

OS Motivation *

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1 Introduction

1.1 Learning Objectives

- Discuss role of OSs to control computers
 - Performance aspects
 - Ownership and control
- Discuss role of licenses to control software

1.2 Performance Aspects

- OS manages computer's resources: CPU, memory, I/O
- OS understanding helps to identify and reason about resource bottlenecks.
 - Improve design, analysis, and implementation of information systems.
 - E.g., why is my computer/application slow? How to improve that?
- (Above are “traditional” topics for OS courses; this presentation takes a different direction.)

*This PDF document is an inferior version of an [OER HTML page](#); [free/libre Org mode source repository](#).

1.3 Whom do Computers Obey?

- Recall (long-term) goal of CSOS



Figure 1: “Notebook” under CC0 1.0; from Pixabay

- “Play and experiment with and control any computer, at any level of interest”
- In CS part, you learned how to build a computer.
 - How does that feel?
- In OS part, we investigate Operating Systems (OSs) to control computers.



Figure 2: “Search” under CC0 1.0; from Pixabay

- OS controls what is executing when.
- Who controls the OS?
- Who controls the computer, then?

1.4 Computers

Presentation contains image grid. \LaTeX export not supported.

1.5 Enlightenment

Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity.
(Immanuel Kant)

- Your computer does whatever it is programmed to do.
- You can succumb to somebody else's programming.
- Or emerge.

2 Choices and Consequences

2.1 Impact of Choices

- Economic and ecological/social impact



Figure 3: “Man with megaphone” under CC0 1.0; from Pixabay

- What do you buy/use/create?
 - * What do you advertise?
 - * What do you impose on others?
- Economic impact
 - Should be obvious
- Ecological/social impact



Figure 4: “Figure” under CC0 1.0; from Pixabay

- If you use some social/communication service, you increase its appeal and value
 - * Network effects, feedback loops, externalities
- If you **choose** communication under **surveillance capitalism**, you **impose** surveillance on your family, friends, colleagues . . .

2.2 Rationale

- If you want to **own** a device containing a computer (“smart” anything, recall slide on computers), you need to control its software.
 - (Including firmware and underlying hardware)
 - * (Topic in its own right)
- Otherwise,



Figure 5: “Control” under CC0 1.0; from Pixabay

- device may work against you, see IoT Hall of Shame,
 - * e.g., smartphones and diesel engines,
- device may stop working any time,
 - * e.g., useless fitness tracker (2019), bricked smart home entertainment device (2017) and hub (2016), Orwell books removed from Kindle (2009),

- device may stop receiving (security) updates any time.

3 Software

3.1 Free Software

- Free Software = Free/Libre and Open Source Software (FLOSS)



Figure 6: “Photo of Richard Stallman” by Victor Powell under CC BY-SA 3.0; from Wikimedia Commons

- Term coined by Richard Stallman, Free Software Foundation
 - * Neal Stephenson, 1999: “The most hackerish of all the hackers, the Ur-hacker as it were, was and is Richard Stallman”
- “Free” as in free speech or freedom, not free beer
- Four freedoms
 1. Run software (also changed versions)
 2. Study software
 3. Redistribute copies
 4. Distribute modified versions

3.2 Free vs Open Source

- Whether software is free (libre) or open source (or both, FOSS, FLOSS) or something else, depends on the **license**
 - 1986: Free software defined
 - * See GNU’s Bulletin 1 for origin
 - 1998: Open Source Software (OSS) defined
 - See Comparison of free and open-source software licenses
 - * Well-known FLOSS licenses include Apache License, GNU Public License, Eclipse Public License, Mozilla Public License
- Mostly philosophical distinction, sometimes religious
 - I prefer the term “free software” because it emphasizes freedom
 - If you do not want **your** academic works (theses, code, project results) to disappear, publish them under free licenses

3.3 GNU/Linux

- Linux is a free [OS kernel](#)



Figure 7: “Tux, the Linux mascot” under CC0 1.0; from [Wikimedia Commons](#)

- GNU/Linux is a family of free OSs
 - Naming controversy
 - I encourage you to try out GNU/Linux, which is free software,
 - * the major OS for cloud infrastructures,
 - * the server OS in lots of **project seminars**.
 - Upcoming **assignments** are based on GNU/Linux
 - * Several GNU/Linux distributions can be started as live systems from CD/DVD or USB stick without changing your current installation
 - [Help on getting started](#)

3.4 Firmware

- Firmware = Software that is embedded in hardware by vendor
 - Stored in (EP)ROM, flash
 - Initialization and control of hardware
 - * E.g., BIOS, (U)EFI; but also video BIOS of graphics card, Management Engine of Intel CPUs
 - Typically shipped as binary blobs
 - [NSA ANT catalog](#) also contains firmware trojans (in wake of Snowden revelations)

3.4.1 CPU Rings

- Outlook: CPUs have [rings/privilege levels](#)
 - Instruction set restricted depending on ring
 - * Ring 3: User programs (I/O and memory access restricted)
 - * Ring 2, 1: Usually unused (originally for system services and device drivers)
 - * Ring 0: OS kernel (traditionally, ring 0 was most privileged)
 - * More rings [Fra19]

- Ring -1: Hypervisor ([virtual machine monitor](#))
- Ring -2: System management mode (SMM), unified extensible firmware interface (UEFI)
- Ring -3: Management Engine

3.4.2 Free and Open Firmware

- Articles by Jessie Frazelle
 - [\[Fra19\]](#)
 - * “Between Ring -2 and Ring -3 there are at least two and a half other kernels in our stack that have many capabilities. Each of these kernels has its own networking stacks and web servers, which is unnecessary and potentially dangerous, especially if you do not want these rings reaching out over the network to update themselves. The code can also modify itself and persist across power cycles and reinstalls. There is very little visibility into what the code in these rings is actually doing, which is horrifying, considering these rings have the most privileges.”
 - [\[Fra20a\]](#)
 - * “It’s an alarming problem that the code running with the most privilege has the least visibility and inspectability.”
 - [\[Fra20b\]](#)
 - * “If you would like to help with the open source firmware movement, push back on your vendors and platforms you are using to make their firmware open source.”

4 Conclusions

4.1 Summary

- Free software is a necessary precondition to control computers
 - ... and everything embedding a computer
 - * ... which is a lot in times of [ubiquitous computing](#) and [IoT](#)!



Figure 8: “Internet of Things” by Wilgengebroed on Flickr under CC BY 2.0; from Wikimedia Commons

- Do you care?

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