

This week's article and subsequent discussion were enlightening and pushed me to consider how I interact with online resources. They challenged my preconditioned thoughts about open-access tools and pushed me to think about how I might be a more critical user of online resources.

The idea that stuck out most to me from the article was the idea of open washing. In my experience, anytime I saw that something was open access, I immediately believed that it was good because the resource creators created it ethically. However, after our discussion, I've realized that while these open-access resources usually begin as a helpful, good tool, there is always the chance that they can be bought out by another company that immediately closes it. An example that someone in my breakout group brought up was how Oracle bought Java, which was open-access before Oracle bought it. After some digging, I found that Oracle has since implemented a new pricing model based on the number of employees per company who use Java. The fewer employees who use Java, the higher the monthly subscription price is for the licensing (Oracle 2). As I was reading through this subscription list, I began thinking about our class discussion about the commercialization of specific software. This seems to be what Oracle is doing with Java because it has a large user base. However, the new tier system has generated a lot of controversy and led to users finding alternative software.

This leads me to my reaction to our discussion and the reading, which is how we can be more critical users of online software. Professor Wisnicki proposed that we research the software before using it, and I agree with this approach. Looking up the company's history or project will provide a good starting point. Also, utilizing online community spaces like Reddit could offer a space for critical users to start as well. If an online resource is implementing controversial policies, someone on Reddit is likely talking about it and sharing links to websites that provide further information. The essay we read for this week also touches on the idea of becoming a more critical user and says that we should look at how the software imposes certain technical norms. With this idea, another way to be a critical user is to see how an online resource functions across various devices. For instance, a website might work beautifully on a laptop, but once a user tests the functionality on a phone or tablet, they may find that it lags or is completely unusable. Likewise, if an online resource can function well across devices, that shows the user that the creators were thoughtful in creating their website and recognized that their project would attract different types of users.

"Oracle Java SE Universal Subscription Global Price List." January 23, pp. 1-2,  
<https://www.oracle.com/assets/java-se-subscription-pricelist-5028356.pdf>.