

# conference **REPORT**

by Benedict Reuschling

## FOSDEM 2017

FOSDEM (Free and Open Source Software Developers' European Meeting) is a noncommercial, volunteer-organized European event, centered on free and open-source software development. It is held annually, usually during the first weekend of February, at the Université Libre de Bruxelles Solbosch campus in the southeast of Brussels, Belgium.



Allan Jude and  
Kristof Provost at  
the FreeBSD table

Last year's one-day FreeBSD devsummit—held during the first day of the conference—was very well received. This year, we decided to add an extra day for that—the Friday right before FOSDEM—so there was no overlap with any talks participants might want to attend (or give), and it gave everyone an opportunity to catch up with new development efforts. The FreeBSD Foundation generously sponsored the lunch and hotel conference room.

On Friday, a total of 11 developers met in that conference room, and after a few announcements, we went right into listing topics of interest to those present. The following is what we came up with:

- libifconfig (librarification of ifconfig)
- Wayland (for which a port is now available in FreeBSD)
- GSOC participation and topics (brainstorming ideas)
- FreeBSD support for the Olimex Laptop; see this blog post for details: <https://olimex.wordpress.com/2017/02/01/teres-i-do-it-yourself-open-source-hardware-and-software-hackers-friendly-laptop-is-complete/>
- pkg flavors and subpackages (further advances to pkg(8))
- OpenSSL in base private (ports will always have to use OpenSSL from ports), or replace OpenSSL with embedTLS
- JuniorJobs and Ideas pages (updating and refreshing)

Here are some of the results that were accomplished either during the devsummit itself or over the following days:

- Removal of translation project download pages that had outdated releases. In some cases, this resulted in ridiculous releases like FreeBSD 11 for alpha, ia64, and pc98. These are not supported architectures anymore, but translation work has not caught up with reality yet, and so we decided it was better to remove these pages. In one case, translators were quick to respond and fix these issues, and pages in their languages were activated again.
- Removal of the mirror selection drop-down menu on [www.freebsd.org](http://www.freebsd.org). In the past, this was used to select a mirror that was closer to one's own location to decrease page-load times. Nowadays, the FreeBSD server infrastructure automatically selects the closest server, so there is no need for manually selecting these mirrors (which were outdated more often than not, anyway).
- Removal of bdes(1): <https://svnweb.freebsd.org/changeset/base/313329>

For me, this devsummit provided an excellent opportunity to do some face-to-face mentoring with Sevan Janiyan. We discussed how to do merges from HEAD to stable/11 for a man page, and ran into some issues where the merge was not done correctly and produced unexpected results. Sevan followed up on this the next day with another committer who was more familiar with Subversion internals. Apparently, we triggered a rare bug that is now being investigated further by constructing a test scenario. Luckily, a temporary local workaround was found and Sevan could continue his work.

Breaks in the morning and afternoon allowed

devsummit attendees to continue discussions over coffee and local pastries. After caffeine reserves had been replenished, we returned to our individual work or proceeded to refine GSoC ideas.

The devsummit dinner that evening allowed people who planned to attend FOSDEM the next day to join us and talk about a wide range of BSD-related topics over food and Belgian beer. A special guest was Groff, the BSD Goat, accompanied by Peter Hessler, who told us about where the two had spent the last few months (you can follow it on twitter: <https://twitter.com/GroffTheBSDGoat>).

On Saturday morning, packed with flyers and promotional material for our FreeBSD table, Allan Jude, Marie Helene Kvello-Aune, and I went to the ULB University in Brussels for the first day of FOSDEM. When we arrived, a lot of other tables had already been set up, but with fixed table designations, this was not a problem. Each table had a poster in front with a description of the project and a big QR-code that people could scan to learn more. The FreeBSD Foundation sent us marketing material like flyers, stickers, pens, and other goodies to hand out. Kristof Provost brought the rest, which had been stuck in Belgian customs, but which he managed to rescue. While setting up the

found ourselves telling people about the productive relationship the two projects enjoy and the technologies and philosophies we share.

The halls began to quickly fill, and before we knew it, we had visitors asking all kinds of questions about FreeBSD. I had to leave the table to Allan and Kristof so I could proctor the BSDA exam in the morning. When I got back around lunchtime, FOSDEM was in full swing and a huge crowd had gathered where the open-source projects tables were located. It was a good thing we had a lot of FreeBSD people available to help! Overall, visitors were interested and open-minded about what our project had to offer.

There were attendees telling us how well FreeBSD was running on their machines and that they rarely have any maintenance issues. We told them about the newest features in FreeBSD, and most were intrigued. Some had never heard about FreeBSD, but had heard of FreeNAS or were even running it. ZFS was a discussion topic where we could show people that FreeBSD is a viable storage solution for home and enterprise use.

We had a lot of questions from people who wanted to switch from Linux distributions and asked how difficult it would be. Hardware support with drivers was a major issue in the past, but we assured them that the project supports a lot of hardware and that things are better now than just a few years back. Others were interested in FreeBSD as an embedded platform, and we told them what vendors like Netflix or iXsystems are capable of when they choose the BSD license for their products.

Other BSD activities included some interesting talks, e.g., Brooks Davis on Everything You Always Wanted to Know About "Hello, World", Ed Schouten on CloudABI, and Arun Thomas on RISC-V.

On the afternoon of the first day, there was a BSD devroom at FOSDEM. This is a separate room where projects give presentations about a specific topic. Rodrigo Osorio organized the devroom, and a video crew provided by FOSDEM recorded the talks. They are available at <https://fosdem.org/2017/schedule/track/bsd/> for people who could not make it to the event. The presentations were well attended and provided another good opportunity to show people what BSD systems can do and the new features that have been developed since last year.

Meanwhile, the FreeBSD table remained well visited and we intentionally had to hold back a couple of popular giveaways lest we run out



Allan Jude  
at the  
swag table

table, we were greeted and offered help by our friends from the Xen Project, some of whom we had met at dinner the night before.

Our table neighbors were from the illumos project and it wasn't long until we got into exchanges on topics of mutual interest like OpenZFS and DTrace. It was nice to see the FreeBSD bootloader running on their laptops—a result of a past collaboration between the two projects. Over the course of the weekend, we

## conference report • FOSDEM 2017

before the end of day. We wanted to give Sunday's attendees the chance to get them as well. We had more than enough flyers, though, and handed out as many as we could. On Saturday evening, I went with a group of FreeBSD people to a restaurant outside of town that specializes in cooking with beer, and definitely, this was a culinary experience that will have to be repeated next year.

Sunday felt a little quieter than Saturday, but still was well enough attended to keep us busy handing out flyers to people and answering questions. Sometimes people recognized Allan Jude at our table and could not believe that the former TechSnap cohost and BSDNow.tv host was in Europe. This proved to be a great door opener, as people were interested in talking with him and that gave us an opportunity to show them FreeBSD.

After dinner on the last day of the event, Allan, Sevan, and I decided to do a little bit of hacking as a small group. We sat in the hotel and worked on some PRs and leftover items (also known as the impromptu hacker lounge).

Thanks to the organizers, staff, and volunteers at FOSDEM for making it such a great event. Thanks to Rodrigo Osorio for organizing and managing the BSD devroom. Thanks to everyone who helped at the FreeBSD table, to all those who attended talks, spoke with us, and offered feedback. Special thanks to Kristof Provost for organizing the FreeBSD devsummit and to the FreeBSD Foundation for sponsoring it. ●

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**BENEDICT REUSCHLING** joined the FreeBSD Project in 2009. After receiving his full documentation commit bit in 2010, he actively began mentoring other people to become FreeBSD committers. He is a proctor for the BSD Certification Group and joined the FreeBSD Foundation in 2015, where he is currently serving as vice president. Benedict has a Master of Science degree in Computer Science and is teaching a UNIX for software developers class at the University of Applied Sciences, Darmstadt, Germany.

# Thank you!

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