

The monthly GNU column

Brave GNU World



First off, this Brave GNU World will open with one of those little projects which are always in danger of remaining unknown.

Ninvaders

Ninvaders [1] by Dettus – his “real” name is Thomas Dettbarn, but he asked me to use Dettus – is a clone of the console classic “Space Invaders.”

In order to also be playable via ssh and on the console, Ninvaders is based upon the ncurses [2] library, which gives the game a sort of retro-charm that will certainly be appreciated by many people.

The original version of Ninvaders was written during a sleepless night, using C as the programming language. Thanks to the help of Mike Saarna, not long after that the aliens began to move.

Since Dettus currently does not have the time to keep developing the game and the project is still hosted by means of Dynamic DNS without additional safety precautions, help is surely very welcome; especially since it appears that a hard disk crash has already impacted upon the project.

Being under the GNU General Public License (GPL), Ninvaders naturally qualifies as Free Software, so it will hopefully have a long life.

GNOME-Annotate

Another program of the category “small but smart” and still in constant danger of remaining unknown is GNOME-Annotate [3] by Andreas Persenius.

GNOME-Annotate is available as Free Software under the GNU General Public License (GPL) and lets you take notes while working with the web browser or another program, by marking text segments and saving them into a file with a single mouse-click. That way a user creates a simple text file in which important text blocks, URLs and other notes are saved.

The idea for this tool came from Olaf Grüttner, but since he could not program, Andreas Persenius implemented it

Welcome to another issue of the Brave GNU

World. This issue we will introduce a few new GNU

projects. From classical games to helping install on old

hardware. **BY GEORG C.F. GREVE**

in Python. On Andreas’ site you will also find some other useful little programs.

Among them is a program working its way through a list of web pages in order to automatically notify the user whether any of them have changed since it was last run and a small popup for quick Google search.

So, paying a short visit to the software page [3] of Andreas Persenius is to be encouraged.

RULE

Because hardware is cheap in many countries and most people can afford new computers, it is often forgotten that this is not the case everywhere. In fact we have to expect that many people will have to depend on working with computers for a long time yet that are already considered outdated by our standards.

To allow these people access to recent and up-to-date software, the RULE (“Run Up2Date Linux Everywhere”) project [4] was started. Its goal is not creating another GNU/Linux Distribution.

Instead, the project bases its work on an existing general purpose distribution by selecting those packages that offer the best functionality while having the least intensive hardware requirements.

Also the large integrated graphical user environments have been left out on purpose, since X11 and KDE or GNOME often require massive resources. Instead the projects uses TinyX.

The project team – purely out of personal preference – has decided to build upon Red Hat, they also seek to modify the Red Hat installer in a way that it will run with less than 32MB RAM or create a replacement, if necessary. The RULE project co-ordinator is Marco

Fioretti, who is concentrating mostly on documentation, the web page, lobbying, PR and some scripts, with most of the code so far being written by Michael Fraton. The mailing list for the project has about 100 subscribers.

Marco Fioretti also sought to emphasize that the decision to base work on Red Hat was due to coincidental preference of the project founders. Work done within the RULE project itself is also Free Software under the GPL.

Even though the team lacks resources to pursue all these directions, such initiatives are clearly needed. The same is true for possible support of non-X86 platforms.

Help is wanted in the form of developers, the identification of suitable applications, providing intelligent (automatic) configuration or a logo – and of course through testing the distribution.

Should the project be successful, Marco also sees potential “collateral use” for other small platforms like coming generations of PDAs and mobile telephones.

Like everything else, please send your comments and questions to the usual address [5]. ■

INFO

- [1] Ninvaders:
<http://dettus.dyndns.org/ninvaders/>
- [2] NCurses home page: <http://www.gnu.org/directory/libs/ncurses.html>
- [3] GNOME-Annotate: <http://home.swipnet.se/darshiva/software.html>
- [4] RULE home page:
<http://www.rule-project.org>
- [5] Home page of Georg’s Brave GNU World:
<http://brave-gnu-world.org>