



Figure 1: In his keynote address, Mark Shuttleworth emphasized extensions.

O'Reilly's yearly open source conference, OSCON, held in Portland, Oregon, attracted more than 3,000 attendees between July 21 and 25. A variety of talks covered topics such as real-life stories on the adoption of open source tools in major corporations, open source community tips, security, Perl, Python, Ruby, open source databases, and legal issues. Into the mix came a variety of "lightning talks," in which representatives for both established and new projects had the opportunity to present themselves or give a status update within five minutes to fairly large audiences with high tolerance levels.

In his keynote address, Ubuntu's Mark Shuttleworth emphasized that building applications for extensions is key, and he pointed to addons.mozilla.org as a poster child implementation of this concept. In an effort to catch up with Apple's artsy OS X desktop, Shuttleworth announced that Ubuntu will invest in beautifying Gnome until it will look just as slick or downright "blow past Apple" in terms of eye candy. He pointed out that innovation functions particularly well when pursued along with sound economics, which is what Ubuntu accomplishes with Shuttleworth's company Canonical.

Awards

In the long tradition of giving out US\$ 5,000 prizes to the most outstanding open source heroes, the Google Open

Source awards went to Andrew Tridgell of rsync and Samba fame, Harald Welte as the defender of GPL rights, Drupal's Angela Byron as best contributor, Firefox's Chris Messina as best community amplifier, and Moodle's Martin Dougiamas as the best education enabler.

The Perl Foundation's White Camel awards went to Josh McAdams, Jacinta Richardson, Tatsuhiko Miyagawa, and Gabor Szabo for their engagement in the Perl community.

Big Names

Server performance buff Theo Schlossnagle gave a live demo of Sun's system profiler DTrace, which runs on OpenSolaris and also comes standard on any Mac OS X laptop and newer FreeBSD systems. Rumor has it that Linux support is only six months away if the legal roadblocks can be removed. Sun Microsystems could score big points with the open source community if it moved in this direction. In his demo on both a live database and a web server, Schlossnagle showed how highly detailed performance data on any running program in the system – down to the subroutine name in C or even to the file and line of higher-level languages like Perl – can be obtained while the system keeps doing its job under a significant load.

Open source enthusiasts sweep into Portland

OSCON 2008

O'Reilly's annual OSCON event attracted a range of open source enthusiasts who were treated to impressive keynotes, a range of "lightening talks," and plenty of in-depth technical sessions.

BY MIKE SCHILLI

Microsoft was a diamond sponsor of OSCON this year and tried to approach the developer crowd with keynote speeches, a booth in the exhibition hall, and several talks. Sam Ramji, a senior director at Microsoft went on stage in a Firefox T-shirt and listed Microsoft's contributions to open source projects. Then the Apache project confirmed that they are now sponsored by Microsoft.

When the audience asked about patent issues, however, it became evident that there hasn't been real progress on this front, although Microsoft made claims about not going after developers over patent issues. What this means for end users, and what the official party line is and will be, remained somewhat nebulous, as opinions on this issue differ widely within Microsoft, according to Ramji. In general, everyone agrees that it will take a complete overhaul of US software patent laws for this problem to have at least a remote chance of being resolved. ■



Figure 2: Attendees picked up free copies of Linux Pro Magazine and signed up for subscriptions.