Free Software Supporter and Groups Wiki

Over the past ten months over 12,000 people have subscribed to the monthly *Free Software Supporter* newsletter. Don't miss out! You can subscribe and read back issues at `fsf.org/fss`.

If you're an activist, please add yourself to our groups wiki, `groups.fsf.org`. We intend to make much more use of this in the coming months. Groups like Manchester Free Software in the UK (`manchester.fsuk.org`) are making extensive use of this wiki already. 🐃

This bulletin was produced using only free software: GNU Emacs, Inkscape, GIMP, markdown, Ikiwiki and LaTeX. Extra special thanks go to Joshua Gay for all his hard work over the last 18 months. Good luck with the new job!

How to Contribute

Associate Membership: Become an associate member of the FSF. Members will receive a bootable USB card and e-mail forwarding. To sign-up or get more information, visit `member.fsf.org` or write to `membership@fsf.org`.

Online: Use your credit card or PayPal account to make a donation at `donate.fsf.org`.

Jobs: List your job offers on our jobs page. See `fsf.org/jobs` for details.

United Way: As a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization, the FSF is eligible to receive United Way funds. See `fsf.org/uw` for more information.

Buy GNU Gear: Order one of our T-shirts, stuffed gnu toys or manuals at `shop.fsf.org`. You can even get a copy of *Free Software, Free Society* signed by Richard Stallman!

Volunteer: To learn more, visit `fsf.org/volunteer`.

Free Software Supporter: Make sure you're getting all the very latest news from the FSF at `fsf.org/fss`.

Groups wiki: Find local groups in your area or start your own at `groups.fsf.org`!

Contact: `donate@fsf.org` for more information on supporting the FSF.

FSF FREE SOFTWARE FOUNDATION

Bulletin

Issue 13
November 2008

Contents

Change we can believe in...

by Peter Brown
Executive Director

Do you use nonfree software? Does your employer or school require you to use Microsoft software? Are you required to use proprietary formats to interact with your bank or local government? Are your children being trained to use computers rather than learning how to be in control of the computers they use?

As advocates for free software we are often faced with these challenges. We know that the support for the status quo, or the convenience of using the monopolists' pervasive tools, makes it hard to convince institutions to change their ways. Yet the opportunities for change have never been better.

In our latest victory, the Free Software Foundation through its End Software Patents (ESP) campaign filed an amicus brief to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit (CAFC) in their en banc hearing of *in re Bilski*.[1] We saw this as an historic opportunity to undo the harm inflicted by software patents on free software developers. The *Bilski* ruling didn't disappoint, as it gutted — if not technically overturned — the *State Street* ruling

[1] `endsoftpatents.org/bilski`

that in 1998 opened the floodgates to the patenting of business methods and software. The vast bulk of software patents that have been used to threaten developers writing code for a GNU/Linux distribution running on general purpose computers has in theory been swept away. The *Bilski* ruling undoubtedly represents a breakthrough for free software and a success for the FSF's campaign. And with this ruling we are on the path to lowering the threats that institutions face when considering adopting free software.

Completely free distributions like the FSF-sponsored gNewSense are now viable, something that just a few years ago seemed far out of reach. Our work with SGI earlier this year[2] means that even the latest 3D graphic acceleration can now be achieved with free software and gNewSense. And the relaunch of our High Priority Projects[3] list highlights that the proprietary software for which there is currently no free alternative and that users feel forced to use, is being tackled aggressively.

Hardware manufacturers friendly to free software have given us the first free software smartphone, the Open-Moko FreeRunner. The OLPC project gave us the first free software laptop, the XO, that has quickly established the low-cost sub-notebook marketplace — where the economics have made GNU/Linux a popular choice. And for the past few months, FSF systems administrators have been working on the forthcoming free Lemote laptop, which Richard Stallman plans to use and that we hope will be widely commercially available.

The FSF has been campaigning

alongside many partners for free and open standards, particularly for Open-Document Format (ODF) and against Microsoft's OOXML. In June of this year, Microsoft finally announced that they would adopt ODF and many nation states have been adopting policies in support of ODF.[4] Our free audio and video codecs campaign has also been winning hearts and minds,[5] and Mozilla's Firefox web browser will soon carry native support for Ogg, giving us an unprecedented opportunity to promote free codecs.

Combined, these breakthroughs are important because they give us an opportunity to put aside the claims of convenience that are used to promote the monopolists' pervasive tools, and ask important questions of our employer. Why are we using this proprietary software that locks us to this vendor when we could be using free software that would give us control? It gives us the chance to demand open government. Why is it, that my local government is forcing me to purchase one vendor's software to access public records, when there are free formats that we can use that work with free software? And why does this school accept corporate donations of proprietary software that come with handcuffs on my child's education, rather than use free software that will give my child the opportunity to be in control of the technology she learning to use?

These are just some of the changes that we can all bring about by voicing support for free software. While it's important that people adopt free software out of concern for their freedom and not just convenience, the cumula-

switch to GNU/Linux instead. In this way, we were successful in transforming Microsoft's unprecedented marketing blitz into a moment introducing many new people to free software. Evidence of this can be seen at `freesoftwarefreesociety.org`, a statement published by our campaign against Vista that was signed by not only over 1,600 individuals but also non-software organizations like the Green Party, Friends of the Earth International, People & Planet, New Internationalist, and Legambiente.

Second, we helped expose the restrictions Vista imposes on its users. Our Vista Watch section collected over 250 news stories describing Vista's new Digital Restrictions Management system as well as security holes and other problems with Vista that stemmed from its being proprietary software. In addition to aggregating such stories, we served as an information resource for reporters writing about Vista, giving straight answers about its restrictions that they couldn't get from Microsoft. Our campaign actions, including street protests in New York's Times Square and near Boston's Fenway Park, helped keep these concerns in the news and counter the propaganda distributed to people attending Microsoft events. Our organized labeling efforts on Amazon ensured that anyone considering purchasing a copy of Vista there would see information about its restrictions.

Now, two years later, it is apparent that Vista has missed its window for widespread adoption. Individuals, governments, corporations, universities and organizations have largely taken a pass or even abandoned Microsoft entirely. Recent numbers, for example, indicate only a 6% adoption

rate by businesses. The fact that Microsoft has both repeatedly extended XP cutoff deadlines and is already promising a public beta of Windows 7 for release in early 2009 is further strong evidence of Vista's failure. In places where Vista was adopted, the reason was often coercive support contracts imposed by Microsoft — it's going to take time for people to extricate themselves from those agreements and it is part of our long-term work to help them do so.

Thank you to all of you for making this campaign a success. We are retiring the web site and ending the campaign in order to devote more effort and resources to new campaigns that will help us reach the next set of milestones on the road toward a world in which all users can safely choose free software. Buoyed by this success, we will need all of you to continue lending your energy and creativity to this new work as together we counter the encroachments of all proprietary software on our freedoms. `BadVista.org` has both advanced this cause and shown us all what we can achieve in the future.

[2] `fsf.org/news/thank-you-sgi`
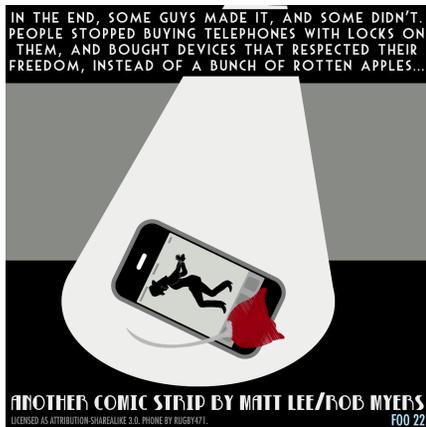[3] `fsf.org/campaigns/priority.html`
[4] `fsf.org/campaigns/opendocument`
[5] `fsf.org/resources/formats/playogg`

Free Software. Both concepts are very tightly linked, and we have to make that clear.

Matt: What can free software supporters like yourself do every day to help?

Franco: Programmers can find a good project to start to experience the free software methodology, and work in the community. Teachers can teach how to use and develop free software, artists can help to improve visual quality and usability of free software projects, while other people, like journalists can spread the word about this fight. I don't believe the importance of free software is the software itself, but making people believe that they can produce and not just consume, that they can decide, and that they can think about the ideas of knowledge and property. 🦬

IN THE END, SOME GUYS MADE IT, AND SOME DIDN'T. PEOPLE STOPPED BUYING TELEPHONES WITH LOCKS ON THEM, AND BOUGHT DEVICES THAT RESPECTED THEIR FREEDOM, INSTEAD OF A BUNCH OF ROTTEN APPLES...

ANOTHER COMIC STRIP BY MATT LEE/ROB MYERS
LICENSED AS ATTRIBUTION-SHAREALIKE 3.0. PHONE BY RUGBY471. FOO 22

Badvista: We hardly knew ye

by John Sullivan
Operations Manager

On December 15, 2006, the FSF launched its BadVista.org campaign to advocate for the freedom of computer users, opposing adoption of Microsoft Windows Vista and promoting free — as in freedom — software alternatives. Two years later, the campaign has nearly 7,000 registered supporters, the name Vista is synonymous in the public eye with failure, and we are declaring victory.

Like Olympic marathon winner Joan Benoit Samuelson, we look at victory as "milestones on a very long highway". We have not yet convinced all Windows users or even all Vista users to switch to a fully free operating system like gNewSense. There is still much work to be done and there are many milestones to reach. But the BadVista campaign was launched to achieve specific goals, and as we bring it to a close we should recognize and celebrate what the campaign and everyone who supported it has achieved.

First, we successfully provided an entry point for those interested in Vista to learn about free software alternatives. Prospective Vista users searching for "windows vista" on all popular search engines saw and still see `BadVista.org` on the first page of results. Microsoft's attempt to create pressure on users to change from prior versions of Windows to Vista created an opportunity for us to suggest that if users were going to take the trouble to change their operating system — something inertia often works against — then they should

tive effect of many people doing this is a world in which it will also be more convenient for all of us to use free software — a world in which those seeking control over users under the guise of convenience will face much stiffer opposition. 🦬

THE BONO SLEEPS TONITE

I KNEW SHE WAS TROUBLE THE MOMENT I LAID EYES ON HER. SHE HAD THIS FRIEND -- THEY ALL HAD THIS FRIEND -- BUT THIS GUY WAS DIFFERENT. HE WAS KIND OF A PHONEY, BUT HE NEEDED MY HELP... HE NEEDED JAILBREAKING AND I WAS THE LAST CAT IN TOWN WHO STILL DID THAT KIND OF THING.

Membership update

by Deborah Nicholson
Membership coordinator

This year the Free Sofware Foundation has been busy creating more opportunities to meet up with our members in person. We want to hear from you and we want you all to meet each other. We especially want you to invite your friends and colleagues who may be interested in free software, but may not be all that familiar with the work that goes into protecting and promoting free software. All of the events we've hosted so far have been informal and fun — perfect for inviting a curious friend!

We've already communed with our

members in Portland, Oregon, where board member Mako Hill and (former) campaigns manager Joshua Gay sparked discussions about Ogg Vorbis and freedom for network services. In San Francisco, RMS joined members in a lively conversation about the nature of freedom and the importance of accepting no compromises. Board member Henry Poole talked about `autonomo.us` and executive director Peter Brown covered some of the exciting sucesses we've had in the battle against DRM this year.

By the time you receive this we'll also have been out to visit with our members in San Diego, assisted by Hugo Award-winning author Vernor Vinge. Early next year we'll be touching base with folks in Los Angeles and we hope to catch up with our Canadian members later in the year. We're also looking for a good opportunity to meet up with our members on the other side of the Atlantic, so that may become part of our member meet-up itinerary soon. 🦬

How free is the G1?

by John Sullivan
Operations Manager

With the launch of iPhone 3G in July, we have stepped up our work to support free software mobile devices like the OpenMoko FreeRunner against nonfree platforms. We've targeted Apple with campaign actions that have been effective at keeping the iPhone's Digital Restrictions Management (DRM) and the Applications Store policies that ban free software in the public eye. Many of you have joined us in writing to criticize Steve Jobs for his attempt to grab even more

control over users. As an alternative, we've been encouraging users to hold out for free software devices, which are rapidly catching up in terms of features, and if they are developers, to contribute their skills to improving these devices.

Along the way, there has been much anticipation in the free software community for the arrival of the "G1" — the first phone to use Android, Google's mobile operating system. The Android base is licensed as free software under primarily the Apache License, and is a more featureful and stable platform than what currently ships with the FreeRunner. You can check out the code at `code.google.com/android`.

The G1 became available in late October, and is currently only officially sold through T-Mobile. Unfortunately, although the base system is free, Google and T-Mobile have chosen to sell the G1 in a form that is not free. It currently ships with proprietary software — the source code for several applications, like Gmail, Maps, Amazon, and the Market, is not present in the official git tree. Also, they have made the decision to tivoize the device, only allowing officially signed firmware to be installed. While users can run, modify, and redistribute Android applications, they do not have root access on their own devices.

There are a couple evident examples of the way this tivoization is being used to control users, and Google has already started an upgrade war with users in order to close the loopholes that have been used so far to circumvent the restrictions. First, the phone comes locked to T-Mobile for three months after purchase. There

are a variety of methods by which the phone can be unlocked, but the firmware signing requirement is a restriction intended to make this more difficult. Second, users cannot remove or replace any of the default applications. Not only does this mean that users can't fix problems or make improvements in the operating system actually being used, but it also reserves space for Google and T-Mobile to have a "kill switch", as the iPhone has. This is a mechanism by which an authority can remotely disable or remove applications running on a user's phone. Google explicitly carves out space for this power in its Android Market Developer Distribution Agreement Terms of Service.

Google says that the kill switch is required to disable malicious applications that may be inadvertently distributed through the Android application store. While it is to its credit that Google does not seem to be exercising the kind of restrictions that Apple imposes on its store, we should reject this "security" justification the same way we reject it from Microsoft and Apple. Windows Defender and Genuine Advantage, for example, have already been used to remove applications from users' computers without warning or approval. Part of moving to free software operating systems is escaping this kind of control. These so-called security measures, other than providing an attack vector, are also about security for Google and T-Mobile, not the user. If they were about the user's security, the user would be given the signing keys, the code to all of the software involved, and the means to verify what external authorities like Google and T-Mobile are up to.

Because of restrictions like these,

and, of course, Blender for 3D modelling.

Matt: On the flip side, what are we really lacking?

Conley: Video editing. I mentioned Cinelerra, but it is terribly unstable. I save every couple of minutes because it crashes that frequently. There are several stable video editors, but they just don't have the same functionality. We really need something to compete with proprietary software in the way that the GIMP can compete with Photoshop. Patent unencumbered formats and codecs are really vital too — many people don't seem to think it is much of an issue, but I say it is. ☙

shop.fsf.org

by Jasimin Huang
Operations Assistant

In August this year, we launched our new online store. With this upgrade, we have a much greater opportunity to communicate our message to the world, both via our merchandise, but also via our matching new website.

Thanks to everyone who has supported us so far, and be sure to check out our latest products! In time for the holiday season we have four new t-shirt designs. From the timeless GNU head, to the glam-metal inspired 'Thanx GNU'. These products wouldn't exist without your support, both by buying them, but also by helping us to design them — Mark Lindhout, Rob Myers, Aurelio A. Heckert and our own Deborah Nicholson deserve all the credit for these latest shirt designs.

If you have an idea for a product or design you think people would buy,

please send example artwork (in SVG format please!) to `order@fsf.org`. ☙

†HANKS TO A GUY NAMED SONNY, CATS ALL OVER THE CITY WERE DOING TIME FOR TRYING TO BREAK THEIR JAILS.. SURE, THEY'D GET OUT IN 70 YEARS OR SO, BUT THEY'D NEVER BE FREE... NOT WHILE SOME OTHER CAT HAD THEIR SOURCE CODE...

GNU talk: Franco

Franco Iacomella is a student and resercher in Buenos Aires University. He is a free software developer, GNU hacker and member of the Free Software Foundation Latin America.

Matt: GNU is 25 years old this year. How are we doing?

Franco: I think there is still a lot of work to do, a lot of fighting still to do. We have to remain true to the original message of freedom and we need to improve our communication skills. We have to protect the original principles of the Internet — the freedom that built the network. So fighting against "cloud computing", spreading the word about free formats and making them standard in the web (like Ogg in HTML5). We also have to join efforts with the free culture movement and show them the importance of using

works, works of opinion and works of entertainment and art.

This lead me to wonder how the free culture community could work with the free software community. The free culture community is broad, with few organizations and many contributors. One effort has been to create a definition of free cultural works, with the Creative Commons Attribution and Atribution-ShareAlike licenses being listed as free licenses for creative works. This seems reasonable, and would rightly exclude our Stephen Fry video from such a classification. Many of the images displayed during the video were taken from various photo-sharing services, and made available under an Attribution license, which permits its reuse and alteration, as long as credit is given. This is similar in nature to non-copyleft licenses, such as the X11 license.

Certainly, one way we can work together is to take the same approach to licensing as the free software community — if you're creating artwork, for a free software project or not, license it under an Attribution or ShareAlike license. Musicians can license their music under these licenses and be included in free games like Frets of Fury. Making sources for these things available is important — as more and more art is produced using software, the ability to make editable sources for these creative works.

Further, we should encourage artists to use free software for their works. Recently, the Dutch Ministry of Finance organized a competition to design a commemorative Euro coin. The winner, Gepostet von Stani, created his entire winning design using free software, proving, at long last, that you can make money with free soft-ware.

What can we do to support the creation of free art? What applications and software do we need to create? ☙

GNU talk: Conley

Conley Owens is studying data mining at Virginia Tech and currently working on his masters degree. He is also the founder of Students for Free Culture at Virginia Tech.

Questions were asked by Matt Lee, FSF campaigns manager.

Matt: Conley, what is Students for Free Culture?

Conley: Students for Free Culture is an international chapter-based student organization that promotes the public interest in copyright and information/communications technology policy. If you don't know what that means, it's okay, because none of us really does either!

Matt: How can artists get involved with local student groups like yours?

Conley: Find us! Talk to us! We are cool people! Specifically, some chapters struggle in reaching out to those in non-technical fields, so having artists to bridge that gap is great.

Matt: One of the most exciting things for me right now is the creation of good free creativity software — what are your favorite pieces of free software for creativity?

Conley: I just discovered Hugin recently from an article on Linux.com, and it's pretty nifty. I think the GIMP is probably one of the best pieces of free creativity software. For video editing, I use Cinelerra. And to add a few more for good measure: synfig for animation, Audacity for audio editing,

neither the iPhone nor the G1 as currently available are acceptable. Fortunately, The FreeRunner is already running a basic free Android port, and development on other operating system distribution options is progressing rapidly. Developers or relatively experienced GNU/Linux users can already feel comfortable using the FreeRunner for many mobile computer functions (I'm very happily using mine as a music player, GPS mapping tool, notepad, wifi internet tablet, and sometimes phone now).

In the meantime, we should avoid giving money to help proprietary competitors. Apple needs to know that its approach is completely unacceptable. T-Mobile and Google should know that theirs is not an acceptable compromise; that their support for free software is very much appreciated but not when they deliver the result in this fashion. If you write code, don't write for platforms like the iPhone that refuse entrance to free software completely. Instead, use GPLv3 for your code, so that no one has the power to make your work nonfree. Remember that your GPLv3 code can generally be used with Android, because GPLv3 and version 2 of the Apache License are compatible — and GPLv3 will still protect your code from being tivoized by anyone distributing it to other users. Finally, please help spread the word about this campaign by sharing the flyer and articles at `fsf.org/campaigns/iphone` with your friends, family and colleagues. We're very close to having free software mobile devices that are as powerful as the proprietary options — your support will help make it happen. ☙

Free Software Directory

by Kelly Hopkins
Directory Maintainer

The Free Software Directory is one of our signature projects here at the FSF. A joint venture between the FSF and UNESCO, the Free Software Directory is your one-stop-shop for completely free programs for use, hacking, and study.

One of the most important ways for us to learn about the latest and greatest programs is from you, our members. Submitting your program to us is easy, but to ensure the directory remains a useful resource, we need a bunch of useful information from you.

- Make sure you send us your project's title and homepage — this might seem obvious, but it is easily overlooked.

- A link to your source code, both a download link, but also a link to your source code repository. If you don't have one, sign up with Savannah! If you're using a bug tracker, send us that as well.

- Don't forget to list ALL the licenses, including the license for your documentation. We recommend the GNU Free Documentation License.

- Sell yourself — a good, concise description of what your project is and what it does. Keep it short, but sweet.

- The current version number, and tell us the maturity of your project — is it production ready, or just your latest hack project?

- Who are you? How can people contact you... we'll make this public, so bear that in mind.

- Community! Do you have mailing lists and IRC channels? Be sure to include those with your submission.

- Be sure to tell us about any dependencies. Dependencies should also be free software, and try to be as accurate as possible.

- And finally, don't forget to tell us about your program's interface — is it a web application, or a console tool? A great GTK app, or a cute Qt program?

Sending us all of this information might seem a little unwieldy or redundant, but considering the volume of requests we receive, it's the fastest way to guarantee that your request receives the attention it deserves.

Free BIOS update

by Ward Vandewege
Senior Systems Adminstrator

A lot of effort is going into v3, the next generation codebase for coreboot. It only boots a few boards so far, but the code design is far superior to v2 and thus much easier to work with. Speaking of v2 — that codebase now supports 108 boards — but not all of those are still available, and on some boards not all components are supported.

AMD recently released documentation and coreboot code for the 690 chipset. VIA has been pushing out a lot of documentation as well. Both AMD and VIA have people active on the coreboot mailing list. As a consequence, almost all supported boards are based on AMD or VIA chips.

At the FSF, we've finished the initial desktop rollout of seven coreboot systems. Work is ongoing to upgrade more of our servers to coreboot.

Compliance lab: behind the scenes

by Brett Smith
Licensing Engineer

A lot of the work of the Compliance Lab involves quiet negotiations, working to convince others to do the right thing for free software. The end results often seem minor—a few paragraphs of legalese here, a change of name there—but they have big consequences, and there's a lot of work that goes into them. There have been a couple of announcements in the news recently that offer good examples.

In late September, SGI released version 2.0 of its SGI Free License B. The terms of this license are identical to the X11 License, but with this release, a lot of software that our community's been relying on was finally turned into free software.

Late last year, it came to our attention that a lot of the core support for OpenGL on common GNU/Linux systems was released under the SGI Free License B version 1.1 and the GLX Public License—both of which were not free software. After discussing the problem with other groups concerned about this, we approached SGI, and began working with them to figure out a good way to release this code under a free software license. The process took over six months, as we figured out who to talk to, explained our concerns about the older licenses, and discussed severable possible solutions before we finally found one that satisfied everyone. Now, thanks to an upgrade clause in older versions of the license, all the code ever released under the SGI Free License B can now be used under these free terms.

Another example came in early November, when we ourselves released version 1.3 of the GNU Free Documentation License. This is a slight modification to the previous version of the FDL: the primary change is the addition of a new section 11, which allows wikis distributing FDL-covered works to relicense those under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike (CC-BY-SA) 3.0 license if certain conditions are met.

We made this change at the request of the Wikimedia Foundation. They wanted to update Wikipedia's licensing so they could make full use of the wide variety of materials people have published under CC-BY-SA. Since they don't hold the copyrights to editors' contributions, they needed another way to make a licensing change, and we have provided it.

Discussions about this change went on even longer than the SGI negotiations. We consulted extensively with board members of the Wikimedia Foundation to find a solution that would give them a feasible transition path, without hurting those users who have come to count on the rights that the FDL provides. The actual license text went through many drafts as well, to make sure that this additional permission would neither be too narrow nor too broad.

It's hard to make hay out of this sort of work in the news — generally there isn't a story to publish until those negotiations are complete. But this slow, steady work gets us a lot of benefit with a minimum of hassle: just think of what it would've required to rewrite SGI's OpenGL implementation from scratch, or the improvements that can come to Wikipedia now that it can incorporate CC-BY-SA materials. Ultimately, it's well worth the effort. Don't be surprised if you hear about others in the next Bulletin.

Free Culture, Free Software

by Matt Lee
Campaigns Manager

I n September, we released Stephen Fry's film to mark the 25th anniversary of GNU. For me, this was the culmination of six months of work, both with my colleagues here at the FSF, but also with Stephen and his colleague, Andrew, who was producing the film. We recorded a lot of footage, and the running time of the video eventually came down to around five minutes, with an extra minute for our lavish and congratulatory credit sequence in which we tried to cram in as many GNU contributors as we could name.

One criticism seen on many blogs was that by not permitting people to download and *change* the video, we were acting hypocritically. In reality, this is how we have treated works of opinion for many years, with our verbatim licensing. The article you are reading now, is no exception to that — Richard Stallman outlines the reasoning behind this in his talk, *Copyright vs Community*, but it essentially boils down a difference between functional