KING ABDULAZIZ UNIVERSITY
THE COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

OPERATING SYSTEMS

EE463

LAB ASSIGNMENT #2: SOFTWARE LICENSES

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SUBMISSION DATE: 09/05/2015

SUBMITTED TO

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Software Licenses

A software license is a document that provides legally binding guidelines for the use and distribution of software. Software licenses typically provide end users with the right to one or more copies of the software without violating copyrights. The license also defines the responsibilities of the parties entering into the license agreement and may impose restrictions on how the software can be used. Software licensing terms and conditions usually include fair use of the software, the limitations of liability, warranties and disclaimers and protections if the software or its use infringes on the intellectual property rights of others.

Types of Software Licenses

Software licenses can generally be fit into the following categories: proprietary licenses and free and open source. The significant feature that distinguishes them is the terms under which the end-users may further distribute or copy the software.

Proprietary Software Licenses

Most software licenses are "proprietary" licenses, meaning the software publisher grants a license to use one or more copies of software, but that ownership of those copies remains with the software publisher. The user must accept the license before they are permitted to use the software. Basically, without acceptance of the license, the end-user may not use the software at all. There are numerous examples of proprietary software. Both the Windows and Mac operating systems are proprietary, and so are many of the typical software applications used in organizations, such as Microsoft Office. Many specialized software applications, such as those used for database management and various types of enterprise information systems, are also proprietary. In many cases, software companies have invested many years of software development into a product. By making the software proprietary, they are protecting their investment and make it possible to commercialize their software. The revenue from software sales can then be used to continue developing the software.

Shareware

Shareware is proprietary software that is made available to users at no cost under certain conditions. For example, shareware may have limited functionality relative to the commercial version of the same software, or the license for the software may expire after a certain trial period. The rationale behind shareware is to give potential users the chance to evaluate the software before investing in a license fee. Trial versions of commercial software fall under the shareware category.

Free and open-source software licenses

Open Source

The term "open source" software is used by some people to mean more or less the same category as free software. It is not exactly the same class of software: they accept some licenses that we consider too restrictive, and there are free software licenses they have not accepted. However, the differences in extension of the category are small: nearly all free software is open source, and nearly all open source software is free.

Public domain software

Public domain software is software that is not copyrighted. If the source code is in the public domain, which is a special case of non-copylefted free software, which means that some copies or modified versions may not be free at all. In some cases, an executable program can be in the public domain but the source code is not available. This is not free software, because free software requires accessibility of source code. Meanwhile, most free software is not in the public domain; it is copyrighted, and the copyright holders have legally given permission for everyone to use it in freedom, using a free software license.

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Copylefted software is free software whose distribution terms ensure that all copies of all versions carry more or less the same distribution terms. This means, for instance, that copyleft licenses generally disallow others to add additional requirements to the software (though a limited set of safe added requirements can be allowed) and require making source code available. This shields the program, and its modified versions, from some of the common ways of making a program proprietary.

References

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