

Erik Moller, “Freedom Defined”

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Background

As proponents of Stallman’s vision of freedom saw what was happening with open content, they attempted to reclaim the conversation by beginning to speak about “free content.” (This is one place in the historical record where open came first.) However, there was significant ambiguity around the phrase free content, particularly as it was used by participants in Wikimedia projects.

The Freedom Defined work was initiated by Erik Möller as a means to resolve the ambiguity about the phrase free content. It was inspired by the Free Software Definition. Helpful feedback was provided during the initial authoring process (in this chronological order) by Richard Stallman of the Free Software Foundation, Lawrence Lessig of Creative Commons, and Angela Beesley, board member of the Wikimedia Foundation and Vice President of Wikia, Inc. Benjamin Mako Hill, who had been pursuing similar goals (as exemplified in his paper “[Towards a Standard of Freedom](#)”) quickly joined the project and helped to improve the definition even before the launch of the open editing phase, which occurred in 2006.

Key Points

1. the freedom to use the work and enjoy the benefits of using it
2. the freedom to study the work and to apply knowledge acquired from it
3. the freedom to make and redistribute copies, in whole or in part, of the information or expression
4. the freedom to make changes and improvements, and to distribute derivative works

Discussion Questions

1. How did Stallman’s Four Freedoms influence this definition?
2. The Free Culture Licenses seem to have the same rules as Stallman’s Free Software, are they the Content arm of Free Software?

Additional Resources

Licenses. Wikipedia. Retrieved from <https://edtechbooks.org/-xTd>

Portal:Index. Wikipedia. Retrieved from <https://edtechbooks.org/-isTL>

Freedom. Wikipedia. Retrieved from <https://edtechbooks.org/-dop>

Free Software Foundation. (2013). What is Free Software. Retrieved from <https://edtechbooks.org/-awLr>

Four Freedoms. Wikipedia. Retrieved from <https://edtechbooks.org/-RUJE>

History of Freedom: Wikipedia. Retrieved from <https://edtechbooks.org/-MuV>



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