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MUUGlines

The Manitoba UNIX User Group Newsletter

May 14, 2002: BSD Installation

Did your Linux machine just get hacked? Do you want to run an operating system that hasn't had a remote root exploit in four years? Try OpenBSD. It runs on Alpha, Intel, most Macs, SPARCs, and more. It has binary emulation for most UNIX operating systems including SVR4 (Solaris), FreeBSD, Linux, BSD/OS, SunOS and HP-UX.

Shawn Wallbridge from Synack Hosting and Chris Lawson and Sean Cody from Tin Foil Hat will be installing OpenBSD 3.0 on a machine and explaining the process. They will explain the ports system, how to use it and talk a bit about packages, and finally how to keep the system up to date including CVS and patches.

Upcoming Meeting

June 11, 2002: BSD Network Security and Virtual Private Networks

Continuing with last month's presentation on OpenBSD, this month Shawn, Chris and Sean will be setting up an OpenBSD firewall. They will be talking about 'pf', the new firewall built into OpenBSD 3.0. Also discussed will be VPNs and setting up an IPSEC VPN using OpenBSD's 'isakmpd'.

Meetings are held at the IBM offices at 400 Ellice Ave. (between Edmonton and Kennedy). When you arrive, you will have to sign in at the reception desk, and then wait for someone to take you (in groups) to the meeting room. Please try to arrive by about 7:15 PM, so the meeting can start promptly at 7:30 PM. Don't be late, or you may not get in.

Limited parking is available for free on the street, or in a lot across Ellice from IBM, for $1.00 for the evening. Indoor parking is also available nearby, at Portage Place, for $2.00 for the evening.

Red Hat 7.3 Released

On May 6th, Red Hat, Inc. released Red Hat Linux version 7.3, a highly configurable operating system (OS) designed for deployments ranging from games and personal productivity to file, print and web serving. Red Hat Linux 7.3 adds new productivity tools, personal firewall configuration at installation, and video conferencing software to deliver everything individual users, educational institutions and small businesses need for flexible Internet-based computing.

The new version also includes the Linux industry's best support offerings, including Web and telephone access to experts and Red Hat Network, an automated Internet solution for managing Red Hat Linux systems. Nearly five hundred thousand users already leverage Red Hat Network to keep their systems updated and secure.

"Small businesses and enthusiasts are looking for a combination of performance, ease-of-use and value in their technology infrastructure, which is hard to find with today's proprietary operating systems," said Paul Cormier, executive VP of engineering, Red Hat. "Red Hat Linux 7.3 delivers this through a combination of open source software, support and automated remote services for confident Internet-based computing."

Red Hat Linux 7.3 delivers cutting-edge open source technologies, new features and updated core components that increase productivity and provide the flexibility and usability users demand.

Key features include:

- Evolution e-mail client and contact manager
- MrProject project management software
- Mozilla Web browser
- GNOME Meeting video conferencing software
- Apache 1.3 Web server
- Firewall configuration
- PostgreSQL relational database management system
- KDE 3.0 desktop
- GNOME 1.4 desktop

For a more complete feature list, see http://www.redhat.com/software/linux/rhl_new_features.html.

More On Wal-Mart PCs

In follow-up to our recent mention of Wal-Mart's operating-system-less computers comes this information: The PCs have "WinModems". Specifically, they are WinModems of a type for which there are no Linux drivers. Some WinModems can be used under Linux, but not these.

The good news is after a recent review of these PCs (and following comments) pointing out this deficiency, a representative from Microtel, who supplies the computers to Wal-Mart, contacted the review's author and assured him that the modem would henceforth be replaced by one more Linux-friendly!

For more details, visit http://newsforge.com/article.pl?sid=02/05/02/1514240&mode=thread&tid=7.

Free Software Push In Peru

Various plans and ideas have been floated to make use of free (as in "free speech") software such as Linux in public venues like schools and governments. A recent bill proposed in Peru is quite possibly the best thought-out we've seen. While other proposals have focused on the capital cost savings, this one goes much further.

As Dr. Edgar David Villanueva Nuñez, the bill's creator puts it:

"It is also necessary to make it clear that the aim of the Bill we are discussing is not directly related to the amount of direct savings that can by made by using free software in state institutions. That is in any case a marginal aggregate value, but in no way is it the chief focus of the Bill. The basic principles which inspire the Bill are linked to the basic guarantees of a state of law, such as:

- Free access to public information by the citizen.
- Permanence of public data.
- Security of the State and citizens"

The above was written in response to a letter he received from Microsoft Peru, which raised many concerns as they relate to Microsoft's ability to supply software to the Peruvian government in the future, or even all of Peru.

Here's another excerpt:

You continue: "6. It is wrong to think that Open Source Software is free of charge. Research by the Gartner Group (an important investigator of the technological market recognized at world level) has shown that the cost of purchase of software (operating system and applications) is only 8% of the total cost which firms and institutions take on for a rational and truly beneficial use of the technology. The other 92% consists of: installation costs, enabling, support, maintenance, administration, and down-time."

This argument repeats that already given in paragraph 5 and partly contradicts paragraph 3. For the sake of brevity we refer to the comments on those paragraphs. However, allow me to point out that your conclusion is logically false: even if according to Gartner Group the cost of software is on average only 8% of the total cost of use, this does not in any way deny the existence of software which is free of charge, that is, with a licensing cost of zero.

As one poster to Slashdot (slashdot.org) put it, "I have politician envy." See the original letter and response in full at http://www.pimientolinux.com/peru2ms/.

Free Software Push In Italy

The Associazione Software Libero and the Italian Linux Society have launched a call for signatures (http://www.softwarelibero.it/news/news020417_01.shtml) in support of a proposed law which would require the adoption of free software and document formats in the Italian government. They want real signatures - there is a PDF file to be downloaded, printed, signed, and sent to the Associazione in Florence. Alas, as of this writing there is no English translation.

Free Software Push In Canada

We're waiting...

News From Germany, Too

The German Ministery of Interior will maintain their own track of talks about "Free Software in governmental agencies" at the upcoming LinuxTag. This track will be part of the business congress, which aims at professionals in the IT business and governmental workers. The business congress is a one-day conference, hosted at LinuxTag, which will take place at June 6th, 2002.

At the business congress (http://www.linuxtag.

org/2002/deutsch/showitem.php3?item=227) during LinuxTag, the police department of Lower Saxony will report about their introduction of GNU/Linux. Recently, Lower Saxony, a northern federal state of Germany, decided to install 11,000 desktop systems running GNU/Linux. They will replace old Unix terminals which were used since 1989.

LinuxTag (www.linuxtag.org) is the largest and most important exhibition and conference in Europe which covers Free Software and GNU/Linux. LinuxTag combines both a community event as well as a professional exhibition with large amounts of business booths and a high quality conference program.

OpenOffice 1.0 Suite Released

The OpenOffice.org community (www.openoffice.org) announced on May 1 the availability of OpenOffice.org 1.0, the open source, multi-platform, multi-lingual office productivity suite available as a free download at the OpenOffice.org community website.

OpenOffice.org 1.0 is the culmination of more than 18 months of collaborative effort by members of the OpenOffice.org community, which is comprised of Sun employees, volunteer developers, marketers, and end users working to create an international office suite that will run on all major platforms.

OpenOffice.org 1.0, which shares the same code base as Sun's StarOffice™ 6.0 software is – like StarOffice 6.0 software – a full-featured office suite that provides a near drop-in replacement for Microsoft Office. OpenOffice.org 1.0 offers software freedom, enabling a free market for service and support, while the Sun-branded product, StarOffice 6.0 software, offers 24x7 fee-based support and training for consumers and businesses, along with deployment and migration services.

StarOffice software also offers additional features, such as a database, special fonts and Sun quality and assurance testing. The two office suites complement each other, meeting the varying needs of consumers, open source advocates and enterprise customers.

Please note: This software is available for many platforms, including but not limited to Microsoft Windows, Linux and Solaris. Ports are under way for Mac OS X, FreeBSD and IRIX.

More Games On Linux

TransGaming Technologies, the leading provider of cross-platform compatibility solutions, unleashed its enhanced WineX technology – the much-anticipated WineX 2.0 – on April 17.

WineX 2.0 allows over 80 Windows games to run on the Linux operating system, seamlessly, transparently, and right out of the box. "This is another breakthrough for TransGaming. No other company can do what we do. In February we brought DirectX 8 capabilities to the Linux platform demonstrating how quickly and effectively our technology can keep pace with Microsoft development," remarks company CEO & CTO Gavriel State. "WineX 2.0 opens the door for the latest 'high twitch' PC games to run on Linux."

The implementation of DirectX 8 support on Linux is the most significant and highest demand milestone for WineX 2.0. DirectX 8 is the de facto standard for PC game development and is used in almost every PC and Xbox game shipping today. TransGaming's support for DirectX 8 means that more and more PC games are now playable on other platforms. For example, Remedy Entertainment's Max Payne – one of the world's top selling action games – now runs right out of the box on WineX 2.0.

"With more than 80 games playable on WineX, we have demonstrated our ability to bring the world's hottest titles to platforms where they have never run before." comments State.

TransGaming has an exclusive licensing agreement for the world's hottest title, Electronic Arts' The Sims. Eight weeks after receiving source code from EA, TransGaming Technologies had the product ready for manufacturing, demonstrating the immense power of WineX.

TransGaming Technologies is based in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. See their website at www.transgaming.com.

CIFS, Microsoft and the Samba Team

A recent document released by Microsoft has led to some concern within the Samba community regarding patents and licensing. The Samba Team wishes to reassure the Samba community that this document will not have any impact on the use or further development of Samba.

The Microsoft document (http://msdn.microsoft.com/library/default.asp?url=/library/en-us/dnkerb/html/Finalcifs_LicenseAgrmnt_032802.asp) is a license agreement attached to a technical document which provides information regarding the CIFS protocol. The CIFS protocol (also known as the SMB protocol) is the core protocol that Samba implements to provide seamless filesharing interoperability with Microsoft networking products.

The key concerns that have been raised over this document are:

- Whether the Samba Team needs access to this document for future developments in Samba
- Whether the patents mentioned in the Microsoft license agreement have any impact on current or future usage and development of Samba
- Whether the anti-GPL components of the Microsoft license will change the use of the GNU General Public License for Samba

The CIFS/SMB protocol has had a long and rocky history, particularly with regard to documentation of the protocol details. The document that Microsoft has recently released adds nothing to the already published knowledge of the CIFS protocol. It is quite strange that Microsoft has gone to such lengths in terms of unusual licensing terms for information which is readily available in existing public documentation.

In the text of the license agreement Microsoft mentions two specific patents that relate to the CIFS/SMB protocol. The license grants a royalty free license to these patents, but specifically excludes free software distributed under the GNU General Public License from this royalty free patent license.

Some people have incorrectly assumed that Samba must implement the methods described in these patents. In fact, the methods described in these patents are quite inappropriate for a Unix/POSIX CIFS implementation such as Samba. It would not even be possible to implement the methods described in these patents in a portable POSIX application. Instead, Samba treats the SMBreadbraw and SMBwritebraw protocol elements in the same way as all other elements of the CIFS/SMB protocol. This means that as far as we are aware Samba is completely unaffected by the existence of these patents.

We would like to also point out that these patents cover an obsolete section of the CIFS/SMB protocol that Microsoft themselves have abandoned in their own products long ago. Microsoft abandoned these "raw" protocol operations in CIFS because their basic design is fatally flawed.

Join Our (E-)Mailing Lists

Nearly every MUUG meeting includes a "round table", an open question–and–answer period in which every attendee can ask about something they would like help with or information about. In addition, there is a corresponding MUUG-managed mailing list where more questions can be asked and follow-ups posted. It seems that not everyone has been made aware of the existence of the latter.

Some of you have already signed up at http://www.muug.mb.ca/mailman/listinfo/roundtable. The more people there are on the list, the more valuable it becomes. Even if you don't currently have questions or answers, sign up today and join in when you see an opening!

While you're there, sign up at an additional cost of nothing to the MUUG-Announce list, which is used to notify list-members of upcoming meetings, other events and last-minute changes. Traffic on this list is low, so don't worry about your Inbox filling up on account of this one!

Sending Us E-Mail?

Due to the amount of e-mail MUUG receives, we've set up an auto-reply to give you immediate feedback, and redirect some of the e-mail to the appropriate places. Why not look at http://www.muug.mb.ca/about.html#contacts first?

We Like To Hear From You

So e-mail us with your comments on the newsletter, whether it's criticisms or commendations, and continue to send in some ideas for articles. We will happily accept complete articles, too. If you have a How-To or other idea, and aren't ready to give a presentation at MUUG, an article is a great alternative! If you can write better than the editor, that's terrific; if you can't, submit it anyway and we'll get it into shape for publication. We know that many of you have some great ideas and lots of knowledge. Why not share? Mailto: editor@muug.mb.ca.