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FREE SOFTWARE FOUNDATION

Bulletin

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Spreading software freedom worldwide

by Peter Brown
Executive Director

In introducing people to the concepts behind free software, we use the analogy that to use free software is to make a political and ethical choice asserting the right to learn, and share what we learn with others, where free software can be the foundation of a learning society — where we share our knowledge in ways that others can build upon and enjoy.

This brings me to news of the release of our latest textbook, *Introduction to the Command Line*. It is now available for download or as a printed book from the GNU Press for $20 at `shop.fsf.org`. The book is released under the GNU Free Documentation License.

I realized from my involvement in the planning for this book — from planning the book sprint organized by Adam Hyde of FLOSS Manuals, to the subsequent editing and production — that we must all take responsibility for learning, understanding and using the command line as an extension of our support for free software. We must ourselves know how to work from the command line, understanding it as a right and a political necessity. We must be able to review and compile source code and be able to encrypt our data and correspondence. This kind of widespread literacy is an antidote to proprietary software.

Having easier and less powerful graphical user interfaces is absolutely fine, but we should see it only as a stepping stone towards empowering our-

selves to use the same set of tools that a developer would use — tools that give us individually more power and freedom on our own computers. The great news is, thanks to the no-nonsense examples given in this book, it is now much less daunting for newbies to learn than I had previously imagined. Please help spread this book, help translate this book, and encourage people to learn the command line as an extension of their support for free software.

In this issue of the FSF *Bulletin*, we have expanded the number of pages to give more space to free software activists campaigning around the world. The power of the Internet means that free software activism has no borders and we can work as a global community and aid each other in the actions we take locally. `LibrePlanet.org` is our contribution at attempting to connect all the users, developers and activists working on important campaigns, to empower them and raise their profile. We are also collecting links to all the important free software resources we can find and we are encouraging the formation of local and regional free software activist groups to take political action in support of free software. We hope that in building LibrePlanet, we can learn important lessons and improve our own outreach efforts.

This summer, why not spend some time helping to expand `LibrePlanet.org` and dip a toe into free software activism?

Compliance Lab: Trip to Korea

by Brett Smith
Licensing Compliance Engineer

Oftentimes, the work we do at the Compliance Lab that gets the most attention revolves around the violations we address. That's easier to see, and it's more exciting for other people to talk about—all the news about our recent case against Cisco is a good example of this. However, the work we do to educate people about the licenses and help them comply is just as important, if not more so: it prevents violations from occurring in the first place, instead of addressing them after the fact.

In April I attended a conference about free software licensing issues in South Korea, organized by the Korea Software Copyright Committee (SOCOP). This government agency was originally created to help settle licensing disputes between proprietary software vendors and South Korean industry. However, as more of the companies there have started relying on free

distinguish the important or reusable points? Hopefully the `swpat.org` documentation will make that easier, and the coming debate in New Zealand will surely generate more information which `swpat.org` will in turn try to help make accessible to the rest of the world.

The target audience of `swpat.org` is thus people who want to start or participate in campaigns against software patents. `swpat.org` won't tell people which are the best arguments. Instead, `swpat.org` will document the whole range of arguments, and will attach all the evidence we can find from studies, statements, and press articles. The decision of which arguments are best is a decision to be taken locally by each specific campaign.

Another motivation behind this project is to increase the continuity and coordination among anti-swpat campaigns in general. Existing anti-swpat campaigns focus on particular regions. It would be useful to coordinate at the global level — you can bet the big patent owners have been doing so for a long time. When some people think of coordination, they think of a coordinator, but that's not `swpat.org`'s approach. Instead, coordination will be helped by making the work of each campaign more transparent and clear. Then each campaign can follow or ignore the work of each other campaign.

Continuity will be increased because as campaigns start and stop, and individuals come and go, the information on swpat.org will always increase. This is particularly necessary in political campaigns because working within the rigid procedures of government institutions leads to bursts of work followed by quiet periods, during which the gathered information gathers dust, websites disappear, and motivated people don't find any active campaigns they can put their energy into. By adding an ongoing documentation project, we can reduce the amount of knowledge lost.

So, what can you do right now to help fight software patents? Take a look at `swpat.org` and add your favorite argument, add a link to that interesting article you remember seeing last year, send a link to a local software group and ask them if they can add information about legislation or court cases in your country or region. Writing articles isn't necessary. A good wiki is built sentence by sentence, link by link.

The *Bilski* court case and the recent consultation by the European Patent Office are two good examples of sources of information to be mined. Dozens of organizations submitted *amicus* briefs summarizing their best arguments and legal justifications for their pro- or anti-swpat positions. Unlike press statements where companies try to be vague and offend no one, in these briefs everyone lays their cards on the table and states their position. So these briefs contain all the details, if someone would just read them and make notes.

There's also awareness work and pressure campaigns which are useful regardless of whether the procedures are accepting input, but this work too needs preparation and coordination to be effective. World Day Against Software Patents, September 24th, is one such good initiative.

On a hardware level, if you can, use coreboot on x86 systems instead of the typical proprietary BIOS, and help the coreboot project support more x86 hardware.

On an operating system level, use one of the free GNU/Linux variants, such as gNewSense or Trisquel. If you need a newer kernel in order to support freedom-respecting devices such as ath9k wifi, the Linux-libre project distributes up-to-date versions of the kernel Linux with all nonfree software removed.

There is also still some work to do to reach a completely hackable laptop. The software that is on hard drives (both magnetic and solid state) can be updated by the user, and is nonfree. This software is usually used for things like making sure no parts of the disk wear out, but could also be used to do things you could not detect and would not like, such as making a copy of data written to it in an area not detectable by software not running on the drive itself.

But the Lemote Yeeloong is the most free laptop that has ever been available, and we would like to thank all those who made it possible, especially **Robert Millan** for doing the bulk of the gNewSense port, and many Lemote employees for their answers to our questions and willingness to work with us towards freedom and control over the computing hardware that we purchase from them; we all should demand no less from all of the vendors that we buy hardware from!

How you can fight software patents today

by Ciaran O'Riordan
Director, End Software Patents

The newly launched `swpat.org` wiki is an effort to build the case against software patents and to make the work of previous and existing campaigns understandable and reusable to outsiders and newcomers. By using a public wiki, `swpat.org` also provides an answer to the always-difficult question: "What can I do right now to fight software patents?"

The wiki approach was chosen because in a field this vast, no one knows everything but everyone knows something. There are two types of information to gather. First is the press articles, studies, statements from experts, and statements from interest groups. These are too numerous for anyone to have a global overview of, and the importance of each depends and the politics, economy, and culture of each region.

The second type of information is the high-quality output of previous anti-swpat campaigns. Previous campaigns have done great work on making the case against software patents to judges, patent offices, and politicians. Interacting with these institutions requires using specific jargon, so these documents are written to be understandable by an expert in a specific institution in a specific country or region.

There's a new debate about patent legislation in New Zealand. How much effort would it take for someone in New Zealand to find the documents produced by the campaigns in the European Union and the USA and

software for their business, using it in a wide and growing variety of different devices, SOCOP has begun working to help these companies understand and comply with free software licenses as well.

To be honest, as I prepared my presentation for the conference, I wasn't completely sure what to expect. Based on the organizers' recommendations, I gave a short speech about how our licenses work on a fundamental level—explaining how they all provide a common set of permissions to share and modify the software, and only have different sets of conditions for these activities.

However, when I started fielding questions about our licenses later in the day, I started to wonder whether that speech was too simple. These questions were not the kinds of questions that people ask when they're just starting to learn about the GPL and other free software licenses. Instead they were questions that clearly showed that the askers had a good understanding of the licenses, and were trying to figure out how the terms applied to their specific situations.

SOCOP itself is already doing a lot to help South Korean companies comply with free software licenses too. This was the first conference they've organized on this subject, and it was very productive and well-run. They are also working to roll out a free software portal where companies can learn about what free software can meet their needs, what licensing terms apply to it, and get together to discuss best practices for compliance.

We want to help SOCOP—and other organizations around the world doing similar work—help the companies it talks to. To do that, we plan to start building a compliance network to share information between these groups—learning about what compliance issues companies are struggling with, and helping them develop best practices to handle them. The whole community will benefit from this work: companies won't have to spend time fixing violations after the fact, users will get more free software and hear about their rights to share and change it, and developers will have easier access to the changes these companies are making. It's a win-win situation for everybody, and the Compliance Lab is in a unique position to help see it through.

Defective by Design: Don't get swindled

by John Sullivan
Operations Manager

Proprietary software and proprietary formats are vehicles for the exercise of power by some over others. Companies that claim ownership over the software and formats involved in the delivery of information become gatekeepers determining who can and cannot access that information. The point isn't whether the people who claim such power — and are granted it by our legal system — use it for good or bad. The point is that they shouldn't have it at all. But as it turns out anyway, they generally use it for bad.

The Amazon Kindle (more appropriately known as the "Swindle"), which uses proprietary software to distribute ebooks in proprietary formats within a Digital Restrictions Management (DRM) scheme, is an example of a company claiming and being granted power they shouldn't have over books and the terms under which we can access them.

Amazon's speedy move to shut off the Kindle's text-to-speech (TTS) capabilities in response to complaints by the Authors Guild was a clear demonstration of this power. Authors Guild president Roy Blount, Jr. borrowed our "Kindle Swindle" monicker as the headline for his *New York Times* oped piece complaining that the TTS feature infringed on authors' rights. Amazon twiddled some bits and suddenly all Kindles refused to read certain titles aloud. It's still a mystery why a computerized voice reading a book aloud to you in your home is infringement on any author's right — but in this case, it's Amazon's secret software that makes the law.

This action sparked a backlash that is still gaining momentum. Blind people have been protesting in large numbers, because the TTS feature is incredibly useful to them. Their point is powerful — taking it further, we should not be content with case-specific exemptions. The problem isn't that Amazon and the publishers don't use the power properly, it's that they have it at all. In this case, they used it in a manner that disproportionately impacted blind users, and that was wrong. But if they retain the power, they will be able to use it later against someone else.

This has not been the only such instance. Earlier this year, DefectiveBy-Design supporters sent Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos jars of peach baby food — a reference to an episode of *Seinfeld* where Kramer is banned from his favorite fruit market for attempting to return a peach — to call attention to Amazon's ban of a user for returning too many Amazon purchases; a ban which prevented the user not only from purchasing any ebooks for his Kindle but also from accessing ebooks he had already purchased.[1] Though the ban was rescinded after the outcry, the leopard had shown its spots.

Amazon spokeswoman Cinthia Portugal told *Wired* that "Amazon is agnostic when it comes to DRM with ebooks," and that they "give content owners the choice." While Amazon has been a positive force in the world of DRM-free music, they are anything but a neutral party in the ebook world. They control the format, the device,

[1] `defectivebydesign.org/impeach-jeff-bezos-for-kindle-swindle`

important tax savings to SSII (Societe de Services en Ingenierie Informatique — information technology consulting companies) and to consulting firms that accept to offer their services to nonprofits free of charge.

FSF France houses numerous free software projects under the umbrella of GNA. GNA, like GNU Savannah, hosts many free software projects, including Xenomai, Decade, Savane, and PyVot. These programs could benefit from the support of Wecena and thereby from the skills of engineers between contracts.

The latter could also contribute to the maintenance, administration, and exploitation of GNA. For instance, an engineer specialized in development of embedded software — like the software in wireless access points — could contribute his/her expertise to unlock the technological bolts of the Xenomai project, or a writer could fill in the gaps for the documentation of Savane, which is essential for the emergence of new methods of collaborative work. All skills have a place in free software.

FSF France therefore encourages all companies interested in the development of their employees between contracts to contact Jean Millerat, social entrepreneur and Wecena initiator "so that this intelligence mine might be exploited to the fullest."

Free software laptops

by Danny Clark
FSF Systems Team

Richard M. Stallman is one of the first users of the most hackable laptop currently in existence, the *Lemote Yeeloong*. Its modifiable binaries, including those that control the boot-up process (often called firmware, somewhat like the BIOS in most computers) and wireless card, have corresponding source code that is free software.

RMS by chance met someone from Lemote during his travels, and found him and others at Lemote to be interested in the GNU philosophy. RMS and the FSF have worked with Lemote and interested hackers to produce a port of *gNewSense*, a fully free distribution of GNU/Linux. Most GNU/Linux distributions incorporate nonfree software, such as device driver binary blobs with explictly nonfree licenses or no source code at all, but gNewSense contains only software which is completely free.

The `gnewsense-mipsel-l` port runs on the Yeeloong laptop, which uses a MIPS64 compatible CPU, the Loongson 2f; PMON 2000, a free software boot loader; and the RTL8187b wifi chipset. It seems to be as usable as the current generation of less free, inexpensive x86-based laptops, which are often also called netbooks.

The current lack of a supplier preinstalling the Yeeloong with gNewSense does make it harder to set up initially than less free netbooks running less free GNU/Linux distributions. However the gNewSense team and often FSF Systems Team are very active in helping people via IRC, mailing lists, and web sites. From personal experience we can say that the thrill of using a computer so close to our ideals is worth the relatively trivial time commitment involved in getting it up and running.

But what can you do to move towards freedom if you do not have around $400 to spend on a Yeeloong?

and Dragora started in Argentina, whereas dyne:bolic and Trisquel have their roots in Italy and Spain, respectively. Furthermore, it appears that there's soon to be a new entrant from Venezuela.

There must be more than Latino blood to it. An average Brazilian might be tempted to credit the nearly-dominant presence of Argentina in the list to gaucho pride, but that would be inappropriate and most certainly wrong. It is not hard to notice how important freedom is for the Argentinian people in general, even more so in the free software communities there.

It may have to do with their having got out of a particularly nasty military dictatorship not too long ago. This can't be all, for a number of other Latin American countries also got out of military dictatorships just as recently, and their peoples don't set out to create free system distributions as often.

Nevertheless, fighting dictatorships certainly changes the social fabric in a significant way for free software: people deprived of something as important as freedom are more likely to value it in its various dimensions. And then, the dictatorships were long preceded by colonization and slavery-based economy, and the echoes of the struggles for sovereignty, independence and respect for human rights and essential freedoms can still be perceived.

Some kind of social conscience and unity seems to have come out of this misery, which explains why free software is making such inroads into governments in so many countries in this region. After all, sovereignty and independence are nothing but freedom applied to countries and peoples.

Let's hope that social misery is not a requirement for learning to value one's own freedom, and to respect others', for then there's hope some day we can all "Be Free!"

Freedo, the mascot of Linux-libre

FSF France: Wecena

by Loic Dachary
President, FSF France

FSF France and Wecena have signed a collaboration agreement, the goal of which is to find companies which would be ready to benefit the association, and the scientific and educational projects it supports, through voluntary service involving the labor of its employees between contracts.

Wecena reduces the "numerical fracture of skills" which separates the nonprofit world from the business world. It allows partnerships and non-government organizations working in the educational, charity, or public health sectors to benefit from the work of computer engineers and consultants between contracts at their companies. The latter thus commit themselves to a form of *pro bono* work at minimal cost since the French tax system grants

and the store where the media for the device is purchased. If all they wanted to do was "give content owners the choice," then why did they send a DMCA takedown notice to a site hosting a tool which facilitated loading books from other companies onto the Kindle?[2]

Statements like Portugal's show Amazon's strategy: Don't look behind the curtain. Trying to get an exact description of what the DRM on the Kindle does is impossible. DRM is not even mentioned much less explained — outside of user-contributed reviews — on the purchase page for the Kindle. And yet, while the Kindle already does support some DRM-free formats, access to the restricted Kindle store is the feature being marketed most heavily by Amazon.

Whatever happens with the Kindle, we need to work to eliminate DRM on all ebooks. Here are some things you can do to protest these restrictions and promote DRM-free ebooks:

Don't get swindled. Other portable devices can both run free software and read DRM-free ebooks. FBReader is free software that runs on Android mobile devices, the OpenMoko FreeRunner, and other systems running GNU/Linux. The Bebook e-ink device publishes their reader software as free software under the GNU General Public License (GPL). As of this writing, the Bebook still includes a proprietary module for DRM support, but maybe if enough people request it, they will offer a completely DRM-free version.

Support authors who offer their ebooks without DRM. Creative Commons licenses sensibly prohibit DRM, so look for books under licenses like CC-BY-ND, CC-BY and CC-BY-SA. Another group of authors is working to tag all of their own DRM-free ebooks with "drmfree" on Amazon. You can help by supporting their work and by helping in the tagging effort.[3]

Insist that Amazon start being honest about their DRM. Write to Amazon asking them to answer author Cory Doctorow's questions about DRM — and publish your letter online.[4] If Amazon is just doing what the authors want, then why aren't they answering him?

Hand out copies of "The Right to Read".[5] Richard Stallman's short story illustrates the kind of world we can expect if we buy into proprietary devices, proprietary formats, and DRM for our ebooks.

Review Amazon on Amazon. This worked to call attention to DRM on video games, when many people reviewed Spore negatively for its DRM. The same can be done with the Kindle. Take a few minutes to write your own review of the Kindle, emphasizing the problems with DRM.

Review the Reviewers. Write to tech reviewers and point out that they failed to mention the Kindle or other device's DRM restrictions in their review. Some reviewers wield a *lot* of influence — people like David Pogue of the *New York Times*. It's mystifying that they exclude such an important misfeature when they review devices in this genre.

[2] news.cnet.com/8301-13578_3-10196424-38.html

[3] defectivebydesign.org/blog/1240

[4] boingboing.net/2009/05/14/kindle-owners-start.html.

[5] http://www.gnu.org/philosophy/right-to-read.html

Please do write to us at `info@defectivebydesign.org` about anything you do to protest ebook DRM, and use the LibrePlanet wiki at `libreplanet.org` to share the texts and reading lists you've created. Together we can achieve the same in the arena of ebooks that we have achieved in music — a widespread recognition that people will no longer tolerate DRM.

"This peach is sub-par"

New free network services

by Matt Lee
Campaigns Manager

To recap: In March 2008, some of our associate members met up during our conference and spoke about what free network services would look like. They came up with a document for discussion, the *Franklin Street Statement*, named after the street address of the FSF offices, here in Boston.

Since then, a number of free network services have arrived. Previously, we spoke about Identi.ca. The founder of Identi.ca, Evan Prodromou, came to Boston for our LibrePlanet 2009 conference and spoke about some of the challenges in building the system. Here's an update on a few more services that have sprung up since then:

Libre.fm: Spurred on by a discussion at the conference, I and a few other free software hackers have been working on a free software replacement for another of these Web 2.0 sites. Libre.fm, a free software replacement for the music site Last.fm, was born at the very end of March 2009. In the last two months, we've provided a scraping tool for users to get their data out of Last.fm, as well as replacements for both the server and Web components. At the time of writing, Libre.fm has just under 9 million tracks in its database, of which approximiately 1.5 million are unique. All this, from just under 11,000 users in a little over 8 weeks. (`www.libre.fm`)

Identi.ca: After continuing success with Identi.ca, Evan has raised funding for the project and has hired some developers to work on the service. (`www.identi.ca`)

Filmaster: Filmaster is a new social network for movie fans featuring personalized content and recommendations. Filmaster allows you to run your own movie blog, rate movies and talk about movies with people whose opinions you care about. They've created a place for real movie freaks — people for whom film is not just entertainment. (`www.filmaster.com`)

We hope to have a full interview with the developers of Filmaster in the next issue of the *Bulletin*.

We're still trying to raise the funding it needs to get started. The plan now is to fundraise all summer, and hopefully launch this in the fall — better late than never, right? But every single organization that has promised funding has backed out — they're too scared, and too many big budget cuts recently. Distributions don't want to contribute. I've talked to all the major distros lawyers. They all blessed our proposal, then the companies still go, "we have no budget for this."

Linux-libre: Creating a free kernel package

by Alexandre Oliva
FSF Latin America

Back in early 2005, a group from the deep south of South America set out to create the youngest member of the FSF Network. After a few false starts, we have managed to form a growing team of software freedom activists from all over Latin America.

After the realization that promoting free software and its use is much narrower than our goal of promoting software freedom, we adopted the motto "Be Free!", and a very social conscience-oriented discourse and behavior. Nearly all of our actions gravitate around enabling software users to be free, and educating them to seek freedom.

One of our first realizations in the "Be Free!" mindset was that, while there were a number of free system GNU/Linux distributions, the largest free software communities were around distributions that did not qualify as free system distributions, but that contained few non-free components. Unfortunately, just removing those was not viable, because one of them was the non-free kernel Linux.

We realized that, in order to enable people to "Be Free!" without abandoning the communities and the distributions they were fond of, it would be useful to offer them free kernels. So, building upon the work started in gNewSense and expanded by BLAG, FSFLA took over the maintainership of Linux-libre, a free distribution of the kernel Linux, aimed at free system distributions and free human beings.

Nowadays, we maintain and publish free source releases based on various non-free Linux releases, along with programs we wrote to automate their cleaning up. Furthermore, in a server kindly offered by the FSF, we maintain, host, and encourage the Linux-libre community to maintain binaries of Linux-libre that can be used as drop-in substitutes for the non-free Linux binaries offered by various GNU/Linux distributions, and as the kernels offered by GNU/Linux-libre free system distributions.

Maintaining freed distributions of Linux based on its various releases seems to have been key for its wide adoption among free system distributions. Once this was done, it didn't take long for all of the free GNU/Linux distributions, recommended by the GNU Project for their commitment to software freedom, to adopt Linux-libre, and for a number of new free GNU/Linux-libre distributions to appear.

It is telling that, aside from gNewSense and BLAG, all the recommended Free GNU/Linux-libre distributions were created by Latin developers, most of them from Latin America. Ututo, Musix GNU+Linux

We couldn't afford enough licenses for the SPARC compiler from Sun, then I discovered the beginnings of the GCC port to the SPARC. I was already maintaining our existing compilers, so it wasn't a difficult switch. As I changed jobs when that startup died, and then another, and another, I wound up maintaining GCC for everyone I worked for.

You've worked on many GNU projects over the years, but mostly programming tools. How does working on a more user-orientated project like Gnash feel compared to say, GDB or GCC?

The bug reports are very different! Most GCC and GDB bugs I dealt with were very low-level stuff, and were primarily reported by engineers. With Gnash, we have a much wider target audience, and bug reports are often more like "YouTube stopped working!"

How did Gnash come about?

I originally wrote Gnash as the graphics layer for a digital stereo system. The user interface was written in Flash. After that I didn't think about Flash much till John Gilmore called me up, and talked me into turning my standalone Flash player into a plugin for Firefox, which I did. Then the FSF made Gnash a high-priority project, I attracted more developers, and off we went...

Most of the phones being sold today have Web browsers and even Wi-Fi, yet they lack a Flash player. Is this an area where Gnash can shine?

We believe so. We pay more attention to things like the footprint, and performance, than Adobe does. Plus Gnash is much more portable, and runs on more processors and operating systems than the non-free players.

One thing I hear from a lot of people, is that they are unwilling to use Gnash, because it doesn't work on some of the sites they use. How can people who don't have the skills to cut their teeth on the Gnash codebase get involved and help out?

We find good bug reports very useful, especially if they've tried with a recent version of Gnash, compared the output from other non-free Flash players, etc... Then as we ask the questions we need to figure out the bug, hanging in there with us and responding to the email helps too. Other than that, we can always use editing of our wiki, info added to our documentation, that kind of thing.

What features does Gnash have that Flash is lacking? I know you recently released a media server, Cygnal. How does Cygnal take advantage of Gnash?

Gnash is still lacking solid SWF v9/10 compatibility. Improving that is the goal of our summer project. Cygnal and Gnash have special functionality that only works when using both. Things like using 100% free codecs for all multimedia. There is other functionality on the roadmap for Gnash & Cygnal, like server side support for editing videos, stuff like that.

You've worked with John Gilmore recently on a project to bust patents on media codecs. What's the goal of the project?

To develop a legally redistributable version of ffmpeg.

How is that going?

We need a minimum of $50k to really do the 3 month project plan. We have people lined up, but right now we can barely pay our bills — it's going nowhere due to lack of funding.

Associate membership: we're coming to your town

by Deborah Nicholson
Membership Coordinator

Although the Free Software Foundation's headquarters is in Boston, we like to meet, greet and conspire with our members and activists from all over the world. Summer brings a lot of opportunities to do just that, and so by fall our virtual suitcase will be covered in stickers. We hope to see you in our travels!

For our first stop, campaigns manager Matt Lee and I are heading down to Porto Alegre, Brazil for FISL. This will be FISL's 10th year, GNU's 25th, and we'll be joined by Richard Stallman at this event. Matt and I want to meet lots of members and free software activists who can tell us more about their experiences. Free software is in wide use in South America and we hope to come away inspired and invigorated by our visit. We'll be in Porto Alegre from June 24th through the 27th.

Late July sees us in San Jose, right in the heart of Silicon Valley. I'm looking forward to seeing our many members and activists, but especially those who helped out at our table during the recent MySQL Conference. We'll be in San Jose from July 21st through the 24th.

Our next stop is DEFCON in Las Vegas. We're looking forward to talking with hackers and free software activists and folks who not only understand exactly what could be going on inside your machine when you aren't the one in control, they're taking steps to stay in control. We'll be in Las Vegas from July 30th through August 2nd.

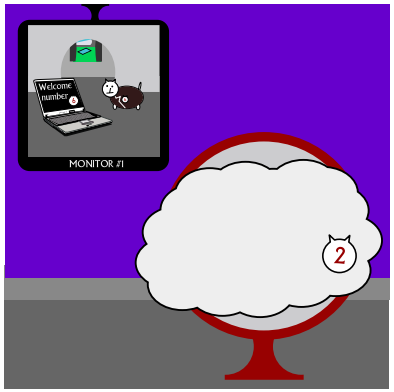
Then it's back out to the West Coast to commune with our Bay Area compatriots. We're hoping to set up a nice informal gathering for members and activists while we're in town. Let us know if you've got any ideas or access to a space! We'll be in San Francisco from August 11th through the 14th.

Our next stop is Columbus, Ohio, a place we haven't been able to send anyone to in a few years. We know there are lots of GNU/Linux users out there in the Heartland, and we can't wait to meet them and catch up. We'll be in Ohio on September 25th through the 26th.

Our last membership outreach stop for the year will be in Baltimore, Maryland, which is just an hour away from the US capital, Washington, DC. We look forward to chatting with people about government adoption of free software, the political implications of free formats and grassroots organizing with free software tools. We'll be in Baltimore in early November.

Please let us know if we can come sit in on your free software user group meeting while we're in your town. If the timing isn't good, we're also up for more informal meetings with local free software activists, like lunch or coffee, etc. If you're interested in rustling up a few people, email us at `membership@fsf.org` or come visit `#fsf-members` on `irc.gnu.org`.

There will be lots of opportunities for conversations, for volunteering and for giving us valuable feedback about the struggle for free software in your community. So don't be shy, drop us a note or visit us online!



Free BIOS: Coreboot

by Ward Vandewege
FSF Systems Team

A lot has happened in coreboot development in the past six months. Some major progress has been made on an ACPI framework for the code, which makes it a lot easier to add ACPI support to supported mainboards. On the payload front, an emulation layer called Seabios now works very well with coreboot. It makes coreboot behave more like a traditional BIOS, in the sense that it provides the BIOS services that some legacy bootloaders and kernels still require (the kernel Linux and grub2 bootloaders do not, but the GRUB bootloader does, for instance). Seabios gives users an easier upgrade path from the proprietary BIOS.

What Seabios does not have yet is complete USB support. However, coreboot got four students allocated in Google's 2009 Summer of Code. Two of them are working on adding full USB support to Seabios. This will make it possible to use a USB keyboard during boot, and to boot from USB drives. Another student is working on putting coreboot plus a minimal virtualization hypervisor in ROM. The last student is developing a free software VGA BIOS for Geode hardware, based on the work already done as part of the vgabios project[6] — a codebase which emulates a VGA bios for use in Bochs and Qemu.

Ultimately, the FSF would like to see a free software VGA BIOS that supports many different graphics adapters, and this is a good first step. Incidentally, a couple of coreboot developers have been working on a similar VGA rom replacement for VIA's K8M890 chipset.

The FSF recently worked with Marc Jones, a freelance coreboot consultant and developer, to add a coreboot port for the supermicro H8DME motherboard. This board is a server board that can take up to two AMD Opteron CPUs and up to 64GB of ram. We have purchased and deployed one H8DME-based system with coreboot and Xen, and more will be deployed in the future as we continue our efforts to retire old hardware and replace it with systems that run coreboot.

[6] `nongnu.org/vgabios`

LibrePlanet 2009 conference

by Matt Lee
Campaigns Manager

On March 21st and 22nd 2009, the Free Software Foundation held the first LibrePlanet conference, LibrePlanet 2009, at the Harvard Science Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Over the next two days, we covered a range of free software activism topics, with the first day of the conference dedicated to a traditional, formal conference style.

Talks from Jeremy Allison, Bradley Kuhn, Ryan Bagueros, Evan Prodromou and Rob Savoye kept the crowd entertained and informed on the first day, with updates and insights from their various projects, while Brian Gough, Mako Hill, Alex Oliva and Ciaran O'Riordan talked about the work of the GNU Project and the Free Software Foundation around the world. Richard Stallman finished the day with the presentation of his article, "The JavaScript Trap," and the presentation ceremony of the 2009 Free Software Awards.

Day two was a new kind of conference for us at the FSF, with myself, GNU chief webmaster Rob Myers, and FSF membership coordinator Deborah Nicholson, leading the sessions for Free Network Services, Activism, and High Priority Projects respectively, and last but certainly not least, while all this talking was going on, one room housed a much quieter group who were busy writing a book. The crew from FLOSS Manuals were running a textbook sprint with on-site and remote contributors all weekend. They produced an amazing text book titled *Introduction to the Command Line*, aimed at GNU/Linux gnubies. The book is available now for reading or download on the FLOSS Manuals website or you can help us fund the next book sprint by buying a printed copy.

The venue itself was nothing short of amazing, and the wonderful support from Harvard University allowed us to have the audio recordings available within days, instead of weeks, and encoded directly from the original audio CDs to the free software Ogg Speex format, a free variation of Ogg Vorbis designed for speech.

Volunteer Spotlight: Rob Savoye

by Matt Lee
Campaigns Manager

Rob Sayove is the founder and lead developer of Gnash, the GNU Flash Player. In the past, he has worked on The GNU Compiler Collection, GNU Debugger, Cygwin and the DejaGNU testing framework. He recently spoke at the LibrePlanet 2009 conference, here in Boston, and I caught up with him to ask a few questions.

When did you first get involved with the GNU Project?

I was working for a small start-up in the 1980s building massively parallel super computers, and we decided to switch processors to the SPARC.