

Re: Does anyone else think Wolfram Research are unfair to Unixusers?

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- *From:* none <none@xxxxxxxx>
  - *Date:* Sun, 13 Jul 2008 23:54:58 +0100
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On Sun, 13 Jul 2008 19:03:02 +0100, Dave wrote:

I understand where you are coming from, but long long ago Unix systems came with a C compiler so one could produce ones own code. It was only more recent years the trend was to not include a C compiler. Now of course things have changed around again, with gcc being free on any platform, Sun Studio 12 free on Linux and Solaris. I don't know about other C compilers (on HP-UX, AIX, IRIX etc). Last I knew they were all still commercial, but it's a long time since I've used those OS's.

DOS came with a free BASIC compiler (BASICA in earlier editions, QBasic in later ones.) BASIC is not of the same standard as C, but it did mean that in the early days there was more emphasis within universities on roll-your-own BASIC code, before Matlab & spreadsheets took over. And BASIC/QBasic did allow you to access most of the immediately useful hardware – ports, screens, keyboard.

If you wanted \*compiled\* code then the PC had a disadvantage, since all the compilers were commercial – more money. But with a compiler costing c. 2 days of staff time, this was not excessive – and to use support libraries (NAG, in my case) required extra money, whether on UNIX or PC (or VAX) – with PC being the cheapest (and being a limited version of the NAG library).

The availability of a free C compiler meant a lot of code was available on Unix systems for free. I am well aware there was (and still is) expensive commercial code for Unix, but a lot more high quality software was available for Unix systems.

I'm not so sure Linux was the start of the free stuff. Linux would not have existed had it not been for all free "computer science" tools which were around at the time.

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True, & I over-generalised. But Unix did seem to encourage the idea that 'serious' software should be commercial & expensive, while the PC was for cheaper, 'toy', alternatives. Much of the 'free' software was free \*because\* it was bundled in as part of the \*hardware\* sales – Solaris was not regarded as a separate purchase to Sun hardware, for example.

How many people pay for a word processor on Unix now? I don't think it is that many. This culture on Unix (and to a greater extent Linux systems), might make it more difficult to sell things like word processors.

What constituted a word process or Unix pre-Linux? When I was using WordStar on the PC I had nroff/troff on the VAX (OK, not Unix). When I had Lotus Manuscript on the PC I had Emacs/VIM on Solaris. When I had Word for Windows on the PC I was still using Emacs/Vim. In the hands of an expert Emacs & Vim may have been powerful; in the hands of a novice (me) they felt like using the PC ED.

I feel that Windows & Linux saw the real rush to competing WIMP open-source word processors.

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