INTERFACE

Interface is the VUW computer club. We have weekly social meetings at 6:00 pm every Wednesday evening in CO339. As well as being an opportunity to meet and talk about common interests, members sometimes help each other with computer problems at these meetings.

The club provides computing resources to members, including a wireless network and access to Linux-based servers on campus for personal use. These systems were built and are maintained by members of the club.

Interface runs regular installfests where we can help you install Linux (or other operating systems) on your computer. If you are interested, please contact us. Interface members will be more than happy to assist you.

We also provide a forum where students can seek advice on solving problems connecting to the university's wireless network, at http://www.interface.org.nz/wireless/.

http://www.interface.org.nz/

What is free / open-source software?

Free software is software that anyone is free to use, copy, improve, examine or distribute, either free of cost or for a price. More precisely, it refers to four fundamental freedoms, which users of the software should have:
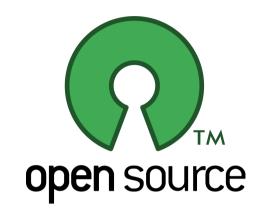
1. Users should be able to run the software for any purpose.

2. Users should be able to closely examine and study the software and should be able to freely modify and improve it to suit their needs better.

3. Users should be able to give copies of the software to other people as they see fit, for free or for a price.

4. Users should be able to improve the software and freely distribute their improvements to the broader public so that they, as a whole, benefit.

There is nothing new or special about this. This is how software used to be developed in the early days. But then, big companies came in, and started changing how software was developed and sold, so as to have more control and make more money. Free software is software that is released under a licence which grants the end user these four freedoms listed above, sometimes called a 'copyleft' licence.

For more information, see

http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/FLOSS_Concept_Booklet.

Student Guide to Free and Open-source Software

A practical guide to paying nothing for software and retaining your rights

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The Victoria University of Wellington computer club
http://interface.org.nz/

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Useful free software

There are a lot of high quality free software applications, many of which contain features you don't get with commercial packages. Here are some that every student should know about. They are available for Mac OS X, Windows, Linux and other operating systems, so no matter what you are running, you can use them.

OpenOffice.org | http://openoffice.org

OpenOffice.org is a complete office suite including word processor, spreadsheet, presentation and drawing packages. It is compatible with Microsoft Office, and contains extra functionality such as the ability to create PDFs. It also supports a much wider range of document formats including the ISO standard Open Document Format. As of version 2.0, it also includes a database tool comparable to Microsoft Access.

Mozilla Firefox | http://getfirefox.com

Firefox is a web browser. It is much more secure than Internet Explorer (reducing the risk of your computer being affected by viruses and spyware), and renders web pages more quickly and correctly. It has many useful features, such as tabs, popup blocking and a wide range of extensions.

Mozilla Thunderbird | http://mozilla.org

Mozilla Thunderbird is an email client, similar to Outlook Express. Thunderbird is much more secure than Microsoft Outlook Express, significantly reducing the risk of email viruses. Thunderbird also includes many useful features that other mail clients lack, such as built-in spam filtering.

VLC Media Player | http://videolan.org

VLC is a media player supporting a very wide range of video, audio and stream formats. It also allows you to play DVDs on your computer regardless of region code, meaning you can play DVDs bought overseas.

GAIM | http://gaim.sourceforge.net/

Gaim is a multi-protocol instant messaging (IM) client. It allows you to connect to a large number of different messaging networks at once, including MSN Messenger, ICQ, Google Talk, Yahoo, IRC, Jabber/XMPP and others.

The GIMP | http://gimp.org

The GIMP (GNU Image Manipulation Program) is an image editing program, similar to Photoshop. It supports a much wider range of formats, and the Windows version (with a plugin) can support Photoshop filters.

Inkscape | http://inkscape.org/

Inkscape is a vector graphics editor, with capabilities similar to Illustrator, Freehand, CorelDraw, or Xara X. It uses the W3C standard Scalable Vector Graphics (SVG) file format, and is suitable for a wide range of applications.

Ubuntu Linux | http://ubuntu.com/

Ubuntu is a complete Linux-based operating system, freely available with both community and professional support. Ubuntu is suitable for both desktop and server use. Ubuntu will run on PCs, 64-bit PCs and Macs. If you wish, it can be installed alongside existing OSs such as Windows or MacOS, or as the only operating system on your computer. It includes many of the programs featured in this brochure.