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FREE SOFTWARE FOUNDATION

Bulletin

Issue 24
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Contents

Teach yourself email self-defense. Learn GnuPG in 30 minutes at EmailSelfDefense.FSF.org

Help us make tablets and ebook readers Respect Your Freedom

by John Sullivan
Executive Director

Our "Respects Your Freedom" computer hardware product certification program encourages the creation and sale of hardware that will do as much as possible to respect your freedom and your privacy, and will ensure that you have control over your device.[1]

For too long, free software has been an "aftermarket" issue. What devices can we buy that will allow us to successfully replace the proprietary software that ships on them with our own free software?

This is a horribly twisted state of affairs. We have to pay the very people working against our freedom in order to recover it. This also places a severe limit on the growth of the free software movement, as installing completely new software on a device can be intimidating for many users, even if the expertise required has been decreasing over time.

More companies than ever before have been selling systems pre-installed

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[1] `u.fsf.org/zm`

with GNU/Linux, but they are still a tiny minority, and in nearly all cases still include some proprietary bits, such as proprietary firmware related to hardware support, and proprietary bootloaders.

The Respects Your Freedom program is the centerpiece in our work to change the world in this area. Over the last two years, it's been building up momentum, giving us multiple 3D printers, two kinds of USB WiFi devices, and a complete laptop running a fully free operating system with a free bootloader. We've been working hard following the checklist of devices most computer users want right now, to make sure we have at least one certified option in each area.

Soon, we'll be certifying a wireless router. I'm especially excited about this, because just about everyone needs a router in their home, and just about everyone currently has one that runs at least some proprietary software. Because of the prevalence of these devices, it will be a big step forward for user freedom.

A certified router will also enable us to promote configurations that will boost our other free software awareness and adoption campaigns — such as offering both a private network (for you) and a public network (for neighbors, guests, and passers-by). Having widely available public WiFi is the most realistic current option (in conjunction with some of the cool mesh network projects out there) for mobile communication using only free software. All cell phones require proprietary baseband firmware to connect to the cellular network, and those companies will fight us tooth and nail if we attempt to connect with free software radio firmware on a widespread

scale. We need our own network, and routers that run on only free software are the next step. A free router could also be shipped with GNU MediaGoblin, GNU social, pump.io, or other important free software network service replacements preinstalled.

That's just one example of how getting a single sort of device certified to Respect Your Freedom out there leads to an expansion of opportunities for free software use and advocacy. You're also going to want wearable computing devices that don't restrict you like Google Glass, and I bet you don't want either Microsoft or Google driving your car if you can help it.

It's all part of our long-term goal of proving that you can in fact have a life that is fully featured technology-wise, without sacrificing your freedom. All day long we are told by companies making excuses for themselves that it is prohibitively expensive or outright impossible to make hardware that requires only free software.

And yet a small nonprofit with a staff of twelve, in conjunction with a few small companies, has been doing just that.

This work is being done by just a couple of us, as part of positions which also involve many other responsibilities. Fortunately, we also have the help of some volunteers. But to make this program fulfill its ultimate vision, we're going to need more than this.

We're in the advanced exploratory phases for the next devices we want to certify — an ebook reader, and a tablet. Both of these are more complex in terms of software than anything we've certified so far. Making this happen will require more of our resources, as well as more resources from the companies working with us.

RMS on his recent visit to San Francisco.

of the stakes involved in making concessions—even when it comes to doing something as innocuous as registering for a talk on free software.

You can view the most up-to-date list of all of Richard Stallman's confirmed upcoming appearances at `u.fsf.org/zi`, see photographic excerpts of some of his recent appearances on his blog at `u.fsf.org/zj`, and listen to those of his speeches for which we have recordings at `audio-video.gnu.org`. Please write to `rms-assist@gnu.org` with any photographs you would like to share or to extend an invitation for him to come speak. ❦

Represent GCC with this new t-shirt from GNU Press!

by Chrissie Himes
Operations Assistant

Everyone is excited about the new shirt design at GNU Press, which presents GCC in an iconic, novelty

logo.[15] But did you know that the shirt is also printed by a unionized shop on 100% organic cotton? The t-shirt brand, Aurom Organic, strives to fulfill an admirable mission: "To offer apparel that is sustainably manufactured following the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS)."[16] The Free Software Foundation is committed to improving across a wide array of ethical practices, including environmental sustainability, and you can lower your carbon footprint with us by shopping at `u.fsf.org/zf` and emailing your support to `sales@gnu.org`!

If you are interested in hearing the latest news about GNU Press products, please join the mailing list. And don't hesitate to add any suggestions for new items to the Ideas page.[17] ❦

Run GCC shirts now available in the GNU Press shop.

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[15] `u.fsf.org/zh`
[16] `aurumorganic.com`
[17] `u.fsf.org/zg`

- Software Freedom Conservancy executive director Karen Sandler called on free software projects to use their messaging to give people of all backgrounds a reason to participate.

- At peak, more than three hundred people participated online through our free software livestreaming system.

- FSF president Richard Stallman addressed the importance of free software on mobile devices, and SFLC director-counsel Eben Moglen issued a rallying cry to finish the fight against software patents.

- MIT student group SIPB co-organized the conference, reaffirming the free software movement's historic relationship with the university.

- The FSF presented the GNOME Outreach Program for Women with the Award for Projects of Social Benefit, and Matthew Garrett with the Award for the Advancement of Free Software for his work against Restricted Boot. For more information, read the Free Software Awards press release at `u.fsf.org/zp`.

With the awesome community that was built and strengthened at Libre-Planet 2014, we can't wait to see what next year will bring. Remember that being an FSF member gets you gratis admission to the conference, and bragging rights for supporting the FSF's work year-round.

A short recap of RMS's recent adventures

by Jeanne Rasata
Assistant to the President

Over the past six months, RMS has continued to advocate for computer-user freedom and to educate people on the importance of free software to a free and democratic society. He's given four dozen speeches in thirty-five cities across ten countries, including Finland, France, India, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, the US, the UK, and Taiwan.

In order for his efforts to be successful, it's key that the lead-up to his speeches not inadvertently undermine his message: we are careful to ensure that the promotion of his talks uses the right nomenclature, and that registration is done ethically. This means that, where necessary, sponsorship logos and promotional text all give credit to the GNU Project, by referring to the operating system as GNU/Linux, and that it's clear that computer-user freedom, and not technical expediency, is what is important (we say "free software," never "open source").[14] It also means that registration, if it is to be done, is either optional, or can be done both anonymously and without the need to run nonfree software.

The creep of mass surveillance and the erosion of our computing freedoms is sometimes so subtle and insidious that it's not always apparent when we're compromising our own privacy or surrendering our computer-user rights. We hope, through our work, to sensitize people to the importance of computing freedoms they might be indifferent to, and raise awareness

[14]`gnu.org/philosophy/`
`open-source-misses-the-point`

An ebook reader we can promote will give a huge boost to our campaign against Digital Restrictions Management (DRM) on ebooks.[2] A tablet will enable us to push back more effectively against companies like Apple and Microsoft, who are working hard to make the mobile computing space extremely restrictive and subjugating.

We keep waiting for some company to get it right from the beginning. But that's just not happening. We're actually seeing regressions in many areas of hardware compatibility with free software — some of them intentional.

If we're going to have hardware that respects our freedom, we have to demand it — both with our voices and our pocketbooks. We've shown that when enough of us get together, we can actually make free devices a reality.

We'll launch specific crowdfunding campaigns for the tablet and ebook reader once we have plans in place, but we need your support now to get to that place. Please join us in this effort with your donations, your memberships, your networking, and your skills. Think of what we could do with even a fraction of what people begrudgingly pay regularly to all the companies working against their freedom.

How do we get our less nerdy friends to use encryption?

by Zak Rogoff
Campaigns Manager
GPG key ID: B5090AC8

As of late, the free software movement has been putting an empha-

[2]`u.fsf.org/zn`
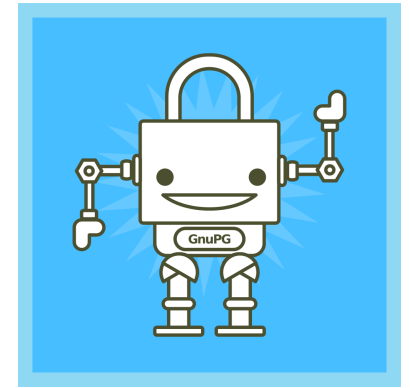
Protect your privacy and freedom with GnuPG.

sis on using software as a countermeasure against surveillance. Among the various ways free software can help us resist being spied upon, perhaps the most central way is its prevalence in encryption technology, like GnuPG for email.[3] The only reliable encryption tools are free software, because trusting proprietary software not to have backdoors and exploits, without the ability to even read its source code, is reckless at best.

Free software activists making use of encryption software is a good thing. But to resist the NSA's dragnet surveillance, we are going to need to get lots of people using this technology. We need encryption to spread outside the free software movement proper, and into the broader world of computing.[4]

[3]For further discussion of this point, see my article in the FSF's Fall 2013 Bulletin, "How can free software protect us from surveillance?" `u.fsf.org/zs`
[4]To be as safe as possible from state misuse of surveillance, it will take a multipronged approach, including reducing the amount of data collected about people in

So what is preventing us from getting to the point of widespread adoption? Until recently, there was the lack of public concern about surveillance, but Edward Snowden and the NSA have each done their part to bring privacy issues to the forefront of discussion. Now the two main problems standing in our way are the lack of awareness that encryption can make us safer from surveillance and how difficult it is to use the existing tools. Even though established encryption tools succeed in protecting privacy, their interfaces present a significant barrier to people more familiar with the slick interfaces of nonfree communication tools. I don't mean to be gratuitously critical of free software. It's simply a fact that most people used to using Facebook or Skype are going to balk at the interfaces of most encryption software.

The good news is that we can solve both of these problems. For increasing awareness of encryption technology, we need to leverage the network effect. The more people there are using a given encryption technology, the more sense it makes for each additional person to give it a try. Those of us already using encryption can start by making it a bigger part of our online persona and getting our friends excited about using it with us. Wherever we write our email addresses and in the signature of every email we send, we should have our GnuPG key fingerprint. We need to get to the point where people feel like something is missing if they see a personal email address without it.

For the usability question, we of course need to make better inter-

the first place. See `gnu.org/philosophy/surveillance-vs-democracy` for more about this.

faces that are friendlier to new users, but that doesn't get around the fact that even basic encryption programs are just a little bit difficult to understand. A working knowledge of GnuPG, one of the most basic and widely used tools, requires a mental model of public-private keypairs, cryptography, keyservers, and software plugins or command line interfaces. To deal with this, we need excellent tutorials, which are as inviting and fun as they are complete and concise.

The FSF has just published what we hope to be just such a tutorial, to do our part in encouraging people to use GnuPG for encrypting and signing their email. You can find it at `u.fsf.org/zr`. If you haven't tried GnuPG, we hope this tutorial makes you excited about getting started. We would love to hear your feedback about our tutorial to help us make it even better at `campaigns@fsf.org`. If you already know how to use GnuPG, please post the tutorial everywhere you can and offer to help people if they have questions about it. With an accessible tutorial and the knowledge that a skilled friend is there for backup, many people will tackle encryption software that would otherwise be outside their comfort zone.

Free software for the public good
by William Theaker
Outreach and Communications Coordinator

In the early days of the free software movement, detractors often claimed that the license of a piece of software was irrelevant, the true ethical concern of software was its use and impact.

LibrePlanet 2014 was our largest conference yet.

LibrePlanet 2014: Free Software, Free Society
by Libby Reinish
Campaigns Manager

Held on March 22 and 23, LibrePlanet 2014: Free Software, Free Society was our biggest conference yet. The annual conference of the FSF (this year produced in partnership with the Student Information Processing Board at MIT) was an inspiring weekend, where newcomers were introduced to the free software movement and everyone put their heads and their keyboards together to chart the path to free software ubiquity.

At LibrePlanet 2014: Free Software, Free Society:

- Wikimedia outgoing executive director Sue Gardner kicked off the conference with a call for the free software movement to become bigger and bolder than ever.

- Almost four hundred people, including fifty-four presenters, attended talks, workshops, panel discussions, and development sprints.

- We launched a new scholarship initiative, bringing fourteen scholarship recipients to LibrePlanet from around the world.

- NSA-revealer, journalist, and privacy hacker Jacob Appelbaum gave a remote keynote via videochat, using entirely free software and Tor to anonymize his location.

- Ten free software businesses and organizations strutted their stuff at LibrePlanet's first exhibit hall.

- Members of the free software community welcomed newcomers and renewed old friendships at a diverse array of social events. At the Saturday night mixer, Lulzbot raffled one of their Respects Your Freedom-certified Taz 3 3D printers.

developers can completely rely. [13]

While our assignment program is critical to our work, there are still some common misconceptions. We hope to explain some of the key protections put in place throughout our assignment program to help allay concerns contributors often have when deciding to make an assignment. Sometimes contributors are concerned about giving up rights to their work. As the assignment is a gift to the free software community, they don't want it to come at the expense of having flexibility in the use of their own code. Thus, we grant back to contributors a license to use their work as they see fit. This means they are free to modify, share, and sublicense their own work under terms of their choice. This enables contributors to redistribute their work under another free software license. While this technically also permits distributing their work under a proprietary license, we hope they won't.

Contributors also sometimes have concerns about what is being transferred. While they may be happy to submit some code to a particular package, there may be other elements of their work that they would prefer to keep separate. Free software is of course about freedom, and the freedom to not distribute some code you are working on is integral to that goal. So we frequently get requests to have a more fine-grained assignment contract. As our standard form covers all past and future contributions on a package, some contributors worry about later patches falling under the agreement. There is no need for concern, as our assignment contract already grants the contributor total control over what is

[13]gnu.org/licenses/why-assign

transferred and what is not. The assignment requires that the contributor notify the FSF of what code they consider covered by the assignment. The simple and most common method for doing so is to simply contribute the code to the project. Contributors can of course take a more formal path and actually send a letter to the FSF stating which particular files are assigned, but this is much less common.

The copyright assignment program provides numerous benefits to the contributors as well as the community: it allows others to work on the code either to improve, educate, or evolve, while the contributors maintain full rights to their code. Willing contributors can also have their contributions announced in our *Free Software Supporter* newsletter, as well as being publicized on the FSF's microblog accounts. But the most important element of the assignment contract is the promise we make to every contributor and community member: **We promise to always keep the software free.** This promise extends to any successors in the copyright, meaning that even if the FSF were to go away the freedom of all users to share in the contributions wouldn't.

While not every GNU Project package is assigned to the FSF, many of the oldest and longest running projects have taken part in the assignment process. By assigning their copyright, the contributors on these projects enable the FSF to keep the software free. We hope we've helped you understand a bit more about this important program, and that perhaps you'll join the thousands of hackers from all around the world who have entrusted the copyright on their work to the Free Software Foundation.

Those of us in the free software movement can quickly recognize the flaws in this argument. Free software is the baseline for ethical computing because it empowers people to manage their own lives and education, rather than ceding control to third parties. A program that restricts users from studying, modifying, or sharing it is not consistent with an aim to do good and improve the lives of others.

It is understandable that an anti-militarist programmer would feel uneasy discovering her code running the flight navigation system of a Predator drone used to murder civilians, but this doesn't make her any more culpable than steelworkers should feel implicated when the product of their labor is used to build prison bars or the files to cut through them.

An important consideration should also be the impact of a particular tool, both actual and intended. This should not supplant software freedom as a baseline for ethical computing. That a program can be used for unsavory purposes is not an argument for proprietary development.

Ensuring that software is used for good is a technical and cultural issue, and not a legal one. This is why the FSF has refused to certify licenses that mandate software be used for "good, not evil." Restricting users through software licenses runs counter to the aim of doing good. For more on this subject, see Richard Stallman's article "Why programs must not limit the freedom to run them." [5] One of the most basic ways to ensure that the software you develop is used for good is to insist on copyleft, which keeps

[5]gnu.org/philosophy/
programs-must-not-limit-freedom-to-run

code public and reusable. Using strong copyleft licenses, like the GNU Affero General Public License, ensures that code you write will not be used to restrict user freedom.

The good news is that we are not hard-pressed to find tools that help people and make the world more just and equitable. While avoiding the easy lure of cyber-utopianism, there are many opportunities for software to help people and communities better manage the issues they face. Each fall, the FSF opens nominations for the Award for Projects of Social Benefit, given to projects that put free software and its ideals to good use. [6] The list of previous winners includes projects like OpenMRS, which is used by health care providers in developing countries to manage electronic medical records.

Support tools that allow for non-profits and community groups to more effectively take action, like CiviCRM and Software Freedom Conservancy's nonprofit accounting tool. Or if you're not interested in coding, get involved with the Humanitarian Open-StreetMap Team, which develops cartographic data and tools for aid groups to use in response to disasters and crises. These projects all need your help with documentation, training users, and writing code. Working with them can amplify the positive impact free software already has on the world.

[6]u.fsf.org/zq

Licensing education resources

by Joshua Gay
Licensing and Compliance Manager

Much of the work done by the Free Software Foundation's Licensing & Compliance Lab is done on `gnu.org`. Until recently, if you visited a licensing-related page on `gnu.org`, it was not clear that the page was actively maintained by FSF staff. However, now there is a small notice at the top of each page letting visitors know when a licensing page is maintained by FSF staff and how to support the on-going development of this work. While making this update to the site, I spent some time looking at traffic statistics and site rankings to get a sense of just how popular the educational resources we publish are. I was pleasantly surprised with what I discovered.

On `gnu.org`, the text of the GNU General Public License version 3 (GPLv3) gets between a quarter and a half-million visitors each month. For approximately every ten visitors that retrieve a copy of GPLv3 from our site, we get one visitor to our GPL FAQ. There are literally hundreds of thousands of sites on the Web that link to the GPL FAQ and our dozens of resources such as manuals and text-books. Our list of free distributions, and our license list all get traffic comparable to the FAQ. And for about every two visitors to the GPL FAQ, we get one visitor to our GPL How-to, which provides guidance on applying the terms of the GPL to one's own work.

Our GPL FAQ provides answers to over 160 questions, and our license list provides commentary and analysis on over 130 different licenses. In addition, we have dozens of resources that provide in-depth explanations of numerous topics. Some of these resources provide information that is useful to any number of individuals, such as our *Guide to choosing a license*,[7] our philosophy on copyleft,[8] or our argument *Why you shouldn't use the Lesser GPL for your next library*.[9] Other resources are just as useful, but more for specialists, such as *GCC Runtime Library Exception Rationale and FAQ*,[10] or our detailed analysis on *What does "the Program" mean in GPLv3?*.[11]

Our extensive library of educational licensing resources was not created in a vacuum. For the most part, it was created in reaction to many thousands of questions we have fielded from individuals over the years. These are questions from programmers, lawyers, users, government employees, and business owners around the world.

We work hard to not only answer questions, but to also make ourselves and our resources as widely available to the public as we can.

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[7] `gnu.org/licenses/license-recommendations`
[8] `gnu.org/copyleft`
[9] `gnu.org/philosophy/why-not-lgpl`
[10] `gnu.org/licenses/gcc-exception-faq`
[11] `gnu.org/licenses/gplv3-the-program`

Our licensing team consists of two full-time FSF staff as well as our president, executive director, and seven active volunteers.[12] Further, we have the support of the Software Freedom Law Center, and we also collaborate frequently with important organizations such as the Software Freedom Conservancy.

Of course, not all of our resources and work are found on gnu.org. We have a number of resources hosted on `fsf.org`, such as our blog at `fsf.org/blogs/licensing`. Much of our work is done via outreach and engagement, through speaking at conferences, or collaborating with other licensing organizations and legal professionals. In March 2014, we hosted a Seminar on GPL Enforcement and Legal Ethics. For more information about this and past seminars, including links to the educational materials created for the event by instructors Bradley Kuhn and Karen Sandler, visit `u.fsf.org/zl`.

And, of course, you can help us accomplish even more. If you would like to join our licensing team as a volunteer or as an intern, then write to `licensing@fsf.org` and tell us a bit about your background, both legal and with the free software community.

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[12] `u.fsf.org/zk`

Copyright Assignment at the FSF

by Chrissie Himes
Operations Assistant
Donald Robertson, III
Copyright and Licensing Associate

One of the services the FSF provides to the free software movement is license enforcement for the GNU Project. Our ability to enforce the license on packages like GCC or GNU Emacs begins with a copyright assignment. Put simply, this is the legal transfer of copyright on a program from the developers to the Free Software Foundation. Our copyright assignment program is crucial in promoting our mission "to preserve, protect and promote the freedom to use, study, copy, modify, and redistribute computer software, and to defend the rights of free software users." The program is as old as the FSF itself; we started it almost thirty years ago in 1985.

Eben Moglen, director-counsel of Software Freedom Law Center, expounds that our copyright assignment program helps with our enforcement of the General Public License (GPL):

In order to make sure that all of our copyrights can meet the recordkeeping and other requirements of registration, and in order to be able to enforce the GPL most effectively, FSF requires that each author of code incorporated in FSF projects provide a copyright assignment, and, where appropriate, a disclaimer of any work-for-hire ownership claims by the programmer's employer. That way we can be sure that all the code in FSF projects is free code, whose freedom we can most effectively protect, and therefore on which other