

# OSCMIS License -- Why the OSL?

Why the Open Software License (v.3.0)?

By Lawrence Rosen

Special Legal Counsel to OSSI

CMIS software is a copyrighted derivative work created by OSSI based upon public domain software written by the US Government under the direction of DISA. As a copyrighted work, CMIS is separately licensed to the public—and licensed back to the US Government—under open source license terms by OSSI.

The open source license used for CMIS is the Open Software License (OSL 3.0) which is an approved Open Source license as designated by Open Source Initiative.

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OSSI decided not to use any version of the GPL for the CMIS software because of the limitations that the GPL places upon linking. Some companies avoid GPL software because, when they link to it from their own proprietary software, they are expected to disclose their source code.

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WHITEPAPER: Open Software License 3.0

A Better License for Open Source Software

by Lawrence Rosen

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Instead, for CMIS, we encourage our customers to link to CMIS with their own applications and to develop their own software extensions for CMIS. OSL 3.0 allows that kind of functional linking from private software without requiring the

disclosure of your own source code. Only modifications to the CMIS software itself must be disclosed under the terms of OSL 3.0.

There are two other versions of the GPL that we considered using. The LGPL handles linking much like OSL 3.0 does, but since anyone can convert LGPL code to GPL code, using that license won't cure the linking problem for long. There is also a version of the GPL, the AGPL, that treats software used by third parties over a network as if it were actually distributed. A similar provision is in OSL 3.0, but the AGPL adds the confusion about linking that is present in the regular GPL, thus making it also unsuitable for the community that OSSI and DISA hope to build.

OSSI encourages companies and other government agencies to improve upon CMIS software and contribute it back to the open source community. For that reason, OSSI uses AFL 3.0 as its contributor license. If you write applications or extensions to CMIS that you wish to contribute to OSSI for inclusion in our open source and commercial CMIS products, license them to OSSI under AFL 3.0.

We'll share these community improvements with everyone under open source terms.