Four Freedoms for Freedom

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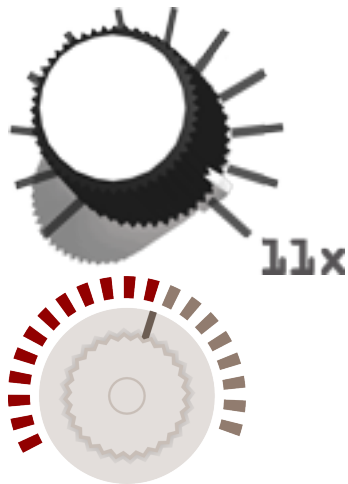
Free Software Foundation
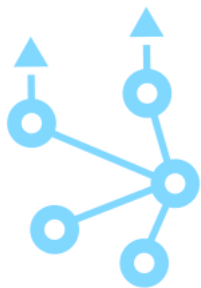
February 24, 2013

Nice to meet you

I've been the Executive Director just since March 2011, but I've been with the Free Software Foundation since 2003.

The FSF was founded as a nonprofit organization in 1985 to fight for the freedoms of computer users, and to sponsor the GNU Project, which has a goal of making a fully free operating system.

Great minds

LibrePlanet 2013

- March 23-24, Cambridge, MA
- http://libreplanet.org/2013

Our goal

At the FSF and in the GNU Project, we want **all** computer users to be able to do **everything** they need to do on **any** computer, using **only** free software. We have been working toward this goal since 1984.

It obviously matters to programmers

The most obvious people affected by software freedom are the programmers. They are the ones who will likely want to – and are able to – modify software running on their computers.

We can't stop there

But free software is a movement to advance and defend freedom for anyone and everyone using any computing device, not just programmers. In many countries now, given the ubiquity of tablets, phones, laptops and desktops, "anyone and everyone using any computing device" means nearly all citizens.

Some want to use this trend to control people

But new technological innovations in these areas keep coming with new restrictions, frustrating and controlling users even while creating a perception of empowerment. The Free Software Foundation wants to gain the support and protect the interests of everyone, not just programmers. How do we reach people who have no intention of ever modifying a program, and how do we help them?

Is this possible?

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YES.

We have ways

Four Freedoms

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- **Freedom 3:** The freedom to distribute copies of your modified versions to others. By doing this you can give the whole community a chance to benefit from your changes.

Freedom 0

"The freedom to run the program, for any purpose"

This one is easy, because all computer users run programs.

Freedom 1

"The freedom to study how the program works, and change it so it does your computing as you wish."

This is harder. It requires understanding what source code is, and why it's important to have access to it.

Freedom 2

> *"The freedom to redistribute copies so you can help your neighbor."*

This is relatively easy, as long as we can help people understand why this is not stealing, and that great software can continue to be written even when unlimited copying is the norm.

Freedom 3

> *"The freedom to distribute copies of your modified versions to others. By doing this you can give the whole community a chance to benefit from your changes."*

This is the hardest. It seems to apply only to people who are able to modify programs and want to spend time doing so.

Why should I care about that?

What do we do about Freedoms 1 and 3? People do care about freedoms that pertain to activities they don't do themselves:

- They care because they feel a sense of ethical responsibility for the impact of their choices.

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What do we do about Freedoms 1 and 3? People do care about freedoms that pertain to activities they don't do themselves:

- They care because they feel a sense of ethical responsibility for the impact of their choices.
- They care because they know that their world is impacted by the lack of freedom for people who *do* engage in those activities.

Opportunities

It's not hard to find examples of proprietary software betraying users that will resonate with many people.

- Ereaders like the Amazon Kindle trouble many people because of the potential for censorship and surveillance of reading habits. When your copy of *1984* gets deleted overnight while you sleep...

- Another clear argument for modification is malware or "antifeatures." (see Benjamin Mako Hill). Devices have plenty of those – some iPhone apps won't let you use them with a projector, even though the hardware can do it. Canon cripples their cameras. Mobile devices block tethering.

How do I care about that?

How do people know when something has the freedoms? This is a hard enough problem for us – we have to spend a lot of time looking at software licenses and code, to see if it is free.

We should use labels

We can use clear labels to let people know when something is free, or dangerous. We have labels that inform people about food products. When things are clearly labeled, people who care can make informed decisions.

When people who are unfamiliar with free software see labels, they investigate whether they should care.

Without labels, mere free software *use* might not help us. Millions of people use Android but have no idea that it is largely a different kind of software.

Not a new idea

Labeling is actually a founding principle in the GNU General Public License (GPL), because it's imperative to let people know the software they are using is different from most software.

1. You must include a copy of the license.
2. You must display a notice when the program is run interactively.

You may convey verbatim copies of the Program's source code as you receive it, in any medium, provided that you conspicuously and appropriately publish on each copy an appropriate copyright notice...and give all recipients a copy of this License along with the Program.

New FSF labels

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- GNU/Linux Inside

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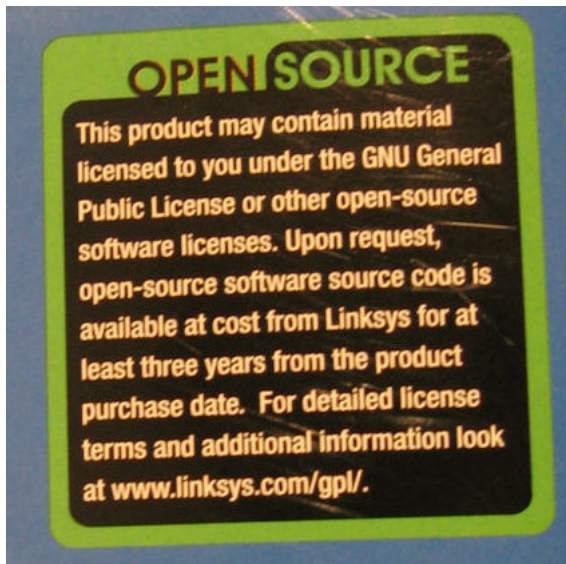- DRM-free (Digital Restrictions Management)

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- GNU/Linux Inside
- DRM-free (Digital Restrictions Management)
- "Respects Your Freedom"

GNU/Linux Inside

Here's a label you can buy from `shop.fsf.org` and apply yourself. It's a very durable sticker to indicate that your machine runs GNU/Linux.

Digital Restrictions Management

One of the main free software issues most relevant to the most people is DRM – the proprietary software that tries to stop users from copying movies or music from one computer to another, or copying an application from one phone to another. But companies don't advertise what has DRM and what doesn't.

DRM-free label

- Launched in August 2012
- Used by O'Reilly Media, Weightless Books, Magnatune, Momentum Books (digital-only publisher of Macmillan), ClearBits, Go Faster Stripe, ccMixter, TuneTrack, Obooko, Project Gutenberg Australia, Project Runeberg, University of Adelaide, Foboko, Girlebooks, and many more.
- Available in English, Spanish, French, and Turkish
- Self-policing; not a certification mark.
- New design coming.
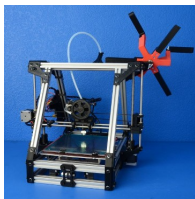- http://www.defectivebydesign.org/drm-free

Respects Your Freedom

This label is for products – computers and computer accessories – that ship with only free software and are fully compatible with free software systems.

- Actual certification mark. You cannot display it unless we've evaluated the product. Companies commit via contract to fix any problems that are discovered.
- We announced the first version of the guidelines in 2010.
- Ultimate goal is to certify complete systems, especially laptops and mobile devices.
- You can read more about it and the guidelines at http://www.fsf.org/ryf. Also see http://h-node.org.

The first certified product

Yes, it's called the Lulzbot. But we were very serious about certifying it. The timing was very effective. The logo appeared in *MAKE* magazine's 3D printer issue. It was soon after Makerbot announced a shift in the proprietary direction, and on the same day that Intellectual Ventures received a patent on DRM for 3D printers.

Aleph Objects, Inc.

Aleph Objects, Inc. is honored to have the first hardware product with the FSF's Respects Your Freedom certification mark, and we're proud to sell a 3D printer that delivers freedom to each and every user. Aleph Objects, Inc. was founded with the idea that people should be free to use, learn from, and improve the machines they use, and to share their improvements and innovations with collaborative communities. The spirit and philosophy of the free software movement is embodied in our LulzBot 3D printer. All of our printers ship with hardware designs, software, and documentation all under free licenses. You get it all – source code, design documents, and specifications – everything needed to control, tinker, fix, and improve upon every aspect of the printer.

– Jeff Moe, Founder of Aleph Objects, Inc.

More labels to come and some that are needed

- **Coming:** Web sites that work with free software – no proprietary JavaScript or Flash, for example.
- **Coming:** Programs in the Free Software Directory – These are programs that are free software and run on free software operating systems, listed in `directory.fsf.org`.
- **Needed:** Application store and extension repository labels.

Two-step plan

1. Label what is free software, or what is proprietary software, in a clear and obvious manner.
2. Point labels to explanations of why software made and distributed in freedom is ethically better for everyone.
3. Use increased success with step 2 to get more people doing step 1.
4. Use increased success with step 1 to get more people doing step 2.

Labeling is not enough on its own.

Our labels need to be much more widespread.

Labeling gives us the ability to more clearly communicate the presence and importance of free software, but it does not stop nonfree software. It does not get rid of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act or similar laws around the world, which enforce DRM. It does not get rid of computational idea patents. But it gives more people a chance to be on our side. It helps people care about their freedom, and the freedom of others.

Support Freedom

Our work is funded primarily by grassroots contributions from thousands of individual members.

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