* Dependencies over the GPL or LGPL

Some people wonder if using GNU gettext necessarily brings their package under the protective wing of the GNU General Public License or the GNU Lesser General Public License, when they do not want to make their program free, or want other kinds of freedom. The simplest answer is “normally not”.

The gettext-runtime part of GNU gettext, i.e. the contents of libintl, is covered by the GNU Lesser General Public License. The gettext-tools part of GNU gettext, i.e. the rest of the GNU gettext package, is covered by the GNU General Public License.

The mere marking of localizable strings in a package, or conditional inclusion of a few lines for initialization, is not really including GPL’ed or LGPL’ed code. However, since the localization routines in libintl are under the LGPL, the LGPL needs to be considered. It gives the right to distribute the complete unmodified source of libintl even with non-free programs. It also gives the right to use libintl as a shared library, even for non-free programs. But it gives the right to use libintl as a static library or to incorporate libintl into another library only to free software.