Why Free Software?

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Terminology

- "free as in speech, not as in beer"
- "libre" rather than "gratis"
- "open source" defines a very similar set of software (ideological vs. technical focus)

"Four Essential Freedoms"

- The freedom to run the program as you wish, for any purpose (freedom 0).

- The freedom to study how the program works, and change it so it does your computing as you wish (freedom 1). Access to the source code is a precondition for this.

- The freedom to redistribute copies so you can help your neighbor (freedom 2).

- The freedom to distribute copies of your modified versions to others (freedom 3). By doing this you can give the whole community a chance to benefit from your changes. Access to the source code is a precondition for this.

History

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Definitions

History

Benefits

Examples

1970s	Restrictive software licenses
1980	Copyright extended to "computer programs"
1983-5	Richard Stallman starts GNU Project, Free Software Foundation, "copyleft"
1992	Linux kernel licensed under GNU GPL
1997	Eric Raymond, "The Cathedral and the Bazaar"
1997-8	Debian Free Software Guidelines, Open Source Definition

Benefits

- control over your own computing
- culture of sharing, "forking", reusing components
- ability to audit, improve code $\rightarrow$ quality, security (hopefully): "Given enough eyeballs, all bugs are shallow."

Examples

- lots of frameworks, services, applications. . .
- GNU/Linux, BSD operating systems
- version control and communities: GitHub

Resources

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_software
- https://www.gnu.org/philosophy/free-sw
- https://fsf.org/
- http://cplug.org/