



Festival Latinoamericano de Instalación
de Software Libre



A freedom festival

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April 28, 2007

Participating in a Free Software installation festival is entertaining, and for many it is the first step to be part of our large community. It is important that these new participants of the community learn a little more about Free Software, the principles that motivate us and the philosophy that gets us together. And also about the problems that we face.

Free Software is a matter of freedom. It is software that respects your individual freedom and that of the community around you. Free Software is defined by 4 basic freedoms: to use, study, adapt, and distribute the software, with or without modifications. These freedoms are essential for living together in a society based on sharing of the knowledge, the mutual aid and the equality of opportunities. Any software that respects the 4 fundamental freedoms is Free Software. Unlike many people think, **Free Software is not software licensed only under the GPL.** There are many Free licenses.

When we use Free Software, we accept the participation in this community in equal conditions. It is exactly the opposite of what happens when we accept proprietary software licenses.

These **proprietary licences** curtail your freedoms, and cause our society's basic values of **sharing** to be seen as **something undesirable**.

Accepting a license of proprietary software, we are accepting **to use** a knowledge that "belongs" **to somebody who does not want to permit us to learn.** Our access to this knowledge is limited precisely to create a form of **control over us.** These licenses do not respect your freedoms, and also they do not respect the people around you, imposing a division of what can and cannot be known by you and your friends, creating a hierarchy in access to knowledge.

Some of these licenses also explicitly **prohibit** you from sharing this program to your friends, turning **life in society** into something **egoistic** and nearly impossible. Who has never loaned a book or a magazine to a friend?

Ok, you might now be thinking: "but this Free Software thing is getting to be quite complicated!" You have no idea. Besides our declared enemies, there are other dangers harder to pinpoint.

Given the growing amount and quality of Free Software available, we're beginning to see more

and more systems that we call hybrid. These systems have the distinguishing feature of putting together both non-Free and Free Software. For example, some GNU/Linux distributions publish proprietary software (including firmware) as part of a system primarily composed of Free Software. They often fail to warn users clearly about this situation. This practice hides some dangers in causing some users to **think they are living in freedom** while they actually aren't. And it is quite likely that they will only find that out when they need the freedoms, and then it may be too late.

Fortunately, thanks to hard work by Free Software activists, we're on track to eliminate these dangers. Examples are initiatives to create **100% Free GNU/Linux distributions** such as gNewSense (Free Ubuntu), BLAG (Free Fedora) and Ututo, an independent, Latin American distribution. Recently, Ubuntu announced it is going to have a 100% Free alternative to its current hybrid forms. We must remember that, once it's installed, it can be hard work to identify and remove the software whose license does not respect our freedom, especially for newbies. <http://www.gnu.org/links/links.html>

It is always important to remember that living in freedom is not like getting a finished gift. **Freedom requires maintenance**, and also commitment. Every day the interests in limiting the individual and collective freedoms grow, as a means to control and to profit from this position of control. Therefore deciding to live in freedom is deciding to **commit to a day-to-day struggle** for not acceptance of the path that may even appear to be easier in the short term, but that in the long run may be too costly. Not only for you, but for all the people. And not only in the software field.

If some (perhaps unfortunately many) people do not realize the danger of accepting a proprietary license in exchange for ensuring some functionality to their systems. These people unintentionally form **critical mass** that, by giving up part of their freedoms, contributes to weaken-

ing the task of defending them. This attitude doesn't aid the understanding of the principles of Free Software by new community members, it debilitates our requests before abusive vendors and, in general, before an industry that's as powerful as it is disregarding of ethics in its development.

By reducing the importance of these freedoms for the sake of practical aspects, it ends up more difficult to emphasize that **freedom is something essential**. And we all know how essential it is.

<http://www.fsfla.org/?q=en/node/139#1>

FSFLA wants to express its best wishes to FLISoL's success, to congratulate its organizers, and to invite all the people to multiply the efforts and joint commitment for the sake of freedom!



<http://www.installfest.info>



Latin America

<http://www.fsfla.org>

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Translated to Spanish by Antonio Russo, with revision by Federico Heinz, and to English by Antonio Negro. Suggestions by Marcelo Zunino.

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