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Two transformative events are currently taking place within the software industry. First, the proprietary software model is being overtaken by the free software model. The battles will continue for years to come, but the war is already lost: the proprietary model is marked for extinction, and the future is free software.

Not only has the eventual domination of free software become evident in empirical terms, but the underlying creative dynamic and driving force is now also well understood: the free software development model allows *unrestricted creative reuse of existing assets at essentially zero cost*. In a nutshell: proprietary software is a constrained model, while free software is an unconstrained model. And this difference, it turns out, is decisive.

But there is now a second transformative event underway: software applications are undergoing a radical shift to a service-based implementation and usage model, or what is sometimes called the "transformation of software into services."

And this transformational shift raises a critically important question. What shape will the free software ideology take in the services arena? Within the general software domain, domination of the free ideology is assured. But now the free/proprietary battleground is shifting, taking us to a new arena where the dynamics and forces are different.

The Internet has become a critical global resource, with far-reaching consequences for the welfare of society. It is vitally important that this resource be maintained as a public, rather than a private, construct. Yet today, the Internet services industry is defined almost entirely in proprietary terms.

It is therefore essential that the free/Libre ideology define and assert itself within the Internet services domain, for the enduring benefit and security of society. Without this definition, there is the likely prospect that the proprietary model will continue its dominance indefinitely.

The Libre Services concept

This is a question of the future, with its many unknowns and uncertainties. But we have given this our own best analysis, and formulated our own solution, which we now put forward for consideration. We have formulated a radically new, completely non-proprietary model for delivery of Internet services. We call this the *Libre Services* model.

Libre Services are an extension of the principles of free software into the Internet services domain. They are Internet services that can be freely copied and reused by anyone. Any company or organization can reproduce and host any Libre Service, either for its own use, or for commercial or non-commercial delivery to others. The Libre Services model exists in relation to the proprietary Internet services model of AOL, MSN, Yahoo and Google, in an analogous way to how GNU/Linux exists in relation to Microsoft Windows.

In essence, the Libre Services model represents a proposed definition of the free software ideology within the services domain. We have articulated the Libre model fully in the form of an industry paper titled, "Libre Services: a non-proprietary model for delivery of Internet services," available online at `http://www.freeprotocols.org/PLPC/100101`.

The interested reader can choose to read more, or less, than this defining paper. For the reader wishing to read less, the key ideas are summarized in the form of a brief Executive Summary. And for the reader wishing to read more, the Libre concept paper is itself part of a larger set of papers collectively called the "Libre Services Manifesto," describing every aspect of the Libre model, including a project-based model for collaborative participation and bootstrapping. The full manifesto is available at `http://www.freeprotocols.org/PLPC/100105`.

Beyond ideology

As an ideological concept statement, the “Libre Services Manifesto” has been written under the auspices of the Free Protocols Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion and support of free protocols, software, and services.

But beyond ideology there is also the question of real-world deployment and usage. The Libre concept is the foundation for something much bigger. We have analysed the totality of what is required to turn this concept into a working reality, including the critical motivations among all relevant constituencies engineering, business, and the end user. And we have formulated a complete, coherent blueprint to drive this all forward.

In a previous email we have described in broad brushstrokes the overall context and direction of this initiative, and we have also described the critically important business dimension. As part of our broader vision we have also built a set of real, first-generation Libre Services—what we call the By* Libre Services. We will present and describe those services a bit later.

In the meantime, we ask you to assist us by reviewing the Libre Services concept paper and giving us your critique.

We see the industry changing, and we see the need for strong and clear free/Libre ideological representation within the services domain. We have our own ideas, but the right solution requires analysis and participation by others. Our work can benefit greatly from external criticism at this stage. I look forward to hearing whatever commentary you may wish to offer.

Finally, as a Libre model no part of this work is in any way restricted in readership or participation. Please feel free to forward this email to others who may be interested.

Regards,

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