

Office Clones: It's About to Get Complicated

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Those looking for some alternatives to the pricey Microsoft Office have looked to Google for its small suite of online apps and OpenOffice, an open-source Office suite "owned" by Oracle and comprised of clones of the Microsoft product. None are perfect or as powerful as the Microsoft offerings, but they are money savers and often perfect for the small or home office.

This is about to get more complicated as a slew of OpenOffice developers have abandoned ship to create the Document Foundation where they are using the OpenOffice open-source code to produce a fork development effort called LibreOffice. You can download the current version of LibreOffice and give it a try.

Open Source projects commonly fork like this when the developers in one project begin to disagree with the project workers who have dominated development or when a company like Oracle suddenly owns the project. In this case, Oracle got both OpenOffice and MySQL from Sun Microsystems when they acquired Sun. So then the group of dissidents goes off and begins a new version of the project under new management, which usually means new ideas.

Until now, OpenOffice had a pretty decent clone of Microsoft Word, but the rest of the system was weak.

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