What's the Password Again?

Distributed Software and Cooperatives

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Goals

1. Learn from each other

   - How do we use software in co-ops?
   - How does this software affect our day-to-day lives?

2. Introduce concepts:

   - Free and Open Source Software (FOSS)
   - Distributed/decentralized software
   - How does software affect cooperative autonomy?
   - Examples of existing tools

3. Future Visioning / Planning

   - How *could* we use software?
   - What needs to be done? How can we help to make co-ops more efficient and effective?

Overview of Technologies

technology means nothing without culture

"the revolution will not be televised"

- signage
- dinner bell
- filing cabinet
- group messaging apps
- Robert's Rules of Order
- **systematized patterns of interaction, often using physical tools**

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- Bookkeeping

What technologies does your co-op use for
decisionmaking, **document sharing**, and
bookkeeping?

When do these work well, and when do they fail?

Remember, technologies include things like rules for
running meetings, written notes, signs, as well as
computerized technologies.

Free and Open Source Software

```
def my_program(input):
    calculate the thing
    output "useful information"
    save "file_for_later.txt"
```

$\longrightarrow$

```
0001010101010101
1010101010111110
0101010101011111
```

"the freedom to use, study, copy, modify, and redistribute computer software"

Case Study: Quickbooks

From Intuit's Terms of Service:

"Note that we may modify the **amount of storage space** you have through the Services and the **number of times** (and the maximum duration for which) you may access the Services in a given period of time... Your continued use of the Services will constitute your acceptance of and agreement to such changes."

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What if Intuit goes out of business? Or decides to double prices? Or their servers are hacked and personal info is stolen/deleted?

convenience vs. control

"just call the landlord" vs. self-management
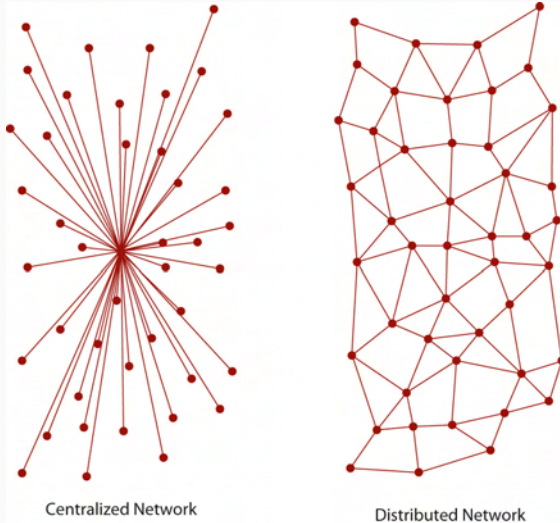
Relevant Rochdale Principles

- democratic member control
  - requires transparent and equal access to decisionmaking process
- member economic participation
  - requires transparent and equal access to economic process
- autonomy and independence
  - "Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations... they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their co-operative autonomy."

Open source software is continually improved - bugs can be fixed by anyone, not just developers working for company

Decentralized Software

Decentralized Software

Figure 1: Figure from *Understanding Media and Culture: An Introduction to Mass Communication*

Open ledgers

- Everyone tracks all transactions that have ever happened
- Majority of people must agree to approve a transaction
- Basic idea behind bitcoin (though 96% of bitcoin is owned by 4% of the network)
- Ideas could be useful for internal transactions in co-op (or network of co-ops): needs more people working on it!

A Plea

talk about software - criticize it - do not treat it as fixed

recruit and support technologically-minded people

consider creating space in your organizations for dedicated "software coordinators"

What do we want computers to do for us?

What are the **obstacles** to changing technologies?

Which of these obstacles are **actionable**?