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The Newsletter of UKUUG, the UK's Unix and Open Systems Users Group

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From the Secretariat

Jane Morrison

The minutes from the Annual General Meeting held on 28th September have not this year been circulated to members in hard copy. All members were emailed on 30th October and advised that the minutes and associated documents could be found on the web site at

<http://www.ukuug.org/events/agm2006/>

As you will see from the minutes we have three new Council members: John Pinner, Howard Thomson and Phil Hands.

They are all enthusiastic about UKUUG and we are hoping they can bring some new ideas and assist with work on ongoing items.

Since the AGM, there have been two Council meetings. At the last meeting, Ray Miller stood down as Chairman, and Alain Williams was chosen as his replacement. See also Ray's Chairman's report below.

Sam Smith has been re-appointed as UKUUG Treasurer.

Sunil Das has agreed to take on some tasks to assist UKUUG on a part time basis: see his article elsewhere in this issue in which he describes his new role.

Council's current concerns are the organisation and programme for the Spring conference being held at the Manchester Conference Centre between the 19th and 21st March 2007. Full event details (information booklet and booking form) should be in the envelope with this Newsletter.

I am sure this event is going to prove very popular and we have again been very lucky to achieve sponsorship from Google for the conference dinner.

Preliminary discussions have started for the Linux 2007 event but nothing can be confirmed at the moment. As soon as dates, venue etc. are known all members will be emailed.

The annual membership subscription invoices will be sent out in January, please look out for your invoice and as always prompt payment will be gratefully received!

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year.

The Secretariat will close from 18th December to January 2nd 2007.

Please note the copy date for the next issue of the Newsletter is 14th March 2007.

We are always looking for interesting submissions from members, so if you have any news or articles please send them direct to

newsletter@ukuug.org

Chairman's Report

Ray Miller

After just over three years in the role, last week I stood down as Chairman of UKUUG Council to let someone else take the driving seat for a while. I am pleased to welcome to the chair Alain Williams, who did not step back with everyone else when I asked for a volunteer to come forward. Alain has been a member of Council for four years now, so will already be a familiar face to many of you. I will be working with Alain until the end of the year to effect a smooth changeover, then leaving Council to concentrate on some of my other interests.

One of my objectives when I took over as Chairman was to raise the profile of UKUUG and build up membership numbers. This has not been entirely successful, with membership numbers remaining fairly static, losing about 25% of members each year and gaining about the same

number of new members. We have done some work in putting about the UKUUG name and brand, with a new logo launched at the beginning of 2006. We have increased our participation in other bodies, with Leslie Fletcher attending a number of meetings on our behalf and initiating some campaigning activities. Leslie's efforts culminated recently with a Parliamentary Early Day Motion on the use of free software in schools being tabled by John Pugh MP - you should by now have read about this elsewhere.

My other focus has been in building up momentum for the winter (now spring) LISA conference. This has been hard work at times, but I am pleased with the outcome: delegate numbers are up; we are attracting significant sponsorship; the programme is very strong, with two parallel streams last year. Sam Smith has taken the lead in organizing the forthcoming 2007 conference, and has put together an excellent programme, again with two streams, with a focus on virtualisation and systems management. I hope you will take advantage of this and make your way to Manchester next March.

Some other news from Council is that we have engaged the services of Sunil Das as UKUUG Liaison Officer. Amongst other things, we have asked Sunil to help to build links between UKUUG and other organizations in the Unix and Linux community and in the commercial world; to solicit speakers for UKUUG events; to raise our profile in the press; and to help expand the content of the newsletter. His efforts have already paid off with this last objective, and we are pleased to welcome Peter Salus as a regular columnist.

I am sure you will join me in wishing Alain and the team all the best for the future, and thank you for your continued support of UKUUG.

News from the UKUUG Liaison Officer

Sunil Das

It's good to be back! Some amongst you may remember that I served as UKUUG Chairman during the latter years of the 1980s and the very early 1990s. I am supporting Council now to raise UKUUG profiles and ultimately attract new members. I came on board at the beginning of October and I will be addressing the following areas: liaising and building a strong relationship with the Unix / Linux community (IBM, Novell, SUN, and HP etc.); actively soliciting speakers for UKUUG events; organising standalone tutorials; expanding the content of the Newsletter; raising UKUUG's profile in the press.

The first month flew by as I updated the UKUUGs membership leaflet. I confess to researching many websites to help in this, in particular, Usenix, AUUG and AT&T. Also, I visited Jane in Buntingford learning about UKUUG procedures, membership numbers over the last six years, etc. A visit to Linux World was instructive and I made contact with the LONIX and GLUUG who are happy to forward announcements about UKUUG events (conference, tutorial, free talks) to their extensive distribution lists. I manned the UKUUG stand during the lunch break and managed to recruit a new member. Only an individual membership but it's a start!

Most of November has been spent on the telephone or writing email (which is an uphill battle as I struggle to get broadband installed). Peter Salus, author and former Usenix Executive Director, has agreed to contribute to this Newsletter and the four editions in 2007. And I am trying to cement contacts with the Unix / Linux communities.

UKUUG is a membership-driven organisation of like-minded 'lads and lasses'. Help me in this liaison activity with suggestions and ideas by email or telephone. Initially make contact with me using sunil@ukuug.org I'd appreciate making new friends as well as 'touching base' with those I haven't spoken to for a while.

UKUUG CD December 2006

OpenOffice and Firefox

We enclose the current versions (2.0) of Mozilla Firefox for Linux and Windows and the current versions (2.0.4) of the OpenOffice.org suite for various platforms, together with documentation and some useful Templates and Clip Art.

We are very grateful to the Firefox and OpenOffice.org developers for making this useful software so freely available.

EuroBSDCon 2007: Call For Papers

The European BSD Conference, September 14th and 15th 2007, Copenhagen, Denmark

FreeBSD – NetBSD – OpenBSD – MAC OS X – DragonFlyBSD

Are you doing interesting things with a BSD based operating system?

Come to Copenhagen and talk about it!

We are looking for papers about all aspects of BSD based operating systems, and would particularly like to hear from people who can tell our audience something about:

- How and why should you try a BSD based operating system?
- BSD based products, how, why, what: good and bad.
- How to manage BSD based systems, operational issues, scaling, updates, patches, auditing and reliability.
- What are the BSD developers working on now?
- Using BSD based systems to thwart the bad guys.

Send us a couple of paragraphs with an outline of your proposed talk and a bit about yourself to: papers@eurobsdcon.dk before February 1st 2007.

Practical Information

EuroBSDCon 2007 is organised by the the usual gang from the BSD-DK user group and our aim is to make it affordable and high quality.

Speakers attend the conference for free and we will reimburse speakers travel and lodging if nobody else will pay for it.

We will aim to finalise the programme and notify the selected speakers by April 1st 2007.

We will not waste money and trees on printed proceedings but will distribute the conference material electronically and expect to receive your final slides no later than 4 weeks before the conference. Please let us know if you want to include other materials (articles, HOWTOs etc).

There will also be a “Works In Progress” session during the conference for short talks about recent developments etc.

If we can arrange it, all talks will be videotaped (unless the speaker objects).

For further information please see:

<http://2007.euroBSDCon.org/>

BCS OSSG Meeting: Simon Phipps

The BCS Open Source Specialist Group (OSSG) announce a presentation on 20th December 2006 by Simon Phipps, Chief Open Source Officer of Sun Microsystems, on the Open Sourcing of Java under the GPL.

The meeting is provisionally timed to start at 6pm (to be confirmed) at BCS Central London Offices, First Floor, The Davidson Building, 5 Southampton Street, London, WC2E 7HA.

A free buffet and refreshments will be provided.

For further information, please see:

<http://ossg.bcs.org/2006/12/20/open-source-java-simon-hipps/>

Press release: FSFE and Bacula

FSFE becomes the legal guardian of the Bacula Project

The Bacula Project has become the first signatory of the Fiduciary licence Agreement (FLA), a copyright assignment that allows FSFE to become the legal guardian of projects.

Kern Sibbald, the founder and lead developer of the Bacula network backup solution, assigned his copyright to FSFE. "I wanted to underline the commitment of the Bacula Project to Free Software", said Kern. "Bacula has always been a community project and we're just solidifying that for the long-term. I am very thankful that the FSFE is providing this service because it removes an important administrative burden from the project, which allows us to focus on the task of programming."

The Bacula Project will be protected by FSFEs Freedom Task Force (FTF). Shane Coughlan, FTF Coordinator, explains "The FTF is committed to making projects more secure. The Fiduciary licence Agreement is one part of this. We want to allow developers to focus on their core work. That's why we are taking care of the legal side of things while Kern continues making a fantastic network backup system."

"We are delighted to help Bacula accomplish its full potential. The Free Software ecosystem is maturing rapidly these days and the Freedom Task Force with its Fiduciary Licence Agreement, licensing education, licensing advice and enforcement services is an important part in this", explains FSFE president Georg Greve. He adds: "We very much thank Stichting NLnet for doing their part in making this possible, and hope that others will step up to likewise support this effort."

Shane Coughlan summarises "our mission is to help individuals, projects and businesses who develop and use Free Software. The Bacula assignment is the first step in our larger fiduciary programme. We are looking forward to welcoming other projects on board."

The Freedom Task Force can be found at <http://www.fsfeurope.org/ftf>

About the Bacula Project:

Bacula is a set of computer programs that permit people to manage backup, recovery, and verification of computer data across a network of computers of different kinds. The Bacula Project is managed and coordinated by Kern Sibbald.

<http://bacula.org>

FSFE Launching Freedom Task Force, Co-operating with gpl-violations.org

FTF to educate programmers and corporations on how to avoid licensing problems, as well as enforce Free Software licences

The Free Software Foundation Europe (FSFE) announced today the launch of the Freedom Task Force, thanks to a grant of EUR 30,000 from Stichting NLnet. The organisation, working closely with Harald Welte of gpl-violations.org, seeks to help programmers properly set up and organise projects legally, as well as educate companies to understand how the GPL works. As needed, the purpose of the group will also include enforcement in the case of licence violations. FTF is located in FSFE's offices in Zurich, Switzerland.

“Free Software itself has become commercial mainstream, but knowledge about Free Software and in particular its licences is often lagging behind”, explains Georg Greve, FSFE's president. “With large companies like SUN embracing Free Software at the heart of their business, the software ecosystem is transforming in ways that underline the requirement for services like the FTF.”

FTF will include experts with technical and legal backgrounds as well as volunteers, working together to provide organised and co-ordinated responses to individual cases where there may be misunderstandings about what a licence requires or a violation of its terms. FSFE has hired Mr. Shane Coughlan to serve as FTF Co-ordinator.

Shane Coughlan on the other tasks of the FTF: “We seek to give commercial and non-commercial Free Software developers the maximum support possible with our fiduciary activities. By helping them bundle their legal interests, we are able to safeguard the legal status of a project while it can focus on technological and managerial issues. For projects that FSFE has accepted into its fiduciary program, FSFE will also be in a position to defend their interests in the eventuality of licence violation.”

Harald Welte, the first person who enforced the GNU GPL in court, will be working closely with the FTF: “My gpl-violations.org work has shown how much the community needs a more focused approach to deal with these violations. While there was good contact with FSFE in the past, we will now be working closely together, sharing our information and resources to best protect the rights of Free Software developers.”

“We have as a primary goal to help corporations to adhere to the licences from the onset, rather than to have to enforce violations later,” explains Mr. Coughlan. “We encourage those responsible for compliance for their company to contact us, so we can work together to avoid licence compliance problems, rather than having to later solve problems that could have been avoided in the first place.”

Stichting NLnet Chairman Teus Hagen expressed pleasure at the launch of FTF: “We are very happy to support the launch of the FTF because in our view this is a timely and necessary step to consolidate Free Software. We ourselves at times felt the need for a reliable partner to handle these issues, and in our experience the FSFE is such a partner. We hope that many others will contribute to and support this effort, and see the FTF as an important step in the maturing of Free Software.”

About the Free Software Foundation Europe:

The Free Software Foundation Europe (FSFE) is a non-profit non-governmental organisation active in many European countries and involved in many global activities. Access to software determines participation in a digital society. To secure equal participation in the information age, as well as freedom of competition, the Free Software Foundation Europe (FSFE) pursues and is dedicated to the furthering of Free Software, defined by the freedoms to use, study, modify and copy. Founded in 2001, creating awareness for these issues, securing Free Software politically

and legally, and giving people Freedom by supporting development of Free Software are central issues of the FSFE.

<http://fsfeurope.org>

About gpl-violations.org:

In the past 30 months, gpl-violations.org has helped uncover and negotiate more than 100 GPL violations and has obtained numerous out-of-court settlement agreements. The gpl-violations.org project is a not-for-profit effort to bring commercial users and vendors of Free Software into compliance with the licence conditions as set forth by the original authors. The project was founded and is managed by Mr Harald Welte, a Linux Kernel developer and Free Software enthusiast.

<http://gpl-violations.org>

Stichting NLnet:

<http://www.nlnet.nl>

FFII Press Release

Patent industry writes ICT task force report “on behalf of SMEs”

A key report produced by a European Commission task force was written almost entirely by the patent industry and large firms, including SAP’s patent lawyers, US firms, and the European Patent Office, says the FFII.

The report titled “IPR for competitiveness and innovation” claims that studies prove that SMEs need patent protection, that SMEs benefit from patents, and that increased software patents in the US have not hampered innovation in the US ICT sector. These claims are forcibly contested by SME organisations, who point out that software patents punish the IT SME sector, while giving large firms a key grip on the market.

The report is particularly insulting to small IT firms, claiming that they “generally reveal an anxious attitude towards the patent system as a whole. Any reform or initiative [...] is viewed as a potential backdoor for introducing software patents, a concept opposed by a large majority among this Group.” The report also accuses small IT firms of having “a relatively inadequate understanding and general knowledge of the patent system”.

The FFII, an observer at the task force, saw strong censorship during the drafting of the report. FFII president Pieter Hintjens says, “the chairman, SAP, exploited their position to make sure that reform-oriented comments were excluded and debate was silenced. Overall the report reflects the opinion of a very small but controlling minority – and certainly no SMEs – while claiming to be representative”.

Hintjens continues: “I am astounded that the EPO, a patent administration body who blatantly lobby for the patent industry, can be allowed to participate in a so-called SME task force. It was a farce. This report is a mockery and an insult to all those who participated in good faith.”

About the FFII – <http://www.ffii.org>

The FFII is a not-for-profit association registered in twenty European countries, dedicated to the development of information goods for the public benefit, based on copyright, free competition, open standards. More than 850 members, 3,500 companies and 100,000 supporters have entrusted the FFII to act as their voice in public policy questions concerning exclusion rights (intellectual property) in data processing.

This press release and associated links and documents can be found through the FFII Press page:
http://press.ffii.org/Press_releases/

Letter from a member

Dear Jane & UKUUG Council Members,

Greetings from a UKUUG member. In the last newsletter, you wanted some feedback on the attendance of the last Linux summer conference in Brighton (quote, “delegate numbers were slightly down from previous years”). I was not in attendance at this conference but thought I could offer a more general suggestion.

One conference idea for one year could be to try and have the LISA/BSD conference in the summer and have the Linux conference in the spring. Last year I could not attend the Spring conference as it clashed with my teaching schedule. It might be interesting to swap the conferences around one year and see what happens to the numbers of attendees.

Cheers.

James Pearson-Kirk

Progress report on parliamentary lobbying

Leslie Fletcher

The Early Day Motion “Software in Schools” tabled by John Pugh MP on 21 November has, at the time of writing, been signed by 49 MPs, several of whom appear to have done so after being contacted by UKUUG members. It is at about 120 out of 350 current EDMs in terms of number of signatures, which is good start for one with a somewhat subtle and technical content. The signature list will remain open throughout this session of parliament so contacting MPs asking them to add their names is still worthwhile; reaching 100 signatures would be a significant achievement.

The perception that BECTA and DfES give an equivocal message to schools about free and open source software has been picked up in the computing press – Media Watch has posted some of the coverage. This has been managed through the Open Schools Alliance, a newly-formed umbrella group, which is itself beginning to attract support from the FLOSS community in the UK.

Lobbying MPs about FLOSS really took off when UKUUG and the Open Source Consortium got together to highlight the contrast between the government’s warm words about fair dealing in procurement and the reality of day-to-day decision making in school IT. Looked at across the public sector, the government’s annual spend on IT is huge – about £250 for every man, woman and child in the UK – and of questionable effectiveness so the campaign is certainly “following the sound of gunfire”.

But where next? It has proved possible to create momentum among MPs on what is a relatively small issue in IT. It has appeal because the impact on SMEs in their constituency is something MPs can relate to and they are keen to be seen promoting the well being of schools in their constituency. A much bigger issue, though harder to grasp due to the byzantine mechanisms being used, is Building Schools for the Future. What is wrong with the “aim ... to rebuild or renew every secondary school in England over a 10-15 year period”? I cannot do better than quote, in full, a letter in The Guardian, 29 August 2006

The same strategy that is responsible for the NHS computer disaster is also undermining sec-

ondary schools IT. Under the name of Building Schools for the Future IT (BSF IT), secondary schools are being offered £1,450 per pupil (£1.5m for an average secondary school) if they will outsource their IT operations to a government-nominated corporation for 10 years.

If schools opt to continue to directly employ technicians and buy their own hardware, software and content, then they do not get the £1,450 per pupil. The contracts are so all encompassing and complex that only global corporations need apply. This is not introducing the market mechanism, this is imposing the corporate state. Surprise, surprise, Microsoft is the preferred operating-system supplier to the corporate bidders.

The aim is to build a bigger campaign around this grotesque manipulation of public funds to serve sectional private interests. Where is the FLOSS angle in this? SMEs seeking to develop a business providing FLOSS solutions to schools are being discriminated against, many UK schools with innovative and well-functioning IT systems use FLOSS, more than 1,000 schools in Extremadura use FLOSS, and to quote from ZDNet:

The true beauty of open-source software is that it is philosophically compatible with educational principles in a way that proprietary software can never match.

Are more reasons needed?

Linux on Trial

Peter H Salus

Hello from Toronto!

For nearly four years – since 6 March 2003, to be exact – there has been ongoing litigation involving The SCO Group and a variety of other parties: IBM, Red Hat, Novell, DaimlerChrysler, and AutoZone. This has all been conducted in the US, you might remark. Why should I care? Read on.

But first, note that “The SCO Group” is what was once Caldera (in fact the early documents in 2003 read Caldera). SCO (Santa Cruz Operation) was a Unix company which sold Xenix and a number of home-grown applications (UnixWare and OpenServer) from 1979 to 2001. In 2001, SCO sold its Server Software and Services divisions to Caldera. SCO then changed its name to Tarantella and Caldera began doing business as The SCO Group (2002).

Meanwhile, in another part of the universe, Novell purchased the rights to Unix from AT&T/USL in 1993 and in 1995 sold the SVR4 code and licensing rights to SCO.

If you aren’t confused yet, continue.

The SCO Group was the renamed Caldera, a company founded in 1994 by Ransom Love with funding from Ray Noorda. Caldera purchased DR-DOS from Novell in 1996 and proceeded to sue Microsoft for a variety of unsavoury business practices. Caldera’s main product was the Caldera Network Desktop until it purchased the LST Linux distribution from Linux Support Team Software GmbH (with funds obtained from its settlement with Microsoft) and became a true Linux company.

In 2002, more investment came into Caldera and Ransom Love left, to be replaced by Darl McBride. McBride had worked for Novell and then IKON Business Solutions, which fired him in 1998. McBride sued for \$10 million for wrongful termination and settled for \$1.14 million. His arrival at Caldera heralded a change in business plan. The newly-dubbed SCO Group apparently believes that it can profit from its “intellectual property,” rather than from vending or servicing a product.

McBride made several statements after arriving at Caldera. My favourite is:

“...And C++ programming languages, we own those, have licensed them out multiple times, obviously. We have a lot of royalties coming to us from C++. It was interesting to see the depth

of Caldera's intellectual capital." – Darl McBride, 2002-08-15

<http://techupdate.zdnet.com/techupdate/stories/main/0,14179,2877578,00.html>

I'm sure this was intended to mean something. Over four years later I'm certain that this was intended to convey content. But, still four years later, I'm at a loss as to what McBride might have meant, nor do I understand what moron might pay "royalties" on an ISO-standardised language.

No ISO standard is proprietary. None. The C++ Standard Library and the C++ Standard Library Extensions are non-proprietary.

What McBride said was flatly untrue.

Six months later (2003-01-22) he stated: "If you pull down (Mac) OS X you'll see a lot of copyright postings that point back to Unix Systems Laboratories, which is what we hold." Which, as we will see, is just wrong.

Over a year later, in an "Open Letter" of 2003-12-04, McBride wrote: "SCO asserts that the GPL, under which Linux is distributed, violates the United States Constitution and the U.S. copyright and patent laws."

<http://www.caldera.com/copyright/>

If you've cleaned up the tea or coffee you just spilt, I'll proceed.

Between those two statements, Red Hat filed suit against SCOG "in response to the unfair, untrue, and deceptive campaign now being waged" by SCOG "against Linux in general and Red Hat in particular." (2003-08-04)

Subsequently, on January 20, 2004, SCOG filed suit against Novell for "making false statements" and "slandering SCO's title" where Unix SVR5 was concerned. (Novell had stated that they had never sold the title to the Unix copyrights to [old]SCO.)

On March 2, 2004, SCOG filed suit against AutoZone (a chain of auto parts retail stores) for infringing upon

"SCO's copyrights in and relating to Copyrighted Materials by using, copying, modifying, and/or distributing parts of the Copyrighted Materials, or derivative works based on the Copyrighted Materials in connection with its implementations of one or more versions of the Linux operating system, inconsistent with SCO's exclusive rights under the Copyright Act."

In other words, by having employed OpenServer in the past and switched to Linux (version unspecified), AutoZone was violating SCOG's copyrights in SVR5.

The next day (March 3), SCOG filed suit against DaimlerChrysler for not complying with the provisions of a licensing agreement between AT&T ("SCO is the successor to AT&T") and "Chrysler Motors Corporation."

So, we have The SCO Group suing IBM, Novell, DaimlerChrysler, and AutoZone and Red Hat suing SCOG. The IBM and Novell cases are in the federal court in Utah; DaimlerChrysler in Michigan; AutoZone in Nevada; and Red Hat filed suit in Delaware.

I'll go to the DaimlerChrysler case first. Judge Sue L. Robinsor of Oakland County, Michigan, threw out most of SCOG's case, "with prejudice" – which means that it cannot be refiled. Apparently, SCOG's correspondence had been mailed to an address where DaimlerChrysler no longer had an office and DaimlerChrysler had never used any [old]SCO software, though pre-2000 Chrysler may have.

After the DaimlerChrysler suit was tossed, McBride downplayed the whole thing: "McBride also today shrugged off an Oakland County Circuit Court decision to grant most of a DaimlerChrysler motion to dismiss a case brought by SCO over certification and compliance issues associated with its use of Unix as the 'equivalent of losing a pre-season football game'". – Darl McBride, 2004-08-05

Oakland County Court closed the docket on March 2, 2005.

We can set aside both AutoZone and Red Hat for a while: in each case, the judge has placed everything on hold, pending resolution of the two Utah cases. SCOG, Red Hat, and AutoZone must make quarterly reports to the judges.

And now for something completely different: another digression.

Though derived from a common source, US and UK courts and their legal systems are quite different from one another. The immediate result is that some of the procedures and antics may appear quite bizarre. They frequently are bizarre, but they follow a set of rules. There are also a large number of courts in the US hierarchy. In fact there are several hierarchies: county, municipality, state, and federal. The SCOG v IBM and SCOG v Novell cases are both being heard in the Federal District Court in Salt Lake City, Utah. Dale A. Kimball is the presiding judge and Brooke C. Wells is the magistrate judge assisting him in both the IBM and the Novell cases.

I have made no secret elsewhere that I have strong feelings where SCOG is concerned. But I have tried to be relatively dispassionate in relating all the preceding: All the names and dates are correct, etc.

However, before ending this introductory essay, I'd like to look at the initial complaints by SCOG in the IBM and Novell suits.

The first document is quite long, running well over 125 numbered sections. However, when I read the initial assertions in 2003, I laughed at times.

"2. ...SCO is now the present owner of UNIX and SCO/UNIX software..."

"17. All commercial UNIX "flavors" in use today are based on UNIX System V Technology..."

"18. SCO is the present owner of all software code and licensing rights to System V Technology."

There is much more. But, and it is a very big but, Novell contests that [old] SCO ever purchased the Unix "software code." And it is very difficult to believe that Apple's OS X is based "on UNIX System V Technology" (it is based on the Mach kernel and BSD layers) or that it's not "commercial."

Many of SCOG's other claims are of questionable historicity. I may cite examples of these in the next article. However, SCOG's claims have changed dramatically over the three years. They no longer claim any patent violations; they have dropped several copyright claims; etc. And they have dropped many Linux allegations.

So that those of you who haven't been following the case diligently can see that I'm not being trivial here, Brian Kernighan has signed a statement that he can find no Unix code in the Linux kernel. And that should take care of it.

The Novell suit can be seen to be a follow-on to this: Novell had the audacity to assert that not SCOG, but Novell owned the copyright to System V code. This impugned SCOG.

Let me end this installment with "why?"

I think that Caldera bought most of [old]SCO for its sales and distribution chain, not for its software. When Ransom Love left and McBride was brought in, the combined businesses were waning. McBride thought that money could be made through corporate blackmail. And IBM has the deepest pockets among the Unix/Linux licensees. He guessed wrong. And, so far, none of the "evidence" exposed to the public has passed scrutiny.

As to why the suits have kept on as the bank balance waned ... you'll just have to wait.

For all the available documents, see

<http://www.groklaw.net> For a Pythonesque (Monty) view, see

<http://blogs.linux.ie/frankly/2003/12/05/not-quite-a-cheese-shop/>

This article is the first of a series of original articles which Peter Salus has agreed to write for the UKUUG Newsletter

LPI Linux Certification in a Nutshell, 2nd Edition **Steven Pritchard, Bruno Gomes Pessanha and Nicolai Langfeldt**

O'Reilly Media

ISBN 0-596-00528-8

978pp.

£ 42.50

Published: 4th August 2006

reviewed by Greg Matthews

The Linux Professional Institute (LPI) is a non profit organisation set up in 1999 to advocate and assist in the professional use of Linux, Open Source and Free Software. It develops certification for the GNU/Linux operating system, independent of software vendors or training providers. The Institute is sponsored by IBM, Novell, SGI, Turbolinux, Linux Magazine and Linux Journal among others.

This book is a weighty tome consisting of almost 1000 pages. There was much criticism of the last edition for being out of date and out of step with the exams so it is a relief to find that the second edition has been extensively updated and reworked.

It is of course impossible to give you a full flavour of all 43 chapters but most of you will be familiar with the Nutshell series; they are designed as a desktop reference books. This one is divided into 4 parts: General Linux Exam 101, General Linux Exam 102, General Linux Exam 201 and unsurprisingly General Linux Exam 202. The first part starts off with a very brief introduction to the LPI exams and a study guide, the rest of part 1 and 2 are devoted to fairly basic topics on x86 hardware and GNU/Linux installations such as file systems and the FHS, booting and run levels, printing, networking etc. Each chapter is split up into clear Objectives and the information is delivered in a clear and direct manner. There are what look like cut down man pages for summarising commands and their frequently used options. I found this quite refreshing as it provides the tersely accurate information of a man page without having to wade through pages of obscure options. There are plenty of examples in many areas of the book but some might complain that they are not provided for everything.

Parts 2 and 3 start to explore more interesting topics such as patching and compiling the kernel, LVM, setting up network services such as Email, Web and DNS.

At the end of each part of the book are a review chapter and a practice test. The first two parts also include a Highlighters Index which is a bit like ready-made revision notes.

Obviously, the primary audience for this book is those intending to take the LPI exams. I found a news article from February this year that claims more than 27000 LPIC-1 and almost 5000 LPIC-2 certifications had been awarded. In November last year, the total number of exams delivered was over 100,000. This pass rate suggests that the exams are not a doddle.

The main problem with books of this kind is keeping the information accurate and up to date. For instance, whilst the objective on Sendmail covers most of the bases, it is centred on an already outdated version and contains at least one technical error (errata submitted). Unfortunately, the LPIC exam topics have changed as of mid 2006. For instance there is more emphasis on MTAs other than Sendmail. Chapter 28 deals with configuring RAID but makes no mention of mdadm which will now be required on the exam. Unfortunately, these problems occur throughout the book, anyone seriously considering taking the exams is strongly advised to visit the LPI website for an up to date version of the exam objectives.

These criticisms aside, this book is a creditable attempt to provide a reference guide to the LPI exam objectives and in itself, is a useful desktop reference. Haven't set up DNS for a while? turn to chapter 37 for a refresh, for example. However, it is difficult to recommend this book as a generic system administration reference as it spreads itself too thinly. It provides enough rope to hang an inexperienced sysadmin but not enough to act as a lifeline for an experienced one. Buy this book if you are studying for the LPI exams, it covers many of the objectives in enough detail and has good review sections and practice questions. But remember to check the LPI web site to make sure you are covering the current curriculum. Note that my criticisms of the book are not shared by the editor of Linux Journal (one of the LPI sponsors) who awarded it Editor's Choice 2006.

The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom

Yochai Benkler

Yale University Press

ISBN 0-300-11056-1

512pp.

£ 25.00

Published: 26th May 2006

reviewed by Paul Miller

Through boom, bust and boom again, books about the internet tend to fall into two traps. They either fly into hyperbole about how a new online gizmo or company is the next big thing or they tell us to be afraid, very afraid, and lock up our children's keyboards, lest innocents be sucked into an evil vortex of sex and gaming.

Yochai Benkler, a Yale law professor, doesn't fall into either trap with his ambitious attempt to understand how the internet is changing society. What Benkler sees is an emerging pattern in the way we use network technologies which he thinks is positive for democracy and innovation, but not without its downsides. He argues that the internet is making obvious an existing form of exchange – social sharing – and taking it from the periphery to the mainstream of the economy. Conventional economics can't explain why volunteer-generated projects such as Wikipedia or open-source software, which are given away for free, have been so successful. He proposes his own theory of "social production" – "commons-based peer production" – to fill the gap.

It's a counterpoint to the received wisdom that creating and exploiting intellectual property (patents and copyright) is the only way to do business in the 21st century. He points out that in 2003 IBM made twice as much money from providing open-source services as it did from intellectual property – despite the fact that between 1999 and 2004 it created more patents than any other US company. Benkler proposes that this is a pattern we will see repeated. The thesis is unsettling for those businesses, particularly entertainment ones, that have relied on controlling distribution of copyrighted material. He says not that they will disappear overnight but that social production is more than a fad. It is no surprise to Benkler that: "We find ourselves in the midst of a battle over the institutional ecology of the digital environment."

Benkler considers the emerging detail of these battles for the legal framework of the internet that could skew the governance of creativity. He finds it contemptible that, if current trends continue, the works of Elvis and Disney will never enter the public domain in the same way as Mozart or Shakespeare.

The book draws on a staggering array of disciplines: from graph theory to economics, law to political science. But Benkler's breadth is not at the expense of depth. The book is all the more

convincing because of the legal precision with which he treats examples, from the “Barbie” entry on Wikipedia to the scandal over Diebold voting machines in the US. He never falls for easy, superficial conclusions.

His writing is clear and readable, although occasionally the technical subject matter makes it hard work. Keeping it as light as he does is a remarkable feat for a heavyweight piece of work.

There is, of course, something perverse about the fact that perhaps the best work yet about the fast-moving, enthusiast-driven internet has taken an academic 10 years to write and is printed on 528 pages of dead tree. But perhaps the interesting social production happens post-publication. The book is released under a Creative Commons licence so you can download it free from his website (www.benkler.org) and Benkler has given readers all manner of collaborative tools to discuss the book and take the ideas forward. You’ll want a hard copy to thumb through, though. This is an important book.

This review was first published in the Financial Times. We are very grateful to Paul Miller for granting us permission to reprint it here.

Ruby on Rails: Up and Running

Bruce A. Tate and Curt Hibbs

O’Reilly Media

ISBN 0-596-10132-5

182pp.

£ 20.99

Published: 5th September 2006

reviewed by Paul Waring

As a programmer with several years of experience in various languages (primarily using C-style syntax), a book which describes itself as “for experienced developers who are new to Rails and possibly to Ruby” is just what I’m looking for. I’m already familiar with the general concepts of programming but would like to find out more about this ‘Ruby on Rails’ thing that everyone seems to be raving about, and this new book from O’Reilly promises to bring me up to speed without being too patronising.

The first chapter of the book, perhaps somewhat unsurprisingly, provides the reader with a very brief introduction to Ruby on Rails, followed by an explanation of the Model View Controller design pattern, which is a paradigm shift for many programmers. The coverage of how to set up a Ruby on Rails environment is somewhat sparse (though there is an appendix that covers this topic in more detail), but this is acceptable given that the goal of the book is to get experienced developers up and running quickly rather than holding their hands every step of the way. The first chapter also lacks a discussion of Ruby’s weaknesses for the reader to weigh up against the list of its strengths, but it could be argued that readers of this book have already decided that Ruby is the right choice for them and just want to get to grips with it as quickly as possible.

After the introduction, the book wastes no time in getting stuck in with practical examples of what can be done with Ruby on Rails. The authors jump straight in with database access and manipulation and within just a few chapters they have already explained all the basics, including templates and scaffolding, and created a functional photo gallery. This mini-project is expanded on throughout the book with the introduction of advanced features such as drag and drop which, despite being complicated to implement from scratch, requires less than 100 lines of code when using Ruby on Rails.

The most pleasing part of the book for me though was the dedication of the final chapter to testing. Usually this is a topic which is either dragged out to form entire books (and therefore

is so tedious that no one bothers to do it) or is skipped over as being something trivial which you can do at the end of a project if you finish before the deadline. This book manages to get the balance right between emphasizing the importance of testing, whilst making it simple enough that there is the possibility of developers actually bothering to do it.

Overall, this is a good book to read if you match the target audience exactly, i.e. you are an experienced developer who can pick up new languages fairly easily and could find out for yourself how to setup a Rails environment on your development platform of choice. However, if this description doesn't sound like you at all I'd strongly recommend a more basic introduction to Ruby on Rails, because this book won't throw you a lifeline should you start to sink part way through reading it.

Mastering Regular Expressions

Jeffrey E F Friedl

O'Reilly Media

ISBN 0-596-52812-4

542pp.

£ 31.99

Published: 18th August 2006

reviewed by John Collins

Regular expressions are a well-established part of the currency of the computer world, especially the UNIX and Linux sub-worlds. From their humble beginnings in `grep` and `ed`, then `sed`, `awk` and `lex`, they really expanded in facilities with Perl and software which adopted the Perl style, such as Python, Java and even `.NET`.

I sometimes get the impression that programmers have used the regular expression (which I abbreviate to "RE" but the author of this book to "regex") as a test of their virility and have written their own parser with slightly different features (I plead guilty to doing this myself at one time). Most UNIX systems have "regex" and "regexp" libraries which have different syntax and features (that's my excuse for writing my own version!). There are two basic styles "grep" and "ed" style, in which `()s` stand for themselves and have to be escaped for grouping and the "egrep" and "perl" style which is the other way around, but you often have to remember whether the version you are dealing with support things like `\b` (word boundary) or `[:alpha :]`.

This book introduces regular expressions and takes the reader through all the obscure extensions introduced by Perl such as non-greedy matching (which I find quite useful as `(. *?)` : looks a lot neater to me than `([^ :] *)` : and similar), atomic and possessive matching, look-ahead and look-behind expressions etc.

The author is clearly a serious Perl programmer and most of the examples are taken from Perl. Some of the material, for example interpolating Perl variables and executing expressions, are entirely Perl dependent. Other languages, such as Python, get mentions in passing, in the style "this is how you do the Perl thing we've just described in the following list of languages". Java does rather better, as does VB.NET and PHP but I get the feeling that the author's first love is Perl.

I think the book describes the world of Regular Expressions well as far as it goes. Python and other language enthusiasts will miss proper sections on their languages. Major omissions to me are descriptions and use of the various C libraries, in particular the PCRE (Perl Compatible Regular Expression) library which is worth using for all new software. I'd also like a nice appendix or two or a pull-out card listing the syntax of some of the more obscure constructs and what is available in what version of regular expressions.

I think this book will probably be of most use to Perl programmers trying to dream up constructs to achieve particular tasks but it may well disappoint other people.

PHP Cookbook

David Sklar and Adam Trachtenberg

O'Reilly Media

ISBN 0-596-10101-5

810pp.

£ 31.99

Published: 8th September 2006

reviewed by Alain Williams

I come at this from the point of view of having used the 1st edition of this book by the same authors, published in 2003. Obvious differences are that the new book is 784 pages in 26 chapters (up from 608 and 21) and covers PHP5, but the iguana on the front cover does not appear to have aged.

Some of the recipes are simple things easily found from the on-line PHP manual, eg the discussions of `date()` and `file_exists()`; far more useful are the ones where different pieces are drawn together, for example: storing md5 hashes of a password in a database and the corresponding check at login; or reading mail with IMAP or POP3. Something that can be easily found in the manual index has no place in a book like this, especially when they are common to many programming languages. Fortunately there is much in this book that avoids that trap, just skip over much of the chapter on arrays.

Some of the recipe titles are obscure. For instance “Introspecting Objects” could be much better understood in an index as “Inspecting Objects’ properties and methods”.

As expected the chapter on objects is expanded, there are lots of recipes that illustrate new magic such as `__sleep()` and `__set()`. If you are new to PHP5 it would be worth reading this chapter all through rather than dipping in from the index.

There are two new chapters on Web Services from the point of view of Clients and Servers. This has become trendy and there are a lot of new PHP5 features for SOAP, and XML; most of the discussion here is about SOAP.

There is a new chapter on security, this is welcome given the unfortunate frequency that PHP scripts seem to appear in the bugs lists. Although useful I feel that more good practise could have been said; but I suppose that O'Reilly have Chris Shiflett's book on PHP security.

The chapter on Error Handling, Debugging and Testing is also new. This covers PHP5's exceptions (`try`, `catch`), stack traces, control of error logging, testing and debugging.

Regular expressions is a new chapter. The other chapters have been updated with new recipes alongside the old ones.

As is common in a book like this there are long chunks of (downloadable) code sometimes, unfortunately, without internal comments – come on guys, you are trying to be helpful to your readers here!

There are a few tit-bits for system administrators as well such as a new discussion on compiled code-caching accelerators and `ab` for Apache benchmarking in a chapter on performance tuning and load testing – although it leaves a lot unsaid.

Summary: overall it is useful, if you are into PHP – buy it.

Python in a Nutshell

Alex Martelli

O'Reilly Media

ISBN 0-596-00188-6

654pp.

£ 28.50

Published: 14 Mar 2003

reviewed by Graham Lee

It has long been the case that when I need a reference book for a programming topic, I'll check to see if there's a Nutshell first. Python in the Nutshell, like the rest of the series, is really easy to search; not through the index, but because the book is divided into a hierarchy of parts and chapters so that it's obvious where a particular topic will be covered.

The style in this book alternates between discussion and summary, with language feature descriptions mainly being wordier and the module references much more concise. This can make finding a particular piece of information harder in the language reference, but still works well because the discussion goes into amazing detail about how particular features are implemented, referring to the PEPs – online documents relating to the Python development process – where applicable. Because Python is a moving target, the book has to refer to three different versions of the language (2.3 to 2.5) which makes more sense than would treating any one of the versions in vacuo, but can complicate some descriptions.

The coverage of the “standard” library of modules is organised thematically, and alongside tables of function references includes some very useful examples of use. The book then closes with a section on both the classic C Python and Java-based Jython runtimes, and how to use Python alongside the native language in each case. Some small mention of IronPython (a .NET implementation of Python) is made, but as that project was not complete at the time of publication the coverage is little more than an indication to take a look at their website. Both it and PyPy (a Python implementation in Python) seem mentioned just for sake of completeness.

This book is one that will find its regular place to be not in my bookshelf but on the desk next to the computer. Because it's so readily searchable, it can frequently be quicker to find that function I've forgotten the name of in the Nutshell than to use pydoc. My review copy is already showing signs of thumb attacks.

Programming Python

Mark Lutz

O'Reilly Media

ISBN 0-596-00925-9

1596pp.

£ 42.50

Published: 5th September 2006

reviewed by Roger Whittaker

This book has grown over the years, from a large book (First Edition) to a tome (Second Edition) to a doorstep (this time round).

It has gained weight to the extent of 300 pages since the second edition, and has three more chapters than previously. The structure of the book has changed significantly, and though much of the new edition consists of the same text as before, parts have been rewritten and some parts of the older book have been left out or incorporated into new chapters. It does of course also

reflect the changes in the language as it has reached version 2.4 and now 2.5 (which appeared just after the book's publishing date).

The book itself stresses that it is to be regarded as a tutorial (or perhaps a set of tutorials) rather than a reference book – for that see “Python in a Nutshell” reviewed elsewhere in this issue by Graham Lee. For information in smaller sized chunks about how to do useful stuff with Python, there is also the “Python Cookbook”.

This book's approach is to explain by doing. Some of the sections are fairly small self-contained descriptions of how particular modules can be used in practice. Other examples develop solid projects in which the author leads you through (among others) creating a Python GUI mail client, a Python webmail server and several fully functional GUI programs. This approach necessarily means building on top of a lot of preparatory work in which the author creates the infrastructure for his project first in the form of various classes and modules. As a result you cannot expect to just quickly grab something useful from any part of the book: you have to follow the author's way of achieving his results.

Unlike the second edition, this book does not come with a CD, but all the code examples are available from the O'Reilly web site. The examples come with a launcher which at the same time runs a simple editor written in Python (as one of the book's projects) allowing you to view and edit the code.

JavaScript the Definitive Guide

David Flanagan

O'Reilly Media

ISBN 0-596-10199-6

1018pp.

£ 35.50

Published: 25th August 2006

reviewed by Lindsay Marshall

The fifth edition. I must have reviewed this at least three times already.

Edition 4 had 916 pages and this one has 994. Probably they will crack the thousand with the inevitable edition 6. First off let me say what I have said before: this is the O'Reilly book I use most. It sits on my desk next to me and I consult it regularly. It is an indispensable companion if you write JavaScript, no matter how expert you may be. If you don't already own a copy, buy it, if you already have bought it then you have to think a bit more about it: full price this is a 35 quid book. Do you need the new edition? Probably not if you are just writing, what we might call Web 1.0 JavaScript, but if you are messing around with all the Web 2.0 stuff like Ajax and SVG then there is a lot of good new stuff in here (though much of it is browser specific so beware).

There are even a few nods to the school of unobtrusive JavaScript in here, and I am glad to say that the section on Ajax is short, informs and does not gush. Interestingly there is no discussion of the increasingly prevalent use of library packages such as prototype. It may be that they are waiting to see if the fad for downloading 60K chunks of script fades away or turns into the norm (and then comes the 6th edition with a *lot* more pages).

Thinking about it, if you are still writing Web 1.0 JavaScript you probably ought to buy this to upgrade your skills. So all of you, buy it.

Unicode Explained

Jukka K Korpela

O'Reilly Media

ISBN 0-596-10121-X

704pp.

£ 42.50

Published: 28th June 2006

reviewed by Roger Whittaker

I don't claim any specific expertise which would qualify me as a reviewer of this book: unicode has always been something that I've found confusing. At times my lack of understanding has become an irritation when (for instance) I'm attempting to write code to process XML which contains "illegal characters". So this review is more about whether unicode really is "explained" by this book.

What this book does very well, I think, is explaining and clarifying the concepts: explaining what a character is, what a glyph is, what an encoding is, and so on. Clear definitions are essential, and it's confusion about these definitions and the logical differences between them which makes the subject tricky.

Moving to the more practical parts of the book, there is a lot of useful material. A lot of it is reference material that's only useful if you want (for instance) to know about the special form of the letter 'e' that appears on food packets near the quantity in grammes. There is much more information of that general type, explaining for instance why a 'K' representing the symbol for degrees Kelvin can and should be regarded as different from the standard letter K. This can all get a bit metaphysical: is the symbol for electrical resistance the same as the capital Greek letter Omega, or is it not?

There is of course some discussion of Far Eastern and Middle Eastern alphabets as well as mathematical and other symbols, but the detailed tables at the back of the book mostly cover what might be regarded as extensions and additions to Western character sets.

Unfortunately the book is rather Windows-centric, particularly in terms of describing input methods and the like. That's perhaps a reflection of the fact that in our world these things are less standardised and more complex.

The author is Finnish, and some of the screenshots have been taken on a Finnish-language version of Windows. This doesn't really matter, but came as a slight surprise when I first encountered it.

I'd like to have seen more about the handling of unicode in Perl, Python and other such languages, as in my experience that's been where the problems of the fact that one is dealing with unicode hits one.

But in general, this is a very good introduction to unicode and I shall certainly be revisiting it.

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ings, Special Interest Groups, Working Groups, Mailing Lists. UKUUG.org email addresses, the UKUUG diary and Local Unix Groups.

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Peter H Salus has been (inter alia) the Executive Director of the USENIX Association and Vice President of the Free Software Foundation. He is the author of "A Quarter Century of Unix" (1994) and other books.

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