### ****How Did Software Licenses Emerge?****

Back in the early days of computing — we're talking the 1950s and 60s — software wasn’t really seen as something separate from hardware. It was usually shared freely among researchers, bundled together with the big, expensive machines it ran on. There wasn’t much talk of ownership or rules around how software could be used.

But things started to change as software became more complex and valuable on its own. By the 1970s, companies like IBM and Microsoft realized that software could be a product in itself, not just something that came with the machine. That’s when the idea of **software licensing** really began to take shape. Developers and companies needed a way to protect their work — to set clear rules about who could use their software, how it could be used, and what wasn’t allowed. This led to the creation of **End-User License Agreements (EULAs)** and other legal tools to define those boundaries.

Not everyone was on board with this new proprietary approach, though. In the 1980s, **Richard Stallman** and others pushed back with what became known as the **free software movement**. Their goal wasn’t to make software “free” as in price, but “free” as in freedom. They wanted users to be able to look at the code, change it, and share it with others. That’s where licenses like the **GNU General Public License (GPL)** came in — legal frameworks designed to guarantee user freedom rather than restrict it.

Over time, this gave rise to the **open-source** movement, which found a middle ground: software that’s free to use and modify, but still governed by clear rules. Today, software licenses — whether open or closed — are a core part of how the tech world operates. They help manage innovation, protect creators, and guide collaboration across the globe.

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