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Free Software Movement

People use free software operating systems such as GNU/Linux for various reasons. Many users switch for practical reasons: because the system is powerful, because it is reliable, or for the convenience of being able to change the software to do what you need.

Those are good reasons—but there is more at stake than just convenience. What's at stake is your freedom, and your community.

The idea of the Free Software Movement is that computer users deserve the freedom to form a community. You should have the freedom to help yourself, by changing the source code to do whatever you need to do. And the freedom to help your neighbor, by redistributing copies of programs to other people. Also the freedom to help build your community, by publishing improved versions so that other people can use them.

Whether a program is free software depends on its license. Our detailed definition of free software shows how we evaluate a license to see if it makes programs free software. We also have articles about certain specific licenses explaining the advantages and disadvantages of some licenses that do qualify, and why some other licenses are too restrictive to qualify.

In 1998 the term "open source" was coined and associated with views considerably different from ours. These views cite only the practical advantages of free software, and carefully avoid the deeper issues of freedom and social solidarity that the Free Software Movement raises. Open source is good as far as it goes, but it only scratches the surface of the issue. We don't mind working with supporters of open source on practical activities such as software development, but we do not agree with their views, and we decline to operate under their name.

If you think that freedom and community are important for their own sake, please join us in proudly using the term "free software", and help spread the word.

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