Software in Capitalist Society

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License

Introduction

- Like everything else, software is influenced by capitalist production relations.

- In addition, software has an important position in our society.

Why Should I Care?

- Computers in general are extremely influencial in society.

- Corporate control of software gives a large amount of power to large corporations.

- Furthermore, in addition to software's price, closed source models pose important questions regarding "who controls" computers.

How Corporatization Effects Society

- Software is developed for profit (obviously).

- Since companies can sell more software to businesses, they produce more narrow "business oriented" software.

- Therefore, software that serves technical or academic interests can be extremely expensive (a student license for Scientific Word is $200).

Corporate Control

- Software allows corporations power over end users

    - Browser spying.

    - DRM.

    - Limited features and "crippleware."

- Discouragement of standardized data formats (XML-based) and internet standards.

- "Secret" file formats (.doc, .xls, .ppt).

Open Source and Free Software

- OSS is available under a license that permits free distribution and code modification (provided modified versions are under the same license).

- Most developed for noncommercial purposes.

- A wide variety available software, operating systems, word processors, presentation programs, spreadsheets, math editors, etc. Everything is freely downloadable.

Importance

- OSS can help people with little money learn more about computers without buying expensive software.

- Unhindered publishing.

- Security against the police state.

- Give less money in support of large corporations.

Links

- Free Software Foundation:
  http://www.fsf.org

- GNU Project: http://www.gnu.org

- OASIS Open Standards Consortium:
  http://www.oasis-open.org

- Anti-DRM:
  http://www.defectivebydesign.org

Software Links

- Operating Systems: Ubuntu Linux: http://www.ubuntu.com, http://www.kubuntu.org (what I use). Fedora Linux: www.redhat.com, FreeBSD http://www.freebsd.org

- Office Software: www.openoffice.org

- Scientific/Mathematical Word Processing: LaTeX www.tug.org, LyX (recommended) www.lyx.org, Axiom, http://wiki.axiom-developer.org/FrontPage