LUGOD, Linux and Open Source

What Is Open Source Software?

Computer software is released under a license that explains what rights the person receiving and using the software has. Typically, these rights benefit the author, and restrict the user. Software which is released under an "Open Source" license is different from typical software. It *gives* additional rights to the end user:

● **Free Redistribution** – The software can be sold, or given away, without restrictions.
● **Source Code Availability** – The source code – the human-readable "recipe" that defines a program – must be made available.
● **Derived Works Can Be Made** – You are allowed to modify the program and release your own version. You are also allowed to use parts of the program for your own, new software.
● **No Discrimination Against Persons or Groups**
● **No Discrimination Against Fields of Endeavor** – There can't be any restrictions like: "You can only use this for educational purposes."

Famous examples of Open Source software include the *Apache* web server, that powers over 60% of the World Wide Web, and which is often combined with other Open Source applications, such as the *Perl*, *PHP* and *Python* programming languages and the *MySQL* database. Then there's the *Firefox* web browser, which at well over 50 million users, is steadily replacing the extremely insecure and outdated *Internet Explorer*. *The Gimp*, a photo and graphics manipulation tool, and *OpenOffice.org*, a complete office suite, are other famous examples.

What Is Linux?

Linux is a completely free computer operating system that runs on desktop computers, mainframes, web servers, the TiVo video recorder, inside robots, and almost anywhere else you could imagine. It's highly secure, stable, and extensible. Combined with other Open Source software, Linux can provide a home, school or office with a full-fledge, rock-solid, Internet-ready desktop, free of spy-ware, viruses, pop-up ads, and crashes!

Why Should I Use Open Source or Linux? And How?

Open Source software is often more stable and more secure than proprietary counterparts. Thousands of developers around the world work on many Open Source projects, and their goal isn't to take money out of your wallet. (Their goals include exercising their brain both artistically and technologically, creating software they themselves need for work or in their daily lives, or simple altruism – making the world better by creating software everyone, everywhere, can use.)

You can get started with Open Source by installing programs for your existing operating system (e.g., Windows), such as Firefox as a replacement for Internet Explorer and OpenOffice.org, as a replacement for Microsoft Office (see **TheOpenCD** and **The Open Source CD**). You can try out Linux without actually installing it, using a "live CD" – a bootable disc containing the entire operating system and hundreds of applications (see **Knoppix** and **Ubuntu Live CD**). Or you can install Linux on your hard drive, either next to your current OS, or as a complete replacement it! (see **Ubuntu Install CD**, or come to a **LUGOD installfest** at UC Davis).

Who Is LUGOD?

Founded in 1999, the *Linux Users' Group of Davis* is a non-profit whose goals are to advocate and educate the local community on the subjects of Linux and Open Source software. We hold regular meetings with guest speaker presentations twice each month, free "installfests" workshops once a month, and occasional hands-on demos and classes about Linux and Open Source software.

LUGOD is made up of over 400 people from the greater Sacramento area (and beyond). Our members are from all walks of life, and range from teenagers to seniors. Aside from our meetings and other events, members keep in touch and share their knowledge and experiences with each other through LUGOD's various on-line e-mail lists.

You can be part of LUGOD, too! Simply visit us at our regular meetings or other events, and feel free to subscribe to any of our various technical and non-technical mailing lists.

www.LUGOD.org