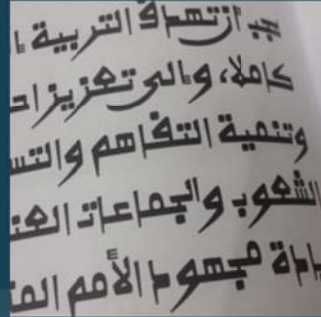


## Font IP and licensing issues



Nico Spalinger, SIL NRSI

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IP: intellectual property not internet protocol

Really a different set of things, saying “property” is already framing the debate. Licensing is probably a better term

Font design is very important to think about, I just want to focus on the legal side of things.  
Not a lot of time in this session but please, this is important too.

# Font IP and licensing issues

A few questions  
before we start...

## Font IP and licensing issues

Have you...

- read (understood?) the license of the fonts you are currently using?
- been told what font to use?
- searched for a better font?
- faced issues with font copyright and licensing?
- heard of the OFL (Open Font License)?
- read the OFL FAQ?

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Can I get a quick show of hands if you can answer yes to these questions?

Do you know where to find answers to these questions?

# Font IP and licensing issues

## Basics

Copyright ≠ Licensing ≠ Trademark

Berne Convention signatories – global international framework

Fonts are software ≠ artwork

free(ware) ≠ open/libre ≠ restricted

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## Overview of the basics

If you think you can ignore this stuff in your region, you're being a little shortsighted, this is a global world, if you're working on a writing system you're serving everyone at a global scale (think of the diaspora). Even locally getting this right is very important.

Distinctions between free and open especially important to understand.

## Font IP and licensing issues

### Goals

Service to all ethos

Providing quality AND accessible writing system components

Long-term availability and sustainability (even after you leave)

Open by default: enabling, equipping and training others

Equipping the Church of the South

Global perspective, going beyond just regional needs

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We should step back and look at what we really want to achieve with the fonts we use.

Our values should extend to fonts as well.

Obviously this is nothing new but let's remember that as you look for the right font for your project.

# Font IP and licensing issues

## Rights and requirements

Use

Study

Modify (expand, subset, fix)

(re)Distribute

Access to all relevant sources, documentation and reproducible buildpath (cross-platform)

Compatibility with other fonts and other software licenses

Integration with existing software: embedding, bundling, merging, forking

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It's generous, I realize not every font will match up to these requirements... But for the future of your writing system, for the maximum access of the people group you are serving, for partnership, for future-proofing the work you have done, this is the gold standard.

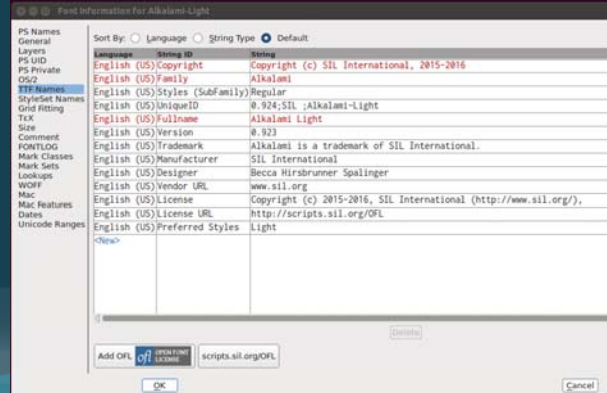
# Font IP and licensing issues

## Where is that info ?

Fonts have dedicated metadata fields  
font properties panel on Windows  
Fontbook on macOS  
Fontviewer on Ubuntu

In font editors directly  
(Fontforge, Trufont, Glyphs, FontLab)

Website  
documentation



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How do I find out where I stand with a particular font?

Example of the metadata of Alkalami in Fontforge.

There are ways to see that info from the font authors. It varies according to your platform but metadata is the standard way of finding out. Or at least getting contact info needed.

## Font IP and licensing issues

### Barriers of unclear/restricted licensing

Exposing yourself / your teams to criticisms, claims or lawsuits

Available on your system ≠ available for all use scenarios

No embedding into mobile app (scripture, dictionaries, literacy) (or costly/restricted)

No bundling with other software (or costly/restricted)

No hosting on webfont services like Google fonts

Making access difficult for the well-meaning users

Making out-of-the-box integration harder

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Why should I care about this?

A few roadblocks that cause people unneeded pain and introduce delays either now or later.



## Font IP and licensing issues



### Examples

- A font removing all information and adding anonymous “to all lovers of this language”
- Unresponsive or unknown copyright holder (via proxy organization or not)
- An expensive unshareable font that few in your team can legally afford
- Unfixable rendering bugs blocking the work
- Variants that you don't like switched on by default
- A font that is too big and needs optimization (web or mobile)
- Unusable data because the font is unavailable

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A few examples from across the web...  
Not enough time to go into details of who and where.

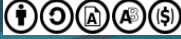
# Font IP and licensing issues

 OPEN FONT LICENSE 

The OFL (SIL Open Font License)  
[scripts.sil.org/OFL](https://scripts.sil.org/OFL)  
[scripts.sil.org/OFL-FAQ\\_web](https://scripts.sil.org/OFL-FAQ_web)

More than 10 years of existence now  
Wide community and industry recognition  
Established as the reference model for unencumbered fonts  
A resource for you, to get others to help you





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The solution we came up with for these problems.

Victor Gaultney and Nico Spalinger and a bunch of others helped research, design and establish this legal model.

I'm pleased to say it's been way more fruitful than we anticipated but God's been gracious.

## Font IP and licensing issues

### The commons of OFL fonts

Thousands of OFL fonts to use and modify from:

SIL fonts

Noto (Google, Monotype)

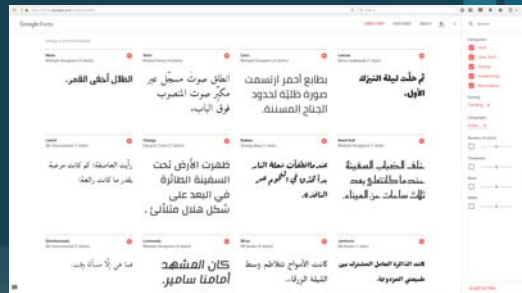
Google fonts (many designers and foundries)

Adobe Typekit

Mozilla

Etc...

Including a few Arabic ones...



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The result is that we have a bunch more open fonts with the criteria we are looking for.

You know about the various fonts our team is producing and making available. But with this model in place you have a lot more choices. We're not the only one doing this. Our interest and those of various organizations and companies are aligned. We've multiplied.

# Font IP and licensing issues

## Practical tips

- Always look at licensing info inside the font (or documentation)
- Access and malleability is a good criteria in the search, not just price
- Being clear and explicit about licensing will benefit your project
- Adopt existing compatible licensing, do not come up with your own!
- Think about modifying an existing open font instead of starting from scratch
- Commission an open font and establishing the reference implementation
- (re)Read the OFL FAQ (Ctrl-F)

Contact us for remaining font licensing questions

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OK, now what?  
What about my project?  
Practical steps I can take?

# Font IP and licensing issues

Questions?

Comments?

Font IP and licensing issues

Thank you! متشکّرین Merci !

Come and chat to me about font licenses...