



MUUGLines

The Manitoba UNIX User Group Newsletter

January 2010

Next Meeting: January 12th, 2010



Montana Quiring will cover Zimbra, the open-source collaboration suite, which includes email, calendars and more.

Before the break, as this month's RTFM topic, Adam Thompson will cover the cut(1) and paste(1) commands.

Where to find the Meeting



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. Please try to arrive by about 7:15pm, so the meeting can start promptly at 7:30pm.

Limited parking is available for free on the street, either on Ellice Ave. or on some of the intersecting streets. Indoor parking is also available nearby, at Portage Place, for \$5.00 for the evening. Bicycle parking is available in a bike rack under video surveillance located behind the building on Webb Place.

Upcoming Meeting: February 9th, 2010

Next month, Adam Thompson will be covering Disk Imaging: who, what, why, where, when. Maybe even "how" if there's time! The presentation is expected to focus on the use of PartImage and related tools.

Free UNIXes: more forks than ever

There's been an explosion of free UNIX and UNIX-like systems available in the last couple of years. For a long time, the free options consisted of Linux, NetBSD, FreeBSD, and OpenBSD. More recently, **DragonflyBSD** (a fork of FreeBSD), **ÆrieBSD** (fork of OpenBSD), **BSDAnywhere** (LiveCD of OpenBSD), **DesktopBSD** (FreeBSD-based distro), **PC-BSD** (FreeBSD-based distro, no relation AFAIK to the original PC/BSD) and **MidnightBSD** (fork of

We Think Your Friends are Awesome!

We Want To Meet Them!

Do you have a friend that is working on an interesting Linux/Unix project?

Why not ask them to present what they are doing at a future MUUG meeting?

Have them email board@muug.mb.ca

FreeBSD) have appeared on the scene. Sun released/produced/rebadged **OpenSolaris** to try and gain traction with the open-source development community. And, of course, there's a new Linux distribution almost every day.

New OpenBSD fork: **ÆrieBSD**

ÆrieBSD is a new fork of OpenBSD started by Michael Shalayeff (A.K.A. mickey@openbsd.org), based on OpenBSD 4.4. Based on the limited information on the website, the split appears to be based on two fundamental differences: a) no GPL-licensed code will be accepted, as they feel it's "a lot of trouble and counter-progressive"; and b) the absence of Theo de Raadt. Given that Theo deRaadt started OpenBSD itself as a fork of NetBSD at least in part due to personality conflicts between Theo and everyone else who isn't Theo, it's perhaps only surprising that it's taken this long for someone to fork OpenBSD for the same reason.

Competition for GCC?

PCC, a BSD-licensed compiler that's been around since the 1970's has recently seen a lot of work to try and get it into shape as a reasonable alternative to GCC. The OpenBSD project is pushing hard towards being completely self-hosting with pcc, so that removing the GPL-licensed GCC suite can become a reality. BSDFund also appears to be supporting the effort, on behalf of all the *BSD variants.

Complaints against GCC fall mainly into two categories: a) the GPL, which is fundamentally incompatible with BSD licensing, and b) performance – apparently many developers feel GCC has lost a lot of ground in this area. The dev team has just asked all OpenBSD testers to start testing the new compiler when rebuilding their systems. Support for i386 is essentially complete, other architectures are expected to follow fairly quickly.

Linux Distros on the Move, Quickly!

Intel's Mobilin project has had their second official release... and Canonical says they're "integrating

Mobilin technologies" into Ubuntu Mobilin Edition. No idea what that means. At the same time, we learn that much of the development of Google's much-touted Chrome OS has actually been done under contract by developers from Canonical (makers of Ubuntu). Apparently Canonical doesn't see any conflict of interest in helping build someone else's OS: they claim that there's no significant overlap between the Chrome OS and Ubuntu markets.

Intel's Mobilin project has focused on quick boot times; a Mobilin system running off an SSD apparently can cold-boot Linux in under 2 seconds. Full loading of udev, networking, system daemons, GNOME (or KDE), etc. still takes at least 4 to 6 seconds.

Embedded Linux vendor Montavista recently demo'd an embedded Linux system that cold-boots all the way into the user interface in under 1 second. They're positioning this for safety-critical systems where any extra delay following an unexpected reboot could cost lives. The demo, in fact, was of a software-driven (presumably simulated) automobile dashboard. Meanwhile Dell and other laptop manufacturers continue to sell models with unobtrusive dual-boot options, allowing users to start playing a DVD, for example, in under 8 seconds.

Linux Netbook video problems

Owners of Intel Atom-based netbooks are discovering that the Intel GMA500 video chip isn't really supported under Linux. The video chip wasn't even made or designed by Intel – just rebranded. So despite Intel's open-source-friendly stance, they are unable to support open-source drivers for the chip.

Especially notable is that many of the Netbooks that shipped with Linux (e.g. Dell Mini9 with Ubuntu preloaded) have this chip... apparently they shipped with a binary video driver. It seems most people don't find this out until they try to upgrade to the next release of Ubuntu (in Dell's case) or install the latest version of whatever they wanted to run on their netbook. No solution is in sight at this time.

Pystar switches to Linux

Complying with a court order in the lawsuit brought against them by Apple, Pystar has halted all sales of PCs preloaded with MacOS X. Since that's the only kind of systems they sold, they're temporarily dead in the water. Pystar says they'll shortly resume sales of Intel-based systems with the customer's choice of Linux distribution loaded on it... and of course the hardware will be specifically selected to be compatible with MacOS X – but it sure won't be preinstalled. Pystar is also voluntarily temporarily halting sales of their Rebel EFI boot loader, pending legal clarification of its status.

HP-UX 11i v3 Update 5 released

HP released Update 5 for their flagship UNIX operating system. Notable improvements include a 100% improvement in I/O performance – from between 30-50% of theoretical disk performance to between 80-99% of theoretical. Also included is new hardware support, notably for LTO5 tape drives, DVD writing, and USB 2.0 high-speed peripherals. Other areas of improvement center on administration, security and auditing to more easily enable PCI and SOX compliance.

IBM to release POWER7 in 2010

IBM's next chip, the POWER7 is still on schedule to ship in systems sometime in 2010. The initial version of the chip will run at 4.04GHz, 8-core, 4-way-SMT (“hyperthreading”) per core, and a 32MB L3 cache. Still no comment from either IBM or AMD about rumored plans to make the POWER7 and Opteron line of chips socket-compatible. (At one time, it appeared that IBM thought this would be a good way to get cheap entry-level workstations and servers, expanding the POWER7's market down-range.)

Monty calls for HelpMYSQL!

Michael Widenius (“Monty”), the founder and original developer of MySQL is calling on all MySQL users and concerned parties to sign a petition regarding the future of MySQL as Oracle prepare to

gobble it up. There is some concern that Oracle is merely buying Sun to get MySQL so they can starve it to death; the underlying theory being that MySQL's very existence has been amazingly harmful to Oracle's database sales – to the tune of over US\$1B in lost revenue.

While some of the logic may require a bit more mental flexibility than usual, Monty does have some interesting things to say. Put on your tin-foil hats and head over to <http://www.helpmysql.com/> to see for yourselves.

Open Group pondering what to call next version of UNIX

Andrew Josey, Director of Standards at the Open Group, claims that they aren't even sure what to call the next version of the Single UNIX Specification: “We may not even do a brand number this time – we're debating how to package it up,” Josey said. “If we do give it a number, we might call it ‘Unix 10,’ but we may not call it that at all.”

(from <http://www.serverwatch.com/news/article.php/3855546/The-Future-of-Unix-Standards-Unix-10.htm>)

United States Patent 7,640,233

IBM has managed to acquire, in the last days of 2009, a patent on a method of using databases to automatically expand abbreviations, titled “*Resolution of Abbreviated Text in an Electronic Communications System*”. It's already being called the “LOL patent” by industry observers. Other than possibly parents of teenagers everywhere, the target market for commercialization looks pretty small. And do parents *really* want to know what their teen is texting back and forth? The invention sports such features as displaying popup lists of alternate meanings for acronyms that aren't unique. I just found 82 definitions of “LOL”: the top four are “Laugh out Loud”, “League of Legends”, “Lots of Love” and “Land o' Lakes”. If you need software to tell you which of those someone meant in a conversation... *sigh*

Cygwin 1.7 Released

After two years, the next version of Cygwin has been released. The most notable change is that Win95, Win98, and WinME are no longer supported at all, while Windows 7 and Windows Server 2008 R2 are now supported. Other significant improvements are IPv6 support, multicast support, support for multiple simultaneous copies of CYGWIN.DLL, and many other general POSIX- and Linux-compatibility improvements. See <http://cygwin.com/cygwin-ug-net/ov-new1.7.html> for more details on what's new.

Canadian censorship takes down 4500 sites

(From <http://slashdot.org/submission/1141856/Canadian-censorship-takes-down-4500-sites>)

"According to activist group 'The Yes Men', the government of Canada has shut down two parody websites criticizing Canada's poor environmental policy." The article goes on to claim that "In response to Environment Canada's request, Serverloft immediately turned off a whole block of IP addresses, knocking out more than 4500 websites that had nothing to do with the parody sites or the activists who created them. Serverloft was shown no warrant, and never called the web hosting company about the shutdown."

OPINION: Secret ACTA deal to change IT forever

(From <http://www.itworldcanada.com/news/opinion-secret-acta-deal-to-change-it-forever/139442>)

"A secret international copyright treaty will impact IT managers just as much as the music and movie industry. Find out what ACTA will do if passed, why it's even being discussed, and how it might be stopped."

Don't let its name fool you. The Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement might give you ideas of knock-off Burberry bags and fake designer sunglasses, but it's actually an effort by the entertainment industry to push through new copyright laws."

Please read up on ACTA yourself, and form your own opinions. The whole process is shrouded in secrecy, but some information is available. Michael Geist's site is obviously biased, but provides a good starting point: <http://www.michaelgeist.ca/>.

Happy 40th Birthday, time(2)!

(From <http://indiegameproducer.com/2009/12/happy-40th-birthday-time2.html>)

The Unix time(2) system call is "over the hill" at 40 years old today. The time(2) system call has dutifully told us how many seconds have passed since January 1, 1970. I use the day as my "birthday" on public websites in tribute. Please raise a glass of champagne tonight with me in celebration!

Sending Us E-Mail?

Due to the amount of e-mail MUUG receives, we've set up an auto-reply to give you jaunty 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 the same. Specifically, what sort of material you would rather see: Announcements, technical articles, new products, or...?

What Do You Think?

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? Send Mail to: editor@muug.mb.ca.

