
Subject: Re: Anyone link GSL into IDL?

Posted by [Allan Whiteford](#) on Fri, 04 Apr 2008 15:25:40 GMT

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Lajos,

FişLDY Lajos wrote:

>
> On Fri, 4 Apr 2008, Allan Whiteford wrote:
>
>>
>> Brian,
>>
>> Even if they had, it would probably[1] be in violation of the GPL to
>> distribute such code.
>>
>
> There is an FFTW3 DLM on the ITTVIS website. FFTW3 is GPL and ITTVIS
> distributes this DLM (binary only). So, is ITTVIS violating GPL?
>

Once again, IANAL. I note that you can buy a non-GPL version of FFTW3, maybe ITTVIS did this in which case discussions are academic.

The whole argument comes down to the difference between linking code and aggregating code and exactly how two pieces of code communicate. It has been discussed ad-nauseum by thousands of people and I'm not really in a position to give a more informed opinion than anyone else. Debian legal discussions are a good place to look for technical discussions rather than just flamewars.

The FSF and GPL seem to draw the line somewhere between a SO/DLM/DLL approach and using a fork and exec. My understanding is that if you have a GPL library then you couldn't distribute a program which links against it (either statically or dynamically) without that program becoming GPL.

See this:

<http://www.gnu.org/licenses/gpl-faq.html#IfLibraryIsGPL>

which seems fairly definitive and this:

<http://www.gnu.org/licenses/gpl-faq.html#GPLPluginsInNF>

which is coming from the opposite point of view but would still suggest that a non-free main program can't have a GPL plug-in without special permission from the plug-in author. I think plug-in could be considered to mean something called via linkimage, call_external in the context of IDL.

> Actually, IDL is not linked against the DLM, IDL is a standalone
> executable. The user links in (loads) the DLM at run-time using the
> DLM hook provided by IDL. Is this the same as build-time linking?
>

I think the FSF and GPL don't see a difference (see last link above).

It might be worth looking into the organisation of the Linux HAL - but that's a GPL main program with proprietary plug-ins rather than the other way around.

> I am working on the DLM support for FL and my example program is FFTW3.
> I plan to release the DLM source under GPL. Is this enough? What is your
> opinion?

Some people would certainly assert that that would make all of FL GPL but that's not to say they'd be right (although I think within open source software circles they will be in the majority).

My personal opinion and understanding of the GPL would be that this would be a violation but I'm not an expert on these things by any stretch of the imagination.

I would be very cautious about releasing a FFTW3 plug-in for FL.

You can always write to the FSF for advice and/or contact the FFTW3 people to see if they'll make an exception for FL.

Thanks,

Allan
