

Debian developers gather in Finland

DEBCONF 5

Debian developers from around the world gathered in Finland to exchange ideas and have a good time at this year's Debian Developer's Conference. **BY ARTUR SKURA**

The 5th annual Debian Developer's Conference (DebConf) was a great success. Almost 300 Debian developers, maintainers, and enthusiasts gathered in Espoo, Finland, at the Helsinki University of Technology (HUT) campus, to exchange ideas, share experiences, discuss important issues, and have a great time just being together.

The core of the conference was the talks, both formal presentations and informal "Birds Of a Feather" chats on subjects of common interest. Topics included the future of Debian, cooperation with other Debian-based projects, tutorials for developers and maintainers, and presentations on Debian subprojects.

Presentations

One of the most important talks during DebConf was given by Mark Shuttleworth, the founder and chief architect of

Ubuntu, the most popular Debian-based distribution. Unlike Xandros or Lycoris, Ubuntu strives to cooperate with Debian developers and gives high priority to a good relationship with Debian. However, not all Debian developers perceive Ubuntu as a friendly distribution. For some it's just a fork. Debian's policy of paying prominent Debian developers for working on Ubuntu is seen by some as weakening Debian. Mark's talk helped to clarify Ubuntu's position and resolve many doubts of the members of the Debian community.

As a direct result of discussions surrounding the Debian-Ubuntu relationship, the Utnubu[2] (note the spelling – "Ubuntu" written backwards) project was created. The aim of Utnubu is to facilitate merging Ubuntu patches back into Debian. Some parts of this process can be automated, but some involve human intervention, so if you know Debian and feel like helping, the Debian

community will be happy to hear from you.

Debian Women

Another interesting talk, given by Erinn Clark and Magni Onsoien, discussed the Debian Women project, as well as the role of women in Free Software in general. Though many people don't notice it, the fact that very few women are involved in Free Software development is very strongly related to cultural factors. The speakers argued that, in countries where education is more even regarding the sexes, the number of women involved in Free Software projects is significantly higher. The audience shared their own feelings about perception of women's involvement in technology issues and suggested some ways of resolving the problem.

Conclusion

For those who missed the event, the organizers have prepared an (almost complete) set of videos featuring all talks. You can find the videos, together with most presentation slides, on the DebConf Talks page[2]. The recording was made possible by the efforts of DebConf volunteers.

The conference organizers did an excellent job with providing clear explanations regarding all aspects of the event. The budget of the conference was over 150,000 USD – both food and accommodation were free. Many participants were even given laptops to use during the event. Network connections were plentiful, so everybody communicated via multiple channels all the time. I would like to thank the DebConf organizers for an unforgettable experience.

Next year's Debian Conference will probably take place in Mexico, whereas Edinburgh has been proposed as the site of DebConf in 2007. Whether you are a Debian developer or just a fan, you will not want to miss the excitement of the next Debian Developer's Conference. ■



Figure 1: The conference centered around formal and informal presentations.

INFO

- [1] The Debian Project:
<http://www.debian.org/>
- [2] The Utnubu Project:
<http://utnubu.alioth.debian.org/>
- [3] The video recordings from DebConf 5:
<http://wiki.debian.net/?DebConf5Talks>