Free Software, Free Society

Allison Randal

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“And if it comes back to being all alone
at the starting gate, so be it. We hadn't wanted
this fuss, these extras. We were calm
under an appearance of turmoil, and so we remain
even today, an unwanted inspiration
to those who come immediately after
as well as those who came before, lots of them,
stretching back into times of discussion.”

—John Ashbery, “Episode” from *Planisphere*

past

present

future

story

printer

“I already had an idea that software should be shared, but I wasn’t sure how to think about that. [...] After this experience, I started to recognize what the issue was, and how big it was.”

—Richard Stallman, *Free As in Freedom (2.0)*, page 9

Emacs

communal sharing

GNU Project

GNU Manifesto

Free Software Foundation

GNU Emacs License

GNU General Public License (GPL)

context

Leia
or
Amidala

software
copyright

“In 1980, Congress expressly incorporated protection for computer programs into the Copyright Act.”

—*Intellectual Property in the New Technological Age*, page 433

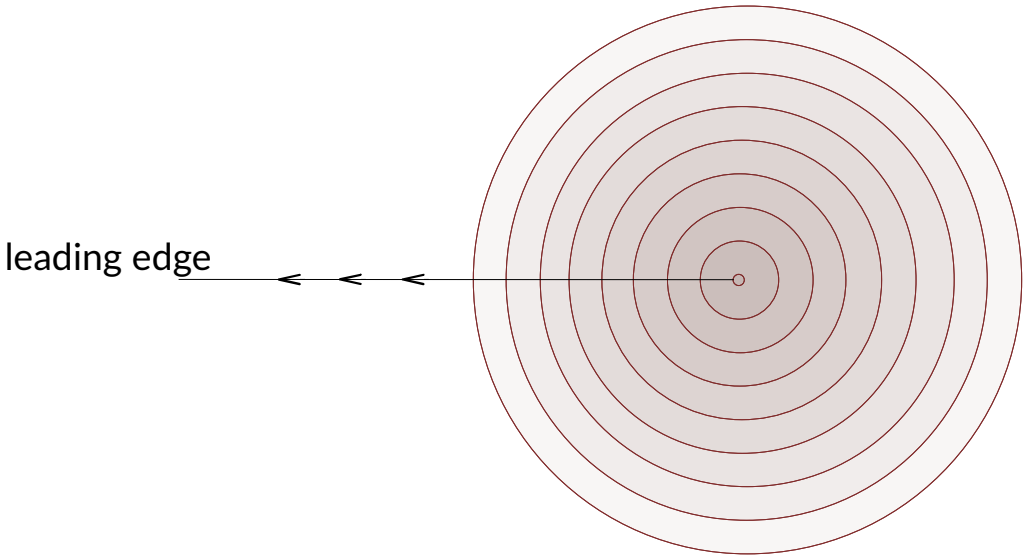
“The first questions about copyright for computer programs involved the simplest form of copyright infringement [...] the disputed issue in these early cases was whether computer programs could be protected by copyright at all. The first major case confronting this issue involved Apple Computer.”

—*Software & Internet Law*, page 33

equal & opposite reaction

analogy

First Age of Software



subsonic

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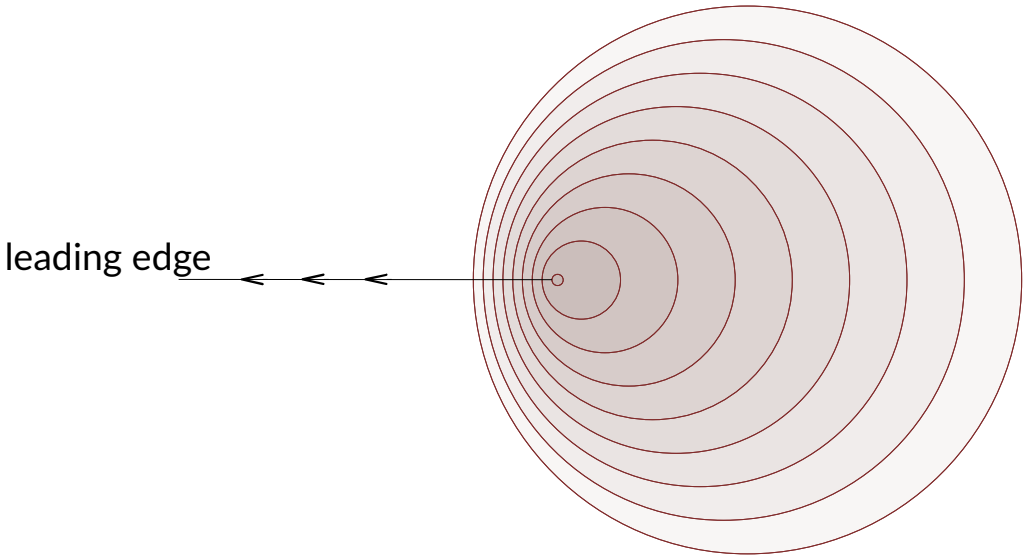
First Age of Software



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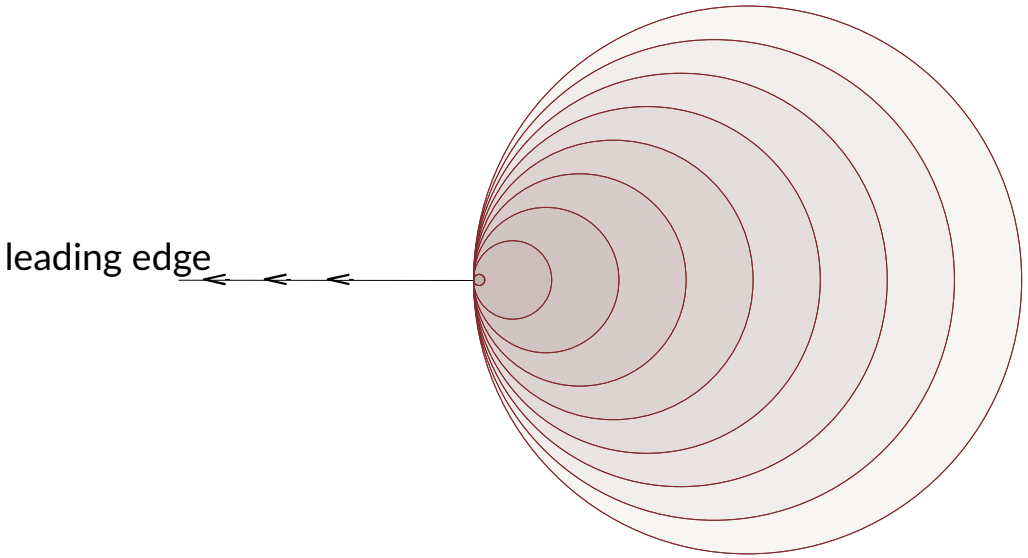
Middle Age of Software



Mach One

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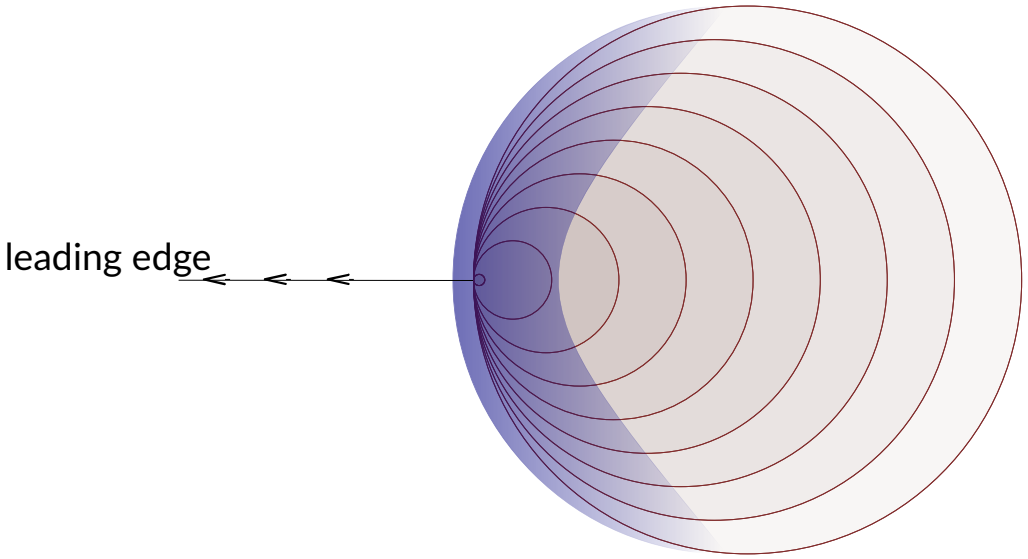
Middle Age of Software



Mach One

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technological progress

proprietary

==

barrier

software
freedom

ethics

what's right?

what rights?

human rights

human freedom

capability approach

material
environment

free society

necessary
&
sufficient

“I hesitate to exaggerate the importance of this little puddle of freedom, because the more well-known and conventional areas of working for freedom and a better society are tremendously important.”

—Richard Stallman, *Free As in Freedom (2.0)*, page 73

past

present

future

software

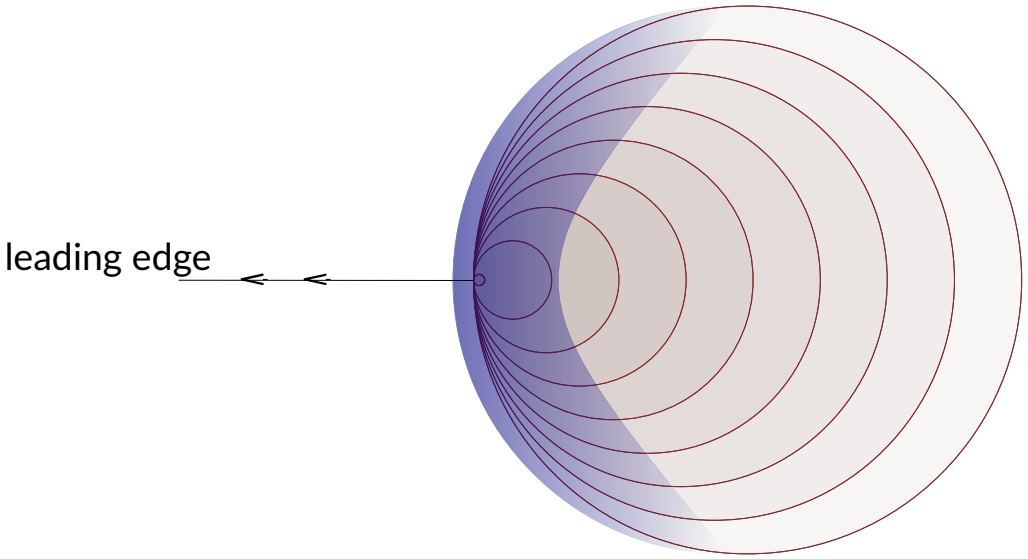
everywhere

users

everyone

developers

Middle Age of Software



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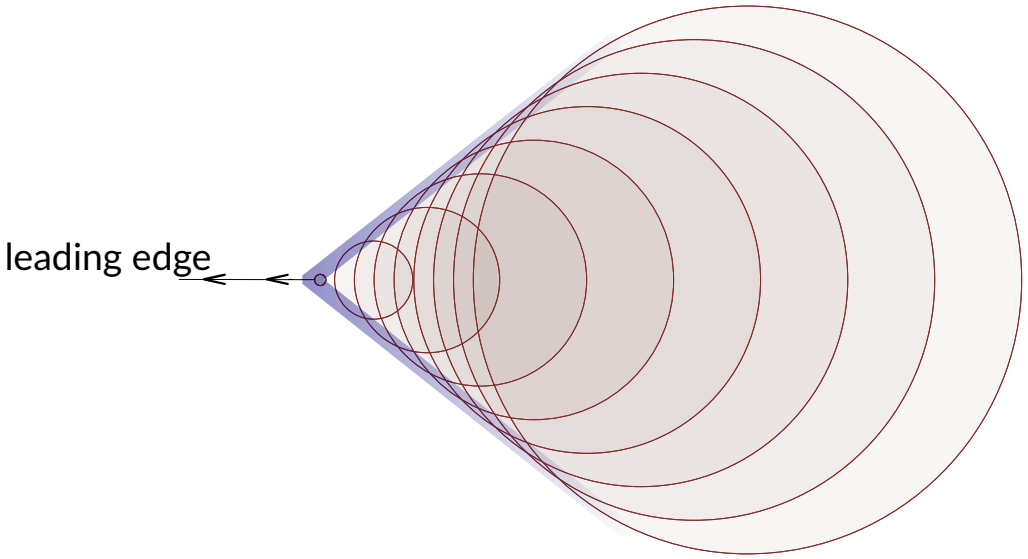
Modern Age of Software



supersonic

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unwanted
inspiration

Apple

technological progress

economic necessity

software
freedom

signal
vs
noise

centered set

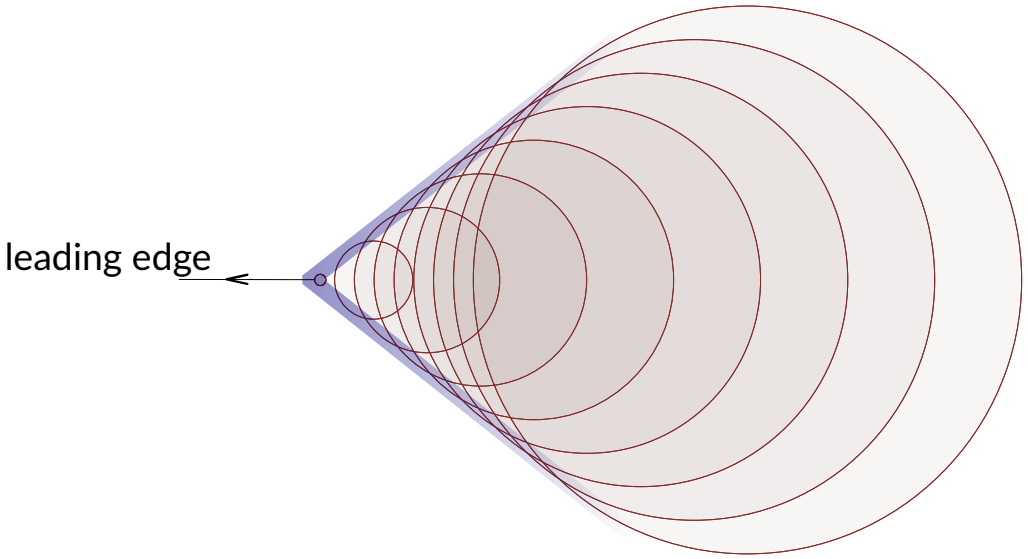
gravity

past

present

future

Modern Age of Software



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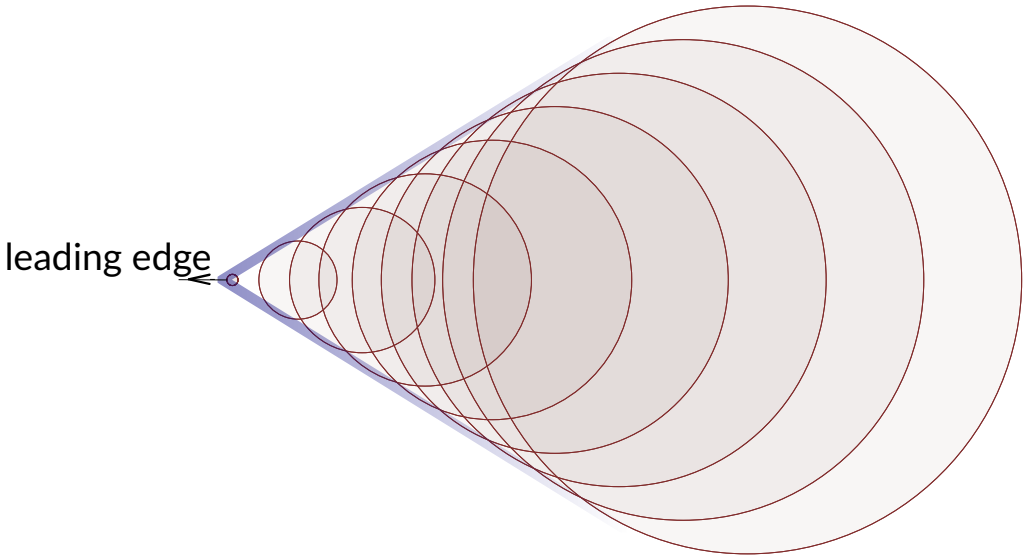
Modern Age of Software



supersonic

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commoditization

singularity

not AI

all software
is free

software
copyright

software
patents

DRM

proprietary

irrelevant

abolition of slavery

dark ages

renaissance

be ready

rebellion

establishment

skills

diversity

free society

“I'd never have let you fail, darling.”

—Richard Stallman, *Made for You*

Stallman's children

we won't
let him fail

empowered

permission

make the world better

empowered

capability

community

“I told you so, we can handle it, hand on
the stick shift headed into the billboard
labeled Tomorrow, the adventures of new music,
melismas shrouding the past and the passing days.”

—John Ashbery, “Episode” from *Planisphere*

Further Reading

- Tony Judt & Timothy Snyder (2012) *Thinking the Twentieth Century*, Penguin.
- Mark A. Lemley (2011) *Software and Internet Law, 4th Edition*, Wolters Kluwer.
- Barbara MacKinnon & Andrew Fiala (2014) *Ethics: Theory and Contemporary Issues, 8th Edition*, Cengage.
- Robert P. Merges (2012) *Intellectual Property in the New Technological Age, 6th Edition*, Wolters Kluwer.
- Richard Stallman (2010) *Free as in Freedom (2.0)*, Free Software Foundation.