Brief for Redesign of Download/Donations Page

DOWNLOAD PAGE

LibreOffice is available in two different flavours: "fresh" for technology enthusiasts, early adopters and power users, and "still" for conservative users and enterprise deployments.

While we do want the fresh version to be installed by the largest number of potential users - this is the only way to have it thoroughly tested, to find bugs and regressions in real user cases -, we also want to make it clear that the still version should be deployed by enterprises with the backing of professional support.

At the moment, we promote the fresh version, while we should find a way to send users, according to their characteristics, to the most appropriate version for their needs, promoting - in the case of enterprise users - professional support to back large deployments which is instrumental for a healthy, large and independent free software project.

So, instead of suggesting the latest fresh version, the download page should start from a mechanism which captures users based on their characteristics and suggests the most appropriate version: fresh, still for individual use, and still for enterprise deployment, backed by professional support.

The LibreOffice situation is rather unique, as all other major free software projects have a single version download and not a two version download (beta channels, like Firefox and Chrome, are not comparable, because the software is declared as beta while LibreOffice is not a beta, even if still affected by "first major release" bugs and regressions).

The Firefox download page, for instance, is better than LibreOffice download page in terms of cleanliness, but at the end is a list of language versions of the same software, while we do not have multiple language versions, especially on Windows - which accounts for over 80% of all downloads - as we offer a single package with all major languages included.

Mac OS X and Linux users must download and install the "language" package - including user interface, dictionary, hyphenation and help - to get LibreOffice in their own native language.

There are examples of software based services which redirect the user according to its profile like Dropbox and Evernote, but the situation is different from LibreOffice as there is a free version versus a license based version.

In the case of LibreOffice, the software is always free, while services are provided on a project basis and as such are different for each user, based on parameters such as the number of desktops but also the interoperability and the integration issues, and possibly the development of specific features.

Of course, we cannot redirect enterprise users based on all the different parameters, but we should try to let them understand - in a rather assertive way - that enterprise deployments must be backed by value added services provided by the LibreOffice ecosystem, to support the development of the free product.

Ideally, the download page should reproduce the traditional "funnel" process, where the user is filtered at each level and sent to the next one narrowing the number of choices. It is not easy, but it should be doable with a two/three level funnel, according to the user profile.

This is a basic mockup of one possible approach on the download page, although we should offer only two options (as we have two versions of the software).
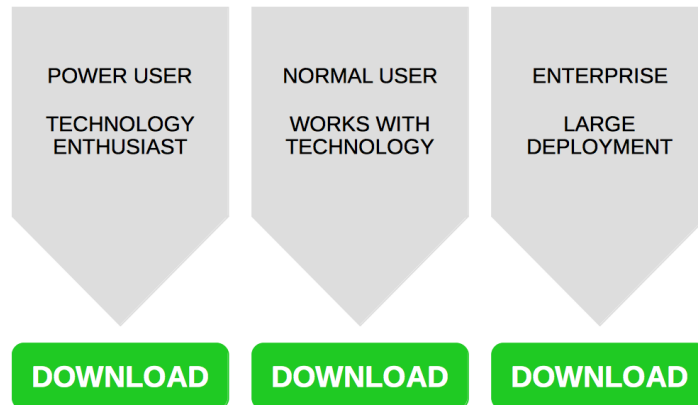
As of today, the left arrow would lead to LibreOffice 5.1.x, and the middle and right arrows to LibreOffice 5.0.x. On both pages there should be a short blurb about deploying LibreOffice with the help of certified professionals, which should provide more infos to users choosing the "still" version (as a percentage of these users will download the software for enterprise deployments).

Next to the download selection, a few key items need to be present on the download page, most notably a prominent link to give feedback (http://www.libreoffice.org/get-help/feedback/), a "Join the project" link (http://www.libreoffice.org/community/get-involved/), and a reference to upcoming events (http://www.libreoffice.org/events/).

To help with the design of the download page, we refer to some examples from other FOSS projects. We do not expect our page to reflect the contents of these download pages, which are offered as a reference.

The first alternative approach, which partially reflects our objective - as it is missing "enterprise" users - is offered by the Ubuntu download page, which separates the long-term supported version from the newest version. Here's a mock-up of how it could look in the LibreOffice website:

In term of completeness of the download listings, we find the VLC download page one of the best, although we do not need that many options. Here's a quick mock-up of the LibreOffice website, based on the VLC design:

In term of visuals (icons), the Wunderlist download page can serve as a great sample.

At the moment, we do not need that many icons as we have just the desktop version for Windows, Mac OS X and Linux, but in the future we might decide to add the mobile and the cloud version from the same page. So, leaving some flexibility in term of visuals could represent an added value. Here's a sample of how it could look:

Download LibreOffice on all your devices

W
Download Windows

M
Download Mac

A
Download Android

L
Download Linux
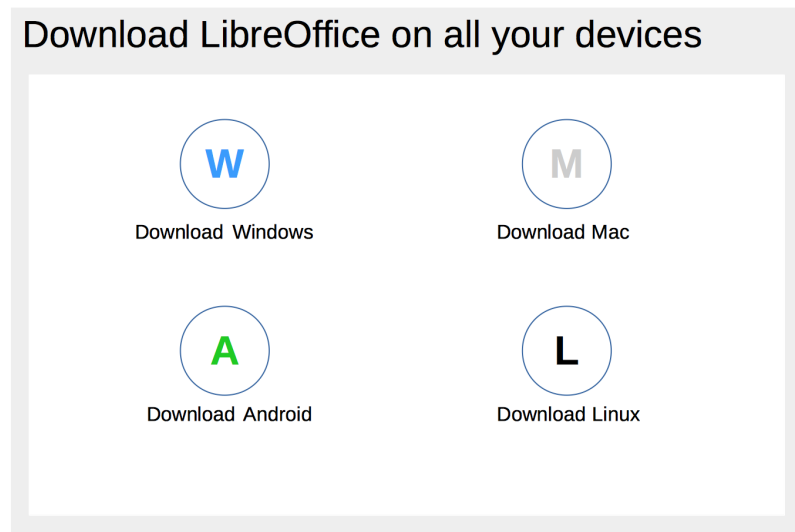
DONATIONS PAGE

Once the user has chosen the right version of LibreOffice, he will be redirected to the donations page.

The timing of the actual page is perfect, as the user has the time to look at the donation page - where there is a prominent note about the fact that donations are optional - before the download starts.

Apart from the timing, the donation page is rather old - it reflects the early days of the project - and should be completely revamped, extended with A/B testing facilities. The A/B testing should be the first thing to be implemented, as all subsequent changes, updates and edits to that pages should be done in an incremental fashion and evaluated in comparison to the current page and based on the results of the A/B testing.

Pictures might be OK, but they should be changed with a randomization mechanism. TDF can provide pictures of other conferences, local events, hackfests, and so on.

In addition, we will provide an updated wording according to the current situation, where donations account for over 80% of the project income (in 2011 they were probably less than 25%, because the mechanism was not related to downloads).

In addition, an option for recurring donations with PayPal (monthly, quarterly or yearly) should be offered alongside development of a mechanism which fires a "thanks" email message, to confirm the donation and provide a few words of appreciation.

In fact, thanks to donations, the project is now able to pay for several key roles, provide grants to native language projects, pay some development activities, fund travels to the conference for community members, etc. and TDF will provide an updated text to reflect this.

To show how we are investing donations, we should add to the page a link to the Annual Report, which offers a summary of the foundation achievements during the previous year.

Looking at donation pages from other projects, it looks like Firefox donation page is a very good example, at least for the mechanism to select the amount and the media (PayPal, credit card, or anything else available).

The Firefox page is extremely user friendly, the mechanism is simple - and foolproof - and the layout clean and can be considered to be the most "attractive" for donations to free software projects. Here's a mock-up of how it could look on the LibreOffice site:

In the world of non profits, there are some other samples which embody good ideas about donations.

The first one is the Livestrong Foundation, which offers a quick overview of the way the money is spent (with a simple pie chart, which is a good compromise between showing and offering detailed features).

The second one is Organising for Action, which provides a picture to recall the original objective.

These pages are worth studying as references to inspire some new ideas.