FNF The Free Network Foundation

Free Network Definition

The fundamental dialectic of our struggle is this: will we be enslaved by our technology, or liberated by it? It was in cognizance of this notion, and in service to our collective freedom that the Free Software Movement was born. It is in this spirit that we aim here to define exactly what it means to say that a network is free. We hope that the existence of this definition will help illuminate the path to a more just world.

Our intention is to build communications systems that are owned by the people that use them, that allow participants to own their own data, and that use end-to-end encryption and cryptographic trust mechanisms to assure privacy. We call such systems 'free networks' and they are characterized by the following five freedoms:

- **Freedom 0)**
  The freedom to participate in the network.

  Freedom 0 regards your right to organize cooperative networks. Conventional networks are characterized by a distinction between provider and user. This mode of organization encourages network operation in the service of self-interest. The provider builds and owns the infrastructure, and the user pays for access. In a free network, however, nodes connect to one another, rather than to a single, monolithic provider. By nature of its design, a free network is owned by those that make use of it. Participants act as providers and users as the same time, and growth is auto-distributed by treating any profits as investment. In this way, those that join the network are able to become owners. This mode of organization encourages network operation in the service of the common good.

- **Freedom 1)**
  The freedom to determine where one's bits are stored.

  Freedom 1 regards your right to own the material stores of your data. Conventional networks encourage (if not force) their participants to store their data in machines which are under the administrative auspices of an external service provider or host. Most folks are not able to serve data from their homes. Participants ought to be free to store their own data (so that it is under their care) without sacrificing their ability to publish it.

- **Freedom 2)**
  The freedom to determine the parties with whom one's bits are shared.

  Freedom 2 regards your right to control access to your data. Data mining and the monetization of sharing has become common practice. Participants should be free to choose those with whom they would like to share a given piece of information. Only someone who owns their own data can fully exercise this freedom, but it is an issue regardless of where the relevant bits are stored.

- **Freedom 3)**
  The freedom to transmit bits to one's peers without the prospect of interference, interception or censorship.

  Freedom 3 regards the right to speak freely with your peers. Information flows in conventional networks are routinely and intentionally intercepted, obstructed, and censored. This is done at the behest of corporate and state actors around the world. In a free network, private communications should remain unexamined from the time they enter the network until the time they reach their destination.

- **Freedom 4)**
  The freedom to maintain anonymity, or to present a unique, trusted identity.

  Freedom 4 regards your right to construct your own identity There is increasing pressure to forbid anonymity, and yet trustworthy communications remain rare. While it is essential to liberty that individuals be able to remain anonymous in the online public sphere, it is also essential that they be able to construct and maintain persistent, verifiable identities. Such identities might bear a legal name, a common name, or an avatar that masks one's corporeal self – individuals could have many such identities, and switch between them at will. Clear delineation between anonymous, pseudonymous, and onymous actors would enable all of us to better asses the trustworthiness of others on the network.