

Beyond Open Source

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Free Open Source

Free open source software is software written (hard work) by people (relatively few) for no pay, and given away for free (in an industry where similar products are sold for money).

FOSS grows out of knowledge that software has an extremely low replication cost, and a conviction that its free dissemination is a public good.

Thought Experiment

Imagine this industry:

- A few people pay a lot of other workers to do some work, but they don't actually want the results themselves. Instead they want the world to use the results.
- The huge number of workers then universally give the results of their work away for free.

Obvious conclusion

- This industry is clearly producing a product in the public interest.
- The workers would be putting the results of their work on the Internet, for anyone to access at peanuts cost.
- The very minor cost of making this work available (on the Internet) would be absorbed by the workers' employers.

WRONG!!@ \$# %!

The industry is research.

The few funders are governments,
universities and research labs

The workers are researchers

The products are research papers

They are all given away for free

But you have to pay \$k to read them!

Problem?

Publishers get in the way, courtesy of obsolete ideas of printed journals and postal costs.

Researchers give their papers to publishers.

Publishers add some value to the papers and publish them in journals.

Potential readers must pay large subscription prices to read the research.

Open Access

Now you see the purpose of the Open Access (OA) movement.

It is that all research papers produced in the world should be available on the Internet, accessible to anyone to read who has an Internet connection, for no cost.

So why not?

- Mostly apathy and ignorance by the researchers
- Added to unnecessary fear of copyright
- Plus resistance by publishers drawing excessive rents and facing the prospect of change

It's not difficult

In a very few fields, it has already happened. The oldest example is Theoretical Physics, and the arxiv website

<http://arxiv.org/>

Arxiv has almost 100% of the available research in the world, for reading for free. But its model does not scale to other disciplines.

Institutional Repositories

The preferred solution is a distributed one:

Each research institution establishes an IR

Every researcher deposits a copy of their paper in the employer's IR immediately on it being accepted by a journal

The access is set 'open' if possible, otherwise 'restricted'

This is the ID/OA mandate

Example

Queensland University of Technology (QUT)

<http://eprints.qut.edu.au/>

Since 2004, has had such a requirement,
and captures at least 80% of its research
for public access.

(Inaccessible at time of writing)

Example 2

University of Tasmania

<http://eprints.utas.edu.au/>

No mandate yet because of senior management foolishness, captures perhaps 20% of all research (but the most important 20%), and 100% of the research theses.

Mandates

Only way to get academics to change their work habits in a reasonable time.

Universities can mandate their employees and some do.

Grant-funding bodies can mandate their recipients, and some do.

Nobody else can mandate a researcher to do anything (well maybe governments)

Australia

Almost every Australian university has an IR.

Almost all are practically empty because of no mandates.

The ARC and NH&MRC strongly recommend deposit in a repository, and grantees have to explain why not in their reports (just short of a mandate).

<http://leven.comp.utas.edu.au/AuseAccess/>

Worldwide

The USA's National Institute of Health
mandates OA

Several US universities, including Harvard

All but one of the UK's research council
mandate deposit

The Wellcome Trust mandates deposit

<http://www.eprints.org/openaccess/policysignup/>

Aggregator Services

Google Scholar

<http://scholar.google.com.au/schhp?hl=en&tab=>

ARROW Discovery Service

<http://search.arrow.edu.au/>

Australasian Digital Theses Program

<http://adt.caul.edu.au/>

Publish or Perish

<http://www.harzing.com/pop.htm>

Summary

Leading edge of a revolution

Aggregating harvesters will develop once the content is high enough

Strongly supported by developing countries

Developed countries require activists to induce change from obsolete practices

The Gold Road

What has been described is the Green Road to OA

The Gold Road is longer term, and will come after Green OA has been achieved

Gold = Journals that are Open Access intrinsically, and have eschewed print and subscriptions entirely

OA Journals

Obtain funds from the people who want to be published or want to support research, rather than those who want to use it

Currently ~20% of world's 20,000 research journals, but growing

Examples

<http://www.plos.org/>

<http://firstmonday.org/>

Slow....

- The publishing industry is VERY slow to adapt to change, especially change that disadvantages it.
- Researchers and research managers are ignorant and indifferent to the possibilities that are open to them.
- Attitudinal change required!

Questions



The End

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