

# Free software and open culture in Serbia

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## Abstract

Free software is concept born on universities. Need for free education resource was motivating enough to spark idea of open and free learning materials and projects for teaching purposes. The best way to learn is to read good work of other programmers. Notion of ownership of software was not born with first computers and was pretty hazy until computers came widely popular among common people and software became source of huge profit. Concepts of software freedom was discovered in the researchers community. Then four essential freedoms were declared. At the same time “freedom of cultural work” was close related to the first communities and circles advocated those concepts. Soon enough was discovered that free and open source must be followed by free licenses, free fonts, free protocols and free formats.

Very soon it was obvious that free software is not thriving without community giving support and life to it. Profit is oxygen for proprietary software like communities are oxygen to the free and open software. Free software in Serbia was introduced modestly by few enthusiasts and slowly developed til first gathering on the Linux Fest happened in Belgrade in 1999. Software market was small so software communities were undeveloped and related to enthusiasm of the few. After a while it was clear that just formally registered organization can be foundation for community.

So, small and undeveloped software industry, programmers unwilling to take part in strange bureaucratic procedures, unpreparedness of academia to participate and absence of leadership caused situation where undeveloped community was born. Few individuals sparkled for a while and even fewer survived in the years to come. Turning point was year 2005 when Richard Stallman, founder of GNU project and Free Software Foundation, and Jimbo Wales founder of Wikipedia visited Serbia. Slowly free software entered schools, companies and even administration.

In the beginning free software was the opposite to the proprietary software, but lately free and open software became valid business model. Especially after Android mobile phones explosion it was clear that “war of operating systems” was over but the winner is irrelevant. New era has begun.

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