Explanation of Terms

The following is an further explanation of terms used in the Software Freedom Day 2008 Press Release.

What is software?

Software is the name that we give to the programmes that you use on a computer. The actual computer that you see and hold is called "hardware". Examples of software that you use every day include Internet Explorer, Microsoft Word, Excel, Paint and so on.

What is Free and Open Source Software?

Software is produced in both human- and computer-readable formats. However, most times, when you buy software, you only get the version that your computer can read. The human-readable version is known as the source code of the software. You can modify a program's behaviour and how the program functions if you have access to the source code.

Most software companies that own the source code sell licenses to end users (the average person) for the computer software and keep the source code secret. Such software is known as "proprietary software."

In contrast, Open Source Software is software for which the source code can be freely downloaded and altered to suit your needs (provided you can do the programming).

Many open source developers make ready-to-install versions for various operating systems.

You can do the following with open source software :

- Install the software on any number of machines in any environment (home or commercial) without paying additional licence fees.
- Obtain and modify the source code and distribute modified versions of the program together with the modified source code. Open source licenses differ in how such source code can be distributed or licensed for others to also do what you have done.

What is an operating system?

An operating system is the underlying software engine that runs the computer. Some examples are Microsoft Windows, Mac OS, and Linux.

What is Linux?

Linux is a free and open-source operating system for computers and for a variety of other devices, such as cell phones and gaming systems. It was originally created by Linus Torvalds with the assistance of developers from around the globe.

What is Ubuntu?

Ubuntu (pronounced (oo-BOON-too)) is a community-developed operating system based on Linux that is perfect for laptops, desktops and servers. Whether you use it at home, at school or at work, Ubuntu contains all the applications you'll ever need, from word processing and email applications, to web server software and programming tools. Ubuntu is an African word meaning 'Humanity to others', or 'I am what I am because of who we all are'.