The Opensource Club Constitution

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Preamble

It is important to recognize the danger that bureaucracy can get in the way of doing cool things. To that end, this constitution is framed, and should remain as only a loosely governing tool. If the bureaucracy of the opensource club ever becomes a burden more than a tool, then the members should at that time, re-frame this document to fix the situation.

Article I - Name, purpose and Non-Discrimination Policy

Section 1 - Name

This is the Opensource Club at the Ohio State University

Section 2 - Purpose

Our purpose is to write and advocate free software, [1] and to create a community of excellent programmers. We advocate free software through creation of documentation, providing support, and fighting cluelessness.

The club should take no "official" stand on political issues in debate among the opensource community, should adopt no "official club license," [2] should not create strict guidelines for what kind of software should be developed, should not create strict guidelines for how a software project should be managed (including frequency of updates, release models, code repository management, etc). Doing so would violate the spirit of the Preamble. Individual software projects can be managed however the individuals involved in the project see fit.

Implicit in this is that the club must allow advocacy of proprietary software written for opensource platforms (for instance) or writing of open source software for a proprietary platform (for instance) if some of its members wish to do so. However, programs written by members of the club, under the flag of the club, and distributed by the club should meet some acceptable definition of open source software.

Section 3 - Non Dissolution Policy

In recognition of the importance of welcoming diversity for the sake of creativity, and for the benefit of humanity, this club welcomes all people.

Article II - Membership: Qualifications and categories of membership

Ohio State University guidelines demand that voting membership be limited to currently enrolled students. The current model of membership is that all people who attend meetings or are on our mailing list are considered members. This kind of loose definition should be preserved. No membership fee for joining the club should be charged.

If the distinction between voting members and other members becomes a significant source of debate, that is a good indication that the club should re-draft its constitution because bureaucratic things are starting to become a burden.

Voting membership is defined by attendance at required meetings. Voting members are required to attend required meetings.

Article III - Organization Leadership: Titles, terms of office, type of selection and duties of the leaders.

The club should elect one leader whose title shall be Benevolent Dictator. [3] The traditional role of leadership [4] is hereby rejected in favor of the evolving model of this club. The Benevolent Dictator will be in office for one academic year. They should be elected because they are respected by the club members and because of his or her technical ability and knowledge of computers. The method of electing the Benevolent Dictator is by vote with a simple majority, where a quorum ($1/3$) of the voting membership) is present.

The Benevolent Dictator will probably be the hardest working member of the club, and therefore needs the power to make unilateral decisions for the sake of saving time. The Benevolent Dictator will not necessarily have any control over software projects, since by the definition of opensource software, code forks can happen when they need to, and no one therefore has ultimate power over a software project.

A system of checks and balances is implicit in the fact that all people are free to do as they please. If the Benevolent Dictator becomes unreasonable, he or she will cease to be Benevolent, and therefore lose their power.

The club should have a treasurer, and will need technical assistance in maintaining computers, web pages, code repositories, and servers for the operation of the club. The club will need help in organizing its activities so that the Benevolent Dictator needn't do all of the work. Positions of this sort should be on a volunteer basis with appointment by the Benevolent Dictator where necessary.

All officers, volunteers, and the Benevolent Dictator are servants of the club.

Article IV - Advisor: Qualification Criteria

The advisor should be a person of technical experience. Preferably someone who has been involved in Opensource development. The advisor must grok the goals of the club so that he or she does not get in their way. The advisor exists to provide guidance, mentor-ship, and cluefulness. The advisor's term is one academic year.

University guidelines demand that the advisor (or failing that, the sub-advisor) "of student organizations must be full-time members of the University faculty or Administrative & Professional staff."

Article V - Meetings of the Organization

The organization should meet however frequently it needs to in order to "Get Things Done." Meetings can be formal or informal, can be in person or over an electronic medium. The current model is that regular organizational meetings are scheduled for every two weeks, and one or two formal meetings are held every quarter. These "formal" meetings are the required meetings for voting membership.

It should be recognized that those involved in individual software projects will have meetings separate from the meetings of rest of the club. It is encouraged, however, that all club members be invited to these meetings.

Article VI - Method of Amending Constitution: Proposals, notices and voting requirements

In the case that someone thinks that they need to alter the constitution or by-laws (if any) for bug fixes, adding features, or compatibility with new hardware, a quorum ($1/3$) of the voting membership) must vote and the vote must be a ($2/3$) majority. Voting can be in person or via some electronic medium provided that in either case a reasonable amount of certainty of identity can be secured. Amendments and changes should be taken advisedly and considered for a reasonable amount of time before being implemented.

It is strictly discouraged that the constitution should be amended frequently. If it is to be amended, and by-laws do not exist, this this article (article VI) allows the creation of by-laws in favor of amending the main body of the constitution (this document).

It is further strictly discouraged that any amendments or by-laws restricting free commerce and creativity be created. New amendments or by-laws should not conflict with the above stated purpose of the club.

Article VII - Method of Dissolution of Organization

Should the club be forced to dissolve itself, any and all assets should be put toward the club's debt (if any). This includes university owned equipment or university funds.

The remaining assets (hardware, operating funds, etc) should be donated to a free software organization, like the fsf. [5] The organization to which the assets are donated must be determined at the time of dissolution by the Benevolent Dictator, with approval of the supervisor.

About this document ...

The Opensource Club Constitution

This document was generated using the **LaTeX2HTML** translator Version 98.1p1 release (March 2nd, 1998)

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The command line arguments were:
latex2html -split 0 constitution.tex.

The translation was initiated by isaac jones on 2000-03-22

Footnotes

... software,[1]
 Please see the canonical literature for the definition of free software. A good source is www.opensource.org. Free software and opensource software are used interchangeably in this document.
... license,"[2]
 The creation and perfection of free software licenses within the club is encouraged, however.
... Dictator.[3]
 "I am quite aware that for any organization to reach its goals, one man must do the thinking and directing and generally bear the responsibility. But the led must not be coerced, they must be able to choose their leader. In my opinion, an autocratic system of coercion soon degenerates; force attracts men of low morality... The really valuable thing in the pageant of human life seems to me not the political state, but the creative, sentient individual, the personality; it alone creates the noble and the sublime, while the herd as such remains dull in thought and dull in feeling." Albert Einstein
... leadership[4]
 Taken from Eric S. Raymond's paper The Cathedral and the Bazaar (http://www.catb.org/~esr/writings)
 1.
  To define goals and keep everybody pointed in the same direction.
 2.
  To monitor and make sure crucial details don't get skipped.
 3.
  To motivate people to do boring but necessary drudgework.
 4.
  To organize the deployment of people for best productivity.
 5.
  To marshal resources needed to sustain the project.
... fsf.[5]
 the Free Software Foundation. www.fsf.org

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