

Why did LibreOffice fork OpenOffice.org?

I guess it depends what you call a fork. The future of our community and of the OpenOffice.org project were uncertain, we just could not know where the new sponsor (Oracle) had in mind, and problems would not get fixed anymore. We had to do something, so we "left". But it was not a real fork until Oracle decided to bid us farewell.

How many developers from OpenOffice.org community now contribute to LibreOffice?

That's an interesting question. It needs to be broken down in details. If you define developers as people who write code and people who localize software, then here are the following numbers:

- the Oracle engineers mostly stayed to work at Oracle, although one has already left to work on LibreOffice for Canonical.
- we started with barely 20 engineers (Novell, Red Hat, independent developers) and around 10 localizers on the 28th of September. Today, we have gained over 120 developers most of them coming from a community background, and are somewhere around 60 localizers (in fact these often come from OpenOffice.org, and sometimes still contribute their localization to that project, sometimes not anymore).

For the rest of the community, that is, QA testers, documentation writers, designers, marketers, etc. I would assume that 80 to 90 % of the community has migrated over to LibreOffice.

Are there developers who contribute to both projects?

Yes indeed, several localizers contribute to both projects, although I believe many of these tend to watch what's going on inside the OpenOffice.org project with attention.

Who is behind LibreOffice and the Document Foundation?

Me.

More seriously: people, like you and me, some companies such as Red Hat, Novell, now Canonical, NGOs such as the Brazilian BrOffice, Debian hackers, but it's really a grassroots movement.

What companies support the Document Foundation?

We have a list of supporters here: <http://www.documentfoundation.org/supporters/> that include many companies such as Google. On a daily basis, companies like Novell, Red Hat and Canonical provide us with engineers and knowledge.

How can we contribute to LibreOffice and the Document Foundation?

You can contribute in many ways, and it's very easy. You can contribute code, time to work on less technical activities, and you can donate money, which is also very important. See that page for more information:

<http://www.documentfoundation.org/contribution/>

What was Oracle doing wrong?

I don't know whether Oracle was doing something wrong per se. I think Oracle is following its own agenda and strategy. A vibrant OpenOffice.org project and community were just not part of the plans.

Why did the community did not fork Openoffice.org when it was own by Sun? What was Sun doing right?

Oh, there had been discussions for years about setting up a foundation even under the stewardship of Sun Microsystems, and we were discussing this with Sun, although it never really came to any result. But Sun was a company truly committed in engaging with the community, and it helped a lot even though it was not providing all the answers.

What role does the Document Foundation plays in Libre Office?

The Document Foundation is the entity leading the LibreOffice project and providing the infrastructure and resources for LibreOffice.

Would you keep an eye on OpenOffice.org and use there code if necessary?After all both projects are free software under LGPL

We certainly keep an eye on it and at this stage it's fair to state that our stable version reuses most of the OpenOffice.org code. But this will change in the future, as it is not in our plans to stick to this codebase by default. We obviously work on that base, but also wish to innovate and rewrite many, if not everything, from scratch. As for the licensing, it's important to note that the copyright assignment needed to contribute to OpenOffice.org is constraining us more than anything else. The LibreOffice only changes are in fact contributed under a triple license: LGPL v3 +, GPL v3 + and the most recent version of the MPL +. By comparison OpenOffice.org is licensed under the LGPL v3 only.

Is LibreOffice community more democratic than OpenOffice.org?

No Free and Open Source project is democratic, ever, because freedom lies in and around the code, not necessarily elsewhere. So as far as democracy goes, we are a limited democracy, if you will, which is already much better than OpenOffice.org, which has none. But what's really important for any Free and Open Source project is to be meritocratic, which means to allow the best ones to make the decisions and become contributors valued by their peers for their contributions. In this sense, we are a fundamentally meritocratic community, and we are a democracy in the sense that contributors get to make decisions, not to bow under decisions made by whatever corporate sponsors. Our values and processes are defined in our Community Bylaws:

<http://wiki.documentfoundation.org/CommunityBylaws>

What advantage should have an user if they use LibreOffice instead of OpenOffice.org?

The feature set is different, and might actually become more and more different over time. Yet the greatest advantage is the assurance that LibreOffice is a transparent project that is committed to code and users' freedom and the never-ending commitment to Open Standards.

Do you think the fork was a good thing? After all what people really needs is an alternative to Microsoft Office monopoly?

I think the fork will prove to be an excellent thing, and I would disagree with your assertion that all what people really need is an alternative to MS Office. People don't need a duopoly, otherwise they could use Apple iWork. I think that what The Document Foundation is showing is that Free and Open Source Software fundamentally works as a model and as a set of values and principles. Through this fork we have shown the world that opposing code freedom and people's will in general will never work. In the end, what matters is freedom, and freedom always prevails.

What roles does ODF format and open standards play in the office suite software?

ODF is an extremely important asset to office suites. The reason is that it fundamentally turns the value of digital documents from being an extension of a specific product -which really amounts to a situation where your data is worthless, therefore your work is worthless and relies on one particular vendor's will- to a state of the art that values your data, your work, your creativity into something that can be kept, shared, protected and does not rely on anyone else's agenda. In a sense, ODF and Open Standards take us from a digital dark age to one of digital enlightenment. They allow people, businesses, governments, countries even, to secure their digital future and enable them to create and share content anywhere anytime.