

FreeBSD[®] JOURNAL

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LETTER

from the Foundation



This year marks the 20th anniversary of the FreeBSD Foundation. At times, the day I signed the incorporation papers feels almost a lifetime ago: before I was married, before our two beautiful children came into this world, before teaching our teenagers to drive, before readying our eldest to head off to college, before moving parents to live close by, before serving as their caregiver. Intermixed in this span were new jobs and opportunities, celebrations with friends and families, excitement and disappointment, successes and failures, joy and sadness. All the things you'd expect from 20 years of life. And during that time, my ability to invest in FreeBSD, to focus on driving it forward, varied along with these life experiences. Again, as you'd expect across 20 years of living.

Twenty years ago, in anticipation of these types of changes, the FreeBSD Project's Core Team contemplated how to build a project that was stronger than the drive and passion of a self-selected group of its most prolific, early contributors. Two initiatives arose from this internal reflection: I incorporated the FreeBSD Foundation, and new project bylaws were enacted that transitioned the Project to an elected Core Team. Combined with the use of the BSD license, our 501(c)(3) nonprofit foundation and method of governance are powerful differentiators to other

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open-source projects. The Foundation provides a stable entity that is able to operate in the corporate world without being dominated by corporate interests. The bylaws encourage a renewing cycle of contributors and opportunities for leadership to any who come to our project. Together, these characteristics have given FreeBSD a life of its own, stronger and more enduring than that of any one individual. Twenty years on and many Core Team elections later, our success as a project has proven the power of this formula.

At milestones like this one, it is only natural to reflect on past accomplishments. For the FreeBSD Foundation, there have been many: protecting the Project's intellectual property; evangelizing FreeBSD at dozens of events every year; building out critical hardware infrastructure at co-location sites around the world; subsidizing new and veteran contributor travel to summits and conferences; improving release engineering, continuous integration, and FreeBSD's response to security vulnerabilities; and investing millions of dollars in underserved technical areas such as the early transition to SMP, the wireless stack, network congestion control research, building a BSD-licensed toolchain, the packaging system, and countless bug fixes and performance enhancements.

But our past represents just our beginning. Like the Project itself, the FreeBSD Foundation is well prepared to ensure that FreeBSD remains *the* reliable toolkit for innovation well into the future. Our strengthening partnerships that span from CPU and device vendors, to system integrators, security researchers, and solution providers, are growing the utility and usability of FreeBSD every day. Our outreach, internship, and educational initiatives are bringing new talent into the FreeBSD contributor base. Our funded development investments continue to grow in scope, ensuring—in partnership with the volunteer community—that we can tackle even the largest technical challenges. Each and every day, the FreeBSD Foundation explores new ways to progress our mission of bettering our world through the technology developed by the FreeBSD Project.

This first 20 years may feel like a lifetime to me, but human measure doesn't apply to corporations. I expect FreeBSD contributors reflecting back from the 40th or 60th anniversary of the FreeBSD Foundation will see these as “the formative years”—the years when the Foundation got a stable footing and then learned how to run. This journey is just getting started.

Justin T. Gibbs
Founder/President
FreeBSD Foundation