

news

UPDATES ON TECHNOLOGIES, TRENDS, AND TOOLS



This Month

Being open means admitting your mistakes

When we relaunched the News section, I promised to hold it to the same standards of openness and honesty practiced within the open source community. With this in mind, I have to confess: I screwed up.

I falsely reported that Canonical was working on a tablet-specific version of Ubuntu that was slated for release later this fall. The article was taken off our website within a day and I take full responsibility for the mistake. Here's how it happened:

On June 11 news came up that Canonical was planning on releasing a tablet-specific version of Ubuntu. Engadget reported the news at 3:15am and cited PC World as its source. I immediately checked the PC World article, which verified the information reported by Engadget and contained a few quotes from Chris Kenyon, Canonical's vice president of OEM services. I didn't stop there, though. I emailed Amber Graner, frequent contributor to our sister publication Ubuntu User and wife of one of Ubuntu's kernel managers for verification.

Here's where things go bad. June 11 was the first day of SouthEast LinuxFest 2010, the UbuCon day, which meant just about every source I needed for verification wasn't available. Given the number of trusted sources that were already reporting the story, I made a judgement call and reported the story, with plans to update it when my sources got back to me.

It wasn't long before our own Rikki Kite informed me that the story was bogus, and I took it down. I awaited updates from my sources, who soon informed me that it wasn't a single detail that was wrong, but the entire story. Kenyon had been misquoted and, as of this writing, Canonical has no plans for making a tablet-specific build of Ubuntu.

Being open means acknowledging successes and failures equally. Doing so encourages accountability as well as a higher standard of quality. And while it was my mistake to make, it won't be one I repeat any time soon.

THIS MONTH'S NEWS

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MORE NEWS ONLINE

Google App Inventor for Android

<http://www.linuxpromagazine.com/Online/News/Google-Releases-App-Inventor-for-Android>

Firefox 4 Beta loves HTML5

<http://www.linuxpromagazine.com/Online/News/Firefox-4-Beta-Loves-HTML5>

Spotify comes to Linux

<http://www.linuxpromagazine.com/Online/News/Spotify-Comes-to-Linux>

Video interview: OSCON Django speakers

<http://www.linuxpromagazine.com/Online/News/Interview-Jacob-Kaplan-Moss-and-Frank-Wiles-of-Django>

Android 2.2 Bests iOS 4 in JavaScript Performance



The iPhone 4 and a Froyo-enabled Nexus One go head-to-head

Ars Technica reports that Google's Android OS out-classed iOS in JavaScript benchmark testing.

For the tests, Ars stacked a Nexus One running Android 2.2 against an iPhone 4 running iOS 4. They then put both devices' mobile browsers through the SunSpider and V8 benchmarks.

The SunSpider benchmark runs a series of JavaScript tasks several times and then returns the mean result. A lower number equals better performance. In the Ars test, Android 2.2 was nearly twice as fast, returning a

mean result of 5,795.5ms compared with the 10,902.1ms turned in by iOS 4. The V8 benchmark, conversely outlines a set of individual JavaScript tests and computes a geometric mean on the basis of how many times all of the processes can be completed in a given time frame. In other words, bigger is better. In this test, Android 2.2 generated a mean score of 287, whereas iOS 4 turned in a mean score of 67.

The results speak for themselves, but I'll say them anyway: Froyo is nearly five times faster than iOS 4 in the V8 benchmark and almost twice as fast in SunSpider.



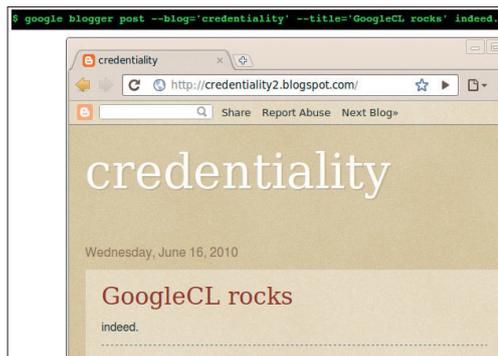
Google Command Line Uses Python to Make Data API Calls

Access Google services from a command line

Google released GoogleCL late last week, an open source program for Linux, Mac, and Windows that allows a user to issue commands to popular Google services APIs in the Python code language. The program makes use of the GData Python client library, which needs to be downloaded along with GoogleCL for the program to function properly.

With GoogleCL, it's possible to upload and delete Blogger blogs, create and edit calendar events, create new albums and rename photos in Picasa, and edit and list videos in YouTube. In the hands of intrepid Python users, much, much more is possible. GoogleCL currently works on GData APIs, which rules out Gmail, Buzz, and Search.

Google has both the tarball and .deb packages for download, with plans for Debian and Ubuntu repositories for the next release.



NEWS BITES

Palm Waives App Submission Fee for Developers

In an effort to boost webOS app development, Palm dropped its US\$ 50 fee required to get an app featured in Palm's official app catalog. Palm is also retroactively refunding any US\$ 50 fees accrued during webOS development. This announcement comes at the end of the Summer Half-Off promotion, which distributed US\$ 1 million to more than 400 developers while cutting app prices for consumers by 50 percent.

Flock Re-Appears; Now Based on Chromium

Flock, the social web browser, makes a return, this time based on Google's open source Chromium browser. The original version of the browser, Flock 1.0, was released in 2007 and was based on Mozilla's Firefox browser. At a time when social media was first taking shape, Flock was designed with blog publishing options and social networking functions built in.

The resulting browser, which is currently available only on Windows, features the familiar minimalist design of Chromium with added features custom to Flock.

Twitter Opens MySQL Migration Tool

At this year's Hadoop Summit, Twitter Analytics Lead Kevin Weil announced that the company would open source Crane, its migration tool used to move MySQL data into Hadoop.

Hadoop is used by Twitter to examine collected analytics, as well as data crunching for live tools such as name search. Weil said that Twitter uses Scribe to log data into Hadoop and Crane to manage tabular data. Crane moves MySQL data to the Hadoop filesystem (HDFS); Hbase, another Hadoop-compatible database; Flock; Google Analytics; or Facebook Insights.



Interview:

Ian Weller

Ian Weller has been an avid contributor to the Fedora Project for more than three years – first as a package manager and now as a member of the community architecture team. The catch? He was 16 at the time. Recently, Weller was awarded the 2010 Fedora Scholarship for his contributions to Fedora and his dedication to open source software. When he came to Lawrence, Kansas, to enroll in classes at the University of Kansas, he stopped by our office and answered questions about Fedora, Flam3, and what his friends think of his hobby.

Trevan McGee: *What do they have you doing at Fedora?*

Ian Weller: Probably 25 percent of it is stuff I've already been doing in Fedora and keeping that going and probably the other 75 percent is: The community architecture team wants to know or wants to prove to the people with money at Red Hat, "Here's the Fedora Project, it's doing awesome stuff that's affecting Red Hat's bottom line; let's continue funding it and supporting it more than we already have been." That's kind of my main task. And probably another 10 percent on top of that 100 percent is just doing general, basic programming and stuff because we're only a four-person team. We haven't been real heavy on programming before. So, it's good to have that additional programming experience on there.

TM: *When you say "four-person team," you mean what you're doing now, right?*

IW: Yeah. The community architecture team is Max (Spevack), Karsten (Wade), Mel (Chua), and me.

TM: *You got started with Fedora in 2007, correct?*

IW: I think I started when either 15 or 16 (years old). Fifteen is probably it. No, I'm betting 16. The first thing I did for Fedora was package maintenance. A lot of people have told me, "You started out at the Fedora Project, at the age you were and yet, you chose the hardest thing to do." I don't know; it was fun.

TM: *What drew you to package maintenance?*

IW: There was a specific piece of software. At that time I was really into fractals and generating those. And there's a program in a library that does fractal flam3 generation. I didn't see that in the Yum repository, and so I just decided, "Okay, I'm going to go put it in Yum." And the rest is history. That review process took about two months because I had little experience with RPM other than installing them. I think I started that package review in December 2007 and then that was finally approved in February.

TM: *According to your project wiki you oversee 17 packages. Is that correct?*

IW: Something like that. I orphaned like half of them recently because I just had too much of a workload with high school and all that. I think 17's about right. I used to have about 30 or so, and I was neglecting all of them.

TM: *Do your friends know that you do this stuff?*

IW: Yeah. They know of my involvement in Fedora. I don't think they knew probably for the first six months or so until I told them I was going to Boston and Red Hat was paying for it. Other than that, it's just been part of my life since that time, and it's been fun.

TM: *How do they react to stuff like you getting an apartment in Raleigh for the summer (for his internship), so that you work on the project, or your attending SELF?*

IW: At this point, they're pretty used to me just flying to places, but not for two months at a time. I think actually the reaction wasn't surprise, it was, "Well crap, now we can't do anything during the summer."

But those are all friends who are also going to KU, so it's not like I'm not going to see them for the next four years.

TM: *With what you're working on now, where do you see yourself in the Fedora Project in the months and years to come?*

IW: That's a very interesting question because I see myself as a lot of things and then nothing all at the same time. A lot of people come to me with questions about the Fedora Project wiki. A lot of people know about MediaWiki, but they don't understand the nuances of the template syntax and the rest of the syntax, and that's something I've been able to help out with.

I recently just spent the beginning of this week getting internationalization support up and running on the wiki after it's been on the wish list for two years. A lot of people come up to me with wiki questions. People are starting to now see me

as that one guy who deals with statistics. There's quite a few more.

I do packaging stuff as previously mentioned, and other than that, I basically hang out in IRC channels for Fedora and see if there's anything that interests me.

TM: You mentioned statistics a couple of seconds ago, what drew you to this and what aspect of the project do you really enjoy?

IW: The thing that I enjoy most about the Fedora Project is being able to give back to something I use. I don't have any knowledge of the intricacies of the desktop environment, Gnome, D-Bus, whatever.

I don't even understand how D-Bus works. It's freaking magic to me, so I just decide that I'm going to give back on the support level. Keep the wiki up. Work on the community architecture team.

None of this was pre-planned of course, but I knew I wanted to give back.

TM: Is that more of an open source trait?

IW: Oh yeah. If I were using something that wasn't free software - even if it had a community around it - if I wanted to give back, it would be, what? Telling people on a forum to stop flaming each other, possibly?

Here, I can do something constructive and actually be able to tell someone, "Yeah, I helped do that." That's the open source way.

TM: You're majoring in computer science. What do you want to get out of the major?

IW: A better understanding of programming. I can hack around a little bit in Python. I have some grasp of object-oriented programming down. I don't know a damn thing about C. I want to stay away from Java. C is something I'll learn from KU.

C++ is actually what we'll be learning, that's a pure object-oriented environment, so that will help me learn the theory behind the programming. And then I can take what I already know, which is practical programming and move on from there as a better programmer, at least.

I don't think KU has very much in dealing with free and open source software aspects, but that is one of the projects that two of my co-workers on the community architecture team are working on - bringing free and open source software ideals not just to the work environments of the students, but to the teachers, and changing the way they teach. So that instead of saying, "Write this tiny piece of code that does nothing useful for the rest of time," take from that to getting them involved in their third or fourth year of undergrad in projects like Mozilla or Fedora.



German Unix User Group

September, 21-24

Linux-Kongress 2010

17. International Linux System Technology Conference

Linux-Kongress, organized by GUUG, is the traditional developer meeting of Linux kernel hackers and FOSS developers. Since its start 1994 Linux-Kongress has been evolved into the most important meeting for Linux experts and developers in Europe.

Also this year is a great opportunity for you to get the latest information and training: Linux-Kongress offers about 30 talks and 8 tutorials and many opportunities to chat with peers who share your interests.

Highlights this year: Keynote from Jon Corbet (LWN.net)

Talks about DECT and GSM stacks, systemd, control groups

Key topics KVM and networking

Tutorials about HA clustering, SELinux, QEMU, IPv6 porting

For conference schedule, online registration and further information

about this event see www.linux-kongress.org/2010/

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WE ARE OPEN!

Nokia Quietly Retires Symbian from N-Series Smartphones

Out with the old, in with the new

Nokia announced it will retire Symbian for the popular N-series smartphones. "Going forward, N-series device will be based on MeeGo," Nokia spokesperson Doug Dawson told Reuters.

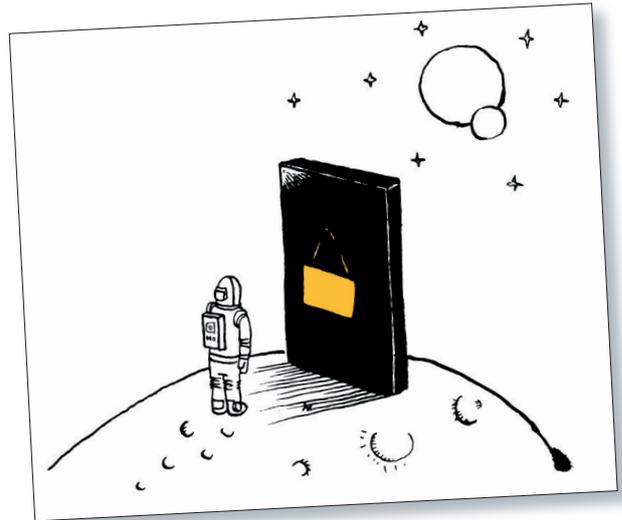
The commitment to MeeGo means that the last N-series phone to feature Symbian is the N800.

This announcement coincided with the release of the MeeGo Handset Experience in late June.

MeeGo is a Linux-based open source mobile operating system that merged Intel's work on Moblin and Nokia's

work on Maemo. Symbian will continue to be used in low-end phones from Nokia, Samsung, and Sony Ericsson and continues to be the most widely distributed OS on the mobile market.

Symbian has been subject of criticism within its own community lately, as popular Symbian blog Symbian-Guru.com recently decried Nokia and the operating system before jumping ship to Android and the Nexus One.



"I can't continue to support a manufacturer who puts out such craptastic 'flagships' as the N97, and who expects me to use services that even most of Nokia's own employees don't use," said Ricky Cadden, founder of Symbian-Guru.com.

WordPress 3.0 is Live

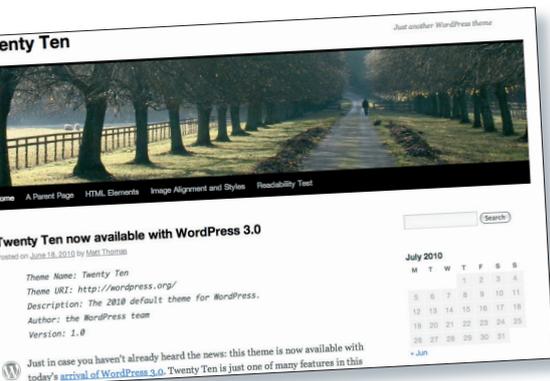
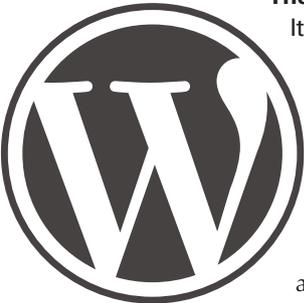
"Thelonious" doesn't blow

It took 218 contributors and six months, but WordPress 3.0 is now live with a few new features sure to make publishers and developers happy.

For starters, theme developers get new APIs that allow for custom shortlinks, headers, backgrounds, taxonomies, and post types. WordPress MU (multiuser) and WordPress have been merged, making it possible to run one blog or several from the same installation.

Users get contextual help on every screen, along with bulk updates. FunnyOrDie.com content is now instantly imbedded through oEmbed. Comments can be adjusted and blocked for future and password-protected posts. Custom taxonomy UI now works for both pages as well as posts. Blogs can also be created with no role assigned.

WordPress 3.0 has quite a few new features, all of which are meticulously detailed. The team that oversaw 3.0 is taking a few months off of their development cycle to focus on the community surrounding WordPress.



Mandriva Restructures

Financial challenges and a loosely defined publishing strategy cited as reasons for relaunch

Mandriva announced plans to refocus the company in lieu of mounting financial hardship and an unclear publishing strategy. In the short term, restructuring means cutting costs and drumming up new investors. The company has already added two new board members: Jean-Noël de Galzain, president of IF Research and Wallix, and Bertrand Glineur, the former DSI of Crédit Foncier de France, and member of the GCE business board.

In the long-term, Mandriva Linux will be distributed by a sales force and integrated IT network and OEM partnerships in Europe, the Middle East, Brazil, Russia, India, and China. Their primary target industries will be education, industry, retail, and services.

"Mandriva finds itself at the heart of a European assembly of Open Source software players which will occur in the coming months," the company stated via press release. In France, Mandriva's home base, the company will partner with IF Research, parent company of Wallix, the software editor.

"By bringing together IF Research and Mandriva, two highly complementary units, Mandriva will be able to strengthen its strategic position," explained Mandriva CEO Arnaud Laprévôte.

Mandriva Spring 2010 was released the first week of July.





MeeGo Launches Its Handset User Experience Project

The project makes its June deadline – just barely

The MeeGo Project released the baseline source code for the handset version of the Linux-based mobile OS to the development community. Progress made to this code will be integrated back into the MeeGo code tree, eventually becoming MeeGo 1.1, which is

slated for an October release.

The MeeGo team also released the MeeGo UI design principles and interaction guidelines to help developers create apps that play well with the overall look and feel of the MeeGo user interface.

“This milestone marks the completion of the merger of Moblin and Maemo as major architecture decisions and technical selections have been determined,” said Valterri Halla, MeeGo director.

The MeeGo Handset Project Day 1 includes APIs incorporating Qt and the MeeGo Touch UI Framework, a subset of

the reference user interface and applications; the core OS and middleware components; and hardware adaptation support for Atom and ARM-based handsets.

The developer preview is available for download at <http://meeego.com/downloads>. For the source code, check out <http://meeego.gitorious.com/>. Full details and release notes are available at <http://meeego.com/downloads/releases/1.0.80.8/meeego-handset-day1-developer-preview/>.



Canonical Becomes First Associate Member of the Open Invention Network

Canonical’s role in both the desktop and embedded environments is the primary reason behind its selection

Canonical became the inaugural entrant in the Open Invention Network’s Associate Member program Tuesday. Although the company that created Ubuntu Linux has been a Licensee for the OIN for some time, the move to Associate Member is a logical one. The OIN’s site describes an Associate Member as follows:

Associate Members are recruited from Linux-related companies, including those that are leaders in advancing Linux’s migration into emerging growth markets. Associate Members make a commitment to the Linux Community by virtue of their commitments to and membership in OIN and help to ensure that patent issues do not impair Linux’s growth.

What this means in terms of patent obligations and membership requirements is unclear, a problem NoSoftware-Patents founder Florian Müller says is indicative of the OIN as a whole.

“The Canonical announcement once again shows the absolutely unacceptable degree of intransparency with which the Open Invention Network operates. Both the press release and the OIN’s website fail to specify what exactly the rights and obligations of OIN Associate Members – as compared to mere licensees – are,” Mueller said.

OIN CEO Keith Bergelt sees things differently. According to Bergelt, the OIN was founded out of community necessity by the founding companies.

“If it’s not broadcast so that everybody is aware of everything we do, somehow there’s this alternate agenda, which I think is unfortunate,” Bergelt said.

The OIN uses patents to influence collaboration within the Linux community. Patents under the OIN are royalty-free to any company, as long as they agree not to leverage any of the patents against Linux. The six founding members of the OIN are IBM, NEC, Novell, Philips, Red Hat, and Sony. Bergelt said Canonical was selected for Associate Member status because of the company’s positioning in both mobile Linux and the Linux desktop. Associate Members are subject to a financial commitment, which Bergelt described as being less than a founding member, but more than a Licensee, who can join the OIN for free.

“[Associate members] have a higher level of positioning within OIN and the ability to influence the direction of our acquisitions and heighten our awareness of critical applications and really the roadmaps for mobile Linux and the Linux desktop,” Bergelt said.

Canonical failed to respond to our inquiry in time for publication.