

Students go Down Under



BRANDON PHILIPS

Alex Polvi (left) and Justin Gallardo get Tux ready to impress the crowds at linux.conf.au 2007.

Donnie Berkholz
Editor

Four OSU students raised enough money to head to Australia for one of the world's largest open-source conferences, linux.conf.au.

Seniors Brandon Philips and Alex Polvi and sophomores Justin Gallardo and Mike Burns created a Web site called pleasesendustolinuxconfau.info and raised \$10,000 to fly to Australia to learn about and promote open source.

Philips said they had wanted to talk to other people about what the OSL and OSEL were doing on campus and network to learn about other people doing the same thing. He said they had learned about a university in Canada doing an open-source software class using Samba, which provides Windows file sharing on Linux.

Polvi said, "The most important point was finding out that there were even more universities than I originally thought doing this open source thing."

"We got to meet a lot of our donors," Philips said, "who happened to be really important and enthusiastic people in the

Linux community. I met the guy doing Samba stuff at Canada through Tridge." Tridge, or Andrew Tridgell, is a core developer of Samba.

Meeting other open-source developers in person was another valuable part of the trip, they said.

Gallardo said, "You can go to Google and read anything you want, but you're not gonna have the author of Samba sit next to you."

Polvi added, "If there is a place that will have all the experts in your field, do whatever you can to get there. ..."

"The conference was really cool because there were so many leaders in the open-source world there."

Their trip set an example for others, too. Polvi said, "Val Henson came up to me at the final meeting and said, 'You guys are an inspiration because I have some friends who say they can't afford to make it to a conference, and you proved them wrong.'"

Learn more:
pleasesendustolinuxconfau.info

Class teaches open source

Donnie Berkholz
Editor

Students contributed to nearly 50 open-source projects during the CS419 special topics course on open-source development.

Professor Timothy Budd said the idea for the class began more than a year ago. Students working for the Open Source Lab were getting great experience in real-world development, and employers snapped them up as soon as they graduated.

Budd wondered how to give that same experience to more people, and he came up with the concept of this class. It combined teaching about open-source philosophies and writing original papers or source-code patches to open-source projects.

But the mix of experience levels made it difficult to organize. "From the beginning," Budd said, "it was clear there were going to be a large number of students

with experience in OSS development."

One solution? Peer mentoring. The students with OSS experience help those without any. Teaching their skills helps the more experienced students learn them better, and it aids in building a student community.

In addition, Budd held a number of student-run "Tech Talks" at the beginning of the course to teach basic techniques of open-source development such as how to use IRC, manage patches and filter e-mail.

Students learned how peer review works in open-source projects, Budd said, by performing it themselves on a class mailing list.

Numerous outside speakers spoke on topics including how legal issues relating to open source, what business models exist when the code is free, secure but open code and how open-source development really works.

"The important thing about OSS," Budd said, "is that people get passionate about it."

InstallFest 7 scheduled for Sat., April 21

Donnie Berkholz
Editor

The seventh iteration of the Linux InstallFest is coming up in a couple weeks, 1-5 p.m. Saturday, April 21, in the Penguin's Nest (Dearborn 401).

InstallFests are open to the community for anyone who wants to try out Linux or get some help for that last bit of hardware that isn't quite working yet.

The LUG is also looking for experienced Linux users to help with the installation.

OSS@OSU Darcs author David Roundy

Donnie Berkholz
Editor

The author of a popular version-control system (VCS) called darcs just happens to be an OSU physics professor, David Roundy.

It started with an online bridge game he was working on. Unhappy with the predominant version-control system, called CVS, he began looking for alternatives. The only ones that were free software were Subversion and arch, and Roundy wanted a distributed system so he went with arch.

He remained unhappy. After



David Roundy

thinking about how he would improve arch, Roundy decided to play with his ideas.

“Thus, darcs was born,” he said. Darcs stands for David’s Advanced Revision Control System, and he saw it as a pet project. That’s why he chose to reimplement the original C++ code using the Haskell functional programming language.

But darcs has become a poster child for Haskell and stands alone

as the only change-based VCS.

With darcs, you can easily pull across a single patch into another branch, at any point in the code history, and all of its dependent patches come along automatically. This is a natural operation of the program rather than an artificial copy of changesets, as occurs in some other VCS programs, and Roundy has proven that it will always find the minimal and correct set of dependencies.

Some consider the code being written in Haskell as a sentence to obscurity and few outside contributions. On the contrary, Roundy

found that darcs had more contributors than another distributed VCS called git, which is implemented in C, Perl, shell script and some other common languages.

Many of the contributors sent in documentation or test-suite patches, but of those who did contribute to the Haskell code, many learned it only to work on darcs, showing that language choice does not cripple a community.

Learn more:
darcs.net

Donors put the “social” into “hacking social”



ALEX POLVI

What’s left after a hacking social?

Donnie Berkholz
Editor

Every week at the Tuesday evening hacking socials, pizza and soda show up. Nobody pays for the food and drinks, and nobody asks any questions. But the groups that donate this help to build the community in the Linux Users Group.

For nearly two years, Google has donated pizza every week as part of its university ambassador program. Courtesy of LUG hacking socials, OSU is one of the largest consumers of this program.

Western Family also helps out the LUG by lubricating the code

hacking with soda.

Nancy Pickett of Western Family said, “Our primary interest in the Linux Users Group is Brandon Philips, the son of one of our employees.

“We are all very proud of his accomplishments and leadership at OSU with the Linux group.”

With Philips graduating, the LUG may need to build new connections to maintain hacking socials at their present level.

Learn more:
lug.oregonstate.edu



ALEX POLVI

Brandon Philips picks up the soda.

<h3>Questions or comments?</h3> <p>You can get in touch with us via our e-mail address, which is osel@lists.oregonstate.edu. The OSEL Newsletter is brought to you by:</p> <p>Editor: Donnie Berkholz</p> <p>Staff Writer: Your Name Here</p> <p>Contributing Writer: Your Name Here</p> <p>This newsletter is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike license and created with free software.</p>	<h3>What is the OSEL?</h3> <p>The Open Source Education Lab has a simple mission: help to get students at OSU involved in free and open-source software.</p> <p>It’s about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · community · student-student interaction · skill building <p>The Open Source Education Lab was created in partnership with the OSU Linux Users Group, the OSU Open Source Lab and the OSU College of Engineering.</p> <p>To help the OSEL, contact osel@lists.oregonstate.edu.</p>	<h3>What is the OSL?</h3> <p>The Open Source Lab facilitates open-source communities as well as the development and distribution of open-source software. It accomplishes this through hosting projects and developing software.</p> <p>The Open Source Lab is a global, world-class facility and data center for open-source software knowledge, hosting, infrastructure, development and collaboration.</p> <p>To help the Open Source Lab, contact donations@osuosl.org or getinvolved@osuosl.org to contribute to a project.</p>	<h3>What is the LUG?</h3> <p>The Linux Users Group is a highly active, self-organizing group dedicated to advocating Free and Open-Source Software on campus.</p> <p>The LUG supports Linux, increases awareness about FOSS and jointly creates events with other groups.</p> <p>Google provides the pizza and the LUG provides the fun each Tuesday night. The LUG hosts a hacking social at 6 p.m. Tuesdays in Dearborn 401, the Penguin’s Nest.</p> <p>Visit lug.oregonstate.edu for more information.</p>
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