Master's thesis

Master's Programme in Computer Science

Public Copyright Licenses in Software Engineering: A Multivocal Systematic Literature Review

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Tiivistelmä — Referat — Abstract

Closed-source software slows down the advancement of the society and allows companies to ask for unsustainable amounts of money for software. Free software attempts to tackle this issue. Free software leans heavily on the software licenses that juridically forbid closed-source derivatives of the software licensed with a free software license. Unlike agile software projects of today these licenses do not patch their loopholes frequently. These loopholes cause exploitation of the licenses. One example of such a license failure is the RHEL incident where an operating system distribution licensed with a free license was partially was essentially rendered into proprietary software.

Tell about the research method here.

Tell about the results here.

Tell about the discussion here.

ACM Computing Classification System (CCS)
Social and professional topics → Computing / technology policy → Intellectual property → Licensing

Avainsanat — Nyckelord — Keywords

open source, free / libre software, software freedom, proprietary software, closed source, copyleft, license

Säilytyspaikka — Förvaringsställe — Where deposited

Helsinki University Library

Muita tietoja — övriga uppgifter — Additional information

Software study track

Acknowledgements

Contents

1 Introduction

Public copyright licenses play a major part in software engineering. In the case of open source there must be an appropriate open-source license attached to the source code in order for open-source software to be freely available for possible modification and redistribution. Because open source is central to software engineering the licenses enabling open source must also be considered important in the same context.

Public copyright license is defined by Wikipedia:

> "A public copyright license is a copyright license where the licensees are not limited. Examples include free content, open content, Creative Commons, free software and open source licences."

(Category:Public copyright licenses, 2012)

Using public copyright licenses can be difficult. This could stem from the legal nature of the license texts and the large number of already-existing public copyright licenses. The license texts favor correctedness over the understaning of the developer because the license text has to act as a valid legal instrument.

1.1 Research goal, questions and contributions

- RQ1: How have public software licenses changed throughout the years?
- RQ2: Why have public software licenses changed throughout the years?
- RQ3: What is the speed of change in software licenses throughout the years?
- RQ4: What are the limitations for a rapidly changing software license?
- RQ5: How can we make it easier for developers to understand various public software licenses?

1.2 Background and terminology of public copyright licenses

literature review here

1.3 Thesis structure

Write how this thesis is going to contribute to the aforementioned problems.

Introduction 3 pages

Methods 10 pages

Results 10 pages

Discussion 6 pages

Conclusions 1 page

2 Methods

1. Develop Review Protocol
2. Validate Review Protocol
3. Identify Relevant Research
4. Select Primary Studies
5. Assess Study Quality

3 Results

7. Extract Required Data
8. Synthesize data

4 Discussion

5 Conclusions

Bibliography

Category:Public copyright licenses (2012). *Category:Public copyright licenses — Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. [Online; accessed 31-January-2024]. URL: https://web.archive.org/web/20240131085240/https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Public_copyright_licenses.

Appendix A Table of software licenses

List of FOSS licenses goes here.