13 February, 2013

Apple Inc.
1 Infinite Loop
Cupertino, CA 95014

Dear Sir or Madam,

We are a small community of devoted users of the historic NeXT Computer, Inc. hardware and software products. These products have been, without any doubt, the most revolutionary and influential in the history of the computer industry. For these reasons we feel that the NeXT hardware as well as the NEXTSTEP and OPENSTEP software need to be preserved and maintained not just as museum exhibits, but as fully functional and running systems.

Our community is actively involved in a number of projects, including porting of recent Open Source software and developing a Motorola 68k based NeXT emulator. Unfortunately these efforts are hampered by lack of access to the NEXTSTEP and OPENSTEP source code, the specifications of the custom ASIC chips present in the NeXT workstations and the ROM Monitor source code. We would be grateful if Apple considered releasing some of this information to the community. It would allow us to continue the NeXT hardware & software preservation and stewardship while greatly enhancing its overall viability. More specifically, we would be able to:

- Update system libraries to correct issues and introduce enhancements
- Correct posix implementation in NS3.3 and re-introduce it to OS4.2
- Enhance the UFS file system to allow larger size drives and partitions
- Update the i386 drivers to allow OPENSTEP on modern Intel hardware
- Port modern Open Source tools and compilers to the platform
- Introduce BSD 4.4 enhancements to the system
- Complete the Motorola 68k NeXT emulator

Apple's Darwin project provides public access to the core source code of OS X. In the past, NeXT Computer also offered access to the equivalent NEXTSTEP and OPENSTEP source, but with a substantial fee necessitated by AT&T UNIX licensing. However, in January of 2002 Caldera granted free source code license to early versions of UNIX that effectively unencumbered the BSD 4.3 source code used by NEXTSTEP and OPENSTEP. Consequently, we feel that the legal reasons preventing the release of NeXT source code are no longer present. In addition, the NeXT source code and hardware design specifications are approximately twenty years old and their release should not pose any Intellectual Property concerns to Apple. We also understand that Apple may not be able to release some of the higher level APIs, such as Display PostScript, due to licensing, IP and copyright concerns.

We would be grateful for your time in this matter and are looking forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely yours,
NeXT Users' Community
via Rob Blessin