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Free software, privacy, and activism

by *John Sullivan*
Executive Director
GPG key ID: 61A0963B

Two years ago, when Edward Snowden revealed a massive US National Security Agency (NSA) bulk surveillance program covering the communications of US citizens unsuspected of any crime, a popular expectation in our community was that Richard Stallman and the FSF would scream, "We told you so! We've been telling you about these dangers for 30 years!" Snowden even used GNU software — specifically GnuPG encryption — to safely communicate his whistleblower information to the media. As additional revelations about bulk surveillance around the world piled up, it was indeed a concrete opportunity to explain the importance of free software for our freedom, and of freedom in relation to privacy.

Since then, we've launched some important initiatives promoting the use of related pieces of free software. Our Email Self-Defense Guide, launched one year ago, has been used by tens of thousands of people to set up email encryption using free software.¹ The past two LibrePlanet conferences featured talks focused on encryption and



Sébastien Jodogne received the Award for the Advancement of Free Software for his Orthanc medical imaging project at LibrePlanet 2015.

¹emailselfdefense.fsf.org

resisting bulk surveillance, most notably a keynote (itself delivered over a free software, encrypted, anonymized video link) by Tor developer and journalist Jacob Appelbaum.²

But this issue has also exposed disagreements within the free software movement. Not all FSF members agree about what level, if any, of government surveillance is appropriate, or about which methods, if any, are okay. Some are concerned about terrorism more than others (and disagree about what, if anything, should be called terrorism), some think that surveillance is ineffective against such threats, some prioritize citizens' privacy within their own nations, and others view it as an international human rights issue.

There is also the uncomfortable likelihood that the NSA is using free software to conduct its surveillance operations. Free software is defined by the Four Freedoms, the first of which is the freedom to run the software for any purpose. This is not to say that the FSF agrees with all purposes for which free software is used. FSF staff hold a variety of political opinions, and historically, our staff has included Marxists and libertarians, liberal democrats and fiscal conservatives, and everything in between. In this way, the FSF staff is a microcosm of the free software movement; our supporters don't all agree on these issues either, and they let us know when they feel that the FSF has taken a public position that goes outside the scope of supporting free software and computer user freedom.

What we do agree on is the importance of free software. The ends to which any software can be used may

be restricted by a society's laws — we don't defend the right of anyone to use software to kill another person in order to rob them. That is illegal and wrong, but restrictions on the software itself, which cannot be implemented without restricting expressive speech, math, and creative thought, are not an ethical way to achieve other social purposes. This is a major reason why we do not have a term in the GNU General Public License (GPL) saying "This software cannot be used for bulk surveillance."

But is bulk surveillance an independent core issue for the free software movement? While we are continually listening to feedback and evaluating this question, the FSF has set a position in this debate that we think is the right one. As an organization with a human rights agenda that discomferts many established powers, both government and corporate, we cannot accept bulk surveillance at a level that impedes or deters necessary anonymous communications with our allies.

People take real risks when they communicate to us that their company is knowingly violating the GPL. A hypothetical Microsoft employee takes a real risk when disclosing to us that the company is secretly making patent threats against free software competitors, or when leaking elements of a concerted campaign against GNU/Linux. People writing and distributing free software to work around Digital Restrictions Management (DRM) even for legal purposes can become targets of interest to the government.

For the free software movement to succeed, we need whistleblowing and communication around free software development to be safe. The levels of surveillance that Snowden revealed,

When organizing for a social movement, as the FSF does, keeping track of your constituents, supporters, and members is crucial. With CiviCRM, organizations can get to know their community by creating events and tracking responses to petitions or surveys. I have implemented CiviCRM instances for various organizations, so I was delighted to see that it is used here at the FSF, too! We use CiviCRM to manage member, donor, and supporter data, to send emails, for event registration, and to manage donations — it is at the core of our work.

I had two goals for CiviCON: to build a stronger relationship between the FSF and the CiviCRM community, and to bring back ideas for improving the FSF's CiviCRM instance.

This was my first time meeting the CiviCRM community in person. Prior to CiviCon, most of my communication with CiviCRM people was via IRC, so an in-person meeting in meat (or tofu) space was a great opportunity to strengthen relationships. When I was not in a session, I was getting to know many of CiviCRM's core developers and figuring out ways to further connect with the community.

A few sessions shared some great ideas in progress, such as the work by Leukemia and Lymphoma Research of the UK to expand a fundraising feature called Personal Campaigns from individual fundraising pages into Team Campaigns, in which multiple Personal Campaigns connect to a Team Goal. This is being developed into a CiviCRM extension to expand CiviCRM's core functionality.

Another great extension I discovered is CiviVolunteer. This extension expands CiviCRM's events capability, adding an "Interested in Volunteer-

ing" option for event-specific or general volunteering. In addition to recording volunteer interest, it lets organizations record data about volunteers: whether they arrived on time, stayed beyond their scheduled time slot or left early, and even a review of the volunteer. That data is associated with the volunteer's contact record, allowing the organization to better track volunteering within their community. I want to explore using CiviVolunteer for LibrePlanet 2016. Extension development is a great way to expand CiviCRM's features without modifying the core code directly, and can be added to civicrm.org/extensions for others to use or contribute to.



Along with the excitement of CiviCon itself, I did some community organizing in the form of an FSF member and supporter gathering held after the conference. I was expecting around twenty people, but after the CiviCon folks promoted the event, nearly eighty people showed up. I met some great FSF members and some folks became members for the first time.

All in all, I did my CiviC[RM] duty and I look forward to representing the FSF at another conference. If you happen to be in the Boston area and want to learn more about CiviCRM, every month on the third Tuesday the FSF hosts the Boston CiviCRM meetup in our office. Contact me at mv@fsf.org for more information, and check out the FSF's CiviCRM instance at my.fsf.org. 🍷

²u.fsf.org/lpja

eration video,²³ was created by enthusiastic volunteers from around the globe.

My role at the FSF is the main contact for translations, and for the past five months I have been catching up on translation offers old and new, and in the process, communicating with wonderful free software enthusiasts around the world. The Free Software Supporter is collaboratively translated each month, into French by free software advocates at the French organization April²⁴ and into Spanish by volunteers on the FSF Spanish translators discussion list.²⁵

As I learn about our translation needs and the multilingual volunteers who love to help spread the word about free software, I am working to figure out the most effective ways to coordinate translations. There are challenges: we are a small staff, with each person shouldering many responsibilities for the organization. We also don't have native knowledge of many languages. So we rely on our volunteers to provide material that has been translated by a person with fluency in the language, preferably vetted by another fluent speaker, and formatted according to the project's needs. That way, we can post and publicize translated material quickly, and avoid having to make many corrections later.

Translations are important to the FSF's central mission: to promote computer user freedom and to defend the rights of all free software users. Our members and supporters outside the United States are crucial to this effort, and our relationships with them

help us maintain an international perspective — something that can be challenging when there are so many threats to computer user freedom here in the States.

We need your help! Please watch for translation opportunities, or get in touch if you want to help with a specific project. If you have thoughts on how to make our translation process better, I'm interested in hearing them. You can reach me at campaigns@fsf.org. And if you are already part of our translation efforts, thank you, truly. You make the FSF stronger and help us make the world a freer place. 🍷

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Our CiviC[RM] duty

*by Stephen Mahood
System Administrator
GPG key ID: 7CF9305D*

This spring, I attended CiviCon, an annual conference focused on the AGPL-licensed program CiviCRM, in the mile high city of Denver, Colorado. CiviCRM focuses on membership management, but expands beyond that to events, registrations, email and postal mailings, and non-member contacts. It has many applications — no pun intended — and it has a great community at its heart.

and the many stories since from around the world, show that bulk surveillance has gone too far by this yardstick. The FSF has therefore committed to work against it, at least until it is reduced to a level that does not chill communications vital to the free software movement.

We also have decided to develop materials that help people use free software to protect whatever level of privacy they want to have. In this respect, the issue is not so different from the other wants and needs that people express for their computing lives. People want to do something with software on a computer, and we want to make sure they can do that with free software. If free software for a certain purpose does not exist, we may want to get it developed.

We have also brought critical scrutiny on efforts to improve privacy through tweaking proprietary platforms or altering the details of regulatory regimes. Free software does not guarantee privacy or security — we have bugs too — but it is a prerequisite to true protection of your privacy and security. You must be able to choose who to trust and who should provide the software you use. Any fighting chance in this area begins with free software. Anything less is blind faith in a black box.

The FSF is one of only a few organizations promoting the view that *all* software should be free software. We work on your behalf to disarm proprietary software companies so that they can no longer restrict you, to limit the impact of bulk surveillance so that we can all safely advance our free software and other beliefs, and to continually improve the free software available to you. But we can't do this without you.

We have been in existence for thirty years come October. We have achieved many things in that time — you can now quite easily have a fully functional laptop with a free operating system, and free software powers the Internet — but we have many more challenges to face in the next thirty years.

The body of FSF membership is a community of people with incompatible beliefs in many areas, but who are united by the principle that the technology used to express these political beliefs should not be under the exclusive control or surveillance of anyone. If you're not already a member, please join this cause and this community today! 🍷

GNU IceCat and the Free Software Directory

*by Joshua Gay
Licensing and Compliance Manager
GPG key ID: 8DA625BB*

The GNU IceCat browser is part of GNUzilla, the GNU version of Mozilla's suite of software that includes the Firefox Web browser. IceCat is a browser designed to respect your privacy and your freedom.

When you first start up GNU IceCat, the default landing page is the `about:icecat` page. It provides seven checkboxes that allow you to enable privacy features including blocking non-free JavaScript and privacy trackers, or disabling JavaScript entirely, and redirecting to HTTPS whenever possible.

Under the hood, these options are implemented using several browser add-ons and extensions. GNU LibreJS blocks execution of nonfree

²³u.fsf.org/usrlib

²⁴april.org

²⁵lists.gnu.org/mailman/listinfo/fsfwww-translators-es-discuss

JavaScript. HTTPS-Everywhere encrypts your communications with many major Web sites, making your browsing more secure. SpyBlock and Adblock Plus block privacy trackers while in normal browsing mode, and all third party requests when in private browsing mode. Also, there are some important things you won't find under the hood, such as the proprietary Adobe Primetime add-on, which is based on the W3C draft specification for baking DRM into HTML5 via its Encrypted Media Extension.³ GNU IceCat is committed to slamming shut and rooting out backdoors and other malware from Mozilla standard releases of Firefox.



In fact, GNU IceCat only recommends installing free software add-ons. IceCat has replaced the Mozilla add-ons search with GNU IceCat page from the FSF's Free Software Directory (FSD) — which lists all of the IceCat add-ons that have been reviewed and added to the FSD *so far*, which, at this point in time isn't nearly as many as we would like, and not

³[defectivebydesign.org/
no-drm-in-html5](http://defectivebydesign.org/no-drm-in-html5)

nearly as many as what Mozilla has listed on their addons site.

The majority of add-ons on the Mozilla Add-ons site are free software. As such, we were at first tempted to simply write a script that imported all of the Mozilla Add-ons with free software licenses listed into the FSD. However, after reviewing a sampling of add-ons by hand, we found that there was a fair number of add-ons that had incorrect licensing information listed, and in some cases the add-ons were, in fact, proprietary.

To solve this problem, Free Software Directory volunteers are making a concerted effort to add many more IceCat extensions to the FSD. Driving much of this work is David Hedlund, who has curated lists of hundreds of popular add-ons for our community of volunteers to review and hopefully add to the FSD. David's approach is creative. His top tier list is browser add-ons with over one million daily users, his second tier list have between 100k and 999k daily users, and so on. In addition to creating these lists, David has made over a thousand edits and has added many new packages and pages to the FSD over the past few months.

One interesting consequence of this work, and other work being done on the Free Software Directory, is that it doesn't just result in a bigger and better catalog of free software on the FSD. In their quest to add new entries to the FSD, contributors often end up submitting bug fixes or filing bug reports to other projects, to eliminate nonfree bugs that are preventing a package from being listed in the FSD. And when we add a new package to the FSD, we encourage FSD contributors to notify its maintainers. After all, one thing most free software develop-

What tools do you use?

My main vector illustration tool has always been Inkscape. I've never liked Adobe Illustrator much. I use Inkscape for drawing some of my wallpapers, for quick wireframing, for all my logo work, and for making icons. I also like Blender.

What role would you like for designers in free software?

I think that designers should play two major roles in the free software world. The first is helping projects focus on user experience. Long gone are the days when free software developers would put together a quick interface and call it a day; now you need designers to be included in the process of making software from the very beginning. Just take a look at what the people at GNOME, KDE, and elementary OS are doing right now and compare it to some years ago.

The second role is for designers to drive the development of the very tools they use. It's easier said than done, but if designers are the ones using the software, it's logical for them to set the priorities. As designers we need good, up-to-date tools, and the free software world will benefit when our tools are able to compete better with the proprietary options that dominate graphic design.

What inspires you in the design world?

What inspires me are the creative solutions to different problems, whether they are life problems or design problems. I especially love creative logos and punny illustrations. I like the

work of Glenn Jones,¹⁹ and in the free software community I enjoy following the GNOME designers.²⁰

You can see Reda's work on Dribbble²¹ and DeviantArt.²² ☞

Found in translation

by Georgia Young

Outreach and Communication

Coordinator

GPG key ID: 48A8254C

In January, I joined the FSF staff as Outreach and communications coordinator. In this role, I make sure all of the communications that FSF staffers create — mostly writing, but also images and video — are shared with you. Have you read a post on fsf.org this year? Most likely, I gave it a final edit and then published it. Do you get our monthly Free Software Supporter in your inbox? I compiled it from writings by FSF staff and other affinity organizations and emailed it to you. Do you read microblogs from FSF or Defective By Design on GNU Social or other microblogs? They probably came from me, too.

As the newest member of the staff, starting only eight weeks before LibrePlanet 2015, I had to get up to speed fast. One particularly challenging and interesting aspect of my work is managing translation from English — the primary language the FSF uses for communication — to Spanish, French, and at least a dozen other languages. Just about every translation of anything on fsf.org, including the subtitles for our User Lib-

¹⁹dribbble.com/Glennz

²⁰github.com/gnome-design-team

²¹dribbble.com/Orax0

²²Orax0.deviantart.com

Interview: Graphic designer Reda Lazri

by Zak Rogoff

Campaigns Manager

GPG key ID: B5090AC8

While working on multimedia projects at the FSF, I've had the privilege of working with graphic designers in our community.

I respect them due to the unique challenges they face: they are often outsiders to the general graphic design community, which is so firmly in the grips of Adobe's proprietary programs like Photoshop and Illustrator that most professionals don't even bother trying free software tools.

I recently spoke with Reda Lazri, a free software graphic designer from Algeria who created our logo for LibrePlanet 2015, as well as the visual identity of the 2014 Giving Guide.¹⁶

Tell us about yourself

I'm twenty-nine years old and a self-taught freelance designer from Algeria. I mainly design interfaces and logos, but I do other things for fun, like desktop customization (themes, wallpapers, icons). And I love doing redesigns.

I help maintain the graphics side of the GNOME Firefox theme and have contributed to free software projects like GNOME and LibreOffice.

How did you get interested in free software?

I'm a computer geek and there was a time where I would install GNU/Linux and play with it, then get frustrated



Reda's logo for Lollypop, a GPL-licensed music player.

and go back to Windows. I kept going back and forth until I fell in love with the Tango icon set,¹⁷ (a standalone project to help create a consistent graphical user interface experience for free software) and decided to give Ubuntu¹⁸ another spin so I could use the icons properly. It was mature enough at that time for it to become my only OS.

Since Windows tools aren't available for GNU/Linux I spent a huge amount of time researching their free replacements. I collected information and tutorials and followed artists that use free tools just to convince myself that I could survive without the Adobe oxygen.

¹⁷[tango.freedesktop.org](http://tango freedesktop.org)

¹⁸Note that the FSF does not endorse Ubuntu because, in its default configuration, it includes and recommends nonfree software. We haven't formally reviewed elementary OS, also mentioned here, for endorsement. See a list of distributions we do endorse at gnu.org/distros/free-distros.

¹⁶fsf.org/givingguide/2014

ers agree upon (and there isn't much we agree upon!) is that it is nice to know others appreciate and show interest in the software we are making.

GNU IceCat add-ons are just one of the many ways we are improving the Free Software Directory on a day-to-day basis. If you are interested in learning more, visit directory.fsf.org/wiki/FSD:Participate to learn how to get started, or stop by IRC during our weekly Friday Free Software Directory IRC Meeting. See fsf.org/blogs/directory for details on the next meeting.

Special thanks to our FSD volunteers and contributors, as well as to Rubén Rodríguez for maintaining GNU IceCat and other important free software projects.

Finally, if you haven't done so already, download GNU IceCat now.⁴ 🐧

On the road with RMS

by Jeanne Rasata

Assistant to the President

GPG key ID: 08FFB3A4

This past semester, Richard Stallman continued racking up air miles to raise worldwide awareness of the issues surrounding computer users' rights and freedoms. Since November, in addition to giving many interviews and meeting with policy and decision makers, he's given forty-nine speeches in forty-four cities across eighteen countries and four continents, with unflagging energy.

While his schedule is as full as in any previous year, his 2015 engagements will include one of particular significance, as we will celebrate thirty years of the charity he founded, the

⁴gnu.org/s/gnuzilla

Free Software Foundation. To mark this milestone, we are planning a new edition of his book of collected essays, currently in its second edition. This new edition will feature the same core essays from the second edition, shed others, and incorporate articles written more recently. It will clarify issues of morality regarding digital hardware, address the threat of mass surveillance, describe the various ways our freedoms are still being curtailed in spite of the advances the free software movement has made, educate us about new and ever more ingenious challenges we face every day, and offer clear directives for how we may share freely again with one another and reclaim our privacy and control of our own computing.

Please write to rms-assist@gnu.org with any photographs you would like us to share on RMS's blog at fsf.org/blogs/rms, or with recordings of his speeches for our audio-video archive audio-video.gnu.org, or to invite RMS to speak. See u.fsf.org/zi for his confirmed speeches. 🐧



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Demystifying copyleft

by *Chrissie Himes*

Operations Assistant

GPG key ID: 351A0C29

Donald Robertson, III

Copyright and Licensing Associate

GPG key ID: 6F3E89B7

Copyright is the legal mechanism afforded to the authors of original creative works, such as books, music, and software. Under 17 U.S. Code § 106, the exclusive rights granted to the artists are: (1) the right to reproduce the copyrighted work; (2) the right to prepare derivative works based upon the work; (3) the right to distribute copies of the work to the public; (4) the right to perform the copyrighted work publicly; and (5) the right to display the copyrighted work publicly.

Copyleft is a tool that works within copyright law, easing the process of licensing creative works to be used, retooled, and/or shared. For instance, you may have a new piece of software that you would like the general public to be able to build upon and fix bugs within. But under U.S. copyright law you possess the exclusive right to prepare derivative works. If you don't provide your users with a license, they won't be able to do all the things that they should be able to do, like modify and share the work. So while many projects think that simply putting the source code up on a repository is good enough to share their work, unless they choose and apply a license, all their hard work will go to waste. So choosing a good copyleft license that most communicates your intent is of great importance. The GNU General Public License (GPLv3) is a strong copyleft license that ensures not only that users have all the rights they

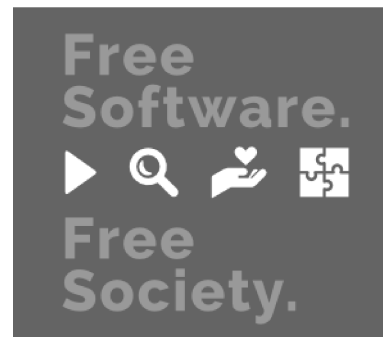
need to share and modify your work, but that every downstream user has those same rights. The GNU Affero General Public License (AGPLv3) is also a strong copyleft license like the GPL, but with an additional provision that ensures that users interacting with modified versions of the code via a network have the opportunity to receive the source code. Finally, the GNU Lesser General Public License (LGPLv3) is a weak copyleft license. It allows users to link to the work under their own terms, while still ensuring that downstream users receiving modified versions of the work itself still have their rights intact.

While this brief introduction gives a basic idea of how copyleft works, there is plenty more to learn. In addition to information provided by the FSF via our licensing portal,⁵ there is now another great resource for learning about copyleft licensing: Copyleft.org. Copyleft.org is a collaborative project run jointly by the FSF and the Software Freedom Conservancy⁶ that pools and shares information about copyleft. This information is being made into a book, *Copyleft and the GNU General Public License: A Comprehensive Tutorial and Guide*. It combines resources developed by several organizations into one comprehensive guide. Is a continual work in progress, but the FSF will from time to time endorse and publish particular versions of the document. For example, we used the guide as part of the foundation for our continuing legal education (CLE) seminar on GPL Enforcement and Legal Ethics last year, and plan to use it for future CLE events.

⁵fsf.org/licensing

⁶sfconservancy.org

But Copyleft.org is more than just a collaboration between the FSF and the Software Freedom Conservancy: it is a community effort. Its tutorial and guide consist of over 150 pages of useful information, but it takes quite a bit of work to maintain. We invite everyone to help update and revise the guide. You don't need to be a legal whiz kid to help out; one of the biggest tasks to take on is copy editing. Every pull request helps, so dive in! 🍷



Sharable badges at u.fsf.org/badges.

Support the FSF by shopping at GNU Press

by *Chrissie Himes*

Operations Assistant

It has been a triumphant year for the GNU Compiler Collection (GCC).⁷ In 2014, the Association for Computing Machinery Special Interest Group on Programming Languages honored the GCC developer community in recognition of its service and achievements in the programming language community. Here at GNU Press, you can learn more about GCC with

⁷gcc.gnu.org

our reference manual.⁸ Following the smash hit Run GCC novelty t-shirt,⁹ GNU Press is now selling the design as a sticker.¹⁰

This past spring, the FSF also held our annual LibrePlanet conference in Cambridge, Massachusetts. LibrePlanet is a celebration of software developers, policy experts, activists, and computer users engaged in software freedom. You can still buy a commemorative LibrePlanet logo t-shirt in white, organic cotton with a green and black logo.¹¹

For a limited time only, GNU Press is selling the NeuG USB True Random Number Generator, which is a tiny USB 32-bit computer based on a free (as in freedom) hardware design.¹² The most common uses of a TRNG include generating cryptographic keys, input for a simulation, and games (including video games and slot machines). For more information about the NeuG USB, you can read this analysis: fsf.org/blogs/gnu-press/neug-trng.

For the latest news about the shop, join the GNU Press mailing list at u.fsf.org/gnupresslist. And be on the alert for new editions of the *GNU Emacs Manual*¹³ and *Free Software Free Society*.¹⁴ If you have any suggestions for GNU Press, don't hesitate to add them to our Ideas page.¹⁵ We would particularly love your input on bumper sticker designs or any other fun ideas. GNU Press inquiries can be directed to sales@fsf.org. 🍷

⁸u.fsf.org/gccman

⁹shop.fsf.org/product/run-gcc-shirt

¹⁰u.fsf.org/gccsticker

¹¹shop.fsf.org/product/1p15

¹²shop.fsf.org/product/usb

¹³u.fsf.org/emacs24

¹⁴u.fsf.org/fsfs2

¹⁵u.fsf.org/gpideas