software can be transferred to other open source products, and will be useful to you, your team and your business in a much wider context.

## Solid foundations

Although it is freely available online, open source code is still a robust, secure and reliable platform, and is no lesser in capability than more privately guarded proprietary source code. The broader community often contributes extensions, adjustments and bonus components that are built on the solid infrastructure of the original base layer. Open source vendors are often well-funded and supported commercial companies in their own right, that operate in the same ways as proprietary sellers, providing the same high levels of customer service and dependable products.



## Fewer bugs and quicker fixes

With the source code exposed to potentially millions of constant users, bugs and problems are much more likely to be spotted and reported, with far greater scrutiny than is possible for small teams of proprietary software engineers. Open source developers will be prompt to submit fixes, solutions and advice, and with access to the code yourself, you are able to apply patches as and when you need to.

## Proprietary loves open source

Open source software is all around us, and is likely to be used by the majority of consumers at some point. Popular platforms such as WordPress are populated by millions of users worldwide, and open source software forms the basis of big name software brands. Proprietary vendors themselves utilise, praise and integrate open source software, and it is likely to be used by the employees of proprietary software companies themselves in both personal and professional capacities.

## Open source opens doors

When choosing the digital asset management software that's right for the needs of your business, you're likely to have a wishlist of features you're looking for in order to improve your workflow efficiencies and transform the way you store and share important files. In selecting a product that both meets your criteria and uses the open source model, you'll not only be benefitting from the robust set of tools you need, but will also experience the bonus ability to customise and collaborate on having the code perform exactly as you need it to. You'll have access to a global community of like-minded developers who are constantly striving to create, upgrade and innovate, learning new skills for both yourself and your team.



## Proprietary software

Whilst proprietary software may be seen as an established ‘ready to go’ solution, it comes with additional fees not associated with open source, and you may be locked into a vendor agreement. Because proprietary software is not available to modify, you are bound by the vision of that vendor as to how the software and its features should work, and limited in the ways you may use it; you will need to learn the system as it is set out by the developers, without options to customise the product to fit your ways of working.

Although there may be opportunities to join specific user forums discussing the product, you won’t benefit from the extensive online community of open source developers who can share their work and expertise to improve your DAM software and your personal skillset.

A commonly cited benefit of proprietary software is that closed source software is more secure, as hackers do not have access to the code in order to look for vulnerabilities and identify weaknesses. However, as previously mentioned, open source benefits from a much wider volume of users constantly reviewing the code; this so-called ‘many eyes’ principle is also known as Linus’s Law, and outlines the principle that the larger the number of people reviewing the code, the more secure it is likely to be.

# Conclusion

When choosing your digital asset management software, you'll require a dependable product from a vendor you can trust. Your search will encompass advanced features that can transform the way you store, locate and distribute mission critical files such as documents, images and videos, and the right product will save you time and resources. Opting for all of these benefits from an open source provider will also remove any restrictions placed upon you by more rigid proprietary vendors, giving you formidable tools straight out of the box, and the additional options to customise, collaborate and develop your system even further at little to no cost.

## DAM is the right decision; open source makes it even better.

Whether you're new to open source software, or are a seasoned developer, the great news is that you've already chosen to make DAM software an integral part of your daily file saving and sharing routine. DAM software can free up resources and creativity in order to save your team time and energy, and open source software such as ResourceSpace presents the opportunities for customisation and building new features. And using open source doesn't mean you're on your own; ResourceSpace offers full customer support across every hosting option, ensuring you receive the same dedicated levels of helpful service regardless of the package you select.

The screenshot displays the ResourceSpace DAM interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'RIVIERA' and various menu items like 'Home', 'Featured collections', 'Recently added', 'Tagging', 'Knowledge Base', and 'Upload'. The user 'Joe Smith' is logged in as 'Admin'. The main content area shows a search result for 'Woman relaxing' with 25 results found. A large preview window is open, showing a photo of a woman in a pink top lying in tall grass. To the right of the preview is a 'Resource tools' panel with a table of file information:

File information	File size	Options
<b>Original JPG File</b> 1920 × 1280 pixels (2.46 MP) 16.3 cm × 10.8 cm @ 300 PPI	411 KB	<a href="#">Download</a>
<b>Screen</b> 1200 × 800 pixels (0.96 MP) 10.2 cm × 6.8 cm @ 300 PPI	187 KB	<a href="#">Download</a>
<b>Preview</b> Full screen preview	187 KB	<a href="#">View</a>

Below the table are actions: Add to collection, Share, Edit, Delete, Manage alternative files, Log, and Transform. Below the preview is a 'Resource details' section with a table:

Resource ID	Access	Contributed by	Subject	Emotion	Event
21	Open	Joe Smith	Woman, Girl, Customer	Happy, Eye contact	Photo shoot
Date	Camera make / model				
30 June 16	Canon EOS 7D				

At the bottom, there's a 'Current collection (12 items)' section with a grid of thumbnails and 'Remove' buttons for each. A search sidebar on the right offers 'Simple search' with filters for 'All resources', 'Photo', 'Document', 'Video', 'Audio', and 'Templates', along with 'By date' filters and 'Clear' and 'Search' buttons.

# Open Source DAM in action

For Kate Blanch of the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, using open source software revolutionised the way the institution approached digital asset management. Having previously struggled with a proprietary vendor, the Systems Manager for Data and Digital Resources now enjoys the freedom and education that open source provides. She explains, “One of the most valuable elements of ResourceSpace is that because it’s built on open source components, when I need to learn something around it, what I’m learning is actually enriching the technical knowledge of the institution. You’re not just learning how vendor software works, you’re learning a tool set and that’s huge. There are so many more places and things to research because you are using open source components on the back end.”

Kate also collaborates with fellow institutions who are also using open source principles to make ResourceSpace perform in even more exciting ways: “I know that the Los Angeles Museum of Art is working on a reverse integration for the TMS feature. So people are picking up the plugins and are continuing to build them out, so that’s fantastic for us.”

To read the full case study outlining the use of ResourceSpace at the Walters Art Museum, [click here](#).



## Let ResourceSpace be your open source DAM of choice.

We hope that you’ve found this white paper on open source and proprietary software helpful. To explore DAM software further, start your free trial of ResourceSpace today to see how much easier it is to manage and share your assets digitally, or to talk to our experts in more detail about the benefits of open source digital asset management, simply get in touch.





## About ResourceSpace

ResourceSpace is the web-based Digital Asset Management software of choice for leading commercial, academic and not for profit organisations, offering a convenient, productive and easy to use solution for organising and sharing files. We help organisations improve efficiency, encourage collaboration, and free up time and resources.

Fully customisable to best meet the demands of your business and packed with highly beneficial features, ResourceSpace is available as open source software, meaning that there are no license fees to pay and no vendor lock-ins.

See for yourself why ResourceSpace is used by a host of big name brands. It takes just a few seconds to create a fully featured trial installation with 1GB of storage and full administrative access. To get started, visit: <http://www.resourcespace.org/trial>



# ResourceSpace

United Kingdom: 01367 710 245  
International: +44 1367 710 245

[resourcespace.com](http://resourcespace.com)