

Franklin Street Statement on Freedom and Network Services

The current generation of **network services** or **Software as a Service** can provide advantages over traditional, locally installed software in ease of deployment, collaboration, and data aggregation. Many users have begun to rely on such services in preference to software provisioned by themselves or their organizations. This move toward centralization has powerful effects on software freedom and user autonomy.

On March 16, 2008, a workgroup convened at the Free Software Foundation to discuss issues of freedom for users given the rise of network services. We considered a number of issues, among them what impacts these services have on user freedom, and how implementers of network services can help or harm users. We believe this will be an ongoing conversation, potentially spanning many years. Our hope is that free software and open source communities will embrace and adopt these values when thinking about user freedom and network services. We hope to work with organizations including the FSF to provide moral and technical leadership on this issue.

We consider network services that are **Free Software** and which share **Free Data** as a good starting-point for ensuring users' freedom. Although we have not yet formally defined what might constitute a 'Free Service', we do have suggestions that developers, service providers, and users should consider:

Developers of network service software are encouraged to:

- ✓ Use the GNU Affero GPL, a license designed specifically for network service software, to ensure that users of services have the ability to examine the source or implement their own service.
- ✓ Develop freely-licensed alternatives to existing popular but non-Free network services.
- ✓ Develop software that can replace centralized services and data storage with distributed software and data deployment, giving control back to users.

Service providers are encouraged to:

- ✓ Choose Free Software for their service.
- ✓ Release customizations to their software under a Free Software license.
- ✓ Make data and works of authorship available to their service's users under legal terms and in formats that enable the users to move and use their data outside of the service. This means:
 - ✓ Users should control their private data.
 - ✓ Data available to all users of the service should be available under terms approved for Free Cultural Works or Open Knowledge.

Users are encouraged to:

- ✓ Consider carefully whether to use software on someone else's computer at all. Where it is possible, they should use Free Software equivalents that run on their own computer. Services may have substantial benefits, but they represent a loss of control for users and introduce several problems of freedom.
- ✓ When deciding whether to use a network service, look for services that follow the guidelines listed above, so that, when necessary, they still have the freedom to modify or replicate the service without losing their own data.