

GNOMOGRAM

GNOME

BASE ALPHA

This month

Gnomogram looks at the alpha version of GNOME 2, news from the GNOME foundation, Ximian ISO images, Mozilla's new licence, Ximian's recruitment drive, Gtranslator and GWCC

GNOME 2 Platform Alpha

After much hard work the first alpha version of the GNOME 2 platform was finally released at the beginning of October. This release was just the first chapter in the GNOME 2 story, and offered developers the chance to become familiar with the new platform, and to port their programs. With a bit of luck, GNOME 2 should be completed by mid-February (around the time you're reading this), which will mean it follows close behind KDE 3.0.

The alpha version is not yet user-compatible, since only the second platform alpha can be installed completely parallel to GNOME 1.4.1; and nor are there any usable programs of any kind yet. What's new about the GNOME 2 platform is of course GTK+ 2, which offers anti-aliasing and – via Pango – better support for exotic fonts. With ATK a framework for a disability-friendly interface will also be introduced.

Many libraries have been split up and can now be used independently of the actual interface. Together with the new libraries, for XSLT or packet configuration for example, this does not necessarily contribute to the clarity of the platform, which is still problematic. Other parts of the platform, such as Bonobo, Gconf, the XML-il8n-Tools and OAF, should all be familiar to users of Nautilus or Evolution, even if OAF has changed its name to Bonobo-activation, and the XML-il8n-Tools will in future be known as Intltools.



The majority of the work will now be in porting and stabilising the GNOME programs on the new platform. A few big innovations to do with the GNOME programs are still outstanding for the time being, so the completely new panel will probably be dropped on the grounds of time. There should be more features in GNOME 2.x, which leaves hope for more regular releases.

Ximian ISO images

All those who find it too fiddly to convert their distribution to Ximian will be pleased to note that <http://www.cofradia.org> has ready-converted ISO images of the most popular distributions. At the moment only Red Hat 7.1 + Ximian is available, under the name XR. Mandrake and Debian versions are currently being worked on.

Mozilla under new licence

Originally Mozilla was largely distributed under the non GPL-compatible MPL licence, and the somewhat less Free NPL. This rapidly led to problems, as some GPL programs were built on Mozilla and thus infringed the GPL. In the case of Galeon, for example, this led to an addition to the GPL, which exempted Mozilla from some restrictions.

Libraries needed

Gtranslator: Gal \geq 0.11.99, Gconf \geq 1.0,
Gnome-VFS \geq 0.4.1, Scrollkeeper \geq 0.1.4
GWCC: Standard GNOME libraries only

News from the GNOME Foundation

Now well into its second term, the GNOME foundation is developing a draft of new policies, clarifying who gets space on the GNOME Web site at <http://www.gnome.org>, for example. In future, even those who are not collaborating with GNOME

will be able to put their names on the GNOME site. To do this Tim Ney has initiated the donor program "Friends of GNOME", under which donations, depending on their amount, will be awarded with little gifts.

Netscape has now decided to place Mozilla under three licences, namely MPL/GPL/LGPL or under NPL/GPL/LGPL, which solves the licence problem for many GNOME programs. This relicensing was relatively simple in the case of the NPL, since this already contained a clause allowing Netscape to relicense. For the MPL, the agreement of all developers involved was necessary, which is why it can take somewhat longer.

To make the licensing chaos complete, there are still some files in Mozilla under BSD licences, but since these are compatible with the GPL they are not being changed. The problem with this scheme is that the NPL continues to exist as part of the threefold licensing. In the long run, according to <http://mozilla.org>, there are plans to replace this with the MPL.

Ximian continues to recruit

Ximian has expanded its management with two new additions, namely Mitchell Karpur and Kevin Harrison. Both bring a wealth of experience to the team, particularly Karpur who has worked for both Lotus and Personal Software Inc., the distributor of Visicalc, and is co-founder of the EFF. Harrison occupies the post of Sales Vice President and it is intended that he will be working on gaining new markets for Ximian's service products. Karpur has a seat on the board of directors of the company.

GWCC

The GNOME Workstation Command Center – GWCC for short – is a front-end for a whole range of command line programs, which enables their outputs to be saved and printed. The respective options of these programs can be changed, which is especially advantageous for newbies. The GWCC is organised in a number of tabs and shows the system status from the main memory to network interfaces. It also enables the use of the standard network tools traceroute and dig. As with top, one can also select and abandon processes from a list. GWCC also supports searching within the process list, as with `ps | grep`.

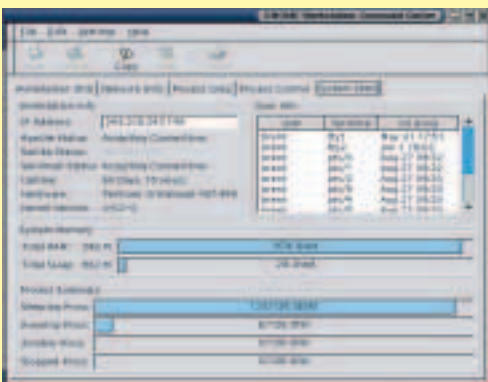


Figure 2: GWCC also displays system information

Gtranslator

The translation of a GNOME program can be one of the most important factors in its user friendliness. Luckily, the many translators don't have to search for and capture whole character strings in the source text, since a program named `xgettext` takes over this task and extracts all strings marked by the programmer into a pot file. Each translator can then copy this file, rename it and fill it with translations – the name for an English translation file, for example, would be `en.po`. These `.po` and `.pot` files must of course be synchronised at regular intervals, which in addition to untranslated sections of text, can lead to "fuzzy" translations.

The idea of Gtranslator is to edit the `.po` files thus produced. The practical thing about this, for new translations, is that Gtranslator can try to complete the file with the aid of existing translations from other programs. Gtranslator also refers to "learned" translations via a UMTF file. This file is filled during translation and/or via the command `gtranslator -nl name.po` from an existing `.po` file.

You can also find some readymade Learn-Buffers on the Gtranslator homepage, which make it easier for beginners to avoid colliding with existing translation conventions. Another useful feature is that Gtranslator can sort the individual character strings according to their status and the file head is automatically completed with the translator's data.

The program Pozilla, which comes with Gtranslator, is intended more for program maintainers. Translators can use this script to find out in advance about releases and thus have the opportunity of delivering on schedule.

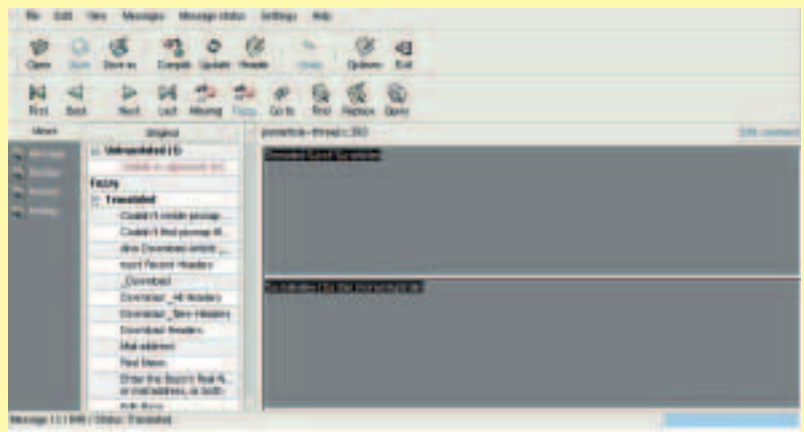


Figure 1: There is a free choice of colour schemes for the Gtranslator editor

Info

GNOME release schedule	developer.gnome.org/dotplan/schedule
The GNOME Foundation	foundation.gnome.org/membership-policy.html
gnome.org account policy	primates.ximian.com/~federico/docs/gnome-org-policies/
Ximian ISO images	uuxii.cofradia.org
Mozilla homepage	www.mozilla.org
Mozilla relicensing FAQ	www.mozilla.org/MPL/relicensing-faq.html
Ximian homepage	www.ximian.com
Gtranslator homepage	www.gtranslator.org
GWCC homepage	gwcc.sourceforge.net