

Free Software, Open Standards and You – Handout

This document is supplementary to the talk given at the New Librarian's Symposium 8 in Canberra, June 2017. It provides additional information, links, and further discussion points. For slides, notes (with references) and other information, see: <http://next-nexus.info/writing/nls8>.

Free software examples

These are just some of the amazing pieces of software available, see the website for more, or do a web search for the category (e.g. CRM) plus the phrase “free/open source software”.

Koha

“Koha is a fully featured, scalable library management system.” <https://koha-community.org>

Thoughts: All library management systems have their unique issues, problems and quirks. Few allow you the freedom to fix those issues. Koha is one that does.

See also: Evergreen <https://evergreen-ils.org>, Greenstone <http://www.greenstone.org> and others.

Zotero

Zotero “is a free, easy-to-use tool to help you collect, organize, cite, and share your research sources.” <https://www.zotero.org>

Thoughts: This cross platform reference software is amazing, and will save you so much effort for your research and referencing.

Open Source Software, FOSS and FLOSS

Whether you call it Free Software, Open Source Software, Free/Open Source Software or Free, Libre, Open Source Software, the end result is very similar from a financial and practical perspective. However, the philosophy and politics behind the labels are different. I suggest that for most of you there is no difference; you should pick a label that works for you or your organisation.

Media Software

If you have a maker lab or similar, you could try putting media editing software on the PCs.

Audacity, Blender and Inkscape are three examples of professional-quality tools that could bring out excellence in your clients.

Audacity is a digital sound editor, allowing “multi-track recording and editing”.

<http://www.audacityteam.org>

Blender “supports the entirety of the 3D pipeline—modeling, rigging, animation, simulation, rendering, compositing and motion tracking, even video editing and game creation.” <https://www.blender.org>

Inkscape, a vector graphics editor, can be used for such things as diagrams, charts, logos, and many others.

<https://inkscape.org/en>

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Other free / open concepts

There are a number of other, related, terms that evoke the Free Software or Open Source Software concepts. This presentation discusses two aspects of a broader “free” and “open” movement.

As a librarian, and as an individual, I believe strongly in free culture, just as much as I do in free software. I believe that equitable access to information is important for a just and free society.

Many of these phrases are related and refer to similar concepts even if they have different names.

Free Culture

Free culture works allow anyone to use, modify, change and improve, and share those works. See also open content. Free Software is automatically a free culture work.

Open content

Open content works allow others to copy or modify them. Some of the Creative Commons licences are the most common licences in this area. However, not all CC licenced work is open content. For example, the CC licences that forbid derivatives or commercial use are not open content licences.

Open Access

Access to content without charge (*gratis*), normally used to refer to published peer-reviewed articles. Not all open access material is open content. Creative Commons non-derivative licences are often used for Open access material, but such material cannot be modified and then re-shared.

Open Data

Open data is data (e.g. from the result of research or study) that can be used, changed and shared for any purpose.

References

This paper draws over 15 years of using and reading about Free/Libre/Open Source Software, and reading about associated topics (e.g. open standards and free culture).

See <http://next-nexus.info/writing/nls8> for notes and resources with references.

Finally, see the Wikipedia articles on the various concepts, terms and phrases used.