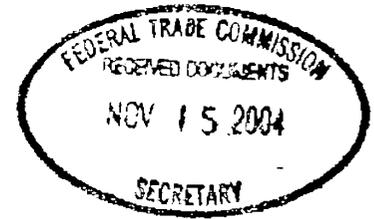Free Software is low-risk and protects the consumer

In the early 1980s, a time when microcomputing and networking were becoming available to many, software was becoming restrictive. What we call the Free Software Movement represents a consensus view of knowledgeable observers all over the world about the need for software distribution to be free from these restrictions.

The use of restrictive software licenses causes:

- Cost Increase
- Risk Increase
- Consumer Value Loss
- Education dampening
- Support Reduction, technical and human
- Progress Block
- Interoperability Block
- Moral and Morale problems

Risk

Restrictive software licenses are often linked to usage or other restrictions or to other concessions. Restrictions include: limits on backup and archival copies; non-disclosure of hazards; those contrasted (below) with free software.
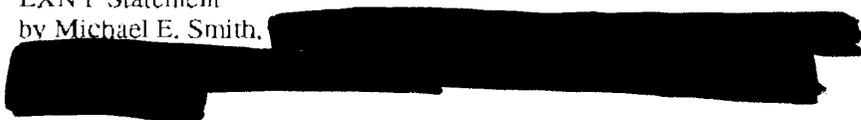
Free software is completely open to public examination. Examination of computer programs by means of reading alone is limited and error-prone. Since software under a free license can be copied, modified and distributed, it can be sent to experts (with no compromising agreements involved) and tested not just by adjusting parameters but by alteration of the programs, thus allowing definitive examination of internal behavior. Results can be published.

As a consequence of the distribution terms, a program found to be good can be replicated and widely and rapidly disseminated. The same applies to fixes when problems are discovered and to improvements.

Consumer protection

Free software licenses are a powerful means of consumer protection. In addition to the above named advantages, the consumer is free to have the software customized. Any excess program code is excisable; adware and spyware would be fully and publicly exposable. A vendor's refusal to fix bugs cannot prevent the consumer from having the bugs fixed (by anyone). Such a license is irrevocable, so the consumer can never be deprived of the product. Since the consumer has access to the source code (defined as a set sufficiently complete to provide autonomy), should the relations with the supplier be ruptured, the programs can not only be run, but can be further developed.

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LXNY Statement
by Michael E. Smith,

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