



Jon Masters is a UK-based embedded Linux developer, writer, and consultant. He has been actively involved with the Linux community since starting his first degree at age 13. Jon is currently a member of more than 50 Linux User Groups around the world.

This month I was in London, speaking at the LinuxWorld Expo on the portability of the Linux kernel. It's always interesting visiting LinuxWorld events, especially given the way they've changed in the years since the dotcom boom. These days, LinuxWorld is more about big corporations showing off their latest products and much less about grass roots enthusiasm. Still, we all turn up because LinuxWorld serves as a convenient opportunity to bring a bunch of Linux folks together in the same place on a semi-annual basis. And I guess that's as good a reason as any to go again next year. For a full description of the show, check out Roger's show report elsewhere in this issue.

I took some time out from the conference to catch up with some of the local Linux folk I've known for quite a num-

Community Notes

LIFE IN THE LUGS

Jon catches up with Linux users in London and rounds up the activities of some Linux User Groups around the world. **BY JON MASTERS**

ber of years now (a worrying sign that I'm getting older, and so are most of the LUGs). It's refreshing also to see new faces that you've never seen before – a sure sign that a new (should that be GNU?) generation of Linux users is coming along behind us.

I went to Oxford to catch up with the OxLUG (my "alma matar"), as well as the University's Compsoc group. OxLUG haven't been meeting so much lately. Those of us who used to be heavily involved have gone on to do other things, and the group has suffered a little as a result, but that's part of what happens to any group that's been around for a while. The meeting went reasonably well, and it was good to see so many people apparently interested in porting the Linux kernel. I think I'll repeat this talk a bit at other groups, as it'll give me an excuse to write about them in a future version of this column.

Next month, I'm going to try something a little different by re-introducing a LUG of the Month – don't forget to send me your nominations-along with a description and some high res digital photos: Jon Masters, jcm@jonmasters.org.

This month I'll roundup the happenings at a random selection of Linux User Groups around the world.

Belgium (bxlug)

This French and English speaking group was one of many debating Ubuntu Edgy Eft. The latest release hasn't gone down so well with some users, who complain that upgrades are painful and that they have had more problems than in the past (though Dapper Drake was a bit of an exception in terms of needing to be supported for so long out). One particular poster on bxlug complained that Edgy had installed a proprietary kernel module for his graphics card without really



Figure 1: The MythTV project demonstrated Linux PVR technology at this year's UK LinuxWorld in London.

consulting him about it first. Obviously, this kind of situation is a trade off – nobody likes binary modules (some developers believe they are illegal, depending upon context), but users often think that they want to install them.

Paris (Parinux)

One Parinux mailing list poster wanted to “safeguard” 40 Microsoft Windows machines using a Linux box. The usual round of replies came back, including various suggestions about ways to use Samba tools to synchronize the content stored on individual machines with a centralized backup Linux system. Of course, Microsoft have announced various deals not to sue those using certain Linux technologies. Hopefully, this protection now formally extends to the Samba project and the work it has done over the years to reverse engineer Microsoft’s “open standards” and make them actually open to the world.

United Kingdom (Wolves)

As friends of the *lugaradio* <http://www.lugaradio.org/> Linux radio show may have gathered, wolves is hardly ever a quiet list. But they have been having some trouble when it comes to organizing physical meetings of late. New group organizer David Morley, recently having taken over from Jono Bacon (now busily employed on Ubuntu and busy as ever running *lugaradio* itself), decided to send out mail outlining his ideas for the way the group should head in the future. Like many groups, Wolves has been a victim of its own success, with a very large and loyal fanbase which is keen to keep the group alive, yet it is all too easy for these things to slide if you let them. David outlined plans for a new venue and new structure, promising to help revitalize the group’s wiki and also to help to attract new members.

Linux Bier Wanderung

The Linux Bier Wanderung (LBW) usually takes place once every year in the summer, and involves a group of geeks coming together to share one too many days in a remote countryside location, allegedly in the name of hiking and drinking beer (though it often turns into hacking and drinking beer). You may have seen the report on this year’s Linux Bier Wanderung in the November 2006

issue of Linux Magazine.

I discovered one year just how interesting this event can be when I noticed someone using a fire axe to break up an argument that had erupted between some members of the group – but don’t let that put you off. (Seriously, it’s a fun event.) The LBW group have a mailing list that, depending upon the time of year, gets a lot of posts about random things. This month, the group have been spending some time debating green server rooms as an alternative to the massive power consumption of the average data center facility.

Boston LUG (BLU)

Your author is speaking at a forthcoming Boston Linux User Group (BLU) meeting, and as part of that, we’ve decided to experiment with various online streaming and recording technologies. The vague plan is to record the session via a remote dial-in to one of my Asterisk servers and then proxy the audio to a website in real time. It’ll probably take just a few meetings to perfect this process. Another idea is to just record and upload a video after the event (but where’s the fun in that?). Who knows if any of this will work, but that’s part of the fun in trying. Eventually, it’d be nice to have realtime participation from remote participants via IRC questions, etc., but like most groups, we don’t necessarily have good net connectivity during the talk (just because you’re using a local college classroom doesn’t mean you’ve got access to their network).

The whole thing got me thinking about how many other groups actively stream or record their sessions. Of course, not everyone is going to want to be recorded (and that’s fine), but for those of us who are already uncomfortably living with the modern surveillance world, it’d be fun to work together. From my brief analysis, it looks like few groups (even those who use Google HQ for their meetings) actually do any kind of recording – much less live streaming – and that’s a shame. Many people can’t make it to their local LUG meeting for a



Figure 2: Jono Bacon steps down as LUGmaster of Wolves LUG, which he founded, to spend more time on his day job working on Ubuntu for Canonical.

variety of reasons (timing, job commitments, physical disabilities) so I’d like to encourage us to come up with 21st century solutions that enable them to participate. Even an MP3 recording from a cellphone is better than nothing. In fact, I think it’s probably time to create a community project to drive this – drop me a line if you’re interested in helping out.

Portland LUG (pdxlinux-plugin)

A rather long thread resulted from an initial posting about errors generated reading from trying to power back up an ancient machine after the poster went on vacation for a week. The box in question was (for some reason) running Red Hat version 7.0 as opposed to anything more recent (and thus more supportable), but in this case, it did appear to be hardware that was at fault.

One helpful suggestion offered by Carlos Konstanski was running a Live CD distribution such as Knoppix and using the tools supplied therein to recover and repair the filesystem, without necessarily resulting in further data loss. Over the last few years, Live CDs really have just made this kind of forensic data reconstitution a whole lot easier, which is a great reason to keep a copy of Knoppix handy for the next time your computer experiences such a glitch. ■