

Computer Tips Article

“Free For All” Software Open Source

How many times have you gotten something that was free, just to find out that some stipulation is attached to it? Like a free magazine subscription that you get automatically charged for after the first month, which was the only one that was free. There is a lot of “free” software on the Internet that is the same way. You download it, use it a few times, then it starts asking you to pay them to continue using the product. Open source software is a type of software where nothing like this will ever happen. It is entirely free. In fact, they even give out the information on how the program was made.

In this article, there are only going to be a few open source pieces of software listed. To help keep things simple, I have included direct links to all of these programs on our website www.yourpcknights.com. Just click on the “Computer Tips” button which is on the left hand side of the page. The links listed in the rest of the article are to the programs’ main site. I provided the direct links on our website so you won’t have to find the download; the links will take you right to where you need to be.

Office:

If you think \$140 is too much for a program to help write documents and make spreadsheets, you aren’t alone. There is an open source software program that does everything

that other expensive office programs do. It is called Open Office, and it can be found at www.openoffice.org.

While this is an amazing product, it does have some downsides. There may be somewhat of a learning curve when you first start using it. It looks a lot like Microsoft’s products, but many of the buttons are different or in different locations. Also, when you first install the program, it will ask you to register. This can be frustrating because it is a long registration. To avoid the long registration, make certain to select “Do Not Register” when you install the program. Though, if you would like to help the Open Office company, filling out the registration lets them know what kind of features to add onto future versions of the program.

Picture Editing:

A full-featured photo editing program can cost up to \$1,000. An easy way to avoid this stiff bill is an open source program called GIMP. It can be downloaded from www.gimp.org. When I say full-featured, I really do mean that this program has everything you would ever need to edit photos.

There are two downsides to this program. Like every other photo editing application, there are a LOT of buttons and settings. Also, instead of having one window like many applications, it actually has three. For any professional photo editor this isn’t a problem, because their monitor is so huge that it can fit all three with ease. For the regular user though this may mean not having much room to work with.

If you are a bit shy about all the buttons or have a smaller computer screen, there is another open source program to edit pictures. It is called paint.NET. It can be downloaded

from www.getpaint.net. This program might not have as many settings as GIMP, but it is a little easier to learn.

Games:

There is a full range of open source games, from card games like Solitaire, to board games like Scrabble. One of the better places to find them is a site called Open Source Games For Windows, the link to the page is osswin.sourceforge.net/games.html. The www is not needed like other locations. If you have any trouble downloading it, all of these links are on our website.

Anti Virus:

This was mentioned in last month's article, but any program that is free and helps protect your computer is amazing. ClamWin is an open source anti-virus application. It can be found at www.clamwin.com. The only problem with this product is that there is no real time protection, and you will have to run scans weekly.

Fun:

My dad and I use to spend entire days watching old StarTrek episodes and movies. I remember imagining how fun it would be to travel through space to see things that no person has ever seen. I managed to get my fix with an astrology program call Celestia. This isn't a game; it is a real time 3D representation of the universe. It can be found at <http://www.shatters.net/celestia/>. To get a good feel of what Celestia can do, click "help" at the top right, then click "Run Demo". This will take you on a quick tour of the cosmos.

If you find this at all interesting, I strongly recommend taking a trip down to the local Delta College Planetarium. It is located at 100 Center Avenue in Bay City, and their number is (989) 667-2260. You will be astonished on what our night sky should look like but doesn't because of light pollution.

If you are not shy about using computers and downloading files there are wonderful sites filled with open source programs. Two of them are www.opensourcewindows.org and www.sourceforge.net. These sites contain literally thousands of free open source applications.

If you need help installing or using these programs, please contact the people who made the program. They typically have websites with tutorials on how to install and even use the program.

If you like any of this software and would like to show your appreciation to the people who made it, give them a donation. All open source programs always have an option to donate money to them. It is NEVER required, but it is a very good way to show the people who spend their spare time making these free programs that you really enjoy their product.

If you have any questions feel free to stop by the PC Knights store or call us. We are located at 973 South Saginaw in the East Lawn Plaza, behind Walgreen's and next to Hamilton Pastries. Our phone number is 877-500-2792 and our e-mail is support@yourpcknights.com. Don't forget to ask about our repair services, data recovery 'even if your computer is making sounds', and trade-ins on new computer sales.

Next month's article.

"Working With Pictures"

Thank You For Reading

David Gill

PC Knights

"We will rescue your computer"

