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It's that time of year again. Spring is in the air, the clocks are moving forward, and the first of the year's major Linux conferences is kicking off in Boston, Massachusetts. LinuxWorld Expo (LWE) has rapidly become one of the most interesting and talked about mainstream Linux conventions anywhere in the world. I'm certainly not the only person who would rather fly from London to Boston than go to my local LinuxWorld and revel in a tiny convention hall filled with a few carefully chosen exhibitors.

If last year's convention is anything to go by, this will be a real blast. This time last year, I hooked up with OLS organizer Andrew Hutton for a 1,000 mile road trip that took us (on a very skewed route) from Ottawa to Boston. Once we'd arrived, we enjoyed three days of

Community Notes

LUGS, LIFE, AND THE FBI

hanging out with some of the more well known members of our Free Software community. People like Don Becker, who you may never have heard of, but who single handedly wrote much of the Linux networking stack. If you didn't make it to this year's convention, consider coming along in 2007. You won't be disappointed.

GPL Tested in Court

Ahead of the LinuxWorld Expo, this author is in Boston for the Free Software Foundation's members-only meeting as an opportunity to hang out with some of the cool guys who help to keep the GPL fresh and relevant in a changing and increasingly corporate world. A lot of debate is expected over the upcoming GPL version 3.0, especially the more controversial aspects relating to software patents. Critics have claimed that the patent provisions take the GPL too far. Wherever you sit on that particular issue – and if you don't have an opinion, check out <http://www.fsf.org/> for the drafts – there's no doubt that the GPL helped form the Free Software community that we know today, so it's right that we debate these issues now.

While we're on the subject of the GPL, it's interesting to note that it was tested in US court over the last month. In the case of *Wallace vs. FSF*, the plaintiff attempted to use the same Sherman Act legislation used by the DOJ (Department Of Justice) against Microsoft in their anti-trust proceedings. They alleged that the GPL constituted a contact, combination, or conspiracy; that it created an unreasonable restraint of trade and that the FSF conspired with others to pool and cross-license their intellectual property in a predatory price fixing scheme. The judge dismissed every one of the anti-trust claims.

Not a whole lot has been said about the GPL case by the community as yet, but it'll be interesting to see how this affects the efforts of those who take it upon themselves to enforce the GPL in the United States and elsewhere. It's often claimed that nobody wants to take the GPL to court – perhaps that's true to a certain extent. But when cases such as this one do come up, the community can use them to re-inforce the power of the GPL as a valid and legitimate copyright license. I'd like to see what the folks at the gplviolations.org website have to say, but that site is down as of this writing.

On the Mailing Lists

If you want to know how the latest Linux news is playing around the world, tune in to some international mailing lists. Following are highlights from recent postings.

Mumbai, India

Amit Karpe posted a "Call for Developers for the CSLinux project" to the Mumbai (Bombay) Linux User Group. The plan is to create a custom Linux distribution (based on Fedora Core) that will contain all of the software packages needed by Computer Science students without them having to resort to third party CDs for extra software and plugins, such as a Java runtime environment. In addition, he says people regularly mail to say they have problems configuring software that they may need for short term project work, and he wants to simplify that process for them. If it works out, this is doubtlessly something that other Universities would want to take a look at too.

Sydney, Australia

A large discussion (dozens of posts) took place on the Sydney LUG (SLUG) following the release of Fedora Core 5. Many

people downloaded the latest release using BitTorrent feeds (a legal use for BitTorrent! Someone tell the MPAA, quick!) rather than waiting for regular mirror sites to catch up with the ISO images. This author was amongst those newly installing Fedora over the last month. I then upgraded to the experimental Rawhide distribution, which supports my Powerbook perfectly. Oddly enough, many other groups haven't started discussing the new FC5 release much (yet).

Toronto, Canada

Members of the Greater Toronto LUG debated the forthcoming SCO city to city tour. One member suggested that members might enjoy registering to be wined and dined, saying "let them cast their marketing dollars on barren soil?" Others agreed, saying that they'd been to previous SCO roadshows and enjoyed the mixture of giveaways and meeting former SCO staff. Not everyone was interested in freeloading at SCO's expense, however. One member decided, "in my highly worthwhile opinion, one could get a free meal at the Scott Mission for less mental anguish and with a more interesting crowd?"

Boston, Massachusetts

Google have apparently begun Beta testing their hosted Gmail service, at least that's according to a member of BLU LUG. Google offers to host email for any domain in return for providing their regular targeted advertising. Users are presented with the Gmail interface when reading their mail, which Google will store on their behalf. This might come in handy next time a major sendmail root exploit is discovered, as one was last month. Interestingly, no groups discussed this exploit, suggesting that few people are interested in what happens with sendmail these days.

Nottingham, England

Jono Bacon will be speaking at a forthcoming meeting. Jono is well known in the UK Linux community for his involvement in creating LUGRadio and for organizing the LUG Radio Live event for the second year in a row later this year. This author has seen Jono's talks many times in the past. I'm sure those present won't be disappointed. For those who can't



Figure 1: If you want to learn more about GPL 3, you can start by reading it. The draft license is available right now at the Free Software Foundation website.

make the meeting, check out <http://www.lugradio.org/> and download the latest episode in ogg or mp3 format.

Regular Linux User Groups aren't the only way that you can meet many local Linux enthusiasts near you. I've recently discovered a large number of interest groups via meetup.com. There, you'll find not only Linux meetup groups, but also those dedicated to individual distributions or to concepts such as Free Software in industry. Check it out.

Linux for Subversives

I learned last weekend that certain foreign immigration officers don't like you very much when you try to convince them that you're taking a weekend trip across the Atlantic. There I was doing one of my crazy weekend trips to visit Linuxy friends when all of a sudden I was getting the full treatment. They went through all of my belongings, trying to find something to use against me, and even called up one of my friends for a while, just for fun. When that didn't turn up anything they could use against me, they wanted to check out my laptop.

That's the reason I'm writing about this. For the comedy of the situation that followed. Having been asked to show them my laptop (and after showing them my ACLU membership card, just in case they wanted to read my personal documents) I booted up the laptop and watched the reaction when it became apparent that it wasn't running Win-

dows. These people didn't seem to be much of a Fedora crowd to me. But there I was, trying not to sound like a super subversive type whilst explaining that Microsoft isn't the be all and end all and that, just occasionally, some of us choose to think different.

What bothered me about the whole situation wasn't that I'd been quasi-randomly selected for the glove treatment but that these security people seemed to have absolutely no training about technology. What's the point in relying upon the foreign national to explain what Linux is and why it's different? I could have said anything and it might have been accepted. Until Linux takes over the world, it might be good if someone would mention this stuff when training new security people.

And finally...

The City of Tuttle in Oklahoma had egg on its face after filing complaints with the developers of CentOS that they had hijacked the Tuttle City website. The complaint came about when officials noticed that <http://www.cityoftuttle.org/> was replaced with a single "Apache 2 Test Page powered by CentOS" web page. Some folks at the ISP hosting the website had evidently re-installed the web server, but that was enough for city officials to threaten CentOS with the FBI. You can't make this stuff up – perhaps someone can send those guys some vouchers for free IT training. ■