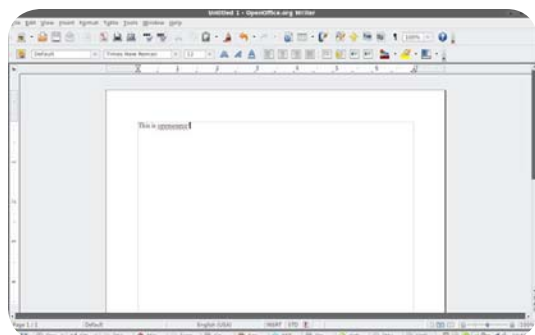


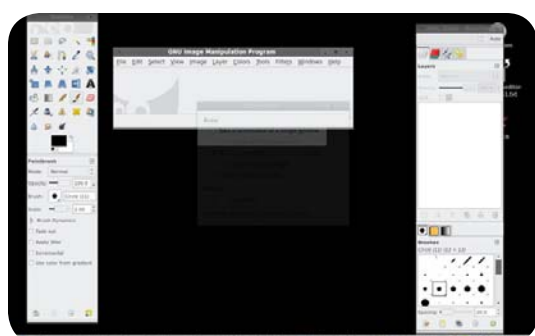
Feature: Open Source, Part 2—Human Rights



Rhythmbox is an opensource music player for Linux. JACK PHILLIPS/THE EPOCH TIMES



Open Office is an open source word processing and office suite for Windows, Mac, and Linux. JACK PHILLIPS/THE EPOCH TIMES



GIMP opensource image editor on Windows, Mac, and Linux. JACK PHILLIPS/THE EPOCH TIMES

By JOSE RIVERA
Epoch Times Staff

In my last article, “Coming Age of Open Source” I discussed the influence of open source technology on the global economy. This time I want to take a closer look at how this technology is helping human rights efforts.

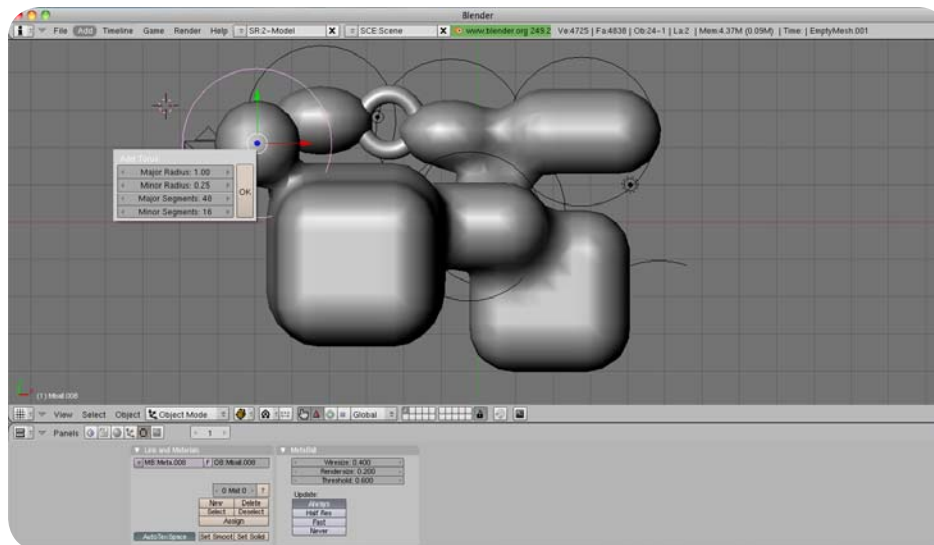
As mobile technologies become more prevalent, humanitarian aid workers, journalists and others are given greater ability to inform the world of important developments as they unfold. Whether facing a natural disaster, an armed conflict, or a police action within an oppressive regime, reporting these critical first moments can often make a considerable difference in how the world community views and responds to a crisis.

One example is Sahana, a free and open source disaster management system. This Web-based collaboration tool addresses the common coordination problems during a disaster, such as finding missing people, managing aid and volunteers, tracking camps effectively between government groups, the civil society (NGOs), and the victims themselves.

Sahana helps coordinate these diverse groups so that they can all work together to respond effectively to a disaster. Sahana helps empower victims, responders, and volunteers to better enable them to help themselves and others. Not only does this system protect victim data and reduce the opportunity for data abuse, but it does so with a free and open source solution that is available to everyone.

Remember that “open source” doesn’t necessarily mean “free” software. Instead it refers to a type of licensing agreement that allows users to shape the software as they see fit.

In my last article, I discussed how the open source model works. It can be



THREE DIMENSIONS: A screenshot of Blender, an open source application for 3-D rendering and video creation. JOSHUA PHILIPP/THE EPOCH TIMES

While some open source software helps governments in coordination efforts, others defy regimes.

that program even more valuable—especially in the area of human rights where so many variables are at play.

Protecting victim data can often be an important aspect to human rights work, and Martus is a project solely committed to this end. Martus is used by organizations around the world to protect sensitive information and shield the identity of victims or witnesses who provide testimony on human rights abuses.

This secure information management tool helps to create searchable and encrypted databases. Users can back up their data remotely to any one of several publicly available servers.

Like most open source software, Martus (the name is derived from the Greek word for “witness”) can be downloaded free. This tool is used by human rights workers, attorneys, journalists, and others who need to secure their information from eavesdropping, theft, or equipment failure.

compared to a store that sells a certain tool. Instead of simply selling this tool as is to the public, in an open source model the tool is available for others to modify. Customers from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives help shape the tool to fit their needs, making improvements that the tool’s creator could never have made on his own.

Imagine how tailoring a program to suit a particular need would make

Holiday Tech Buyer’s Guide

Skygrabber Software Tool Suspected Iraq Insurgents

By IAN RITZ
Epoch Times Staff

Skygrabber, a satellite information downloading program, has enjoyed a spike in popularity due to recent news that it has been used to access information from U.S. military planes in Iraq.

Skygrabber is a low-priced computer program used to gain free data from satellite signals without using an Internet connection. There has been a recent concern that the military opposition in Iraq may have used this technology to monitor information from U.S. Predator drones.

The Iraqi opposition has allegedly found a way to access live video feed from the drones used to fly the plane with Skygrabber.

The U.S. Predator drones have had a positive response in combat with their most unique feature being remote control operation. With no direct threat to pilots’ lives in battle, and the use of remote signals to dictate their coordinates from afar, the drones have been used frequently in Iraq. The Iraqi opposition has allegedly found a way to access live video feed from the drones used to fly the plane with Skygrabber.

U.S. officials have stated that there is no solid evidence confirming a breach in military security and they have stated that they have taken recent actions to encrypt the remote signals. Many people are left wondering why these videos from the drones were not protected by encryption in the first place.

An insurgent’s recent capture led authorities to discover Skygrabber on his laptop and to the ongoing controversy with the video feeds. Skygrabber was created by the Russian company SkySoftware which has yet to make an official statement on the situation in Iraq.

By JOSHUA PHILIPP
Epoch Times Staff

TERRARIUM

OK, so they’re not really tech, but every techie needs some decoration for that computer desk. Terrariums are self-contained gardens, often in glass enclosures. They often run upwards of \$100, but these handmade, organic terrariums are much easier on the wallet. In their glass enclosures are gardens of moss, ferns, and lichens. Since they do not require much care, they are the tech lover’s ideal desktop garden.

PRICE
\$15.00 to \$40.00

WEB SITE
http://www.etsy.com/shop/teresabi23?section_id=5869364

OLYMPUS E-P1

For anyone who wants a pro-level camera but doesn’t want to lug around a big DSLR, the Olympus E-P1 is one of the best out there for its price. It has optional interchangeable lenses and external flash, similar to the large DSLRs, only it keeps a small, old-school enclosure that is closer to a point-and-shoot. These cameras pack 12.3 megapixels, image stabilization, HD video, high-quality audio, and a good range of other features. Although there are more advanced versions from Olympus, the E-P1 is among the best on price.

PRICE
\$799.99 with a 14-42 mm lens

WEB SITE
www.olympusamerica.com



The Olympus E-P1. COURTESY OF OLYMPUS

SOLARGORILLA SOLAR LAPTOP CHARGER

Solar panels are in and this foldable solar panel can be taken anywhere. It folds to be about half the size of a regular laptop and can be used to charge most laptops, phones, MP3 players, handheld game consoles, and other devices. It has a water-resistant design and has an output of 500 mA at 20V and 5V. When sitting on a porch or in a park doing computer work, this is a nice companion.

PRICE
\$249.99

WEB SITE
<http://www.earthtechproducts.com/solargorilla-solar-charger.html>

IRONKEY

These NATO-approved USB memory sticks have military-grade security technology and self destruct if someone tries to tamper with them. This may be as close to a James Bond-style gadget as the casual user can get at a reasonable price. They include built-in hardware encryption, anti-malware technology, and password attack protection technology. They are also waterproof, electromagnetically shielded, and have an epoxy compound surrounding the inner chips and circuitry that will destroy all information if someone tries to remove the chips to read them. They are great for storing any sensitive personal data, such as banking information.

PRICE
starting at \$79.00

WEB SITE
www.ironkey.com



The IronKey. COURTESY OF IRONKEY

LEVITRON WORLD EXECUTIVE PEN HOLDER

It is a hovering globe that rotates in the air over a sleek pen holder. The globe levitates and spins via magnets inside the Cherry wood base of the pen holder. It also comes with a nice chrome pen. Elegant and amazing.

PRICE
\$58.99

WEB SITE
<http://www.earthtechproducts.com/levitron-world-executive-pen-set.html>

WACOM BAMBOO PEN

Although they take a bit of getting used to, some users prefer these pen tablets over using a mouse. The Wacom Bamboo Pen tablet connects to the computer via a USB cable and allows the user to write and draw in a way similar to using a pen and paper. It can be used as a mouse replacement or just for specific functions. Using a pen tablet also enables pressure-sensitive features in various different creative software. The Wacom Bamboo Pen tablet in particular, is one of the best low-priced pen tablets available.

PRICE
\$69.00

WEB SITE
www.wacom.com



The Wacom Bamboo Pen tablet. THE EPOCH TIMES