Open Source Software Licensing

Choosing An Open Source License

Is it trivial? YES → Public Domain
 NO → Is it code? YES → Use present license
 NO → Is it part of an existing project? YES → Do you want access to changes made? RESTRICT
 NO → Allow propriety usage? YES → GPL
 NO → LGPL
 NO → BSD (3 clause)

License Release Dates

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<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>License Release Dates</th>
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<tr>
<td>1970s</td>
<td>Original BSD</td>
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<tr>
<td>1980s</td>
<td>MIT</td>
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<tr>
<td>1990s</td>
<td>Original LGPL</td>
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<td>2000s</td>
<td>LGPL Updated</td>
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Copyleft adj. /ˈkɒpiːlɛft/ → Allowing use, distribution, and modification on the condition that any redistributions or modifications also be licensed under the same condition and, in the case of computer software, are accompanied by source code. [2]

Public Domain n. /ˈpʌblɪk ˈdəʊmən/ → The feature of intellectual property being not protected under patent or copyright, i.e. no person or other legal entity can establish proprietary interests. [3]

Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

The idea of using other peoples work and ideas to help with your own is not new; in fact the phrase “standing on the shoulders of giants” has been around since the twelfth century. The free software movement has embraced this idea, by enabling people to access, extend and reuse source code written under an open source licence. This idea is considered to be the antithesis of “reinventing the wheel”, a practice which is common when software is protected by copyright and hidden behind binaries. Because of these restrictive licences, a lot of a programmer’s productivity is spent re-implementing something that has been done a thousand times before. With many open source licences, the only restrictions enforced are those of attribution, such that all contributing authors may be recognised for their work, and that any derivative works are released under the same licence, leading to more available code for people to use.

Current license usage proportions

- GNU GPL
- LGPL
- MIT/X11
- Creative Commons
- Apache
- Artistic License
- BSD License 2.0
- Public Domain

References