

Debate pits open source Linux against Microsoft

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In 1991, when Linus Torvalds posted on a USENET newsgroup about his new creation, a functional desktop operating system that came to be known as Linux, he had no idea that a revolutionary war would ensue because of his operating system.

Many argue that Linux, for a variety of reasons, is a better operating system than any product from Microsoft's Windows line. However, for every Linux lover it's not too hard to find someone who will take the opposing viewpoint.

Alex Daley, an academic relations manager from Microsoft, and Eric Lucas, a Drexel graduate and member of the Philadelphia Linux Users Group, took opposing viewpoints in a debate sponsored by Drexel's Math and Computer Science Society May 19.

The debate was set with each candidate giving a three-minute talk and one-minute rebuttal for a series of predetermined prompts compiled by the MCS Society.

The first topic up for discussion focused on the pros and cons to both open source programming and proprietary, or closed source, programming. Lucas concentrated on the positive aspects of open source programming and argued that an open source program is one that users have the right to distribute, modify, derive works from, and universally use. There are no licenses that bar the user from owning the software.

"With open source it's your business, your data, your right to use it as you see fit," said Lucas.

He also added that Microsoft licenses do not give users ownership of the software, only the right to use it.

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