



GNOME™

Annual Report 2007

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GNOME's First Ten Years

Photo: Frederic Crozat

Do you remember ten years ago?

"We want to develop a free and complete set of user friendly applications and desktop tools, similar to CDE and KDE but based entirely on free software [...]"

So, let's see. Free desktop? Check. Complete desktop? Check. Applications and desktop tools? Check, check!

We have completed our original goal.

Ten years ago, GNU/Linux distributions did not include a free and usable web browser. Ten years ago, using only free software, you could not do graphic design and illustration, you could not balance your checkbook, you could not download pictures from your camera to the computer, you could not do phone calls over the Internet, you could not create a spreadsheet with pie charts, and you could not plug a USB drive into your computer and expect it to "just work". Okay, USB sticks didn't exist ten years ago, but you get the idea.

I hereby thank all the people that hacked, translated, documented, decorated, and marketed all of this, making it a reality. You have given us freedom, good jobs, and a priceless group of friends.

Sure, our desktop still has bugs here and there, and some things don't yet work as smoothly as they should (printing and other ugly swamps), but the basic goal is done: we have a free-as-in-freedom, easy to use, stable desktop with a number of utilities and applications. We have a few million non-technical users, a few thousand technical ones, and many people and companies using GNOME.

A couple of years ago, people were becoming concerned that GNOME lacked direction. We were beginning to realize that the original goal was done, so now what? If anything, GNOME is in a healthy transition, similar to that of a teenage crisis, where it doesn't quite know how to grow up and changes its mind all the time.

It's about home users! It's about mobile devices! It's about big deployments! It's about corporate desktops!

Dan Winship, one of the long-time GNOME hackers, made a beautiful observation:

"The problem is that the community doesn't know what direction it wants GNOME to move in, and so some people are pulling one way, and some are pulling another way, and the vectors all sum to zero."

Gradually, we are recognizing that we must let GNOME grow in different directions, without requiring everyone to do the same thing or letting a new direction become a distraction.

Back when GNOME was small, it was easy to create new directions for it.

We said, office applications? Sure, go ahead and write them. We had grandiose plans for a spreadsheet written in the Scheme programming language. I started writing a "sheet" object with a linked list, and then I realized that I knew nothing about spreadsheets. Fortunately there were saner people who did the right thing: Miguel de Icaza wrote the basic spreadsheet engine while I wrote the display engine, and later Jody Goldberg and Morten Welinder came about with *real* knowledge of spreadsheets, and they made Gnumeric beautiful.

We also said, "Flashy desktop? Go ahead!" Carsten "Rasterman" Haitzler wrote the original theming architecture for GTK+, and taught us how to make windows and widgets look incredible. One day I was having dinner with Rasterman in a pizza place a block away from our apartments when we lived next to each other. He told me, "You know, the future is to draw everything with 3D acceleration." This was back in 1998! I said, "No way, <N semi-plausible technical reasons why it couldn't be done>, it's never going to happen." Of course what happened is that two or three years ago Apple started doing it, and now we are playing catch-up. Raster was quite the visionary, and I wish we had listened to him more.

Once we said, "Usability? Sure!" MIT, Sun, and others did usability tests and beat us in the head with the results. There's nothing like people telling you, "Users can't log out because they think this icon looks like a fried egg". People even figured out how to fit a usability lab in a backpack.

A few years ago, we were either working on many vertical, self-contained problems; or, if we worked on horizontal ones which touched the whole desktop, GNOME was small enough that we could change *all* of it quickly. But not anymore --- GNOME is big, and integrating all the different parts together can be a major piece of work.

That is why people are afraid to have a part of GNOME diverge: what if someone comes up with a super-cool idea that means changes in *all* of GNOME? Who is going to write that!? Why, the people who are interested in it! It's the same way it has always been, just bigger. Bring it on.

We are changing the world, one patch at a time.

Happy hacking to all of my GNOME colleagues, friends, and users!

Federico Mena-Quintero



GNOME in 2007

Text: Sayamindu Dasgupta Photo: Michael Dominic

The year of GNOME's 10th anniversary was full of important happenings: more GNOME-based mobile devices were released, a new Roadmap process was created, the Online Desktop ideas were presented at GUADEC, and more.

2007 saw GNOME based technology showing up in a number of mobile and embedded devices. The beginning of the year saw the release of the GNOME-technology-based Nokia N800 Internet tablet, shortly followed up by the announcement of Neo1973, a mobile phone running the OpenMoko stack, based on the underlying components of the GNOME platform.

The year also saw the rise in popularity of Vala, a new programming language aimed specifically for GNOME developers. As mentioned in its website, "Vala aims to bring modern programming language features to GNOME developers without imposing any additional runtime requirements and without using a different ABI compared to applications and libraries written in C."

March also saw the release of GNOME 2.18, the end of yet another six months of tireless work by the developers, translators, and documentation people. Apart from the usual small but extremely useful incremental upgrades which accompany all major GNOME releases, this release was accompanied by the introduction of Seahorse into the core desktop. Inclusion of Seahorse brought full integration of personal security features into the desktop, allowing users to communicate with each other securely and to easily manage their personal keys.

The vision of the GNOME Online Desktop is to adapt the desktop so that it becomes the perfect window to the modern Web.

GUADEC, the annual GNOME Conference, happened in Birmingham, United Kingdom, during July. One of the pertinent topics of the conference was the concept of the GNOME Online Desktop. As online services such as social networking sites become more and more popular, the vision of the GNOME Online Desktop is to adapt the desktop so that it becomes the perfect window to the modern Web. This year's GUADEC saw a number of presentations centered around this concept, most notably Havoc Pennington and Bryan Clark's joint keynote address and Alex Graveley's keynote speech. These presentations helped bring the concept to the centre stage, and soon after GUADEC, <http://online.gnome.org> was set up to test out the various ideas around the initiative. GUADEC was also witness to a very interesting discussion on the future of GTK+, with developers pitching in their comments on what works for the existing versions of the toolkit and what does not. This year's recipient of the GNOME Thank You Pants, an annual award for Outstanding Service to the GNOME community, was Federico Mena Quintero, an active GNOME developer from the very beginning of the project. Memorable events during this GUADEC included the parties and the football match. The next year's GUADEC is scheduled to happen in Istanbul, Turkey.

September saw the release of GNOME 2.20, including a number of new useful features added to various applications like Evolution, Gedit, Tomboy, and Totem. GNOME 2.20 also marked the start of a revamped process for defining the roadmap, where a dedicated team would gather the roadmaps for the next release from each module maintainer, and then collate them in a wiki page. This gives an increased sense of direction for the overall project, especially for people who are observing it from outside.

October saw Vincent Untz taking up the job of the GNOME release manager, a post previously held by Elijah Newren. The latest GNOME technology based Internet tablet from Nokia, the N810, was also announced in October. The Royal Sonesta Hotel in Boston hosted this year's Boston Summit. The GNOME Online Desktop was once again one of the focal point of the summit. The GNOME Beer Summit, sponsored by Google, was also held during the Boston Summit.

The GNOME 2.22 roadmap was announced in November, a month which also saw the start of the GNOME Foundation 2007 Elections process.

A new board of directors of the GNOME Foundation was elected in December. In another significant development, the One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) reported the beginning of the deployment of 100,000 XO laptops in Uruguay, running the GNOME-technology-based Sugar environment. In India, as a part of the annual FOSS.In (one of the premier FOSS-related conferences in the region), a GNOME Project Day was held with GNOME contribution being one of the main focus areas. This was the first major GNOME related event in Asia, to be followed by the GNOME Asia Summit in China in 2008.

As the eventful 2007 slowly comes to an end, 2008 does indeed look bright for GNOME, with new and exciting developments poised around emerging areas like GNOME Online Desktop and GMAE (the GNOME Mobile and Embedded initiative).



I love paw prints

Words about GNOME in 2007

The greatest achievement for me and other Swedish users is that the Swedish translations has undergone a seriously large review and are very close to being perfect. I have, during the year, spent a lot of time on the Assistive Technology features, such as Orca in combination with the speech synthesizer eSpeak, which now works really good with Swedish. It's has been a year of much work, but seeing GNOME as it is today, makes me feel good inside.

- Daniel Nylander

In 2007, I've been going to more events than any year before, and the feeling I got there is that people are happy with GNOME. They, of course, all have some pet bug, but they're still happy: GNOME, Official Desktop of Happy People. Personally, I'm also glad to see all the hard work being done in many areas, like Evolution, gio/gvfs, library.gnome.org, and the forthcoming crash.gnome.org. Watching translators work has been amazing—I'm closely following the French translation, of course—and I have to admit that having at last the documentation in your native tongue is simply fantastic. Ah, but I guess the best event for GNOME this year is that everybody has agreed that ice cream is what we want in the end.

- Vincent Untz

GNOME has had a great year from my perspective. My highlight was GUADEC, as this is the first year I've been. It was also the first year I've participated in the Google Summer of Code (as a mentor), which was a great experience and gained the GNOME community some valuable new contributors. Similarly, the Google Highly Open Contest was a welcome addition that allowed us to get lots of those small tasks done, as well as providing a great introduction to GNOME to a larger audience. Of course, there is one more achievement I'm particularly proud of that may well go unnoticed: the replacement of Scrollkeeper with Rarian. This, together with the new parsing code in Yelp and the beginnings of a new documentation editor, marks the start of work on our exciting new documentation project, Project Mallard, which we hope to advance lots more in 2008.

- Don Scorgie

GNOME is a superior community work, every little achievement [whether] I'm interested or not, I appreciate that we're making our movement sympathized by others. We are changing modern desktop and computer experience over time. Now we have our software on devices without keyboards, mice, [or] even monitors with GNOME Online Desktop. Community-wise, I'm very happy that GNOME is easily available to more people having better [internationality] tracking on [the] GTP side, thanks to new Damned Lies. It's also very fortunate that we're having our footprints in [the] mobile arena with GMAE.

- Baris Cicek

In 2007, it became clearer than ever how widely GNOME technology will be used in new kinds of mobile devices and other consumer products. Unlike proprietary platforms, GNOME rushed to embrace the potential of open standards and the full diversity of the Internet.

- Havoc Penington

This was a great year for GNOME. Found myself reading about the OLPC XO computer in my local newspaper and thinking to myself "Hey, that runs GNOME". In general, it's really fascinating seeing GNOME growing beyond the desktop into mobile phones, surf tablets, and other small computers. It was also great to see so many new faces in our community with a lot of energy and interesting ideas where we can go from here.

- Andreas Nilsson

The GNOME project has been rocking during 2007, there's a big group of people creating the most extraordinary technology you can imagine and using it for building amazing projects like the GNOME Mobile, the awesome development in new libraries like gvfs that will make the life easier to the Desktop Developers. Also, it's helping to make easy deployments of Linux in schools where you never thought it will be used, such as in Macedonia and a lot of small ones in Latin America. I've loved the community around GNOME this year; it has been growing quite fast; we saw it and felt it during the GUADEC at Birmingham, this is the most lovely community you can find in the Free Software world and it's the one that allowed me to participate, contribute, and get a job related to one of the things I love the most: GNOME.

- Pedro Villavicencio

GNOME's greatest achievement in 2007, in my opinion, was showing everyone that when it comes to users' freedom, we are in for no compromise. GNOME Foundation's decision to join ECMA-TC45-M to let Jody Goldberg be on the technical committee for Microsoft [®] Office Open XML specification is as controversial a decision as GNOME could make this year, yet it is the least we could do to ensure that our users will continue to enjoy the freedom to take their data out of proprietary formats and incrementally migrate to free software and open standards. I hope that 2008 is the year that the community at large comes to appreciate that decision as much as they would have done if GNOME had pretended that no problem exists silently hoping that OOXML goes away on its own.

- Behdad Esfahbod

Mature. That is how I describe GNOME and GNOME during 2007. In the course of 2007, various infrastructure pieces have either been implemented or started that really put the finishing touches on GNOME. I'm talking about the move to SVN, GNOME Library, GNOME Socorro server, Build Bot, gvfs, dconf, Mango, Vala, more D-Bus usage, etc. This while, at the same time, there is the usual [biannual] improvement going on, also known as the next GNOME stable release. I really enjoy being part of GNOME and I encourage everyone to join. Be the 'I moved GNOME to D-SCM and all I got was one ice cream' blogger, or perhaps you like build systems more and end up porting all GNOME modules to use Waf. Whatever it is, start now.

- Olav Vitters



2007 in Distributions

Text: Lucas Rocha Photo: Kushal Das

GNOME continues to have strong support from a number of distributions. In 2007, the latest GNOME Desktop and Platform releases were shipped in all the major desktop and mobile distributions.

Earlier this year, the Fedora community released Fedora Core 7 with GNOME 2.18, including improved overall hardware support and more. In October, Fedora Core 8 was released with GNOME 2.20, Compiz Fusion desktop effects enabled by default, and the initial version of the Online Desktop stack including Bigboard sidebar and other components.

In April, Canonical released Ubuntu “Feisty Fawn” 7.04 with GNOME 2.18, networking improvements, easier multimedia codec management and more. October saw the release of Ubuntu “Gutsy Gibbon” 7.10 which included GNOME 2.20, improved hardware management features, Compiz Fusion desktop effects enabled by default and integrated desktop search. In addition to the desktop targeted releases, Canonical is now working with Intel on the Ubuntu Mobile and Embedded (UME) project which aims to provide an operating system for mobile internet devices using Ubuntu as a base.

Sun released the Solaris Express Developer Edition (SXDE) in February and May which included GNOME 2.16, and the September release of SXDE included GNOME 2.18. The OpenSolaris community released the OpenSolaris Developer Preview in November, the first milestone for Project Indiana which aims to create a binary distribution of an operating system built out of OpenSolaris. In 2007, in addition to updated versions of GNOME, HAL was integrated with Solaris and OpenSolaris providing better USB, Firewire, CD/DVD support. The first official release of OpenSolaris is planned for Spring 2008 and will ship with GNOME 2.20.

In October of this year, the openSUSE team released openSUSE 10.3 with GNOME 2.20, refreshed artwork, a GTK+ version of YaST, a new 1-click-install technology, Compiz Fusion desktop effects enabled out of the box, virtualisation improvements, and other additions. The 10.3 release also ships with the latest versions of the well-known GNOME-based applications, F-Spot for photo management and Banshee for music management, which received a number of usability improvements.

The Debian community released Debian 4.0, codename “Etch”, on August 15th after more than one year of heavy development. The 4.0 release brings important hardware support enhancements and ships with GNOME 2.14, which received many stability and integration improvements.

The goal of the GNOME Developer Kit is to provide an easy to use platform for testing, developing, documenting, and translating GNOME.

Since the GNOME 2.18 release this past March, Ken VanDine, lead developer of Foresight Linux, has been kindly preparing Live Media of the latest GNOME stable releases. The GNOME Live Media images include a LiveCD, a VMWare image and a QEMU image available for download at <http://torrent.gnome.org> and are available the same day as GNOME releases. Additionally, in early December, Ken created the GNOME Developer Kit, which is a Foresight-based image (available as a VMWare live image and installable ISO) with daily builds of the development version of the GNOME Desktop and Platform. The goal is to provide an easy to use platform for testing, developing, documenting, and translating GNOME.

Among the FLOSS mobile initiatives, the GNOME Platform has been used as a basis for OpenMoko, One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) and Maemo projects. OpenMoko had two initial releases of their distribution and development platform in 2007, mostly targeted for developer consumption. The Maemo project released version 4.0, codename “Chinook”, of their SDK; and is now shipping Hildon 2.0, their GTK+ 2.10 based application framework.

The GNOME Foundation would like to thank everyone involved in the development of GNOME-based distributions and we’re looking forward to seeing more success in 2008!



Interview with GUADEC organizers

Text: Lucas Rocha Photos: Frederic Crozat

The 8th edition of GUADEC took place in the rainy lands of Birmingham, United Kingdom. Now, it's a good time to hear from the organizers Paul Cooper, Thomas Wood, and Bastien Nocera about their motivations, challenges, and evaluation for this successful conference edition.

First of all, could you briefly tell us who you are, what you do and how you got involved with GNOME?

Paul: ...right now I'm a Business Development Manager for OpenedHand. However, before applying to host GUADEC, and right up until the week after it finished, I was the Assistant Director for OpenAdvantage, a project funded by the West Midlands region to assist local business take advantage of open source software.

I got involved in GNOME from one of the early pre-1.0 versions that came with Red Hat 5.X. I was working as a part-time system administrator at the time (while failing to complete a PhD). I believe I was one of the first to roll out a GNOME-1.0-based graduate student lab shortly after 1.0 was released.

Bastien: I work in the Desktop team at Red Hat, and it all started with my first full-time job getting me enough money to buy a Rio500. I scratched an itch and wrote a management application for it using GNOME/Gtk+. I was also build-monkeying the Ximian Desktop GNOME packages at the time. Cue more music and movie playback adventures. :)

Thomas: I first started using GNOME from about version 1.2 which shipped with some version of Red Hat Linux. I didn't start getting involved until I helped out with the art.gnome.org website a few years later. From there, I started wanting to make improvements to the theme engines and the theme manager, so I started contributing code as well. I now work for OpenedHand Ltd., a company specialising in free and open source software for embedded devices.

What were the main motivations for bringing GUADEC to UK? How did this idea emerged?

Paul: The first GUADEC I attended was 2004 in Kristiansand, and I had such a good first day that on the second day I suggested to Jeff Waugh that it would be great to hold GUADEC 2005 in Birmingham. Once he stopped laughing, he explained how the process actually worked (mundane things like putting together a proposal, thinking about a venue, accommodation, etc.).

Anyway, I came back to Birmingham all fired up to apply to host GUADEC 2006, started looking for venues, etc., and emailed, called, and met up with various people I knew about my idea of hosting GUADEC. All of them said it was not a good idea: conferences are hard work, costly, and organisationally complex, leave it to the pros (not sure what they were trying to say about me ;-). So, in the end, I never did get together a bid for 2006, but enjoyed going to Stuttgart in 2005.

In the meantime, Thomas and I met up doing GNOME stands at

Linux Expos in London. Thomas did most of the work; I just helped organise some hardware and burning of CDs. Sometime after GUADEC 2005 in Stuttgart, Thomas suggested on the gnome-uk mailing list that it would be good to put in a UK bid for 2007 and did anyone know of any venues... I dug out the bits of research that I'd done the year before and pretty much bullied the list into thinking Birmingham would be the best venue in the UK (which it is).

Thomas and I started putting together the proposal, and Bastien joined in and helped us out. We got the application in just in time, we all went to Vilanova (and had a great time) and somehow managed to convince the Foundation Board to let us organise GUADEC 2007.

Bastien: I was sucked in after the facts. I remember quite a few discussions on the gnome-uk list about having GUADEC in the UK, but most of the people wanted London, which was a no-no in terms of costs. We just didn't have the local help we would have needed anywhere at the time. But, Paul managed to rope people in.

Thomas: At university, I never had the chance to go to GUADEC as it was often around the times my exams were set. I was also interested in creating a GNOME community in the UK, so I asked on the gnome-uk mailing list if anyone would be interested in bringing GUADEC to the UK. I had met Paul through LinuxWorld in London and he was really keen to see GUADEC in Birmingham. We put a proposal together and it went from there.

What were the main challenges in the organization of GUADEC 2007?

Paul: Finding accommodation was a challenge, there are plenty of choices in Birmingham, but I thought it was important to try and find somewhere that was good value but also offered the facility for hacking and socialising. In the end, the Etap worked out well, I think.

Bastien: That was the sponsor brochure for me: realising that the bank account hadn't been set up yet, so we couldn't have all the details we wanted to have in the brochure. Once the company was setup, everything started falling into place. To all the aspiring conference organisers: get the finances sorted first. :)

Thomas: The biggest challenge was deciding how best to handle the finances, as without some form of bank account we couldn't do anything. After that, the next challenge was making sure everything fell into place at the right time. It's quite difficult to assign tasks and check on people's progress when you are all working as volunteers in your spare time. Good communication is vital to make sure everyone knows what is (or isn't) happening.



From an organizer perspective, what went fine and what went bad (or not so good) in this GUADEC?

Paul: I think this year we were lucky to be able attract a high level of sponsorship, which allowed us to sponsor a large number of attendees. I think the GNOME stickers that Andreas did the design for, and Thomas found a good supplier for, were a great hit with everyone. Also, Bastien did a great job organising the 2 GB USB key with all of the conference materials on.

While the Conservatoire was a great venue, it was like a rabbit warren, and I should have done a better job organising signage. Also, due to other events at the venue, we had to set up and start the conference on the same day, which led to some large queues and a general organisational crunch on the first day. I think we did about as well as we could have in the circumstances, thanks to the patience and good nature of all involved. However, given the option, I wouldn't do that again.

Bastien: I was happy with pretty much everything, apart from seemingly getting lost in the town centre. It's all the more shameful when about 30 people are following you to get to the football tournament venue. We had minor niggles that needed straightening, but nothing major once the conference started.

Thomas: By the time of the conference, I was just pleased to see everyone in the same place at the same time! The most important thing about GUADEC is that it gives users and developers the chance to meet up and socialise.

What were the greatest moments of GUADEC 2007?

Paul: For me, the best things to see were everyone having a good time and sharing a drink at the parties as well as the discussions and hacking going on in the hallways and around the venue.

Bastien: The party was great, although I stand by my original thought about the venue being a bit tight. We had more party people than we'd realised.

Otherwise, I'd have to say the football tournament, although we lost against the sneaky South Americans. No handballs this time.

In your opinion, what were the major outcomes of GUADEC 2007 to GNOME?

Paul: That's impossible for me to say since I don't work day-to-day on the project. I think only the people working directly on code, documentation, artwork, marketing, etc., could tell you.

Bastien: I think it's hard to pinpoint a single event as an outcome, but I guess everybody expects GUADEC to be a place for discussion, and technical changes in the project itself. It happened in Birmingham, and it will happen in Istanbul again next year.

Thomas: GUADEC is about people meeting face-to-face and having the chance to create and share new ideas. Who knows what seeds have been sown?!

What do you expect to see in the next GUADEC

Paul: More of the same: plenty of fun, lots of interesting and entertaining talks, and another interesting city to experience.

Bastien: More of the same :)

Thomas: Ditto!

The GNOME Conference
Birmingham UK - July 15th-21st

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GNOME and Students

Text: Lucas Rocha Photo: Kushal Das

In 2007, the GNOME Project participated in two Google programs targeted for university, and new this year, high school students from several parts of world.

Google Summer of Code

The Google Summer of Code (GSoC) is a program that offers university students a chance to be paid (\$4500 USD) to work on a mentored development project for three months on various open source and free software projects. One of the major goals of the program is to bring new and young contributors to open source and free software projects. Once again, the GNOME Project was one of the mentoring organizations of this year's GSoC, having participated in the first two editions the last two years.

GNOME received a total of 174 project proposals, the majority based on ideas proposed by the community before the submission period was started. A selection committee, composed of 12 well-known GNOME community members, selected 29 proposals. These committee members were either invited by the GSoC administrators for GNOME or explicitly volunteered to be part of this committee. Of the selected students, 27 were able to successfully achieve their original goals.

In 2007, the students worked on a very diverse and interesting set of projects. Some projects were about the development of new applications for GNOME such as Cheese, a Photobooth-like application; Foie Gras, a WYSIWYG documentation editor; GNOME Voice Control, a voice recognition applet and more. Others were about new features of existing GNOME applications and libraries. The improvements on the desktop lockdown framework, a new geometry manager for GTK+, and the PDF annotations support in Evince are examples of the contributions by GSoC students. Interestingly, some projects' results have already been made available in GNOME 2.20, such as the Deskbar Applet refactoring work made by the Sebastian Pölsterl, who is now co-maintaining the module with Raphael Slinckx, his project mentor.

The students were very positive in the evaluation of their GSoC participation. "I really enjoyed being one of the GNOME's Summer of Code students! Now I know a lot more about the GNOME community and I'll try help it become even better" said Paulo Zanoni, the student who worked on MPX support for Metacity. Approximately ten GSoC students were sponsored by the GNOME User and Developer European Conference (GUADEC) organizers to attend the conference in Birmingham/UK this year. Attending GUADEC gave the students an opportunity to personally meet and socialize with other GNOME contributors. Several students are continuing to contribute to GNOME and are engaged in the development of different parts of the desktop and platform.

The GSoC administration team for GNOME is quite happy with the results of this year's edition. "I enjoyed quite a lot of this year's GSoC; our students did an amazing job working on various projects, touching everything in GNOME from our core libraries to some new end-user applications" said Vincent Untz, one of the GSoC admins

for GNOME. "And the best part is seeing students stay in our community and making it rock even harder!" This year, the GNOME administration team improved the organization of the GSoC program inside the community by forming a committee to select the project proposals, keeping a closer look on a given projects progress, facilitating the sponsorship of several students to attend GUADEC and more.

Google Highly Open Participation Contest

With the great success of the GSoC program, Google decided to create a similar program aimed at high school students and introduced the Google Highly Open Participation Contest (GHOP). The program started in November of this year and ends February, 2008. In GHOP, instead of working on longer 3-months projects like in GSoC, the students can accomplish smaller tasks offered by the ten open source and free software projects that were invited by Google to participate in the pilot edition of the program. For every three tasks completed, the students receive a \$100 USD prize from Google. GNOME was one of the invited projects together with Apache Software Foundation, Drupal, Joomla!, MoinMoin, Mono, Moodle, Plone, Python, and SilverStripe.

GNOME's GSoC admin team created a GHOP organization team composed of 14 members who were responsible for setting up the project's information pages and submitting approximately 50 initial tasks. The tasks were divided into seven categories (Code, Quality Assurance, Translation, User Interface, Documentation, Outreach, and Training) providing the students a varied set of tasks for different aptitudes. At the time of this writing, GNOME has a total of 65 tasks from which 41 have been already completed.

To date, GNOME's GHOP team regards the program's results as excellent. "It's really fun to work with all these highly motivated students!" affirms Andre Klapper, one of the GHOP organizers in GNOME. "The interest was so huge that we were sometimes afraid of running out of tasks. Thanks Google for making this possible and getting us new contributors." The students have reflected a similar enthusiasm. "I think GHOP is an awesome opportunity to jump in and get involved and I'm enjoying it a lot" said Natan Yellin, one of the GHOP students. "I think that there's a lot of positive energy here and we just have to channel it towards the right ideas".

In summary, both Google programs, GSoC and GHOP, have brought some very nice contributions and especially, new contributors, to GNOME. A big thank to Google for these amazing programs. We expect to have an even better organization, projects and results in our community next year.



GNOME User Groups

Text: Lucas Rocha & Sayamindu Dasgupta Photo: Juan Carlos Inostroza

GNOME is an international project and has active local communities distributed throughout the globe in all continents. Let's see what some of those local groups have made to promote GNOME in their countries.

Brazil

In 2007, the Brazilian GNOME community worked on the consolidation of their community through meetings, a unified website and presence at large FLOSS conferences in Brazil.

After a series of successful editions, the 4th Fórum GNOME, the yearly event of the Brazilian GNOME users and developers community, took place together with the second Northeastern Free Software Conference, the biggest FLOSS event in northeastern Brazil. The conference was held at Aracaju/SE from September 28th to 30th and was a great success in helping GNOME Brazil to bring in new contributors, especially translators, to GNOME.

Additionally, a second GNOME community event was organized at the 9th Fórum Internacional Software Livre (FISL), the largest FLOSS conference in Brazil. There were talks about GNOME and how to contribute to the Brazilian translation team. There was also a public meeting during FISL with the aim to set goals for 2007. GNOME Brazil also participated with talks on Latinoware, another important international FLOSS conference in the country.

Through a collaborative effort, all Brazilian GNOME websites were unified in to one brand new website. The new website is based on a wiki which will make it easier to keep it updated and attract new contributors to the local community. The Brazilian translation team, which received many new contributors this year, translated 100% of the GNOME 2.18 and 2.20 desktop releases. Unfortunately, one of our most valuable translators, Raphael Hingo, passed away on October 7th.

Future plans in 2008 for the the Brazilian GNOME community include an improved Fórum GNOME and stronger participation in the various FLOSS conferences through Brazil. For the 5th edition of the Fórum, they're planning to invite foreign speakers and to host workshops focusing on contributing bug fixes and coding to bring more Brazilian contributors to GNOME.

Chile

In 2007, GNOME Chile grew as a community. They covered more Chilean territory by giving many talks throughout the country. Most of, if not all, FLOSS conferences in the country had representation from GNOME Chile.

In April, GNOME Chile participated in the Festival Latinoamericano de Instalación de Software Libre (Santiago) with talks about GNOME and how to get involved in the project. Also, they held a stand with GNOME Desktop demonstrations allowing attendees to get closer view of GNOME. In June, a talk about GNOME development with Python was given at Universidad San Martín de Porres (Lima/Peru).

Later in August, a workshop about graphic application development with PyGTK was given at the Universidad Santo Tomás (Talca). In September, the Tercero Encuentro de Software Libre took place at Universidad Autónoma de Chile (Temuco) where GNOME Chile members gave talks for potential GNOME contributors and workshops about GNOME development with Python and Mono.

In celebration of the 10th anniversary of GNOME, the Chilean community organized activities about GNOME for the Día del Software Libre (Curicó) that was held at Universidad de Talca. At the GNOME stand, the desktop environment was showcased and stickers were given to visitors.

The 8th Encuentro Linux, one of the largest FLOSS conferences in Chile, took place at Universidad de Tarapaca de Arica on October 12-14. The GNOME Chile contributors gave a talk about the 10 year history of GNOME and organized a workshop about GNOME development with Mono.

November was a busy month for GNOME Chile with GNOME promotional activities at the Congreso Austral de Ciencia de la Computación (Puerto Montt), 2nd Encuentro de Linux Universidad Autónoma de Chile (Talca), and Encuentro Open Source INACAP (Valparaíso). In December, the Chileans participated in three conferences: Segundo encuentro de Software y Tecnologías Libres (Concepción), Encuentro de Linux (Curicó), and Encuentro SW Libre "Pingüinos en la costa" (Lota).

For 2008, GNOME Chile plans to have a very strong presence at the 9th Encuentro de Linux, which is the largest FLOSS conference in Chile. Plans also include the development of a program to attract new hackers and to collaborate with GNOME Hispano to bring "Libro de GNOME" with the goal to generate one information source for Spanish speakers.

French Speaking Community

The GNOME French speaking community (GNOME-FR) had a busy year with strong participation in important events in France and the traditional organization of the GNOME room at FOSDEM, one of the most relevant FLOSS conferences in Europe.

In June, Vincent Untz contributed to a round table about Free Software communities during the Paris Capitale du Libre conference. This round table also featured Tristan Nitot (Mozilla Europe), Sophie Gautier (OpenOffice.org), and David Larlet (Ubuntu). In July, volunteers from GNOME-FR organized a GNOME stand at the Rencontres Mondiales du Logiciel Libre (RMLL). Vincent Untz gave a talk about the GNOME community at this same conference.

Later in the year in October, another GNOME stand was held by volunteers during the Journées du Logiciel Libre (JDLL). Once more, Untz had a talk about GNOME project. In the same month, Guillaume Desmottes talked about Telepathy/OLPC/Tubes at a Brussels LUG event. In November, the Gutsy Party in Paris had talks about GNOME project, its overall philosophy, and the 2.20 release. In November, a talk about GNOME was given at the Journée Méditerranéenne du Logiciel Libre (JM2L). Finally in December, Xavier Claessens, Guillaume Desmottes and Frédéric Pétters organized a small event to introduce people to GNOME development in Brussels.

Following a very positive experience in 2006, GNOME-FR again organized the GNOME presence at FOSDEM, which was considered a success. Christophe Fergeau organized the GNOME devroom, with many great talks, thanks to speakers coming from several countries. GNOME-FR offered free t-shirts, designed by Andreas Nilsson, to Foundation members who had registered beforehand. The “GNOME Love/Hate Wall” attracted many comments and you could see people walking by stop and read the wall. Vincent Untz also took many photos of people with a small “I [heart] GNOME” sheet.

GNOME-FR plans for 2008 involve the production of a new t-shirt, something that was not possible this year, and an even stronger presence at the largest FLOSS events in the French speaking countries.

India

The GNOME community in India has been existence for over three years, consisting of users and a small group of developers. The glue that keeps this community is communication through social networks. Until this past year there was not a large push to transform the social/personal network into an achievable set of tasks.

The GNOME India community conceived the GNOME Project Day at FOSS.IN 2007, one of the largest FOSS related events in India with the objective of coaching and mentoring newer contributors by showing how to participate and what tools can be used to contribute. To appeal to a larger base of users the sessions at the Project Day covered a broad segment of the GNOME project, including topics related to GNOME Art, the Translation Project, and Bug Triaging. New and upcoming technologies such as Clutter were also discussed at the Project Day.

The challenge for the GNOME India community now is to follow-up on the ideas discussed during the Project Day and make them actually happen. In order to achieve that goal the group plans to organize on a consistent basis in 2008 and focus on a greater GNOME presence through talks and workshops at events, coordination with companies who are part of GNOME community and have Indian operations, communication with academics and institutions to grow the GNOME presence in education, and organization of local GNOME merchandise. They also plan to investigate the possibility of creating a registered entity that would allow an easier transaction of funds.

Turkey

The GNOME Turkey community launched a new design for their website in 2007 (<http://www.gnome.org.tr>). The redesign involved help from other user groups, especially for the graphics, resulting in improved relationships between the groups. The new web site has a improved translation management system, and uses Joomla for content management.

The group also started ‘GNOME Sohbetleri’ talks at Universities this year, with the first talk being held at METU. The next talk is scheduled to happen at Cankaya University. Discussions are ongoing with four more Universities, and efforts are in place to make the University student clubs aware of the activities of GNOME Turkey.

The GNOME Turkey community is also extremely pleased to help host the next GUADEC, due to take place in Istanbul during July 2008.

For 2008, the GNOME community in Turkey plans to improve the translation management system, spread ‘GNOME Sohbetleri’ to different cities, especially the smaller ones, and of course, host a great GUADEC 2008.

Australia, China, Spain, and US

Australia’s GNOME conference, GNOME.conf.au, was hosted in Sydney at linux.conf.au in 2007. The conference was spread across 2 days, with a variety of topics being discussed, both technical and non technical. Both new and upcoming technologies and applications for GNOME were explained and demonstrated, as well as topics such as the re-branding of GNOME.

In China, the local GNOME community is working hard on the organization of the GNOME Asia Summit which will take place in Beijing in 2008, with the date still to be defined. The GNOME Asia Summit will play an important role in building a sustainable community in China and potentially in other Asian countries.

The Spanish GUADEC, GUADEC-ES was held in Granada (Andalusia, Spain) during July. A large number of topics were presented, ranging from discussions about GNOME technologies in mobile devices to presentations on Free/Open Source software for graphics artists. Before GUADEC-ES, in March, Spain also hosted the first ever GUADEMY, a conference attended by both GNOME and KDE developers. The conference saw a number of discussions on how GNOME and KDE fit together, and how each can benefit from the work done by each other. The end of the conference was marked by a football match between the GNOME and KDE developers, with the GNOME team winning in the end.

In June, the first US GNOME user group was created in Chicago at BARcamp Chicago. Its members hope to inspire other users to band together and create groups in cities all around the US. In 2008, the Chicago GNOME User Group has plans to host a GNOME booth at the Flourish Conference April 4-5th. They also will be hosting a GNOME 2.22 Release Party to show off the new features of GNOME 2.22.



Foundation Development

Text: Vincent Untz and Behdad Esfahbod

In 2007, the GNOME Foundation gave strong support to community and local groups activities around the world. In the Advisory Board, we received important new members and highly relevant topics such as GPLv3, OOXML, GTK+ maintenance, and others were discussed.

Sponsored activities

In 2007, the GNOME Foundation once again organized the Boston Summit. It was considered a success by all parties, overcoming some last minute organization issues and a forced change of venue. The Board members would like to thank Rosanna Yuen, Owen Taylor, and John Palmieri for their help, and Google for sponsoring pub night at the summit. As part of the Boston Summit, the Foundation also sponsored and facilitated the organization of a Java-GNOME Hackfest and an Accessibility Summit, the latter being followed by the nearby Mozilla Accessibility Summit. Thanks to Andrew Cowie and William Walker for organizing these focused events.

We also supported presence of local groups in two major events, the 4th Forum GNOME in Brazil and FOSS.in in India. Thanks to Izabel Valverde and Sankarshan Mukhopadhyay for the organization of these events.

The Foundation also sponsored travel of two members to talk about GNOME at local conferences: Vincent Untz traveled to RMLL in France and Máirín Duffy to FOSS.in.

The US GNOME Event Box traveled to SCALE, EclipseCon, and LinuxWorld Expo in California, and OLF in Ohio. Thanks to Rosanna Yuen for managing the box, and Eitan Isaacson, Ben Konrath, Ken VanDine, Jorge Castro, and Patrick Wagstrom for representing GNOME at these events.

The European GNOME Event Box traveled to CeBIT in Hannover, LinuxTag in Berlin, OpenExpo in Zurich, and come2Linux in Essen. Thanks to Murray Cumming for managing the box, and Josh Kress, Sven Herzberg, Michael Natterer, Jürg Billeter, and Markus Ortel for representing GNOME at these events.

The line-up for 2008 events already looks quite exciting, including: helping launch the first GNOME Asia Summit, an annual GNOME event for the Far East; organizing the Berlin GTK+ Hackfest; an accessibility outreach program; the Boston Summit; and also sponsoring the Latin America Tour in Chile and Southern-Hemisphere Summer Event in Peru.

Advisory Board

The GNOME Foundation received important new members in the Advisory Board and highly relevant topics such as GPLv3, OOXML, GTK+ maintenance, and others were discussed this year.

At the beginning of 2007, the Advisory Board of the GNOME Foundation consisted of 15 members and continued to grow logically, adding two new members, in addition to Canonical. While Canonical joined in 2006, we could only announce their membership this year. In June, Igalia decided to increase their involvement in GNOME and also joined the Advisory Board. With GNOME and Mozilla sharing many values and having been close for a long time, it was not a surprise for anyone that the Mozilla Foundation joined in December, the latest member to date.

Various topics were discussed between the Board and the Advisory Board during three phone meetings in March, May and November, a face-to-face meeting at GUADEC, and through email communication in-between meetings. The board reported ongoing activities

to the Advisory Board, including the creation of the 2007 budget, the organization of events and the re-design of the GNOME website. The face-to-face meeting introduced more technical topics, including the current situation of Mono, how the Foundation can help the Online Desktop initiative, and the need for more focus and leadership that the GNOME Roadmap should bring.

Due to issues having been raised by GTK+ maintainers, the current situation of GTK+ was debated with Advisory Board members. The Advisory Board members decided to give more work time to their GTK+ contributors to directly work upstream. Other options to provide additional help with maintenance, including hiring a contributor or organizing more GTK+ events, were also proposed and discussed. Thanks to the Advisory Board support, this discussion led to concrete results with more time for contributions as well as the GTK+ hackfest that took place at the beginning of 2008.

The state of upstream documentation was also debated and discussed. Coordination with GNOME distributors for end user documentation would help improve overall documentation. There are also opportunities to pool resources for developer documentation as many members see the value of high quality developer documentation. Improving the documentation situation is, however, still an ongoing task of the Board.

GNOME Mobile has been a primary topic, including coordinating the public launch of the initiative, as well as organizing a mini-meeting at GUADEC this past year and the presence of GNOME representatives at relevant conferences to represent the initiative.

With the release of the GPLv3, a number of concerns were raised. The current license situation in GNOME has been simple for a long time, including LGPL in the platform, and GPL/LGPL in the desktop. Since the Foundation doesn't own the copyright but the individual contributors do, the Foundation can not force the choice of license in GNOME. However, the Board and the Advisory Board both see an interest in documenting the current situation and the implications, good or bad, of any change.

The GNOME Foundation's involvement in ECMA TC45-M (OOXML) was the main discussion point during the last meeting. The sole purpose of GNOME's involvement is to ensure interoperability and enabling the correct implementation of OOXML. While the Foundation does not support this file format as the main format or as a standard, it appears it is hard to convey this position since it is a new approach to this kind of problem. The Board will more than likely request more input from the Advisory Board to help better convey this position in future statements about this topic.

Finally, three of the Advisory Board representatives have agreed to help the Board to hire or contract someone to work on the GNOME infrastructure, since the current system administrators are all busy volunteers and there is a need for more work in this area.

With all those discussions, the Advisory Board has been of great help to the Board and it will certainly be the case again in 2008!

Perhaps more than anything else, GNOME is a worldwide community of volunteers who hack, translate, design, QA, and generally have fun together.

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