

What Happened at the AUUG 2001 Conference

Dr. Warren Toomey

School of IT, Bond University

Abstract

As always, the Australian Unix Users Group 'winter' conference was a great event. This seminar will look at the papers presented, the workshop topics, and explain to our new researchers (Honours, Masters & PhD students) why going to conferences is so useful.

Unix and Glue

- Unix is the glue that joins things together.
- It provides the stable & powerful platform on which useful applications are run:
 - Apache web server (65% of all web sites)
 - Samba file server (100K+ installations)
 - Middleware glue: Perl, Python, Tcl/Tk
- Unix is infinitely malleable
- Unfortunately, dozens of variants, including Linux

AUUG and Glue



- AUUG is the glue that binds the Australian Unix Community together
- Created in 1976 by John Lions at UNSW
- State 'chapters' of AUUG throughout Australia: local events
- Regular symposia, e.g Security Symposium in Brisbane in November
- The yearly winter conference is the focus of AUUG's operation

AUUG 2001 - September 23-28, Sydney

- Six day event:
 - 3 days of workshops, 3 days of conference
- 200 attendees typically, in 2001 just over 100
- Attendees: programmers, sysadmins, network managers, salesfolk, Linux hackers, applications developers, users, academics, teachers, ISP reps, security consultants etc etc.
- A variety of people, presentations, ideas, tips & tricks

Monday - Workshop Day 2

- My full-day workshop on Installing FreeBSD
 - Small number attending workshop, but enthusiastic
- Evi Nementh (Uni of Colorado) talked about hot sysadmin topics:
 - LDAP, DHCP, BIND 9, disaster planning, security tools
- Lawrie Brown (ADFA) & his standard crypto primer workshop, firewalls in the afternoon

Tuesday - Workshop Day 3

- Robbie Kolstad (ex-BSDi): Perl for Beginners
- Practical IPsec by Adrian Close
- Linux Security Tools by Richard Keech
- NTP by John Warburton (TrueTime)
 - Well attended, given rave reviews
- Computer History: Methods & Problems by Peter Salus (USENIX)
 - A topic dear to my own heart
- Speakers reception that night: ended early!

The Conference Itself

- Welcome + keynote/plenary starts each day
- Morning tea: laptops, e-mail, catchup with people
- Two concurrent streams of morning presentations
- Lunch: more catchup
- Two concurrent streams of afternoon presentations
- Footnote presentation concludes each day

Conference Day 1

- Peter Salus: The Importance of Users in Unix/Linux History
- Steve Landers: KitView & MetaKit
 - DB & GUI using Tcl/Tk: UI fits on 1 floppy, self-downloading
- Greg Lehey: FreeBSD SMPng
 - How Open Source development works, or doesn't

Conference Day 1 (cont)

- Peter Moulding: Why PHP?
 - What makes PHP better than both Perl and ASP/VB
- David Lloyd: Embperl
 - Embedding Perl code into server-side HTML
- Footnote- David Purdue: AUUG Electronic Services
 - What AUUG plans to do, what do AUUG members want?

Conference Day 2

- Rob Kolstad: Sysadmin as a Profession
 - Why it needs more recognition
- Rasterman: Enlightenment 0.17
 - Advances in desktop UI & window managers
- Conrad Parker: The Sweep Sound Editor
 - Used by CSIRO to edit/mix *large* sounds decks

Conference Day 2 (cont)

- Adam Radford: Issues on Wireless LAN security
 - Recent academic & real attacks on 802.11 encryption, excellent
- Greg Tunnock: Fibre to Your Place
 - Review of fibre advances, MLPS, DWDM, replacing copper
- Footnote: Kimberly Heitman, EFA Challenges for the Online Environment
 - Spam, DDOS, Script Kiddies, Plaintiffs, new legislation, volume charging & innovation

The Conference Dinner

- How to keep nerds, users, suits & admins together in same room for 4 hours?
- Toys: balloons, blank paper, origami manuals (not used)
- Robbie Kolstad: Jeopardy Game
 - Must get it for tutorials: content review
- After 2 courses, tea & coffee, followed with the usual short movies
 - De jure for an AUUG conference
- I missed the after-dinner room party, too tired

Conference Day 3

- Evi Nementh's Keynote: DNS Damage
 - Malicious packets sent to root nameservers
 - Exactly how broken MS client & server DNS software really is
 - Only about 30% of DNS queries to root NS are not 'broken'
 - Why we should all upgrade to BIND 9

Conference Day 3 (cont)

- Andrew Tridgell's Plenary: Converting Samba to Unicode
 - Best presentation of entire conference
 - Samba is a huge software project (millions of code lines)
 - How to make significant structural changes while keeping intermediate versions working
 - Where developers are spread around the world, only have Internet to communicate
 - Also how to deal with broken MS protocols, broken MS clients and servers

Conference Day 3 (cont)

- Michael Paddon: What's on Your Network?
 - What do firewalls and IDS really receive from the Internet
- Peter Gray: SUS - A Better Sudo
 - Fine-grained, macro-based, temporal-aware sysadmin control tool
- Ken Pang: Virus Protection for Your Unix Gateway
 - Sales presentation, always 1 of these

Conference Day 3 (cont)

- Mark White: State of the Union 2001
 - How well Linux is faring in IT industry, recent layoffs, what to expect in near-future
- Robert Hart: Through the Looking Glass
 - How to combat the FUD spread by commercial companies that are threatened by the Open Source methodology
 - A talk to keep you awake at night worrying

Conclusion

- AUUG: bringing a diversity of Unix interests together
- Assaulted by ideas within & without your field of expertise
- What's currently happening in the area
 - Journals always 18 months out of date
- Renew acquaintances, build/extend your jellyware network
- Inspires you to do more research, explore new avenues