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INDIAN AUTUMN

RICHARD IBBOTSON

The European Apache Conference was a mix of smooth sophistication and welcoming technical help that all of us have grown to appreciate. Many of us had that customary feeling of *deja vu*. Perhaps some of us had been there before. Perhaps not.



The BSD Team

The conference is all about the well-known Internet program – Apache. This is the Open Source software that runs most of the Internet. Without it the Financial Times and other institutions of that sort couldn't carry out their day-to-day business. Apache is extremely sophisticated and will become a 2.0 release in the not too distant future. Plans for GUIs and all sorts of the refinements after version 1.3 are afoot. The first port of call for information about the Apache Conference is Daniel Lopez Ridruejo who is a software engineer at Covalent technologies. Daniel gave us his Apache projects overview. This did a really good job of outlining broad concepts before the real meat of the conference arrived on the table. Ryan Bloom is also a reliable reference. He is also a software engineer at Covalent Technologies. His own talk about

writing Apache 2.0 modules was a complete masterpiece from beginning to end – the kind of thing that most programmers would like to hear. There are many more parts to Apache and Apache configuration than most people know about or imagine. Just about anything to do with the Internet is based on Apache or the modules that make it so versatile and reliable. Even XML is somewhere in the Apache software. To put it succinctly, Open Source software is all about new technology and not old technology. A really good example of this was the talk by John Zukowski about developing dynamic web sites with java server pages.

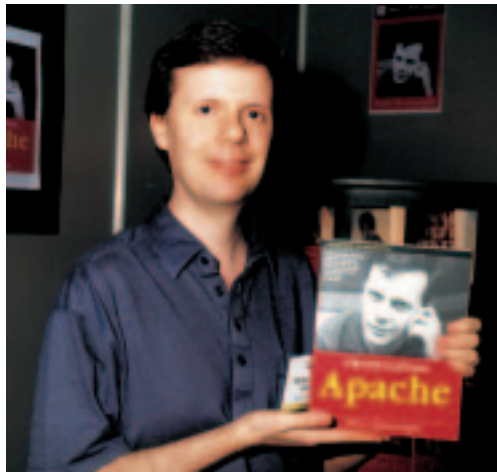
The whole thing took place on the upper floor at the Olympia conference centre. All we had to do was walk between the Sun vendor theatre where

we learned all about Java development with GNU/Linux and Free BSD, and the various lecture theatres where all kinds of really substand technical presentations were taking place. Everything was there for those who wanted it. The Sun/ Free BSD presentation by Kristin Thorleiffsson was worth going to alone. The exhibition hall had a good selection of stands that covered most things that Open Source software people might want to ask about. The Covalent stand was placed prominently – in full view as people walked through the door. I had a word with Randy Terbrush, the Chairman and CTO of Covalent Technologies about his work. Randy started out with computers through his background in geology. He told me, "I worked in the oil industry in California and when it collapsed I found myself working in user interface software development with CAD systems on Intel systems. I remember the 0.7 GNU/Linux kernel. In 1994 the Internet started to warm up and I decided to start a services business that would help other Internet users. I began looking around for server software and found other people who were like minded from institutions such as MIT. In 1998 we released our own product which was the SSL module. Since then the company has become more of a products and services business. Covalent sees itself as a hybrid business model that produces Open Source applications and products. Nettruss is our latest product. It's a GUI that cuts down Apache configuration from a three day job to a few minutes. Apache can be configured on the fly for load management etc. The Covalent intrusion detector is also available. It stops the server serving web pages when an intruder is detected."

Recently there was a re-organisation of Senior Management at Covalent Technologies. Mark Losh, Jim Zemlin and Scott Albrow are part of the new team. Covalent offers comprehensive training programs for Apache web server throughout the United States and Canada. There are plans to extend the training scheme to Europe in 2001.

I found Jim Jagielski over on the Zend Technologies stand. He's known as the PHP evangelist. We talked about his work with PHP. He says he was always interested in science fiction so he got interested in computers and went to college at the John Hopkins University on a PDP 1145. After that he went to work for NASA. This was good for his own understanding of the Internet. His enthusiasm for Open Source software is awe-inspiring. He's the kind of person who could run an entire University unaided. After leaving NASA he started his own web-hosting company and quickly became a member of the Apache group. If you haven't yet tried PHP then it might be a good idea to take a look at it. It's the most reliable software I've seen for a long time.

Over on the Wrox stand I found Peter Wainwright. He started out by hacking around at home with BBC basic. He graduated in Electronic



Peter Wainwright with his best-selling publication



Daniel Lopez prepares to deliver his Apache overview

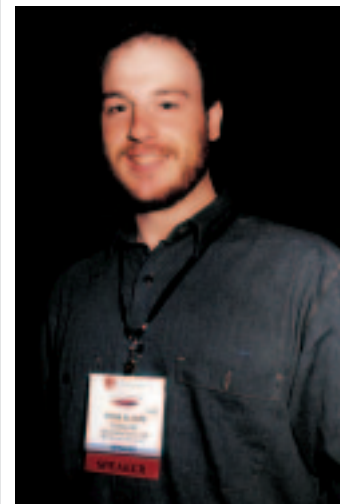
Engineering from Imperial College where he taught himself C programming. This proved to be his future and he started to produce software for a job. His latest enterprise is his new book Professional Apache from Wrox Press. It's proving to be a best selling publication. When he isn't writing books he's involved in space tourism and commercial space exploration.

The Free BSDi stand proved to be full of surprises – it's also available for Alpha and other platforms follow soon. If you are a BDS'er then look towards Open BSD for one or two surprises soon. The BSD technology is not new to most of us. However, the approach that the BSDi team have to promoting BSD and providing support is highly refreshing.

The next Apache Conference will be from the 4th to 6th of April at Santa Clara in California. Those of you who haven't been there may like to know that it's a great place to go to. Hope we see you there. ■



Chairman and CTO of Covalent Technologies, Randy Terbrush



Ryan Bloom spoke eloquently about Apache modules

Useful references

<http://www.apache.org>

<http://www.covalent.net> –

Ryan Bloom rbb@ntrnet.net

<http://www.apachecon.com>