

# Collaborative creativity, IPR and development

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# Collaboration in history



James Watt, Lean's Reporter and the Cornish Pumping Engine

# James Watt



# James Watt

James Watt's improved steam engine... was the key innovation that brought forth the Industrial Revolution. ... it gave us the modern world. A key feature of it was that it brought the engine out of the remote coal fields into factories where many mechanics, engineers, and even **tinkerers** were exposed to its virtues and limitations. **It was a platform for generations of inventive men to improve.**

--Wikipedia

# James Watt

Lobbied for an Act of Parliament to extend his patent's lifetime to *thirty-one years*

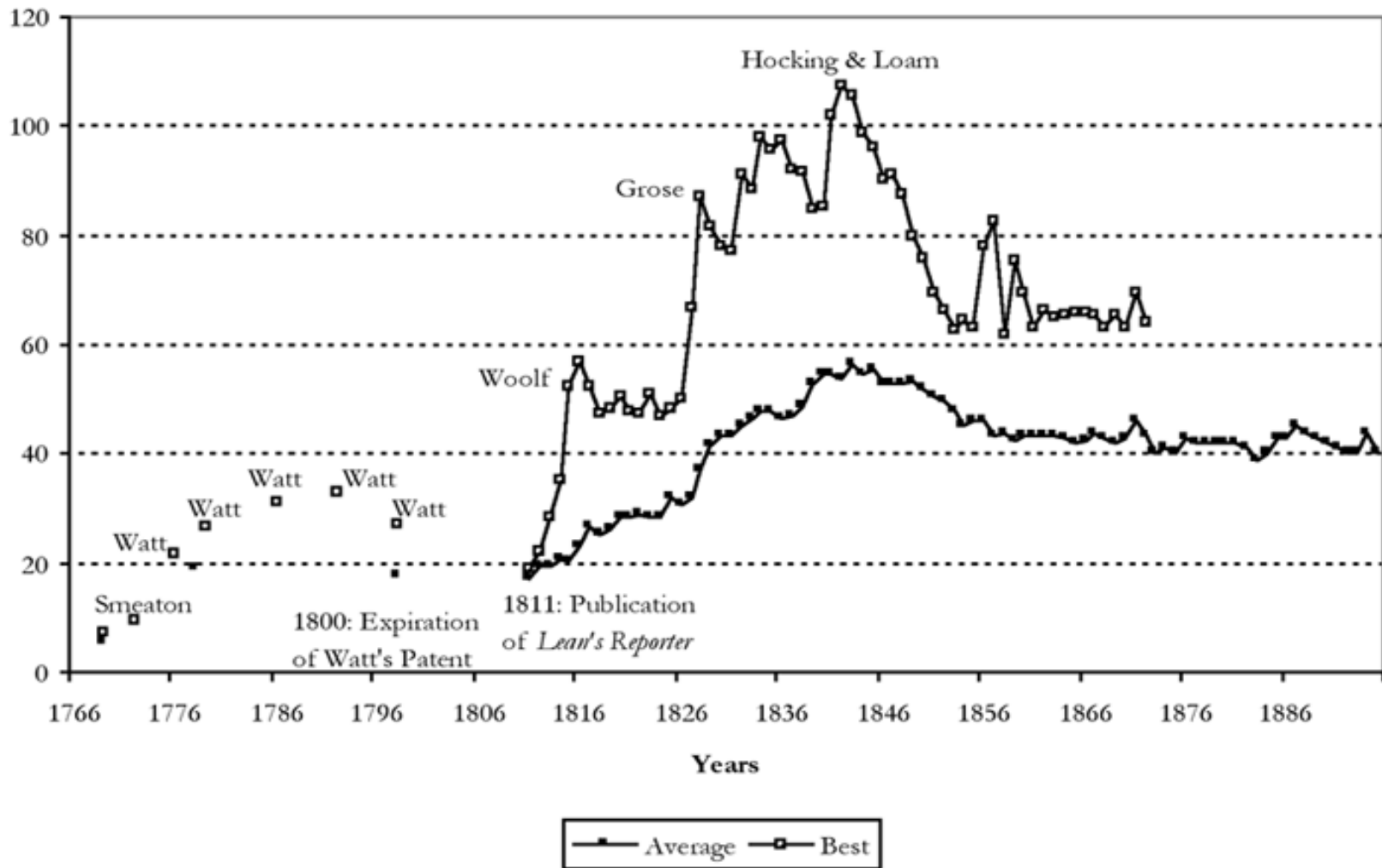
Drove the inventor of a superior engine to bankruptcy  
(Hornblower)

Blocked innovation in steam engines – and steam engine sales –  
throughout the life-time of his patent

When his patent ended, Cornwall – one of the biggest markets –  
boycotted his company, in protest at his former aggressive  
monopoly... sounds familiar?

# James Watt

Nuvolari, A., 2005. "Open source software development: Some historical perspectives". *First Monday*, 10:10



“Duty” or efficiency of steam engines

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# 1811 *Lean's Reporter*

Monthly journal published by Cornish miners – the main user-developers of steam engines

Published the full specifications of each improved engine, so they could be copied

Improvements, performance skyrocketed

New inventors (Trevithick, Woolf...) avoided patents, releasing specifications publicly

# 185 years later...

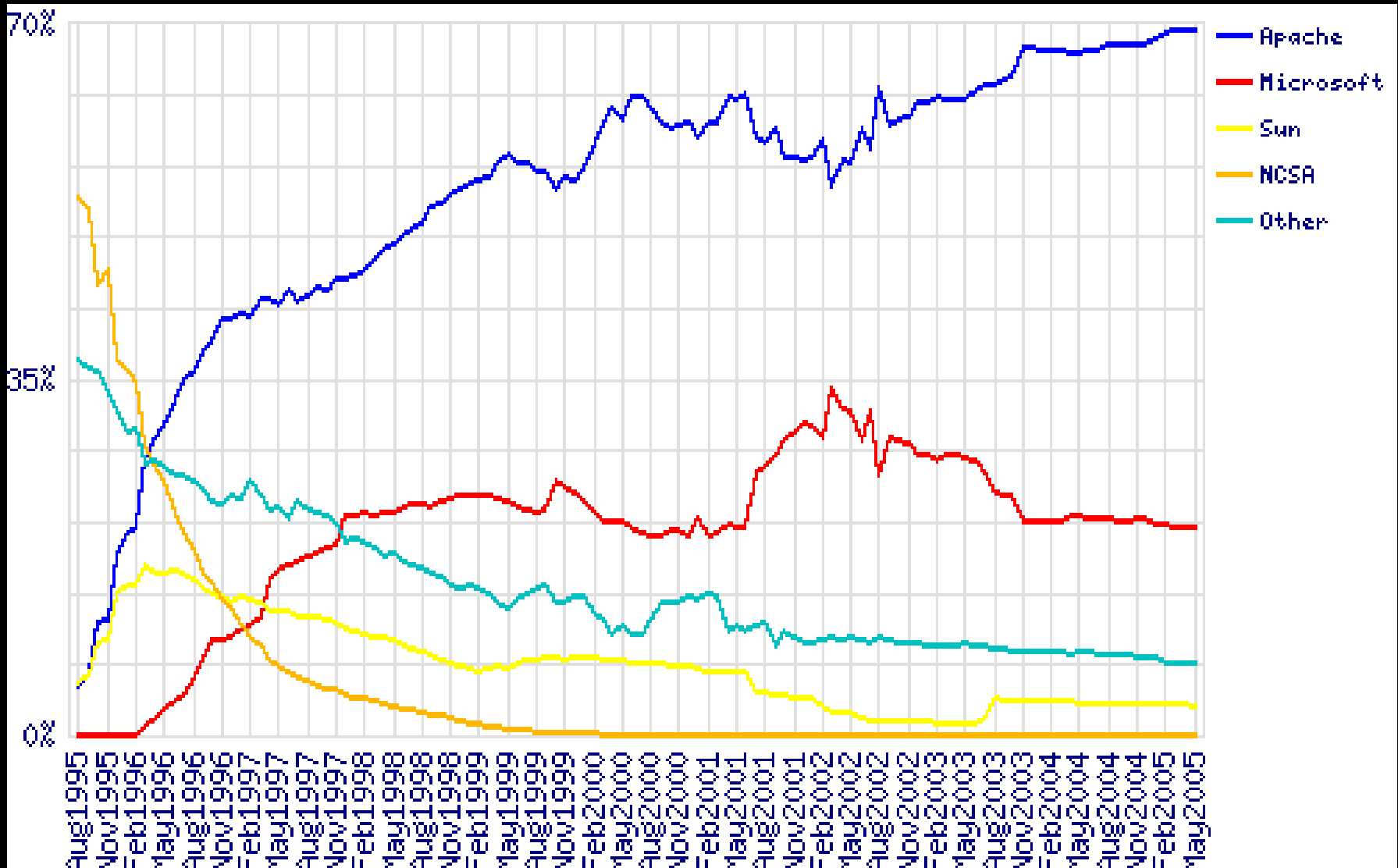
Software published by user-developers of major innovative websites (*Hotwired* etc)

Publish full specifications – source code – of each improved version

Improvements, performance – and market share – skyrockets

Many new inventors avoid patenting (proprietary copyrighting), releasing source code as free software

# Web server market share



Source: Netcraft Web Server Survey, May 2005 - [www.netcraft.com](http://www.netcraft.com)

# 195 years later...

And IBM, Sun, etc release free software

*(Sadly, some never learn,  
and monopolistic practices still exist)*

# Kicking away the ladder

Charles Dickens would complain about US  
copying of his novels

Britain, US, etc did not respect foreign  
patents until mid 19<sup>th</sup> century

The Netherlands abolished patents  
between 1869 and 1912

Switzerland granted patents on  
chemical substances only in 1978

*(Ha-Joon Chang, Cambridge University)*

# Thank you

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