A report from FOSDEM 2008

FOSDEM, NEXT GENERATION

Now into its eighth year, the FOSDEM developer conference in Brussels, Belgium, demonstrates that it is very much alive and kicking, and even celebrating records. **BY KRISTIAN KISSLING AND MATHIAS HUBER**

Figure 1: From left: FOSDEM Sign. – There were probably more OLPCs per square yard at FOSDEM than anywhere else in the world. – Alexander Neundorf (left) and Bill Hoffman (right) of the CMake project. – Gabrielle Pantera and Robin Rowe report on the use of Linux in Hollywood studios.

When Philip Paeps and Pascal Bleser from the FOSDEM team officially opened the 2008 conference [1], they happily announced that records had been broken: 228 talks by 268 speakers were scheduled for the February event. Approximately 4,500 visitors packed the corridors and lecture theaters at the Free University of Brussels.

To get things moving, the conference's founder, Raphael Bauduin, and the new team led the traditional FOSDEM dance and thus handed over the event to the next generation.

Linux in Hollywood

The first talk focused on Linux in Hollywood, and it started with an animated sequence from the movie Bee Movie, which was produced on Linux.

Robin Rowe, who gave the talk with his colleague Gabrielle Pantera, explained that the bees were so small that rounding errors occurred in the software. He went on to disclose how Linux had established itself in Hollywood studios, from the first animations in Titanic, through Shrek, Finding Nemo, and The Matrix.

Scripting Languages

Scripting languages were another major focus. Computer science lecturer Patrick Michaud, the chief developer for the Perl 6 compiler in Parrot, gave the audience a preview of the new features in the next version of Perl. Perl 6 will break with downward compatibility and cleaning up the syntax.

The PHP 6 web scripting language really shines when it comes to Unicode, as Andrei Zmievski from the PHP core team demonstrated.

Charles O. Nutter talked about JRuby, which he has been working on for Sun over the past year. JRuby is a Java implementation of the object-oriented Ruby scripting language. For Nutter, the project offers an open source success story. Most of the code was contributed by volunteer members of the project, and many Java-based editors and developer environments, such as JEdit, Netbeans, and Eclipse, use JRuby as their choice of Ruby implementation.

Free Software Projects

On the fringe of the talks in the lecture theaters, members of free software projects gathered in developer rooms to discuss their development targets. Enrico Zini presented the Apt-Xapian [2] extension for the Debian Linux distribution's package management system.

A number of European Fedora developers founded Fedora EMEA, with its headquarters in Germany, to help Fedora become slightly more independent of Red Hat, the project's main sponsor. The openSUSE project intends to improve package management and the installer for Version 11 of its Linux distribution.

Package Managers

Besides this, there were talks about package managers such as Conary and Klik and build systems like CMake and SCons. Trends such as virtualization and state-of-the-art web development were also on the agenda.

Video Stream

Linux Pro Magazine/Linux Magazine hosted a live video stream throughout the event [3]. Visit our website to watch the archive version of the stream.

Eight Years of Inspiration

Now into its eighth year, FOSDEM remains an informal, innovative, and independent event.

Entry is still free, and there are no talks by commercial enterprises. The event is organized by volunteers and financed by sponsors. ■

INFO

[1] FOSDEM: *http://www.fosdem.org*

[2] Apt-Xapian: *http://enricozini.org/2007/debtags/apt-xapian-index.html*

[3] *Linux Pro Magazine/Linux Magazine International* video stream: *http://streaming.linux-magazin.de/en/*