

The sys admin's daily grind: OpenRhineRuhr

Regional Fair

According to Goethe, the best way to gain an education is to travel. Sys admin Charly went to Oberhausen, Germany, for the OpenRhineRuhr fair last week. *By Charly Kühnast*

I love open Linux fairs – that is, fairs where corporations rub shoulders with clubs, user groups, and other non-commercial exhibitors. The largest fair of this kind in Germany has to be LinuxTag, but some regional fairs try to emulate it. In Oberhausen, about half an hour's drive from where I live, the Rhine Industrial Museum recently provided the exhibition hall for the OpenRhineRuhr fair [1].

The first OpenRhineRuhr in 2009 was a family get-together with all the usual suspects, including good keynotes, pizza, and booths for companies with a known affinity for Linux. What the show lacked was regular visitors. Last week, when I visited the third open fair, I saw many visitors, and it looks like the organizers have finally managed to call the show to order. The WLAN – which tends to groan under the load of the fair traffic – didn't drive anybody to distraction.

I spent Saturday at the fair renewing acquaintances with fellow administrators and programmers and taking in a couple of talks in the process. On Sunday, users and business owners roamed the corridors and broadened their home banking, billing software, and free phone system horizons. The MythTV stand was crowded, perhaps because they were broadcasting a Formula 1 race, but the elegant Linux media center really deserved the attention on its own merit.

I guess some people, yours truly included, stayed longer than planned after reading the program. Talks were held in four rooms during the two days of the show. The "End User" track was more heavily frequented this year than in the past. This track covers topics like Libre-

Office and is mainly targeted at small to mid-sized enterprises. Incoming invoice workflows, groupware, cloud services, time management, and office automation are also popular topics. And, business start-ups got the chance to learn how to avoid making expensive mistakes in the "Starting up with Free Software" talk.

Hold Your Nose

Next door, some Linux professionals were sweating over their LPI, BSD Certificate, and Typo3 exams, and one door farther down were the admin talks, where I updated my knowledge of BIND 10 and Git. As an enthusiastic tinkerer, but also someone who tends to steer clear of soldering irons, the "Open Hardware" track was the right one for me, and it took me into Arduino programming territory. After an introduction to the individual derivatives and their extensions, Jörg Pleumann, master of the narrow gauge, showed the audience his Railuino hack, in which he connected an Arduino basic module with a CAN Bus shield to control a Märklin model railway (Figure 1).

I'm pretty sure the model railway wasn't to blame for the sticky atmosphere in the seminar rooms – which is the only criticism I have about the whole

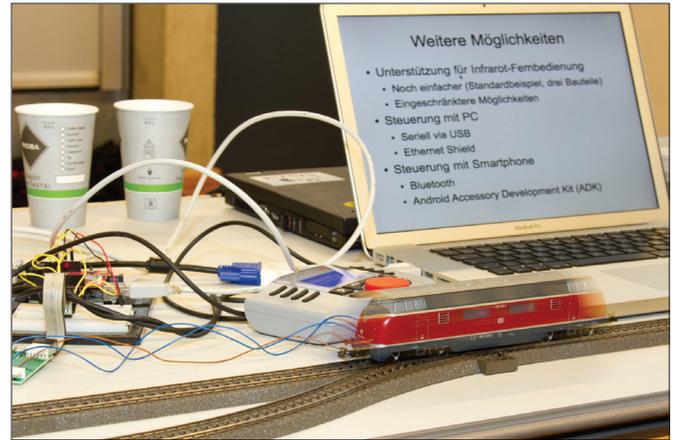


Figure 1: Jörg Pleumann displays his Railuino hack.

event. I took a walk through the Industrial Museum's regular exhibition basically to get some fresh air – after all, admission was free to OpenRhineRuhr visitors. The fair organizers did manage to establish an event offering something for Linux users, experts, and newcomers alike. Linuxtag advertises with the slogan "Where .com meets .org," but the regionally oriented OpenRhineRuhr also succeeded in bridging this divide. ■■■

INFO

- [1] OpenRhineRuhr: <http://openrheinruhr.de> (German only)

AUTHOR

Charly Kühnast is a Unix operating system administrator at the Data Center in Moers, Germany. His tasks include firewall and DMZ security and availability. He divides his leisure time into hot, wet, and eastern sectors, where he enjoys cooking, freshwater aquariums, and learning Japanese, respectively.