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To: Julie L. Sigall
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From: Eric Anholt

Comment:

I am an open-source software developer who frequently encounters problems with licenses of software that was intended to be released for free. Often software is written with some simple header like "Copyright <date> Some Developer, somedeveloper@somecompany.com", and distributed with source. This means that it would be unusable and non-redistributable, when the developer actually meant to release it under something very liberal such as the MIT license, and simply failed to do so due to time constraints or just forgetting.

While so far I have managed to contact developers with these issues and get them resolved, I know of several pieces of software whose copyright status I'm sure couldn't clear up if I chose to work on them again and wanted to integrate them into open-source operating systems better, notably 3dfx's Glide. Rather than have these projects that cost thousands of hours to create be lost to history due to the loss of interest of their original developers, let these things fall into the public domain so that everyone can use them.

(Also, I'm a fan of several older computer games which are no longer sold by their developers, and their developers are no longer willing to redistribute them (and certainly not improve them!), which are slowly disappearing unless the presumably illegal "abandonware" websites are counted. Let people have some honest fun, if it's not hurting anybody.).