

Licensing of the T_EX Gyre family of fonts

Jerzy B. Ludwichowski

Jerzy.Ludwichowski@umk.pl

The Polish T_EX User Group – GUST

EuroT_EX 2009, The Hague, The Netherlands

Why this talk?

The events

- 1996—URW++ Design and Development donates the base 35 PostScript Type 1 fonts under both the GNU Public License (GPL) and the Aladdin Free Public License (AFPL);
- 2009—URW++ agrees to release the **same fonts** under the LaTeX Project Public License (LPPL).

Why this talk?

A central question

Is there any significance in the URW's decision for the TeX community, especially for the TeX Gyre font family?

How it began

Peeking into the Pandora box

Early in 2005 it occurred to me that e-foundry, the GUST font team (<http://gust.org.pl/projects/e-foundry>), does not have a font licensing scheme.

The “obvious” choice of the GNU General Public License (GPL) was rejected.

Why not GPL?

Frank Mittelbach (March, 2005)

[...] GPL is not a good license for something like a font (or a language definition such as LaTeX or ConTeXt etc.)

GPL is fine if update and improvements are mainly relevant to a local environment, e.g., it doesn't matter if I run a different version of Linux or what have you compared to what Karl [Berry] runs on his machine because both versions serve in their respective environment and interaction is simple and minimal.

Why not GPL?

(Frank Mittelbach—continued)

Languages or fonts also serve as a transport means, i.e., an interchange media and people rely on that something identifying itself as X actually represents the same X on both my machine and Karl's.

(Just remember the famous incident some years back when somebody “improved” the CM fonts and distributed a T_EX version that would produce totally different line and page breaks).

Why LPPL?

(Frank Mittelbach—continued)

*By using something like LPPL you circumvent this problem as the license allow any use and any change as long as you **identify** the resulting product **as being different** from the original that people rely on being in a certain form [a contentious point in the negotiations with `debian-legal`].*

GPL on the other hand doesn't [insist on that identification], which is why I think it is bad for anything that should reliably work in larger groups in a consistent way.

How does LPPL do it?

Maintenance equals control. . .

A significant part of the LPPL is devoted to ensure that works released under it will have a so-called Maintainer, and that the Maintainer is approved by the community.

The other important requirement is that any derived work clearly identifies itself as such.

Those elements were crucial for the e-foundry guys to decide to use LPPL as the base for their future font license.

Is GFL/LPPL a “free” license?

Perhaps...

- ... it is deemed free by the FSF but “***incompatible with GPL** because some modified versions must include a copy of or pointer to an unmodified version.*”
(http://www.fsf.org/licensing/licenses/index_html#GPLIncompatibleLicenses);
- ... we don't know if it is free as per the Open Software Foundation (OSF) because it was **not yet scrutinized** by that organization (<http://opensource.org/approval>);
- ... we and debian-legal think that it is.

The Pandora box fully opened

GFL—the Gust Font License

The name GUST Font License (GFL) was coined by Karl Berry (mail message from March, 2005). In the same letter he says:

*Although I really shudder at the prospect, I guess we should send anything we come up with to debian-legal (and rms [Richard M. Stallman]). Otherwise we'll just be postponing the **inevitable clash**. Maybe if we ask them up front they'll be more disposed to approve it.*

The Pandora box fully opened

GFL—the Gust Font License, continued

Alas, skipping further communication with the outside world, we went ahead and came up at first with **two LPPL derived but LPPL incompatible licenses** (see <http://www.gust.org.pl/projects/e-foundry/licenses>, section: The Historical Part) :

- GFSL—for fonts with “sources”
- GFNSL—for fonts without “sources”

and afterwards, after a clarification from Frank Mittelbach, with **a single, LPPL compatible GFL**, the GUST Font License.

The text of the license, supporting information and 2 articles describing the license and its coming about are also provided at the same URL.

GFL—the text

An excerpt

This work may be distributed and/or modified under the conditions of the LaTeX Project Public License, either version 1.3c of this license or (at your option) any later version.

Please also observe the following clause:

1) it is requested, but not legally required, that derived works be distributed only after changing the names of the fonts comprising this work and given in an accompanying ‘‘manifest’’, and that the files comprising the Work, as listed in the manifest, also be given new names. Any exceptions to this request are also given in the manifest.

We recommend the manifest be given in a separate file named `MANIFEST-<fontid>.txt`, where `<fontid>` is some unique identification of the font family. If a separate ‘‘readme’’ file accompanies the Work, we recommend a name of the form `README-<fontid>.txt`.

The Pandora box fully opened

The worms

We did not consult (remember Karl Berry's advice?) and released the T_EX Gyre family under GFL.

Sure the worms crept out...

T_EX Gyre fonts were build from a recent version of the 35 PostScript base fonts, which, remember, were released in 1996 under the GNU General Public License.

In releasing the T_EX Gyre fonts under GFL we were accused to violate the GPL's sacred viral principle of operation thus bringing upon us the wrath of the open source community.

E.g., Debian folks repackaged T_EX Live without T_EX Gyre.

Pushing the evil back into the box

At what cost?

- Frank Mittelbach—about 1600 LPPL related messages with `debian-legal` (this pre-dates our “adventure”).
- my GFL related mail collection—about 400 messages.

Pushing the evil back into the box

How?

It was Karl Berry, who suggested that we approach URW++ and ask them to release the base fonts also under LPPL (please remember that GFL is legally equivalent to LPPL).

Pushing the evil back into the box

URW++

On June 22, 2009 URW++, represented by Dr. Peter Rosenfeld, its Managing Director, kindly agreed to release the **original** 35 base PostScript fonts as shipped with Ghostscript 4.00 under the LPPL in addition to the previous licenses.

Hopefully the worms are now contained!

The consequences

What's missing?

As a consequence of restarting T_EX Gyre from ver. 4.00 of the PostScript base fonts:

- Valek Filippov's Cyrillic additions are gone from all fonts,
- Hàn Thế Thành's Vietnamese additions are kept (Thành agreed explicitly).

The consequences

What's left?

If anybody feels that his contribution to the base fonts is not accounted for in the T_EX Gyre fonts, please step forward and tell us.

The People

Thanksgiving

- Karl Berry—for everything
- Frank Mittelbach—for the LPPL and enlightening and beautifully organized insight
- Hans Hagen—for hating licensing issues
- Bogusław Jackowski—for pushing the issue
- Volker RW Schaa—for moral support and, of course,
- URW++ and Dr. Peter Rosenfeld—for the obvious.

Is the “central” question belated?

Perhaps it doesn't matter now. . .

So, is there a merit in having the T_EX Gyre fonts under
GFL/LPPL?

Thank you!