

Re: University License fees are short sighted of Wolfram Research

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.math.symbolic/2005-03/0199.html>

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Richard Fateman wrote:

- > *You are supposing that you know how to market Mathematica*
- > *better than Stephen Wolfram and his presumably well-paid*
- > *market-droids.*

Although if you read his book 'A new kind of science' you soon realise he is very self-opinionated, with just about the only science book I have read where the author keeps referring to 'I' all the time. Hence it would never surprise me if Stephen Wolfram felt that high prices to universities was the way to go, then that would be the remit of the marketing people.

- > *I am sure they have considered many different models and*
- > *have decided that this is the way that makes them the*
- > *most money. Maybe not the most friends.*

I'm sure in the short to medium term it does make more money, as it would take a few years to get universities to heavily adopt Mathematica and for the graduates to be in a position to specify software when they are in industry.

- > *My guess is that the most lucrative sales are to universities,*
- > *and WRI is not about to give it away.*

In the science + engineering fields I often see jobs advertised wanting Matlab skills, but never Mathematica. (I guess jobs at Wolfram would be an exception!) Looking on the newsgroups, I currently see

maple – 102 messages

mathematica – 388 messages (I do realise this is moderated, which does not help matters either).

matlab – 2368 messages

I can't be bothered to try to sort out the academic posts from the non-academic ones. But both these facts (jobs and newsgroups posting) would indicate Matlab have a much larger share of the mathematical

software market than Mathematica. I wonder if there is any correlation between this and the fact Matlab is provided to universities (well at least where I work) at a far lower price.

A quick look on the websites of Wolfram Research and Mathworks shows Mathematica was launched in 1988, and Matlab in 1984. Wolfram Research claims there are 7 million users of Mathematica
<http://www.wolfram.com/company/background.html>

but I wonder if they count users as universities that have site licenses. Sure, we have a license that would allow 10,000 users to use it, but in practice since the license fee has to be recovered, in practice the number of users is far less.

I know some here take the opportunity to slag Wolfram Research off all the time. I'm not doing that – I like Mathematica, and despite having access to Matlab too, I prefer the former. But I realise that soon I will probably have to switch to Matlab, since

- a) The university is unlikely to continue the site license with Wolfram.
- b) From a point of view of a CV, Matlab skills are more desirable.