

Overthrowing the tyranny of software: Why (and how) free societies respect computer user freedom

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Overview

- The tyranny of software: surveillance, control, injustice
- The solution: software and computers under the control of their users
- How we get to a society where that's the norm



Amazon Echo



When is it listening?



Aral Balkan

@aral

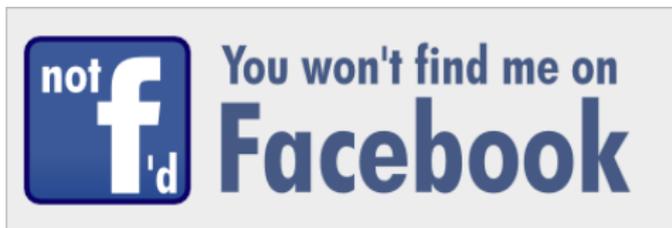


Follow

Amazon Echo: invite a corporation into your home to listen to every word your family says. What could go wrong?



Facebook



Button available at fsf.org/facebook



Digital Restrictions Management (DRM)

Digital Restrictions Management: **control** and **surveillance**

DRM is proprietary software that artificially restricts what you can do with media. It's what stops you from sharing a song, saving a streaming video, or playing a single-player game offline. It limits your freedom to use and share the media fully, making the media defective by design.



CC BY SA 3.0 - Gordon Mullen & Matt Lee

Most DRM technologies **surveil** what you do on your computer, sometimes even sending data to back to their owner's servers.

Even worse, DRM enables **digital book burnings** - remote deletions of media from our devices on a mass scale.

MAKE US
BACK

If we want to avoid a future in which our devices monitor and control our interaction with digital media, we must fight to retain control of our media and software. Get involved at defectivebydesign.org.

DEFECTIVEBYDESIGN.ORG

DRM FAQ & News DRM-free Media Community & Events



1984

I never imagined that Amazon actually had the right, the authority or even the ability to delete something that I had already purchased.

- Charles Slater, reader, quoted in the *New York Times*, July 18, 2009



Antifeatures

An antifeature, in the way I use the term, is functionality that a technology developer will charge users to not include.

`(fsf.org/bulletin/2007/fall/antifeatures/)`



Injustice

For the first time in human history, we face an economy in which the most important goods have zero marginal cost. And the transformation to digital methods of production and distribution therefore poses to the twenty-first century a fundamental moral problem. If I can provide to everyone all goods of intellectual value or beauty, for the same price that I can provide the first copy of those works to anyone, why is it ever moral to exclude anyone from anything? If you could feed everyone on earth at the cost of baking one loaf and pressing a button, what would be the moral case for charging more for bread than some people could afford to pay? This represents the difficulty at which we find ourselves straining at the opening of the twenty-first century.



Hiding other bad behavior



Four Freedoms

From <http://gnu.org/philosophy/free-sw.html>:

- **Freedom 0:** The freedom to run the program, for any purpose.
- **Freedom 1:** The freedom to study how the program works, and change it so it does your computing as you wish.
- **Freedom 2:** The freedom to redistribute copies so you can help your neighbor.
- **Freedom 3:** The freedom to distribute copies of your modified versions to others. By doing this you can give the whole community a chance to benefit from your changes.



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How free software solves these problems

- The source code is available for anyone to inspect
- Once you find a problem, you can fix it, or ask someone to do it for you
- You can then share the fixed version with everyone else
- While not guaranteeing perfection, this means it's a lot more difficult to keep bad behavior in free software



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The Free Software Foundation

The FSF was founded as a nonprofit organization in 1985 to fight for the freedoms of computer users worldwide, and to sponsor the GNU Project, which has a goal of making a fully free operating system.



The Free Software Foundation mission

At the FSF and in the GNU Project, we want **all** computer users to be able to do **everything** they need to do on **any** computer, using **only** free software.



Why not “open source?”

- Was originally an intentional split from the free software movement
- We want to focus on freedom
- But, the software is the same



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Licenses and freedom

Restrictions that can make software proprietary:

- Copyright license – “All rights reserved.”
- End User License Agreement – “That thing in tiny print in a tiny dialogue box that you don’t read.”
- Software patents – “Apple and Microsoft’s favorite weapon of choice.”



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Skype's license makes it not free software: Freedom 0

While you can download the program without charge, Skype denies you the freedom to run the program for any purpose.

4.2 Restrictions. You may not and you agree not to . . . use the Software or cause the Software (or any part of it) to be used within or to provide commercial products or services to third parties.

(License quotes are from <http://www.skype.com/en/legal/tou/>.)



Skype is not free software: Freedom 1

Skype denies you the freedom to read and modify the program's source code.

You may not and you agree not to . . . undertake, cause, permit or authorise the modification, creation of derivative works or improvements, translation, reverse engineering, decompiling, disassembling, decryption, emulation, hacking, discovery or attempted discovery of the source code or protocols of the Software or any part or features thereof



Skype is not free software: Freedom 2 and 3

Skype denies you the freedom to share modified or unmodified copies of the program.

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Many other free licenses

- The FSF's list of licenses:
`http://www.gnu.org/licenses/license-list`
- The Open Source Initiative (OSI) list:
`https://opensource.org/licenses`



What the FSF does

- Licensing advocacy and education (fsf.org/licensing)
- Support free software development (gnu.org)
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Other organizations

- April
- Open Source Initiative
- Software Freedom Conservancy
- Free Software Foundation Europe
- Apache Software Foundation
- Linux Foundation
- Electronic Frontier Foundation
- Many project-specific organizations



Free software everywhere

We already have free software everywhere:

- Android
- GNU/Linux
- Apache
- Wordpress (used by 26 percent of all Web sites, according to w3techs.com)

But it's still surrounded by unfree software.



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Hardware that Respects Your Freedom



How you can help as an individual

- Support the concept and ideals of free software.
- Start using some free software and stop using unfree software.
(directory.fsf.org)
- Switch your operating systems – your laptops, tablets, e-book readers, and phones.
- Write and share free software, especially copyleft free software
- Help other people do all of the above
- Translate free software materials
- Buy hardware that Respects Your Freedom as much as possible



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- Come to LibrePlanet! (March 19-20 in Cambridge, MA) libreplanet.org/conference

Slides will be available at

<https://libreplanet.org/wiki/User:Johns/Presentations>.

