# FREE SOFTWARE FOUNDATION

# Bulletin

## Contents

**LIBRE PLANET 2015**

Register for LibrePlanet at `u.fsf.org/14w`.

## Free software needs your vote

*by John Sullivan*
*Executive Director*

At the Free Software Foundation, we want to empower all computer users everywhere to do everything they might need or want to do on any computer, using only free software, without having to ask permission.

By definition, proprietary software does not empower users in this way. It places limits on what they can do, such as preventing sharing of the software, or looking at its code to see how it works.

Proprietary software enables users to pursue everything they might need or want to do, only as long as the software distributor approves.

The four freedoms that define free software — to run the program (0), to study and modify it (1), to share it (2), and to share modifications (3) — are meant for everyone, in their interactions with any program. Free software is a means to protect the individual freedom of computer users.

But why would someone who has no intention of ever reading the source code of programs running on their computer, much less in modifying it, care about Freedom 1, or Freedom 3? Why do they need or want the freedom to do things they might never need or want to do?

One reason is that any computer user can ask someone else to do those things for them. Like the freedom to take your car to any mechanic, or to evaluate multiple contractors for an improvement on your home and then go with the one you like the best, in a free software world, people can request or commission changes to the way their software works.

In the proprietary world, this happens only in a very limited and contingent way. You can't pay Microsoft or anyone else to make changes to Windows, or anyone — not even Apple — to change something in the iPhone's operating system. In the free world, anyone can make modifications to any program, and can even be paid for their time spent doing so.

This is an example of a *tangible* way in which everyone benefits from the four freedoms, whether they work on software themselves or not — but it is not the only benefit.

The mere existence of the *option* for people to inspect, modify, and share the software they use has an important effect which, if it became the norm, would cause a dramatic change in the behavior of software companies, and the character of software.

To understand why, think about the right to vote. Everyone does not have to vote in every election in order for voting rights to have an impact on the behavior of elected officials. Politicians know that there is the *potential* for all eligible people to vote one way or the other, and they have to act accordingly.

Of course, many countries (such as the United States) have voting systems that are less than ideal, with various obstacles and distortions dulling the importance of individual votes. But in general, the right to vote can be a powerful check on government behavior.

The four freedoms for software can work in a similar way. We don't need *everyone* actively modifying software to deter bad behavior by software companies.

But we do need everyone to have the *right* to modify software; we need everyone to have that *potential*. The fact that any given person around the world *could* step up and make a modification to a program to make it act differently — such as removing a back door installed by some company — is a powerful check against unethical control of individuals through software.

It can't be *entirely* mere potential. If nobody ever votes, the right to vote loses its impact. This is a good reason to request the source code for any device you purchase that has GNU GPL-covered software on it, whether you have plans to do something with it or not. But regardless, the number of software developers, hobbyists, and tinkerers, who can effectively modify and redistribute software, is much more than zero.

We do still need to encourage people to learn more about how their computers work, enough to be able to make basic changes for themselves, but we also need to explain that these freedoms are important for anyone regardless of whether they intend to ever write a line of code in their lives. We need to encourage people to use only software that respects everyone's freedoms.

To succeed at this, we need to make it easier for people to identify free software, and to care about it. Identifying whether something is free software or not can be a complex process. Several aspects need to be looked at by a

knowledgeable person — the copyright license, any End User Licensing Agreement, related trademark licenses, and possibly relevant patent claims.

That's a lot to ask of someone who is just trying to buy a computer or device that comes with some software, or is considering downloading a program they found online.

We know we need to make this easier, and we are working on a number of efforts in this area. One of the most important is our Respects Your Freedom hardware certification program.[1] Another is a simple label that can be put on programs to indicate that they have been verified as free (such as being listed in our Free Software Directory).[2]

As one milestone along our path to the elimination of proprietary software, we can aim to have free software achieve what the organic food and textiles movement has achieved. Whatever you think about the importance or irrelevance of organic products, they are now available and clearly marked in many stores around the world, as well as in online shops. Imagine if it were just as easy to identify and support free software.

Please do exercise your freedom to read and modify software. But even if you don't, insist on having the option. By doing so, you help create a world where software is a tool for true empowerment instead of control. ᕮ

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[1] fsf.org/ryf
[2] directory.fsf.org

# What would a free software world look like?
*by Zak Rogoff*
*Campaigns Manager*

Free software activism is a struggle with short and long term goals. We try to stay focused on moving forward the world around us and not getting hung up on perfectionism or fantasies. But from time to time it's good to pause and envision the goal state we're working towards. Different free software activists have different goals — at the FSF we advocate for an end to proprietary software and a 100% free software world, so that's what I'll write about here.

Inherently, there are a lot of assumptions I'm making for this thought experiment, and there's no way for the predictions to be actually accurate. With that said, let's step through the door of imagination into a different world . . . a world of all free software.

One of the first things we notice is that people think about software differently. Thinking of it less as a black-box product to buy, people understand that it is a living, evolving tool that reflects the efforts of the people that develop and use it. Though not everyone is a programmer, many more people have at least basic programming skills and an understanding of how computers work.

People are legally able to explore and customize any program that they have the hardware to run, so they are familiar with a more diverse array of software. Compatibility between programs and protocols is less of an issue, because they are all designed to work with as many other systems as possible, and programmers can add compatibility that the original authors over-

looked. People are more often able to use the best software solution available for the problem at hand. Because so many people in so many different circumstances have created custom software solutions for their needs, there are programs available to help a wider range of people in different cultures and economies.
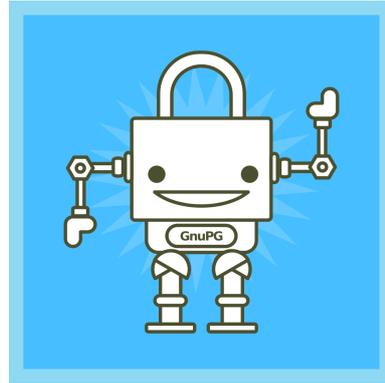
Powerful organizations also use software differently. Independent review of the software that runs important systems in government and corporations is commonplace, and these organizations see it as a great embarrassment for vulnerabilities to be found in the code, so they hire hackers to fix them in the open. Censorship and surveillance is considerably harder, though not impossible. Tools for circumventing them are widespread and under constant development to stay one step ahead. Governments spend less money on software. Hopefully they spend it on other things that are good instead, but maybe they spend it on something worse.

Perhaps most importantly, people are a little less accepting of being pushed around in general. Free software doesn't exist in a cultural vacuum, and having the expectation of control over their software conditions people to expect control over other aspects of their lives. Democracy is stronger, and people are more comfortable working out their differences and coming to solutions together.

Back to the real world . . .

We may or may not see an all free software world in our lifetimes, but I think that it's worth conceptualizing it, both to inspire us in our work and to help us prioritize different efforts within the scope of free software activism, based on which parts of the

goal are most important to us. I'd love to hear your thoughts on these ideas. Email me at `zak@fsf.org` if you want to share them. I can't guarantee that I'll respond to every message, but I'll read them. ☺



Learn how to encrypt your email in over eleven languages! Visit `u.fsf.org/esd`.

# GNU Guix and GNU's 31st Birthday
*by Dave Thompson*
*Web Developer*

### What is Guix?

GNU Guix (pronounced like "geeks") is a purely functional package manager and a GNU/Linux distribution (officially called the GNU Guix distribution of GNU/Linux) that respects the freedom of computer users. Guix is written in GNU Guile Scheme, the official extension language of the GNU System. In addition to standard package management features, Guix supports transactional upgrades and roll-backs, unprivileged package management, per-user profiles, and garbage collection.

**Guix hackathon on GNU's 31st birthday**

There's no better way to celebrate the GNU Project's birthday than to hack on GNU software with free software advocates from around the world. To continue the theme set by last year's GNU30 hackathon at MIT, an online hackathon was held in the #guix IRC channel on Freenode on September 27 and 28, 2014 to celebrate GNU's 31st birthday. During that time, contributors worked on KDE, Hurd, and Ruby support, fixing bugs in existing packages, a PyPI package importer, package 'linters', and made improvements to the 'guix.el' Emacs user interface. That's a lot of birthday presents!



Try GNU Guix today!

**Guix's role in the GNU System**

Guix is currently the only GNU/Linux distribution that is an official GNU project. In addition to building a fully free operating system, the Guix project intends to improve the integration and consistency of GNU software, as well as improve the workflow among GNU hackers and users. Guix aims to maximize build determinism and security by providing reproducible package recipes and not trusting a single binary provider.

**Towards the future**

Guix is alpha software that currently has approximately a thousand packages available in its default repository.

In order to provide a distribution that is useful for all computer users, your help is needed! The Guix project needs volunteers to test out installation images and give feedback, package useful software, keep packages up-to-date, add additional system services, fix bugs, and spread the word about Guix and the GNU Project. For source code, documentation, and contact information, visit the GNU Guix homepage.[3] Happy hacking! 🐃

# Appropriate legal notices
*by Joshua Gay*
*Licensing and Compliance Manager*

The GNU General Public License (GPL) is intended to guarantee the freedom to share and change all versions of a program—to make sure it remains free software for all its users. When you receive a program that is licensed under the terms of the GPL, you should receive (or be offered) the corresponding source code along with a copy of the GPL itself.

However, the way people download and install software these days, it is often the case that certain "details," such as the license of the software or offers of source, will go unnoticed by users. So if a user doesn't look at the

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[3]https://gnu.org/software/guix

license or read the page where they are downloading it from carefully, how else will they know that the program is licensed under the terms of the GPL, and what that means?

One answer is: Appropriate Legal Notices. In version 3 of the GPL, it states that if a program has an interactive user interface, then it must display Appropriate Legal Notices, which the GPL defines as:

"An interactive user interface displays 'Appropriate Legal Notices' to the extent that it includes a convenient and prominently visible feature that (1) displays an appropriate copyright notice, and (2) tells the user that there is no warranty for the work (except to the extent that warranties are provided), that licensees may convey the work under this License, and how to view a copy of this License. If the interface presents a list of user commands or options, such as a menu, a prominent item in the list meets this criterion."

So when creating and distributing your own free software programs, consider incorporating Appropriate Legal Notices into your UI (such as in a menu item or elsewhere). But don't just follow the letter of the GPL, consider the spirit of it as well. After all, our goal isn't to hide our legal notices as many proprietary programs do in fine print and complicated language with the hope users will not notice or understand it. In fact, we want to do just the opposite! Let users know that they have the freedom to make, use, improve, and share improvements to the program.

You may be asking how exactly should you word your legal notice so it does all this. Well, I'm not sure there is any one best answer. I would be interested to know what others think. You can help me collect good examples or ideas by either emailing `licensing@fsf.org` with your suggestions or by adding them directly to our LibrePlanet wiki page at: `u.fsf.org/14t`.

# Free tools for the FSF

*by William Theaker*
*Outreach and Communications Coordinator*
*Dave Thompson*
*Web Developer*

The Free Software Foundation draws our strength and support from our members and supporters around the world. We use CiviCRM, a free contact management system, to run our campaigns, collect donations, and send emails to our database of nearly eight hundred thousand contacts. We're not alone in this, top organizations like Creative Commons and Wikimedia Foundation also use CiviCRM to stay in contact with their members and organize against threats to free knowledge. Before switching to CiviCRM, we relied on a custom membership tool to handle the complexities of FSF membership, particularly perks like email forwarding. By the time this article reaches you, we will have completed the final steps of our migration to CiviCRM for membership management. Although CiviCRM is a powerful set of tools, the default membership dashboard was missing some features essential for our needs. Since CiviCRM is free software licensed under the AGPLv3, we have been able to modify it to suit our needs.

FSF web developer Dave Thompson has been working hard over the last few months on building an extension

CIVICRM

to CiviCRM to finally unify our membership management system with the rest of FSF-provided services. Now, the same account you use to log in to the Free Software Directory or LibrePlanet wiki will allow you to update your email and postal mailing preferences, view attendence at past events like LibrePlanet, and soon will even allow you to get in touch with free software activists in your area. This custom membership dashboard currently depends on some Drupal-specific features, but we're working on getting the core parts of the new dashboard into upstream CiviCRM so everyone can benefit from the work we've done and contribute changes. We have hopes that this extension will become platform agnostic and also support Joomla and WordPress instances of CiviCRM.

To keep our work reusable, the new member dashboard is implemented as a CiviCRM extension. By creating an extension, we can add features to CiviCRM without modifying the core source code. We decided to create a new extension because CiviCRM's default contact dashboard doesn't display all of the information that we would like our members to see and has no knowledge of our domain-specific member information. For example, we exposed the option to choose whether to receive plain text or HTML email directly on the dashboard for convenience.

Additionally, we tweaked the columns that are displayed in tables for con-

tributions amd events to include the most relevant information. Since FSF members can create email forwarding addresses, our extension adds a new database table and user interface for managing them. The biggest new feature is that our extension displays a special CiviCRM profile that allows members to update their own contact information.

Since the FSF first called for nonprofits to switch to CiviCRM in 2010, the project has seen a remarkable rate of adoption and improvement, with feature development outpacing that of many proprietary donor management systems. If you volunteer with or donate to an organization that's still using a proprietary system, like a local animal shelter or prisoner support group, let them know that CiviCRM is a suitable replacement and offer to help them migrate if you have the technical skills.

Meanwhile, you can check out the new dashboard by joining the FSF or renewing your membership. Let us know what you think at info@fsf.org. As always, patches are encouraged! 🐃

# Common misconceptions in licensing
*by Donald Robertson, III*
*Copyright and Licensing*
*Associate*

Part of our work in the Licensing and Compliance Lab involves answering questions from the community about licensing.

While the most common misunderstanding revolves around whether you can charge for copies of freely licensed works (hint: you can!), there are other aspects of licensing that fre-

quently cause confusion. We have a very robust FAQ that covers a wide variety of questions related to licensing, but I just wanted to highlight a few common mistakes.[4]

## Source required even for verbatim copies

One of the most common misconceptions that leads to compliance failures is the idea that one can distribute a verbatim copy of a GPLed work without providing source. Sometimes people will fail to provide source at all, while others will think that pointing users upstream to the original author satisfies the source requirement. While there are some circumstances where users can pass-on a written offer from an upstream distributor, all versions of the GPL require that the distributor themselves provide access to source.

## No requirement to 'publish' source code

Good community members will always want to share code widely, but a part of software freedom is choosing whether to distribute the software at all. Copyleft licenses like the GPL ensure that when someone chooses to distribute software, their users receive the same freedoms in the software, for which they'll need access to source code in order to fully enjoy. But when someone chooses to not distribute the software, or to only distribute it to particular persons, community members sometimes cry foul. In particular, people are often distressed that they can only get a copy of the source code for a particular GPLed work by paying

for a copy of the binary. While we can encourage distributors to make the source available to all, the license only requires that they provide the source to those who receive the binary. If a distributor chooses to only provide source to their direct customers, users who receive the source code with the binary should share that source code with others.

## The LGPL is not not a permissive license

The LGPL is a copyleft license. In fact, it is actually the GPL with additional permissions. These additional permissions allow users to link to the work without adhering to all the conditions of the GPL, but the LGPL still places some conditions on users, in order to ensure that they can still use, modify, and distribute the library. Even though a work that links to an LGPLed library need not be licensed under the LGPL, it still needs to be under terms that maintain the user's rights to the library. At minimum, the user is going to need a copy of the license, so that they know what those rights are. There are even situations where a distributor will need to provide source code for the library, even if they do not need to provide the same for their own work. 🦬

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**Free Software Jobs**

**Looking for employment in the world of free software? Visit `fsf.org/jobs`**

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[4]`gnu.org/licenses/gpl-faq`

# Volunteer opportunities at the FSF

*by Chrissie Himes*
*Operations Assistant*

You can support the free software movement by getting involved in myriad volunteer opportunities.

### Volunteer at LibrePlanet 2015!

There are many ways to participate at our annual conference.[5] In the past, volunteers have: carried out outreach before the conference, built the conference Web site, welcomed people at the registration desk, managed video streams, edited videos post-conference, escorted speakers, sold merchandise, and organized social gatherings during the conference.

Perks include: one admission ticket into LibrePlanet, 40% discount at the shop, lunch provided at LibrePlanet, and one gratis commemorative LibrePlanet t-shirt.

Please fill out the volunteer form with your specific interests.[6]

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[5]`libreplanet.org/2015`
[6]`libreplanet.org/2015/volunteer`

### Create 3D Objects

You can assist the FSF sysadmins in creating 3D objects on the Lulzbot TAZ 3 model by Aleph Objects. This 3D printer was certified by the Respects Your Freedom program.[7] Currently, the FSF sysadmins are creating objects for use in our server racks with Computer Automated Design (CAD). Such objects include 2.5" to 3.5" hard-drive adapters, long-term cable storage clips and couplers, as well as an assortment of other useful objects. Using a 3D printer to create these objects saves the FSF money by reducing shipping costs.

### Contribute to the free software movement

Help grow the free software movement by submitting code to programs on the High Priority Project list,[8] writing free manuals and other documentation, improving access to free software, becoming a GNU webmaster,[9] and by contributing to the Free Software Directory.[10]

GNU webmasters help maintain existing pages, respond to user inquiries, and organize major site upgrades. Email `webmasters@gnu.org` to get started. You can also get involved with the Free Software Directory by attending our Friday meetings in `#fsf` on Freenode. Visit `fsf.org/blogs/directory` for the latest meeting information. The Directory provides a comprehensive database of free

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[7]`fsf.org/resources/hw/endorsement/aleph-objects`
[8]`fsf.org/campaigns/priority-projects/`
[9]`gnu.org/server/standards/webmaster-quiz`
[10]`directory.fsf.org`

software projects and is maintained by a group of dedicated volunteers.

### Assist with general office tasks

If you live in the Boston-area and are free during the daytime, just email sales@fsf.org with your availability. Tasks include stuffing envelopes, creating shipments, and loading USB cards with Trisquel. These tasks are vital in connecting the Free Software Foundation with our supporters.

## See you at LibrePlanet 2015!

*by Libby Reinish*
*Campaigns Manager*

The LibrePlanet conference has always been a special event among free software conferences. Last year's conference blew us away, with over 350 attendees, speakers from thirty-nine different organizations, and a new partnership with the Student Information Processing Board at MIT. We strategized about how to use free software to make the world a better place, conspired to make our own movement more welcoming for everyone, and celebrated the movement's victories and some of its heroes with the Free Software Awards.

The energy and inspiration is palpable at LibrePlanet. Whether it's rubbing elbows with a maintainer you admire, learning about a new tool that can help you with your work, or getting down to brass tacks in the fight against proprietary software, I'm telling you, you want to be in Cambridge, MA on March 21-22, 2015 for LibrePlanet.

And here's the good news: if you're getting this bulletin in the mail, you're probably an active member of the Free Software Foundation, and attending LibrePlanet at no cost is one of your member benefits. So what are you waiting for: cash in your frequent flyer miles and make plans to be at LibrePlanet 2015!

This year, the theme of LibrePlanet is "Free Software Everywhere." Talks at this year's conference will touch on the many places and ways that free software is used around the world, as well as ways to make free software ubiquitous. Think "where" in the broadest sense of the word. What are some contexts where free software is thriving, and some others where it needs a push? How have people worked to gain a foothold for free software in their companies and communities? And what about free software on all of the myriad pieces of hardware we use, including laptops, phones, tablets, and even coffee makers? At LibrePlanet 2015, we're taking software freedom around the world, to outer space, and through all kinds of industries, governments, organizations, fields of study, and communities.

We want to see your smiling face at LibrePlanet, and we also want to see the smiling faces of people who can't afford a plane ticket, or need childcare

or ASL interpretation in order to attend. You can help us ensure that LibrePlanet 2015 welcomes all people by making a contribution to the conference's scholarship fund. We run this event on a shoestring budget; Libreplanet is not a money-maker for us; we do it simply to help the movement for free software grow. Please consider making a donation today.[11]

We hope to see you at the next LibrePlanet on March 21-22, 2015 in Cambridge, MA. ☙

# Around the world in (a hundred and) eighty days

*by Jeanne Rasata*
*Assistant to the President*

RMS once again went all the way around the world in a hundred and eighty days this past semester, giving thirty-nine speeches in thirty-one cities across thirteen countries. In Geneva last spring, he gave a TEDx talk on free software, a pithy introduction to convince even the most skeptical hold-outs of the importance of computer-user freedom.[12] In the US, Taiwan, China, and Austria, he spoke at a number of institutions of higher learning, and at GNOME Asia, in Beijing, and the Central European Bitcoin Expo, in Vienna. His speaking tour through Romania and Moldova was organized by the local teams of Fundatia Ceata, a Romanian foundation promoting free software and free culture and whose launch RMS attended last year as a guest of honor. At the OWASP AppSec Europe conference, he spoke about the "freedom

issues for Web sites," giving an on-stage interview and taking questions from the audience at Indie Tech, in Brighton. In France, he shared his message on how to resist surveillance at the Tails Hackfest, gave one of the keynote speeches at the Libre Software Meeting, and spoke on "free software: human rights in your computer" at the Fête de l'Humanité. He rounded out the summer by speaking at a number of universities and free software conferences in Colombia, Chile, Venezuela, and Italy.

Please write to `rms-assist@gnu.org` with any photographs or recordings you would like to share or to extend an invitation for him to come speak. See `u.fsf.org/zi` for a list of his confirmed speeches or `audio-video.gnu.org` for the speech recordings we have. ☙



Replicant stickers now available at `shop.fsf.org`.

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[11] `u.fsf.org/14u`
[12] `u.fsf.org/14y`

If you recently joined as a member, your mailing includes a USB flash drive membership card preloaded with a full live distribution of Trisquel. You can download source code for the distribution at `fsf.org/associate/source/`. If you would like us to send you the source code on two DVDs for five dollars, please write to `info@fsf.org` or at the address above.

Donate to the FSF with Bitcoin.

## How to Contribute

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

**Online**: Use your credit card, PayPal account or Bitcoin to make a donation at `donate.fsf.org` or contact `donate@fsf.org` for more information on supporting the FSF.

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

**Free Software Directory**: Browse and download from thousands of different free software projects! `directory.fsf.org`

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

**LibrePlanet**: Find local groups in your area or start your own at `libreplanet.org`!