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Emacs is Not Just An Editor

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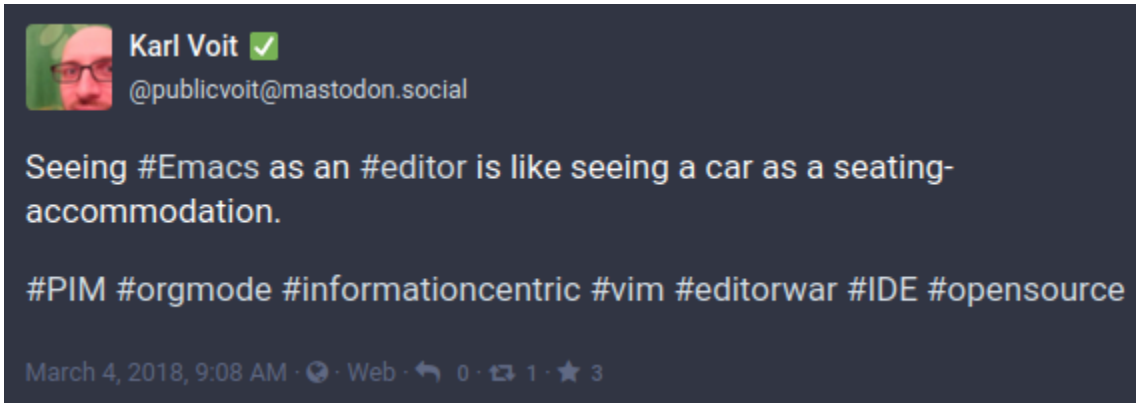
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- Updates
 - 2016-07-02: Link to article by Christopher Patti
 - 2020-01-21: Link to the "Emacs is no text editor" article
 - 2020-09-11: Rephrasing of "Emacs is an OS" [because of avoiding to use wrong terminology](#).

The [editor war](#) between users of the vim editor and the Emacs editor exists since decades. Here is my comment on that as somebody who is using vim **and** GNU/Emacs intensive on a daily basis.

In my opinion, the most dominant advantage of [Emacs](#) is that it's not just an editor: it's a [LISP](#) interpreter and thus a very capable highly dynamic platform.

The consequence of this fact is dramatically: Emacs runs a very large number of [third party packages](#). Those packages provide top-of-the-art features for editing but also for non-editing stuff like file management, games, project management, email management, calendar, data processing and visualization, version management, spreadsheets, drawings, or even composing music.



Screenshot from my Mastodon account.

Other "editors" do offer some few non-editing features as well. However, only Emacs is even used by people who don't need an editor at all. [Org-mode](#) is an excellent example of functionality which has almost nothing to do with editing per se and whose enormous capabilities are not matched by any other software solution.

Apparently, the [well known quote](#) "Emacs is not an editor, it's an operating system" is not just a funny phrase to make you smile - it's perceived as an operating system ([in a non-technical sense](#)). People like [John Wiegley](#) (and **many** more) are not using many features from applications related to one specific operating system or any other software at all. They basically "live" within Emacs only. They've added another abstraction layer on top of their classic operating system. This does provide great abilities whose benefits can't be understood by most people unfortunately. It's impossible to explain colors to people who can not see (yet).

So: comparing Emacs to an editor is like comparing GNU/Linux to a word processor. It's an unfair and inadequate comparison for both sides. Those [stupid editor flame-wars](#) are not worth the time at all.

If you need only an editor, great power-tools like [vim](#) are fine as well. Don't complain that Emacs can be so much more than just an editor.

Simply use [the best tool for each job](#) **deliberately**.

Also interesting to read:

- [Vim Versus Emacs - Minus the Religion](#) by Christopher Patti.
- [Emacs is no text editor | Eigenbahn blog](#)
 - "Emacs is a generic Man-Machine Interface for anything text."
- [Emacs is very special regarding UIs](#) (via [this reddit thread](#))
- in contrast: [RMS \(Emacs founder\) does not think that Emacs is an operating system](#)
- [Why Emacs: Redux - \(think\)](#) (2021-11-16)

Related articles that link to this one:

- [My Personal Emacs History](#)
- [Organize Your Life With Org-Mode](#)
- [OneNote Will Be Discontinued, Evernote Will Follow Some Day - Switch to Something Much Better](#)
- [UOMF: My Emacs Key Binding Strategy](#)
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