Unlocking IP: Content and Code

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Libraries

- Can take significant time to become educated in a topic
- Usually free access to information
- Relatively few barriers to access locally
- Information is localised (language, content, bias)
- Time limit on information
- Requires physical access to library
- All “published” authors

The Internet

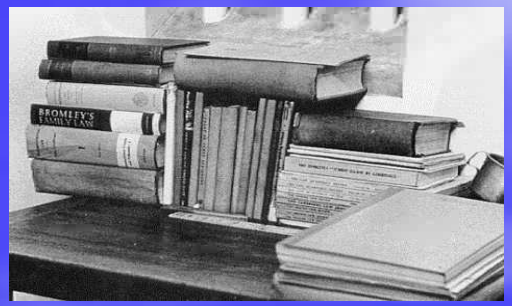
- Tools like Google give popular hits first -> faster more efficient searching for information
- Many tools of access control -> registration, payments
- Relatively few barriers to access globally
- Information available from all over the world
- Increases global communications and cultural understanding
- No time limit
- No physical access needed
- Everyone can publish...
  ...and does

Changing the playing field?

- The internet has given ordinary people the ability to broadcast and access information
- Where information is restricted, often the gap is being filled by others -> freer market for knowledge (Eg - Wikipedia)
- Traditional biases are balanced by many sources of information -> The Baghdad Blog
- Knowledge meritocracy? Google
- Access to everyone, communication all round

Job Skills still largely inaccessible

- Almost every profession requires significant funding to gain qualification and required tools for the job
  - Plumbers, mechanics, lawyers, doctors
- Even though professions within ICT often rely more on practical skills, much needed information is still locked up and controlled by vendors, institutes, etc.



Open Source Software?

- Open Source is a different world altogether:
  - Platform
  - Tools
  - Documentation
  - Practical experience

All freely available!

- An individual can go from nothing to world class developer with what is one of the first completely freely available knowledge and tools kit

Open Source?

- Why is it relevant
  - Changing the faces of the ICT industry and traditional knowledge sharing paradigms
  - Gives “developing” countries a chance to create export economies and internal skills
  - Raising the bar of education, job prospects
  - Creates technical communities that offer a source of innovation and skills
  - Based on Open Standards, Open Source, Open Knowledge, and Open Licences

Open Standards

- Software based on Open Standards:
  - Is more interoperable
  - Removes vendor lock-in risk
  - Easier to collaborate on globally
- Knowledge stored in Open Standard formats:
  - Is more accessible
  - Removes vendor control of data and product lock-in
  - Easier to collaborate on
  - Standards can be scrutinised

“The peoples' data must be accessible to the people”
Cuban Minister of ICT

Open Source

- Software source can be scrutinised -> transparency (election code)
- Gives access to learning from and contributing to software projects

Open Knowledge

- Knowledge packaged with Software
- Attitude of sharing code translated to sharing information
- Knowledge sharing projects already under way, anyone can contribute anything!
  - Brazil
  - Spain
  - Malaysia
- Imagine if every person in the world wrote just one paper on something they know well for public access...

Open Licences

- VITAL to protection of knowledge
  - “want it to be freely accessible and so don't want a licence”?
- Software – OSI approved, eg – GPL
- Knowledge – Creative Commons, etc

Last thoughts

- Open Source Software is a success story that proves sharing information creates a cumulative and ever-improving base of knowledge and learning, as well as increased participation and community spirit
- Open Source also shows how a software product can be successfully developed
- In recent decades we have put a price tag on our own evolution by locking up accrued knowledge.

  There is no excuse.