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## FSM Newsletter 31 August 2008

By [admin](#)

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Hello readers, and welcome once again to [Free Software Magazine](#) 's fortnightly newsletter, keeping you up to date with all things free software... AND the top 10 FSDaily announcements for this week! Enjoy!

### General announcements

#### Top ten Free Software Daily stories this week

1. **Quebec sued for ignoring Free Software** —“MONTREAL, Aug. 27 /CNW Telbec/ - FACIL, a non-profit association, which promotes the collective appropriation of Free Software, contests the Quebec government purchasing methods for software used within public administrations. [Read more...](#)
2. **Greens urge end to software patents** —The Green Party has called for an overhaul of patent laws that would prevent software being patented. [Read more...](#)
3. **What the FSF is doing Wrong** —Please don't take this post the wrong way just because of the title. I love the FSF. However, based on my observations, it has made some major mistakes that have ended up leading fewer people to freedom. Allow me to elaborate. [Read more...](#)
4. **Vista FUD?** —Seeking out and responding to FUD is not about slinging mud in the other direction. It's about correcting lies, rumors and bad press. For me, it's about providing an alternative view on things. I just happen to be passionate about Linux in particular, based on my own conversion. [Read more...](#)
5. **Novell and Microsoft: Stop with the FUD already** —Unlike a lot of open-source supporters, I don't turn red with anger at the very thought of Novell working with Microsoft. Like it or not, getting Linux and Windows to work better together makes good, hard business sense. [Read more...](#)
6. **Software Freedom Day - huh?** —No, this is not a day when you free yourself of all your software addictions. Rather, Software Freedom Day is an annual grass roots effort to educate the public on the virtues of free and open source software. [Read more...](#)
7. **Universities that do not use Free Software: Time for a boycott?** —“I received an email recently from a young man in Brazil who wanted me to come to his university and talk to the students and faculty about using Free Software. I am normally happy to advise universities to use Free Software, but usually this is done in conjunction with some large conference held at the university or some other venue. I just do not have the time to visit each and every school. [Read more...](#)
8. **The A-Z of programming languages: Python** —And, yes, the language's name is indeed a tribute to Monty Python's Flying Circus [Read more...](#)
9. **Nepomuk and KDE to introduce the semantic desktop** —The semantic desktop — a data layer for

annotating and sharing the information in your computer is scheduled to arrive at the end of 2008.  
[Read more...](#)

10. **Emacs and W3M: Toggling between work and the Web** —“Here’s a handy shortcut that toggles between the W3M web browser and other buffers you’re working on. I use it to quickly switch between code and documentation (or your favorite timewasting site, as it also makes a handy boss key). Define the function by adding the following code to your ~/.emacs: ...” [Read more...](#)

*Thanks to can.axis, mark, trombonechamp, Leonivek, switchpin, mads, and KDEmon for these stories!*

## Latest content

**What if copyright didn’t apply to binary executables?** —By Terry Hancock. By rights, copyright really shouldn’t apply to binary executables, because they are purely “functional” (not “expressive”) works. The decision to extend copyright to binaries was an economically-motivated anomaly, and that choice has some counter-intuitive and detrimental side-effects. What would things in the free software world look like if the courts had decided otherwise? For one thing, the implementation of copyleft would have to be completely different. [Read more...](#)

**An open letter to Barack Obama and the DNC (or, change video formats)** —By Anthony Taylor. In his campaign speeches, Senator Obama often evokes images of citizen participation in the governmental process. He proclaims that his message of hope is built on the foundation of mutual respect, and the prospect of working together to return the government to the hands of the people. [Read more...](#)

**The Bizarre Cathedral - 19** —By Ryan Cartwright and Tony Mobily. The Latest from the Bizarre Cathedral. [Read more...](#)

**Amarok, the music player that does it all** —By Andrew Min. For a time, GNU/Linux music library tools seemed to be, well, non-existent. Sure, XMMS was an awesome media player. But if you wanted to catalog your music, you were out of luck. Apple users had iTunes and were always rubbing it into the free software world’s face. Even Microsoft, the sleeping Redmond giant, had upgraded Windows Media Player to include a library feature. Then, a giant wolf named Amarok charged to the rescue. [Read more...](#)

**Skegness Grammar School, using GNU/Linux and thin-clients across the school** —By Richard Rothwell. Garry Saddington is ICT co-ordinator at Skegness Grammar School. It is a specialist sports college and a specialist maths and computing college with nearly 800 pupils, and has a boarding provision for around 60. Alistair Crust is responsible for serving the technology needs of the Skegness Grammar School community. All the school’s 180 curriculum computers run GNU/Linux. [Read more...](#)

**Being open about “open” (source)** —By Steven Goodwin. I’m not sure why it bothers me: I use the word “Free” when I’m talking about “Free Software”, and “Open” when I mean “Open source”. I’m very particular about my words, that way. But that’s just me. I don’t expect another religion to follow the rules of my own, or vice-versa. So why do I expect others to use words in the same way that I do? And why do I feel so cross about “Open standards”, which come with proprietary documentation, a hefty price tag, and an NDA? [Read more...](#)

**How do Drigg and Pligg compare?** —By Tony Mobily. I am Drigg’s founder and developer. Drigg and Pligg are pieces of software that will allow you to create Digg-like sites. People sometimes ask me if they should pick Drigg or Pligg. When it happens, I am not sure what I should answer. This article will hopefully solve the dilemma for most of them. Please note that I am bound to be biased here. I am an ex-Pligg users, who happened to have the both the need and the skills to create an equivalent product. I would have never

forked Pligg had I liked Pligg in the first place. So... well, feel free to tell me what I got wrong with facts — I will correct this post accordingly. [Read more...](#)

**The top 4 internet flame wars about free software** —By Andrew Min. Everyone knows about the infamous internet wars. Ranging from operating systems to text editors to code indentation style, these wars have wreaked havoc on the web for years. The topics range from serious topics like religion to serious geek topics like operating systems to just plain stupid topics like code indentation style. So today, I'm going to go through a list of some of the most famous topics and remind you of a few of the more, er, "famous" battles. [Read more...](#)

**SliTaz live CD: small but beautifully marked** —By Gary Richmond. When I came across the oddly named SliTaz I really didn't know what to expect. Yet another predictable fork of some better known distro which would blaze briefly in the free software firmament, burn out and fall to Earth, spent? Boy, was I ever wrong. If you want to know why Switzerland may be about to become better known for more than chocolate and Cuckoo clocks, read on and be prepared to be impressed and delighted by a live distro of exceptional speed and size. [Read more...](#)

**There and back again: a narrative of OSCON 2008** —By Rich Bloch. The Open Source Convention, or OSCON as it's more readily known, is an annual confluence of all things open source that has taken place since 1998. From its origins as an informal get together of Perl aficionados, OSCON is now regarded as the place to go for all things open source. [Read more...](#)

**Is Microsoft trying to kill Apache?** —By Gary Richmond. When the story about Microsoft shelling out \$100,000 to Apache for ASF sponsorship broke across my radar it rather tickled my funny bone and my curiosity. When ASF Chairman Jim Jagielski declared that "Microsoft's sponsorship makes it clear that Microsoft "gets it" regarding the ASF" I had a fit of the giggles—and then, like many others, I started to ponder on the reasons why and what it actually meant. [Read more...](#)

**Stop the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement** —By Mauro Bieg. I just heard about the proposed ACTA (Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement) over at Free Software Daily and from the Free Software Foundation. Right now the governments of the United States, the European Commission, Japan, Switzerland, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, Canada, and Mexico are secretly negotiating this new treaty which aims to increase the enforcement of intellectual property laws yet again. [Read more...](#)

**Inkscape tutorial: creating a simple ribbon** —By Ryan Cartwright. Inkscape is one of the most popular free software vector drawing applications. With minimal effort you can achieve some excellent results. However, for the inexperienced it can be a bit hard to find out how to get those results. In this tutorial I'll look at creating a simple ribbon effect which will hopefully introduce some of the key Inkscape features along the way. [Read more...](#)

**Creating wealth with free software** —By Richard Rothwell. A report by the Standish Group indicates that adoption of 'open source' has caused a drop in revenue to the proprietary software industry by about \$60 billion per year. That's not a huge amount of money compared to what has been lost though the misselling of mortgages, but it is still a lot. The report identifies the value of these 'open source' products to be about 6% of the world market for software. [Read more...](#)

**Self-signed certificates and Firefox 3 - a possible solution** —By Ryan Cartwright. Some websites need to handle data securely and assure the end-user they are a) secure and b) who they say they are. The traditional way to achieve these is via Secure Socket Layer. Firefox 3 changed what happens when a self-signed SSL certificate is encountered. It's a change which has caused some concern and much discussion. [Read more...](#)

**Why sharing matters more than marketshare to GNU/Linux** —By Terry Hancock. In a recent article, Ryan Cartwright argued that free software isn't playing the "same game" as proprietary software is. He's right—but that begs the question: what game is GNU/Linux playing? [Read more...](#)

**Why did Javascript/AJAX mop the floor with Java, Flash and Silverlight? Or, why open standards eventually win** —By Tony Mobily. It's not always true that the neatest, most advanced technology ends up winning most of the market share. There are other reasons which get in the way. Sometimes, the less advanced solutions end up winning — and evolve in order to become more solid and established. An example of this is Javascript/AJAX, which has conquered most of the web-based client programming — despite the fact that there were competing technologies which could (and maybe should) have easily won, purely based on technical merits. How did that happen? [Read more...](#)

**More evidence of Microsoft "tying up" the Asus EeePC** —By Tony Mobily. The EeePC started as a niche product aimed at children. It was a huge hit, which surprised everybody — even Asus. Microsoft noticed it, and started putting pressure on Asus . While reading around, I came across this interview with Benson Lin, which proves once more that Microsoft is tying up Asus and effectively killing the GNU/Linux version of the EeePC. [Read more...](#)

## Reminders

You can read this and previous newsletters online [here](#)

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