



WHAT HAPPENED TO PIRATEBOX?

Scott Murphy



HISTORY

Back in September of 2017, I gave a talk on PirateBox.

Yes, not the PirateBox or a PirateBox, but PirateBox.

Four years have passed and what has happened?



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FIRST A LITTLE HISTORY

This part comes from the previous talk, but will serve as a refresher on the topic.

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WHAT IS PIRATEBOX?

From the project website:

- PirateBox is a DIY anonymous offline file-sharing and communications system built with free software and inexpensive off-the-shelf hardware.
- PirateBox creates offline wireless networks designed for anonymous file sharing, chatting, message boarding, and media streaming. You can think of it as your very own portable offline Internet in a box!

WHY IS IT CALLED THAT?

Well, that is a little more historical. It was a nod to the old pirate radio stations that flourished in the 1960's, one example being Radio London that operated from 23 December 1964 to 14 August 1967 from a ship anchored in the North Sea, three and a half miles off Frinton-on-Sea, Essex, England.

More currently, this is about sharing information freely, open source, and free software.

Of course, it may also have had something to do with the skull and crossbones on the old style lunch box that was used to house the prototype.

THERE WAS A DEMO

I had a couple of units running at the time, but we did the demo with the RaspberryPi version of the unit. The original unit I had (TP Link) was unable to run the software due to incompatibilities in the hardware (new version).

UTILITY OF PIRATEBOX

The basic functions were:

- Chat Server
- File Sharing Site
- Forum

It was as useful as that.

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MAIN PAGE OF PIRATEBOX

The screenshot shows the main page of PirateBox. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the PirateBox logo and links for Home, Forum, Files, and About. The main content area is divided into several sections: a Welcome message, a chat window, a file upload section, and a disk usage section. The chat window shows a message from PirateBox and a text input field. The file upload section has a 'Choose Files' button and a 'Send' button. The disk usage section shows a progress bar at 8% and a 'Refresh' button.

PIRATEBOX Home Forum Files About

Welcome

Now, first of all, there is nothing illegal or scary going on here. This is a social place where you can chat and share files with people around you, **anonymously!** This is an off-line network, specially designed and developed for file-sharing and chat services. Staying off the grid is a precaution to maintain your full anonymity. Please have fun, chat with people, and feel free to share any files you may like.

Thanks

Chat

00:00:00 **PirateBox:** Chat and share files anonymously!

Anonymous Message... Send

Text Color:

Default Blue Green Orange Red

Go to Upload ->

Choose Files No file chosen Send

Browse Files ->


Disk Usage

8%

Refresh

FORUM PAGE OF PIRATEBOX

[Burichan] [Futaba] [Gurochan] [Photon] - [Home]



PIRATEBOX
PirateBox board

Name	<input type="text"/>
Link	<input type="text"/>
Subject	<input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="Submit"/>
Comment	<input type="text"/>
File	<input type="button" value="Choose File"/> No file chosen
Password	<input type="password"/> (for post and file deletion)

- Supported file types are: ZZ, AAC, BZ2, FLA, FLAG, GIF, GZ, IT, JPG, LHA, LZH, M4A, M03, MOD, MP3, MPC, MPP, NSF, OGG, PNG, RAR, SID, SPC, SWF, TORRENT, XM, ZIP
- Maximum file size allowed is 5000 KB.
- Images greater than 200x200 pixels will be thumbnailled.

Forums need content! [DreadPirateRobbers](#) 17/09/05(Tue)17:15 ID:0Wrxmada No.1 [Reply]
Well, something to show there is activity in the forum anyway.

>> **Something** [Me](#) 17/09/05(Tue)17:03 ID:uGWHbF3I No.2
Something

Delete Post File Only
Password

- kareha 3.1.4 + futaba mode -

IT WAS RETIRED IN 2019

The web pages are still up, but...

We are closing..

November 17, 2019

As you may noticed, there isn't much activity in the last month. The reason is mostly described in [this forum post](#). The forum is already switch in read-only mode, you can discuss on [/r/piratebox](#).

The website, downloads and everything else will continue running in 2020, but will be shut off at the end of 2020.

Matthias

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SO THERE WAS A FORK...

Back in the early days, there was a fork of the project. It was desired for education use and had a kickstarter to get it off the ground, an external 3D printed case was created, etc. This was intended to be a better unit...

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LIBRARYBOX

LibraryBox v2.0 is a combination of a router (a variety of hardware will work), USB drive, and software that, when combined, give you a small, low powered webserver. The webserver acts like a captive portal, and delivers files that are stored on the USB drive.

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USING LIBRARYBOX

To use LibraryBox, you simply connect to the wifi SSID "LibraryBox" and launch a browser. Attempting to visit any webpage will push you to the LibraryBox homepage on the device, which has information about the project, and links on the menu for downloads. You can browse the contents of the Shared folder, and download any files you'd like. The device you are using does have to be able to understand the download (for instance, downloading an EPUB ebook to a Kindle won't really work).

STILL ACTIVE?

As far as I can tell, no. The github repo has no updates for years. There is a 2.1 listed when you look at how to build the project and that is still available.



SO WHY TALK ABOUT DEAD PROJECTS?

The concept lives on under an earlier guise, with hardware support and a rich, active ecosystem...

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FREEDOMBOX

Launched in 2010 (slightly predating PirateBox) by Prof. Eben Moglen, FreedomBox is a global project to empower regular people to reassert control over the infrastructure of the internet.

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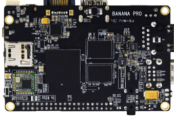

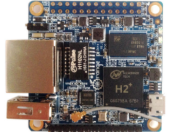

HOW DOES IT ACCOMPLISH THAT?

- FreedomBox empowers its users to avoid the data mining, censorship and surveillance by centralized silos that characterize the web of today.
- It makes web servers personal, affordable and manageable, so that a user can host necessary web services at home on a device they own, powered by free software they can trust.

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SUPPORTED HW/SW

32-bit ARM (armhf)	32-bit x86 (i386)	64-bit ARM (arm64)	64-bit x86 (amd64)
			
A20 OLinuXino Lime	A20 OLinuXino Lime 2	A20 OLinuXino MICRO	Beagle Bone Black
			
Cubieboard 2	Cubietruck (Cubieboard 3)	Debian	Lamobo R1
			
LeMaker Banana Pro	LinkSprite pcDuino3S	Orange Pi Zero	PC Engines APU 1D

SUPPORTED HW/SW (CONTD)

			
Pine A64 LTS	Pine A64+	Pioneer Edition FreedomBox	QEMU/KVM amd64
			
QEMU/KVM i386	Raspberry Pi 2	Raspberry Pi 3 Model B	Raspberry Pi 3 Model B+
			
Raspberry Pi 4 Model B	Rock64	RockPro64	VirtualBox for amd64

LIMITED EDITION HARDWARE

In partnership with the FreedomBox Foundation, Olimex is selling FreedomBox home servers. The FreedomBox home servers come with our software pre-installed, a backup battery in case of power outage, and everything else you need to get started.



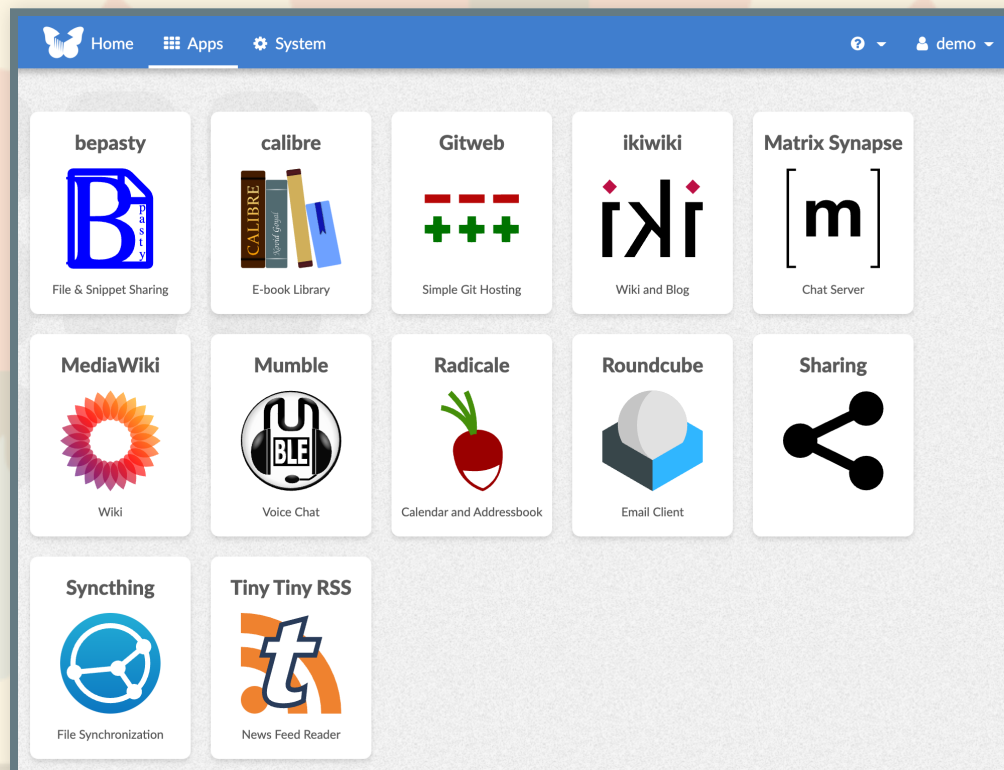
HOW USEFUL IS THIS ONE?

Very.

It has internet connectivity as well, so it is not just a collaboration hotspot, but has a number of interesting features and a lot of available packages.

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MAIN PAGE



COMMUNITY USE - 1

The primary design goal of FreedomBox is to be used as a personal server at home for use by a single family and their friends. However, at the core, it is a server software that can aid a non-technical user to setup services and maintain them with ease. Security is automatically managed and many of the technical choices in system administration are taken care by the software automatically thereby reducing complexity for a non-technical user.

COMMUNITY USE - 2

This nature of FreedomBox makes it well-suited for hosting services for small communities like villages or small firms. Communities can host their own services using FreedomBox with minimal effort. They can setup Wi-Fi networks that span the entire area of the community and draw Internet connections from long distances.

COMMUNITY USE - 3

Community members can enjoy previously unavailable Internet connectivity, ubiquitous Wi-Fi coverage, free VOIP services, offline education and entertainment content, etc. This will also boost privacy for individuals in the community, reduce dependence on centralized services provided by large companies and make them resistant to censorship.

DEMO

While I can do a demo, the project uses an Amazon instance and it might be more interesting if you connect to the demo server.

<https://demo.freedombox.org>

Login credentials: demo/demo

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DISCUSSION/QUESTIONS

REFERENCES

- [PirateBox Website](#)
- [LibraryBox Website](#)
- [FreedomBox Website](#)
- [FreedomBox Manual](#)
- [FreedomBox: A personal server for Privacy and Security](#)
- [An Offline First Box](#)