

Free and Open Source Software

Trinidad and Tobago Computer Society (TTCS)

<http://www.ttcsweb.org/>

“Networking local computer users!”

Software Licensing

- Software you use isn't sold, it is licensed for you to use.
- Users are only granted permission to use the software under specific conditions laid out in a End User License Agreement (EULA).

Example EULA

1.1 Installation and use.

You may install, use, access, display and run one copy of the Software on a single computer, such as a workstation, terminal or other device ("Workstation Computer").

The Software may not be used by more than one processor at any one time on any single Workstation Computer.

<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/home/eula.msp>

Proprietary Software

Proprietary software (also called non-free software) is software with restrictions on using, copying and modifying as enforced by the proprietor.

Restrictions on use, modification and copying is achieved by either legal or technical means and sometimes both.

Technical means include releasing machine-readable binaries to users and withholding the human-readable source code.

Legal means can involve software licensing, copyright, and patent law.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proprietary_software

Source code

A key feature of proprietary software is that the the source code is not available and is kept secret.

The source code is the human editable blueprints to alter the software. With source code, you can modify the program's behaviour and how the program operates.

An analogy : if a cake were ready to use software applications, the recipes would be the source code.

Disadvantages of proprietary software

- The cost of software license fees which must be paid for each machine it is installed on
- Closed formats - data created by proprietary applications can only be read by the vendor's application. As such, you can only pay for/upgrade to whatever the vendor offers. And the vendor could withdraw support or go out of business.
- anti-piracy methods to prevent software piracy can lock you out of your data (sometimes accidentally) and frustrate legit use.
- No access to the source code means you can't modify the program to suit your needs.

“Free” software

- “Free software” is a matter of liberty, not price.

To understand the concept, you should think of “free” as in “free speech”, not as in “free beer”.

The term "free software" was coined by Richard Stallman and the Free Software Foundation (FSF) in the early 1980s.

“Free” software

Free software is a matter of the users' freedom to run, copy, distribute, study, change and improve the software.

More precisely, it refers to four kinds of freedom, for the users of the software :

- The freedom to run the program, for any purpose (freedom 0).
- The freedom to study how the program works, and adapt it to your needs (freedom 1). Access to the source code is a precondition for this.
- The freedom to redistribute copies so you can help your neighbor (freedom 2).
- The freedom to improve the program, and release your improvements to the public, so that the whole community benefits (freedom 3). Access to the source code is a precondition for this.

“Free” software licenses

A free software license is a software license which grants recipients rights to modify and redistribute the software which would otherwise be prohibited by copyright law.

A free software license grants, to the recipients, freedoms in the form of permissions to modify or distribute copyrighted work.

-- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_software_license

One of the most popular Free Software Licenses is the GNU General Public License (GPL) originally written by Richard Stallman.

The GPL grant the recipients of a computer program the rights of the free software definition and requires derived works to be available under the same license.

Open Source software

Open Source software treats free software's precondition to see/alter/distribute source code more of a practical value rather than a moral necessity for users.

Put another way, free software is a social movement while open source is a development methodology.

The Open Source Initiative (OSI) organisation was formed in 1998 to promote and advocate open source. It also publishes a definition which lists 10 criteria for software to be considered open source.

<http://opensource.org/docs/osd>

Benefits of Free and Open Source software

- no per user license fees for each machine.
- multi-platform - most application software is available for different operating systems -Windows, MacOS X and GNU/Linux
- data formats are specified - other applications can be developed to read/alter them.

Thank You!

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