

The 2007 Gnome Users and Developers Conference

GUADEC GATHERING

More than 400 Gnome users and developers gathered in the United Kingdom for the July 2007 GUADEC conference.

BY PAUL ADAMS

GUADEC, the annual Gnome users and developers conference, is one of the larger project gatherings on the Linux calendar [1]. This year's gathering in Birmingham, UK, was no different. More than 400 people were in attendance, from all aspects of the Gnome community.

A general buzz of excitement at the Birmingham Conservatoire focused on some early talks about the selection of Gnome and its applications for the Open Moko phone and the Nokia 770 and 800 mobile tablets, and as the desktop of choice for Canonical's Ubuntu distribution.

Moving Ahead

Gnome should not be complacent with its successes, warned LUG Radio's Jono Bacon in his humorous and rabble-rousing opening keynote. He asserted that the project requires "specific, defined direction" and that direction should be

pursued with vigor. The KDE project is strongly focused on this year's release of version 4, so most people at the conference appreciated his point.

In their keynote, Havoc Pennington and Bryan Clark (Red Hat) offered a suggestion for the focus – closer integration between the desktop and the web – which was something reminiscent of Microsoft policy circa 1998. However, despite correctly pointing out that application developers are losing users to the on-line application space, many developers questioned the logic of integrating desktop applications with third-party, on-line systems, such as Google's Gmail. Havoc and Bryan's demo of Mugshot [2] gave a clear indication of how desktops may work in the future. But even the promise of having user data available from any machine, anywhere, couldn't win over all attendees.

This year's program of more than 90 hour-long sessions was delivered in

tracks covering the state of the art, short-term goals, and some of the sexier ideas for potential inclusion in Gnome 3/4 [3]. Conference sessions covered diverse topics such as legal issues, Mono development, and the intriguingly titled "Clutter Foo." Additionally, keynote speeches were presented by Ari Jaaksi (Nokia), Alex Gravely, Rob Love (Google), Stormy Peters (Open Logic), and Doc Searls (*Linux Journal*).

A Real Community

Between talks, attendees could be found talking in the corridors. Unlike many other conferences, the focus of GUADEC is to bring all corners of the desktop community together in an effort to drive the community – not just the product – further. As a result, ad hoc meetings of users and developers were conducted wherever space could be found. Furthermore, there was seldom an IDE in sight, but attendees still managed to use the 20GB bandwidth provided by the ISP by day three.

The feeling of community integration was fostered by the conference's two social events. The events gave hackers and users alike an opportunity to mix outside of the venue and discuss all things Gnome over a few beers.

Looking Forward

After the bustle of the main conference, GUADEC concluded with two days of "after hours" meetings. The focus of these sessions was on helping developers pick up new skills, bringing the conference to a gentle conclusion while also maintaining excitement for new directions in Gnome. And the community *should* be excited – next year's meeting is in Istanbul. ■



Figure 1: GUADEC attendees in their natural environment, the LUG Radio party.

INFO

- [1] GUADEC website:
<http://www.guadec.org/>
- [2] Mugshot website:
<http://www.mugshot.org/>
- [3] GUADEC talks:
<http://www.guadec.org/schedule/core/>