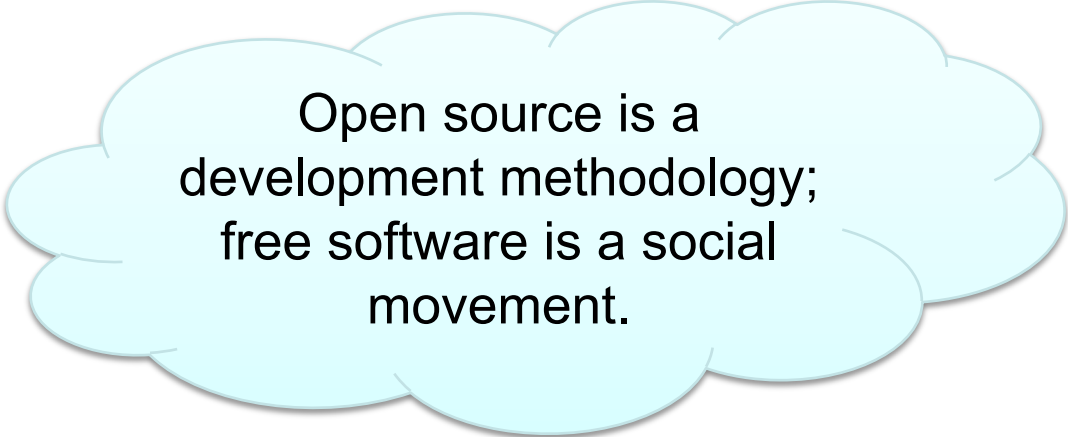


Ethical Interest in Free and Open Source Software

Free Software

- The issue is freedom, not price
 - Free software is "not for free"
- Essential freedoms
 - a user is free to run the program,
 - change the program,
 - redistribute the program with or without changes.
- Selling Free Software **is ok**

Open Source Software



Open source is a development methodology; free software is a social movement.

- GNU GPL – “copyleft”
 - All code derivative to a GPL-covered program must be free software.
- Leverage copyright to propagate software freedoms.

Open Source Software



Why Open Source misses
the point of Free Software

- (9) License Must Not Restrict Other Software

“ The license must not place restrictions on other software that is distributed along with the licensed software. For example, the license must not insist that all other programs distributed on the same medium must be open-source software. ”

All existing free software would qualify as open source.

Free software vs OSS

- Free software means that the software's users have freedom.
- Is the GPL pragmatic or coercive?

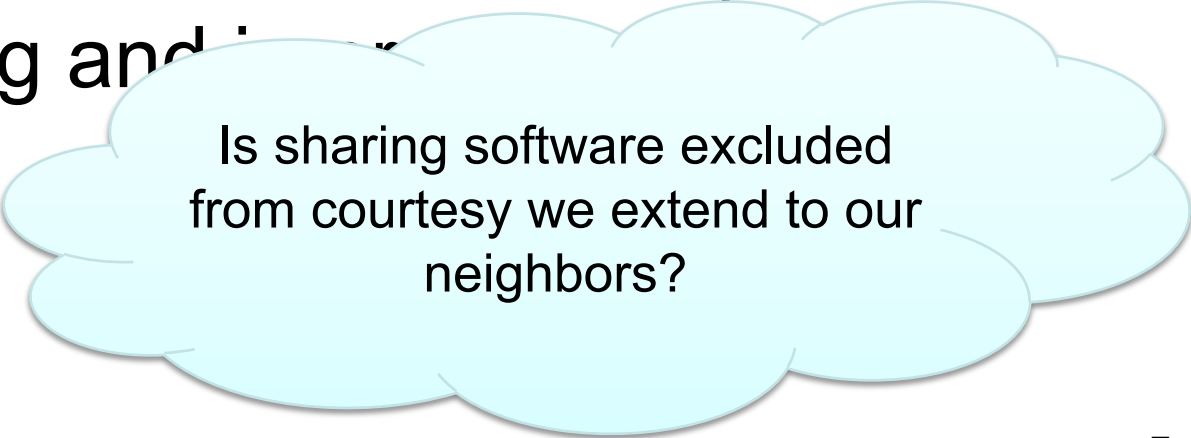
Objections to free software

- Programmers should be rewarded for creativity.
- Programmer has the right to control the results of his/her creative endeavor.

Why shouldn't users have the right over software once they have paid for it?

Social Cost of proprietary software

- proprietary software begins to destroy the ethic of making contributions to society.
- Writing replacement software is frustrating for the programmer and more expensive than modifying and improving software



Is sharing software excluded from courtesy we extend to our neighbors?

OSS

- Shape free software into an acceptable choice for businesses by defining open source software so that there are no restrictions on distributing it with proprietary software.
- Make source code available without losing control over derivatives works.

Critiques (Meyer, Watson)

- Giving source code away as “an immediate business killer”
- Free software is a “copycat” of some proprietary piece of software.
- leveraging copyright to promote the ethical notion of freedom is in itself unethical.
- copyleft is not about freedom, it is more about making sure that someone does not earn money off someone else’s hard work.

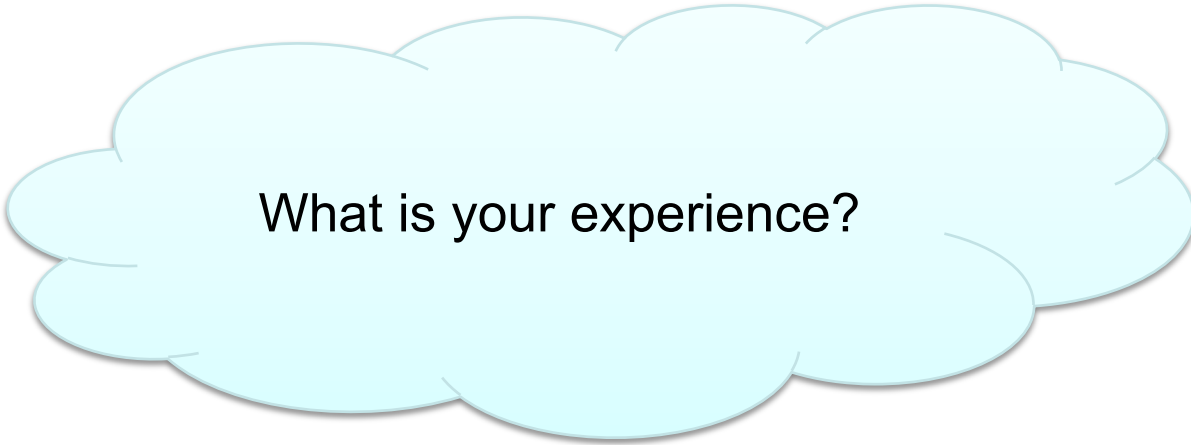
Motives for OSS developers

- Is it altruism?
- Is it a reaction against corporate greed?
- Bragging rights? Part of a select community with special talents!

Motives for OSS developers

- programmers join a community because there is a program that they need
- Programmers can select projects based interest and skills.
- The expected return from the programmers' labor comes in the form of reputation among others within the.
- Autonomy - can join or quit an effort

Quality of OSS



What is your experience?

- Advocates - developers/users are motivated to do quality work because they are developing software for their own use.
- Critics - volunteers will not do professional-quality work if there is no monetary compensation.

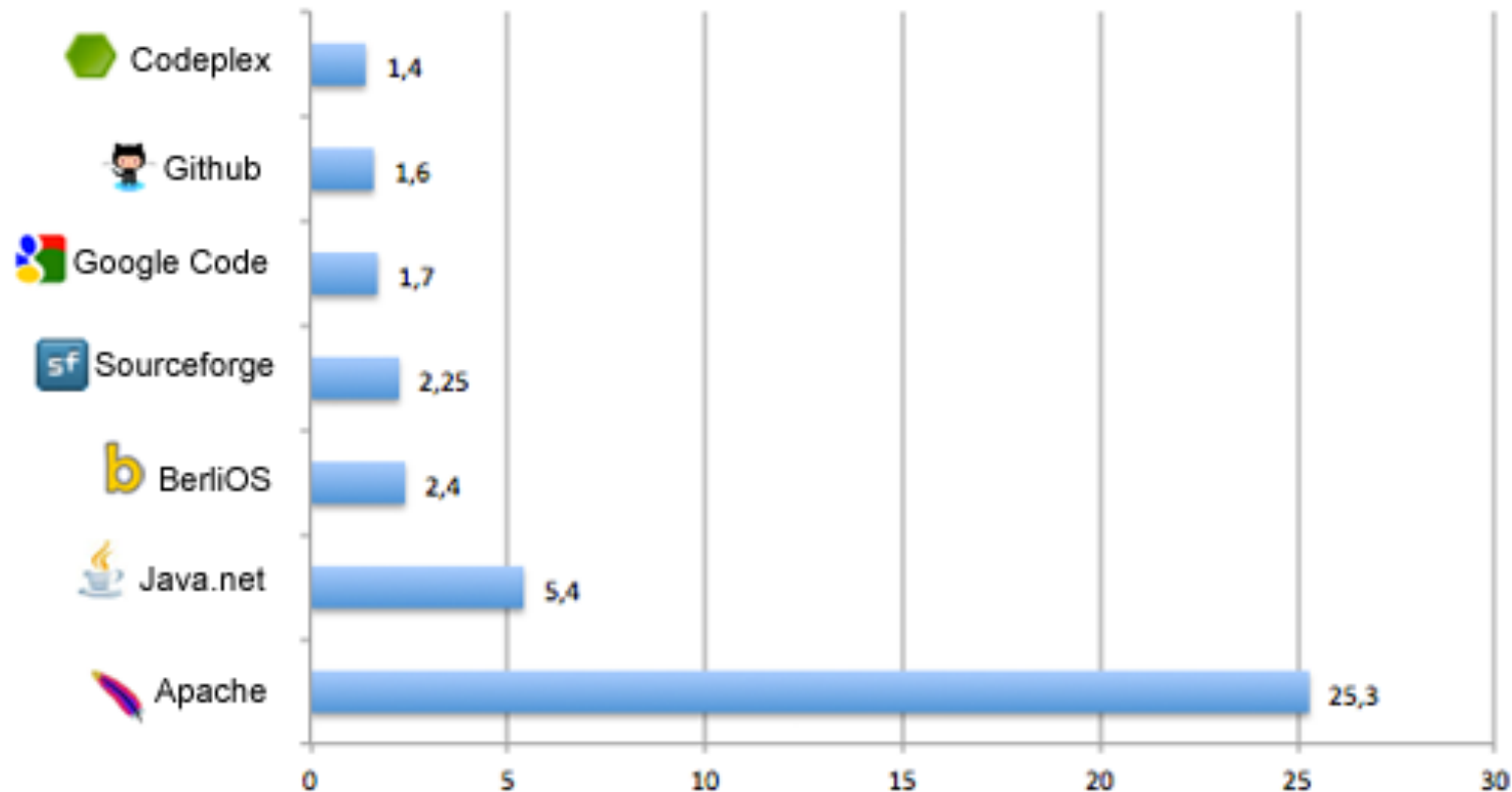
When Free Software Isn't (Practically) Superior

“Open source is a development method for software that harnesses the power of distributed peer review and transparency of process. The promise of open source is better quality, higher reliability, more flexibility, lower cost, and an end to predatory vendor lock-in.”

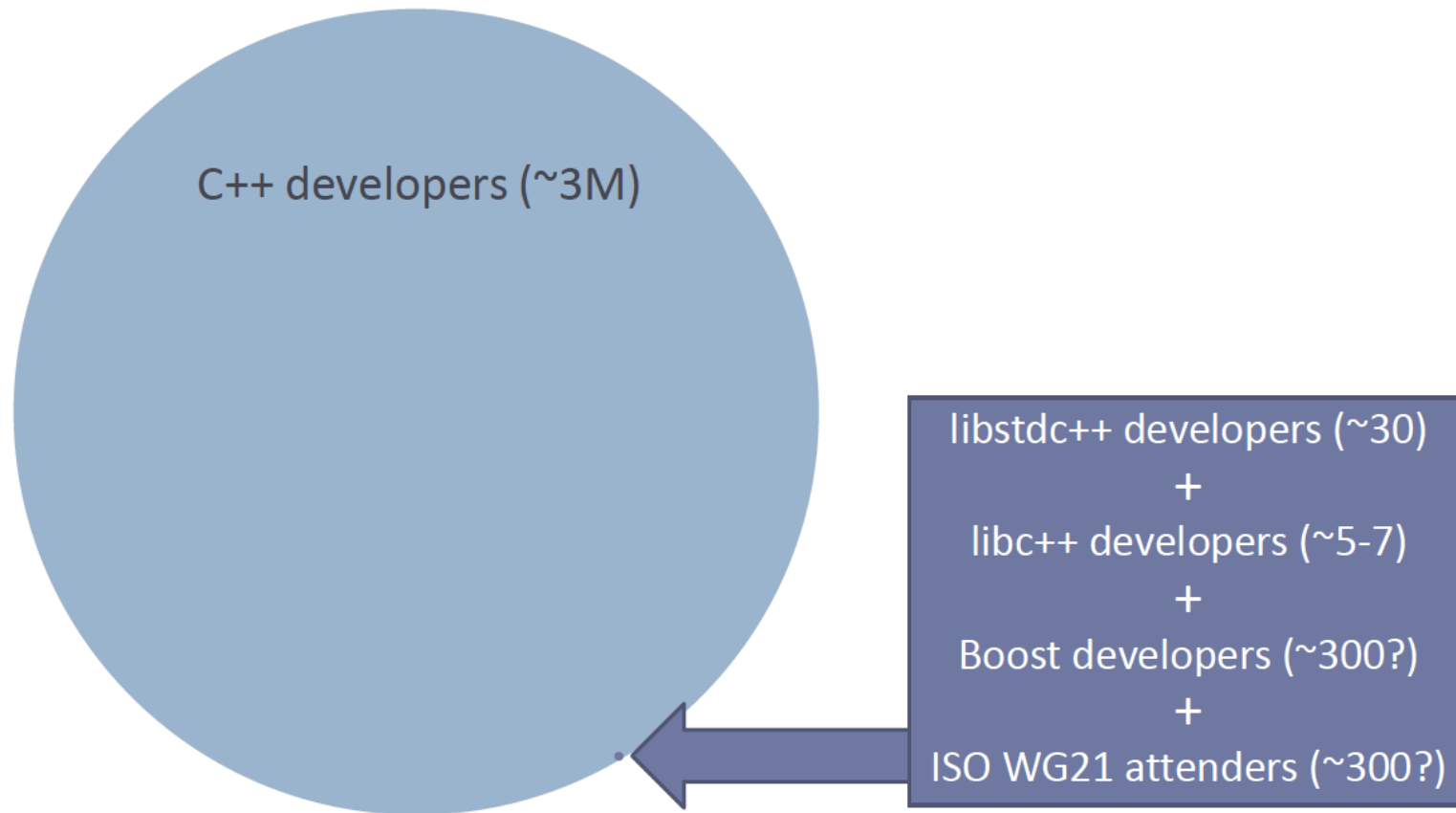
this promise is not always realized

Distributed, peer-review development process

Average number contributors per project



Distributed, peer-review development process



Ethical Responsibilities of Software Developers.

- Developers have pointed to the low price and claimed, “*you get what you pay for*” when the software is unreliable.
- Barriers to accountability
 - (1) the problem of many hands, (2) defects, (3) computer as scapegoat, and (4) ownership without liability.

Is OSS a public good?

Peter Kollock - defines public goods as those things that are non excludable and indivisible.

Is there an active interest among developers to create a public good?

Does academia have a moral responsibility to participate in OSS, giving the publicly funded nature of the universities?

