

Logiciel Libre — TD 2*

Principles, history, and Free cultural works

2020–2021

1 Free Software Principles

Exercise 1.1 (Your definition of Free Software). *Write in one or two sentences your definition of Free/Libre/Open Source software (“Free Software” in the following). Try to be personal: we’re not asking for an academic, neither a mainstream definition. We ask for a definition which captures your views about what Free Software is.*

Exercise 1.2 (The most prominent impact of Free Software). *From your point of view, what is the most prominent impact of Free Software? The impact may be of any kind (economic, legal, social, technological, etc), and be produced by any combination of factors, as long as they are clearly related to Free Software (Free Software projects, companies, developers, organizations, etc).*

Exercise 1.3 (Differences between Debian and OSI definitions). *Compare the Debian Free Software Guidelines (DFSG)¹ with OSI’s Open Source Definition (OSD)². Is there any difference? If so, which ones? In case there are differences, do you think they are meaningful, and have important practical consequences or not? Could you track back the OSI and Debian definitions to find out when those differences, if any, were introduced? (As a side-exercise: determine the date in which both definitions were published, and their primary authors).*

Exercise 1.4 (GNU Manifesto). *The GNU Manifesto³ is one of the first documents stating the goals of the Free Software movement. Determine when it was published, its context, and its immediate consequences? When did the GNU project started to produce usable programs?*

Exercise 1.5 (OSI and FSF definitions). *Compare the OSD and FSF’s Free Software definition⁴. Try to map concepts (and even paragraphs) from one to the other. Explain the main differences between the two documents, and also the key points in which they match.*

Exercise 1.6 (Code obfuscation). *One of the clauses of the Open Source Definition comments on “code obfuscation”. Which one? Please provide a definition for “code obfuscation”. Can you point to any Free Software tool that can do code obfuscation (please provide name and reference URL)?*

Exercise 1.7 (OSI and FSF approved licenses). *OSI maintains a list⁵ of software licenses recognized as conforming to the OSD; FSF maintains a list⁶ of software licenses recognized as conforming to the Free Software definition. Analyze both list. Try to determine whether the licenses not included (and hence considered non-free/non-open) are the same in the two lists. Similarly, try to determine which licenses, if any, are included in only one of the two lists.*

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¹https://www.debian.org/social_contract.html#guidelines

²<https://opensource.org/osd-annotated>

³<https://www.gnu.org/gnu/manifesto.html>

⁴<https://www.gnu.org/philosophy/free-sw.html>

⁵<https://opensource.org/licenses>

⁶<https://www.gnu.org/licenses/license-list.html>

Exercise 1.8 (Provisions 5–10 of the Open Source Definition). *Provisions 5 to 10 of the Open Source Definition further clarify the main points of the OSD, delimiting its boundaries, and leaving outside the open source software realm licenses that might be considered “borderline”. In some cases, these provisions have been included for practical reasons, in others to avoid the circumvention of the spirit of the definition, in others to clarify some details.*

Describe at least one borderline case (a license or a software carrying it) that at least one of those provisions would exclude, explaining why it is outside the realms of the Open Source Definition, and the rationale for it. Discuss the reasons that, in your opinion have lead to the relevant provision for the case you have chosen.

2 History of Free Software

Exercise 2.1 (Important events in the history of Free Software). *In the textbook “Introduction to Free Software”⁷ (Chapter 2), you can find a list of important events in the history of Free Software. Can you mention some others? (if possible, mention one before January 1st 2006, and one after that date). For each event, try to date it as accurately as possible, describe it, and explain why do you think that it is important for the history of Free Software.*

Exercise 2.2 (Historical context of the OSI definition). *The Open Source Definition was produced in a very peculiar historical moment for Free Software. Try to find out why the term “open source” was coined, who first proposed it, who agreed with it, and who didn’t. Also, who wrote the OSD, and who decided to found the OSI, and composed its first board. Try to put this in the technological and business context of those times.*

Exercise 2.3 (Netscape announcement). *In 1998, Netscape announced⁸ that the next release of its web browser was going to be Free Software. Read and comment the announcement. Explain what happened to the browser software after the announcement, leading to the first releases of Firefox, and to which extent the plans by Netscape, as stated back then, became real.*

Exercise 2.4 (Free Software 10 years from now). *How do you imagine Free Software in year 2026? In particular, do you think it will be a mainstream model for producing software? Or maybe it will be confined to some specific niches? Which ones? Or maybe it will become irrelevant? And in any case, why? As a side question, for the main computer devices in use by that year, how much Free Software will be delivered on them, typically (e.g., as a percentage)? Motivate your answer.*

3 Free Cultural Works

Exercise 3.1. *The definition of Free Cultural Works⁹ is inspired by the Free Software definition, but also incorporates aspects of the OSD. Do a comparative analysis of the definition of free cultural works and the two definitions of Free Software and Open Source.*

- *According to these definitions, can all Free Software and Open Source software be considered Free Cultural Works? Why?*
- *In addition to the basic freedoms, other aspects are taken into account when defining a free cultural work. Why do you think those have been taken into account in the case of cultural works, but not for free/open source software? Or maybe it is, but in some other way?*
- *Which of the Creative Commons licenses¹⁰ are suitable licenses for free cultural works?*
- *Why is the Creative Commons “nc” (non-commercial) clause considered outside the free cultural works realm, according to this definition?*

⁷http://ftacademy.org/sites/ftacademy.org/files/materials/fta-m1-intro_to_FS-v1.pdf

⁸<https://blog.lizardwrangler.com/2008/01/22/january-22-1998-the-beginning-of-mozilla/>

⁹<https://freedomdefined.org/>

¹⁰<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>