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MUUGlines

The Manitoba UNIX User Group Newsletter

December 10, 2002: Gentoo Linux

Gentoo Linux is a modern distribution that focuses on performance and features. Its packaging system was inspired by the BSD ports tree, but with many enhancements. In this presentation, Shawn Wallbridge will briefly cover the install, how the Portage system works and other neat things about this distribution.

January 14, 2003: Mac OS X Update

This month, Douglas Hamilton, Apple Product Professional at the University of Manitoba, returns to give us an update on Mac OS X, a year after his last presentation. Many changes have occurred to Mac OS X over the past year (the current version is now 10.2.2). These changes include a revised kernel, greater security, improved development tools and greatly improved printing & networking technologies (including a new open standard).

The presentation will cover the significant changes pertaining to the Unix underpinnings of Mac OS X, and how they have improved this operating system. This presentation will also cover the user interface changes which have been made to enable consumer (as opposed to power-user) access to the new Unix services included in Mac OS X.

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.

Solaris 9 For x86

Sun has announced that it will, after all, release Solaris 9 for the x86 architecture – sort of. As you can see from http://wwws.sun.com/software/solaris/x86/earlyaccess/index.html, the Solaris x86 Operating Environment is available through their Customer Early Access program. So, for US$20, you too can test and evaluate Solaris 9 on x86.

What's the big deal? Some of the features are:

- Integrated Sun ONE Directory Server: the Sun ONE Directory Server has been integrated into Solaris™ 9 OE to provide native LDAP services.
- Improved performance and scalability: an improved threading library and multiple page size support improve both the raw performance and the ability to use additional CPU resources, particularly for large, multi-threaded applications
- New security features: Kerberos 5 and Secure Shell for sysadmins, new APIs — including /dev/random — for developers
- Solaris™ Volume Manager: fully-integrated volume management software for setting up and maintaining concatenated, striped, and mirrored disk volumes
- Solaris 9 Resource Manager: integrated resource management features for controlling and allocating system resources

The hardware requirements are listed as 64 MB RAM minimum, and 600 MB (desktops) to 1 GB (servers) of disk space. Sorry, the free binary license is limited to one CPU. Presumably, it will run on a Pentium. There is a hardware compatibility list (HCL) for those concerned.

New OpenOffice Installer Project

By Christof Pintaske, OpenOffice.org/Sun

Currently the installation of the OpenOffice.org suite is done by running the setup application, which provides a cross platform graphical user interface that wizards the user through all phases of the setup process. Though this has been proven to be as painless as possible, even for novice users, it does not integrate very well with the different installation standards found on the various operating systems. It is neither possible to install or uninstall OpenOffice.org using the systems installer nor does it appear in the list of installed packages.

To make OpenOffice.org a well behaved citizen on your hard disk we want the systems native installer to become the default way to install, modify, or uninstall OpenOffice.org on your computer. Just like any other package you install.

Beyond that we expect the installation process to become more robust. Relying on the native installer means that the setup process cannot fail for bootstrapping reasons. We hope that this eases porting and testing of new builds as well. A further motivation for this move is to simplify unattended installation.

We are investigating the possibilities to build installations based on:

- Microsoft Installer (MSI) on Windows platforms
- RedHat Package Manager (RPM) packages on Linux
- Solaris Packages (PKG) on Solaris

Nevertheless, we expect our new 'yet to be built' setup tooling to be open to support all other package formats including but not limited to:

- Debian packages
- FreeBSD packages
- Generic packages (tar / tar.gz)
- MacOS X packages

We want to make all this happen based on the OpenOffice.org Trunk (src66x, see http://tools.openoffice.org/releases/OpenOffice_org_trunk.html) codeline. Some more information can be found here: http://installation.openoffice.org/servlets/ProjectDocumentList.

SAPDB Open Source

SAP believes that times have changed, that databases are becoming part of the basic technology infrastructure, and as such, they need not be proprietary or complex. SAP sees that the time is right to drive open-source development of database technology and contribute to this effort by making SAP DB Open Source. Open-source development is revolutionizing the way software is created, as shown by the success of Linux, and SAP - which is already providing the first comprehensive e-business solution on Linux - wants to encourage this development.

SAP DB is a state-of-the art, SQL-based, industrial-strength database management system. SAP DB is platform-independent, so users can deploy it for a wide array of projects. SAP DB is highly scalable, easy to use and maintain, and provides full transaction support. Companies can deploy SAP DB together with SAP applications for a complete out-of-the-box business solution. SAP DB also goes beyond relational processing by offering object orientation as well as support for managing unstructured data. This comprehensive set of features and their availability as Open Source will benefit the entire database development community.

For more information, visit www.sapdb.org.

Mark's Adopts Linux Point-of-Sale

Mark's Work Wearhouse, a 320-store Canadian retailer of apparel and work-related clothing, is replacing and centralizing its point-of-sale (POS) system and reducing operating and maintenance costs with a new Java-based Retek Point-of-Service (RPOS) solution running open-source Linux on IBM SurePOS 500 systems.

Mark's Work Wearhouse, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Canadian Tire, has successfully completed the initial phase of the project with 64 stores live. "Our previous POS software required a server at each location," said Robin Lynas, chief information officer, Mark's Work Wearhouse. "We needed a scalable, flexible solution that could handle all our current and future POS processing requirements without the need for an in-store server. Our pre-holiday pilot of Retek Point-of-Service running on a Linux-based POS platform has delivered impressive results. We are now running RPOS live in 64 stores, and have realized substantial operating improvements by leveraging its Java-based, fit-client architecture. We brought our first store live in only four months and have reduced POS store opening costs by 30% and maintenance costs by 50% with dramatically improved customer and employee satisfaction within our pilot stores."

Retek's Point-of-Service solution delivers one of the most powerful, scalable, flexible and stable point-of-service solutions available. RPOS offers comprehensive point-of-service solutions including point-of-sale, labor management, cash management, inventory management and customer management. RPOS adapts to retailers' business style, operating seamlessly with existing networks, data repositories, hardware and operating systems.

The Java-based architecture of RPOS is entirely open and flexible and is hardware and operating system independent. "Retek Point-of-Service has proven what until now has only been theory," said Peter Baskin, vice president of retail customer relationship management solutions with Retek. "In the mission-critical store environment, retailers now have proof that Java POS can not only be deployed easily but can also reduce overall costs. The impressive RPOS results achieved by Mark's Work Wearhouse provide retailers a quantified, proven business case for Java POS."

Mark's Work Wearhouse Ltd. Operates 321 unisex apparel and footwear stores in Canada, and was acquired by Canadian Tire Corporation, Limited in February 2002.

Retek Inc. provides of mission-critical software and services to the retail industry. Leading global retailers including Tesco, Best Buy, Gap Inc., Sainsbury's, Eckerd Corp. and Selfridges use Retek solutions. Visit http://www.retek.com for more information.

New Evolution

Ximian, Inc., the leading open source desktop company, announced on November 11 Ximian™ Evolution™ version 1.2, which offers a host of enhancements designed to improve the usability, performance and interoperability of the premier personal and workgroup information management solution for Linux and UNIX-based systems.

Version 1.2 of the award-winning Ximian Evolution software upgrades its integrated e-mail, calendar, contact and task list management functions to provide a more powerful and customizable solution for end users and companies using Linux or UNIX workstations.

"With hundreds of thousands of users worldwide, in less than a year Ximian Evolution has emerged as the de facto standard for e-mail, calendar and information management on Linux and UNIX," said Nat Friedman, Ximian vice president of product development and co-founder. "Version 1.2 reflects the tremendous feedback and contributions from the open source community, corporate customers and extensive usability testing. Its improved ease of use and enhanced interoperability with rich standards support make Ximian Evolution a critical piece of a cost-effective Linux desktop for companies of every size."

Ximian Evolution is the premier personal and workgroup information management solution for Linux and UNIX-based systems. It uniquely integrates e-mail, calendar, contact and task list management in one powerful, fast and easy-to-use application. Advanced e-mail capabilities, such as threaded mail view, text and HTML mail, automatic message indexing, and the unique vFolder™ contextual views provide the needed power and flexibility to manage large e-mail boxes. Broad support for data exchange and communications standards enables integration with corporate networks and messaging systems.

The new Ximian Evolution version 1.2 offers a host of usability, performance and interoperability enhancements that complement its advanced e-mail and information management capabilities to create a friendlier and more configurable user experience. Support for multiple e-mail accounts has been improved with user customizable settings for default mail, address books, calendar and task folders. The improved e-mail indexing engine performance speeds mail searches and inbox population. Version 1.2 enhances information navigation by enabling multiple word searches and jumping to and selecting items in e-mail lists by typing a single character.

Others of the dozens of enhancements in version 1.2 include:

- Built-in HTML e-mail signature editor, with support for choosing from multiple signatures
- One-stop configuration centre to manage settings and preferences for everything from the mail composer, fonts and address books directories to account setup, default folders and calendar options
- Expanded time-saving keyboard navigation

and shortcuts
- Enhanced auto-completion for addressing e-mails, including improved performance and support for multiple address books
- Customizable colour e-mail labels, fonts and follow-up flags for e-mail messages
- Improved support for corporate LDAP directories

"The standards support and advanced e-mail and information management features in Ximian Evolution are ideal for the users of our systems, and they have allowed me to implement the product with hundreds of users throughout the organization," said Dave Richards, systems administrator for the City of Largo, Fla. "Based on the extremely positive reception, it's safe to say that Evolution provides my constituents with a comfortable, easy-to-understand and cost-effective solution that is easily integrated into their daily work."

Ximian Evolution 1.2 also works with the optional Ximian Connector 1.2 for Microsoft Exchange add-on software, which enables Linux and UNIX users of Ximian Evolution to function as Microsoft Exchange 2000 clients. With Ximian Connector installed, Ximian Evolution users can connect directly to Microsoft Exchange 2000 servers for group calendaring, access to shared address books, task and contact management, centralized mail storage and access to public folders.

Ximian Evolution can be freely downloaded from www.ximian.com or purchased on CD as part of the Ximian Desktop Standard Edition ($29.95) and Professional Edition ($59.95) products. The application supports a broad range of Linux distributions and UNIX variants, including Red Hat, Mandrake, SuSE, Debian, Solaris and more. Ximian Connector for Microsoft Exchange can be purchased separately for $69.

HP & Sendmail Tops Sun

HP and Sendmail, Inc. announced at the recent Frankfurt LinuxWorld Expo the results of a performance benchmark testing Sendmail's e-mail software on industry-standard HP ProLiant servers vs. proprietary Sun systems. The results show that significant price/performance benefits and better message throughput are achievable when Sendmail's software is deploying mail and messaging solutions on industry-standard hardware running Linux, as compared to more expensive Sun servers running Solaris.

Performance testing indicated that Sendmail software running on two- and four-way HP ProLiant servers with SuSE Linux Enterprise 7 and the Reiser Filesystem was significantly better than Sun servers running Solaris in message throughput, price and performance.

For example, the two-way, IA-32 HP ProLiant DL380 server running Linux outperformed and has a lower acquisition price than a two-way, 64-bit, Sun Fire 280R running Solaris. The HP ProLiant DL380 running Sendmail Switch™ delivered 30 messages per second while a Sun Fire 280R delivered only 19 messages per second (100 KB message size). The HP ProLiant DL380 server costs $6,463 while the Sun Fire 280R costs $16,490 (price includes Veritas file system).

Additional tests revealed that the HP ProLiant DL580 server running Sendmail Advanced Message Server™ and Linux was capable of serving 14,000 users at approximately 100 percent concurrency (with all users logged in and working at the same time). By comparison the Sun Fire V880 server running Solaris was only capable of serving 9,000 users at approximately 100 percent concurrency. The price of the HP ProLiant DL580 server, including fibre channel storage, is $48,603 while the Sun V880, including T3 storage and the Veritas file system, is $190,095.

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?

Share Your Thoughts

E-mail us with your comments on the newsletter, whether it's criticisms or commendations, and continue to send in articles or ideas for same. 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.