

# Comparative Open Source Licensing

## An Introduction

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## Introduction



## IANAL

- This represents my interpretation only
- This does NOT constitute legal advice
- For proper legal advice, talk to a lawyer



## Speech vs. Beer



- Free software, as in freedom to do what you like with it
  - ‘free speech’ - *Libre*
- Free software, as in software that costs nothing
  - ‘free beer’ - *Gratis*
- Free, open source, FOSS, F/OSS, FLOSS

## Categorisation

- Self propagating vs. non-propagating
  - Strong / weak copyleft
- Linking (possibly with non-FOSS code)
- Redistribution
- Changes to licensed code
- Internal usage

## License usage

- Google figures (Chris DiBona)
  - 48% GPL
  - 23% LGPL
  - 14% BSD
  - 6% Apache
  - 5% MIT
  - 5% Everything else

## License usage

- Black Duck Software
  - 52% GPL (v2 and v3)
  - 9% LGPL (v2 and v3)
  - 8% Artistic license (Perl)
  - 8% MIT
  - 6% BSD
  - 5% Apache
  - 12% Everything else

## Where do FOSS licenses come from?

- Free Software Foundation (FSF)
- Open Source Initiative (OSI)
- ‘Legacy’
- Anyone who rolls their own



## GNU Public License

- Must pass on source to downstream users
- ...including any modifications you've made, noting your modifications
- Any software incorporating GPL code must be released under GPL
  - Compatible licenses
- May not impose further restrictions
- v2 vs. v3
- Static vs. Dynamic linking
- Affero GPL (AGPL)



## Lesser GPL

- As for GPL, but:
  - Allows linking with non-GPL code
  - Non-viral
- Still need to make source available to downstream users
- Still need to release (under LGPL or GPL) any changes to LGPL code



## BSD

- No obligation to redistribute source or changes
- May not use licensor name to promote your product
- May be combined into proprietary products
- Original (4-clause), Modified (3-clause), Simplified (2-clause)
- Permissive



## MIT

- As BSD
- Some variance: X11, Expat, ncurses
- Originally written for X11 system
- Possibly less ambiguous than BSD, so some people prefer it over BSD



## Apache

- Permissive
- ...as per BSD/MIT licenses
- Must preserve copyright / license notices
- Must make changes explicit
- NOTICE file
- Currently v2.0



## LaTeX (LPPL)

- Similar to MIT/BSD...
- ...but strict controls on what goes into licensed product
- Controls over name and maintainer
- Based on TeX license (Donald Knuth)
- LPPL itself is copyright



## Public Domain

- Essentially anything not covered by any intellectual property rights at all
- 'intangible to private ownership'
- Software must be explicitly placed into public domain
- FOSS != Public Domain

## Others

- WTFPL – 'Do What The F\*ck You Want Public License'
- Creative Commons
- Mozilla
- EPL
- etc.



## Choosing a license

- Try to choose one of the existing ones rather than making up a new one
- How do you want people to use your code? (and do you even care?)
- Political considerations
  - Employers wishes
  - Personal support for FOSS ideals



## Patents

- Software patents pose a serious threat to FOSS software
- Some licenses attempt to address this (GPL, Apache)
- Anecdotal evidence that software engineers not in favour of software patents

Questions / pig wrestling?



## Useful information

- My email: [alison.lloyd@pure.com](mailto:alison.lloyd@pure.com)
- GPL: <http://www.gnu.org/licenses/gpl.html>
- LGPL: <http://www.gnu.org/licenses/lgpl.html>
- BSD: <http://www.opensource.org/licenses/bsd-license.php>
- MIT: <http://www.opensource.org/licenses/mit-license.php>
- Apache: <http://www.apache.org/licenses/LICENSE-2.0>
- LaTeX: <http://www.latex-project.org/lppl/>