

Motivation

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If you are working with computers, you should avoid going to the next store and ask "I'm seeking for a program that...". Doing so, you are in a bad situation, because it gives the manufacturer too much power over you and you'll be punished soon.

Experience shows a much better situation for customers when you decide to use standard file formats and standard protocols and buy the software that fits to this decision.

Software markets based on standard file formats and standard protocols evolve whereas "standard" programs in monopoly situations slow down development.

Example 1: The internet. Put any computers with arbitrary operating systems together and it just works. The reason: they all work with standard protocols like TCP/IP.

Example 2: The World Wide Web. This isn't a program, it's a standard file format (html) and a standard protocol (http). The success arises, because you can use any computer with a WWW browser from any source and it works. Usually. To create it, you can choose from a lot of tools (I'm using one of my favorite text editors right now) and it works. You can use different servers. And suddenly we have something fascinating with an explosive growth for the benefit of all.

Example 3: The platform [Java](#). [Java](#) is a definition of a free available programming language and a platform. Take a compiler of an arbitrary manufacturer. Apart from usual differences in quality you can exchange them. The programs run on most operating systems with declining problems and good prices.

When we are talking about score printing, the examples above show that we have good reasons to care about standard formats and data exchange.

There are some 80 to 90 Score printing programs worldwide. They share a small market and manufacturers have a mean number of about two programmers.

Doubtless, you are buying a great score printing program. Are you sure, that the small company behind this program still exists in five years? Experience shows that you will have a new computer with a completely new operating system architecture every five years. Are you sure that there will be a new version of your program that fits?

The answers aren't optimistic. At least, you want to save your data. The [MIDI file format](#) is not accurate, most essential score printing informations get lost.

There is another reason to care about exchange: There are some musical score scanning programs. They are not good but getting better. How do you get the data into your favorite score printing program? (I'm not saying that that an usable musical score scanning program exists at all.)

So a very good reason for the selection of a score printing program are the supported standard exchange formats.

For further information, see openformats.org.

