What Does Linux and Role Playing Games Have in Common?

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As a recently revived Game Master/DM going back to my RPG roots in Advanced Dungeons & Dragons, 1st Edition after about a 20 year absence, I find that computer technology has impacted Role Playing Games far beyond being able to play online.

People have been working over the years to "free gaming". Yes, Free in the same terms as open Source software that we use today. Both "free beer" and "Free-dom".

Linux has an Open Source License in the GPL and RPG's have the Open Game License. Due to the proprietariness of many of the original artwork and story content of the gaming modules of games like Advanced Dungeons & Dragons and other game systems, it has become very difficult to access new "modules" or published adventures in which to continue playing the game people have become so fervent over.

Thus, the Open Game License was created to allow "near beer" versions of traditional games systems that allow fans and groups to legally "side step" those proprietary concerns of the original games and still continue to publish and make available new content for game systems that are no longer sold or are out of print but still under copyright.

It's a legal tightrope walk to be sure. Avid fans and supporters work very hard to stick to the rules in order to keep their favorite games alive. The good news...it's working.

Open licenses have far trancended the software universe and continue to have meaningful impact on very diverse areas of social life. I'm not entirely sure that table top RPg's could not only continue to exist but actually are experiencing growth in the ranks, without Open licensing.

The fight for "open-ness" is a good fight and goes way beyond making access of software and media accessible to the masses. Stiking a victory for open licenses in one arena is a victory for open licences in other arenas as well.