

GU4DEC 2003 report

Going Gnome

The Fourth Annual GNOME Users And Developers European Conference (GU4DEC) was held from June 16th–18th at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland.

The conference has drawn several hundred people for the first two days, which were dedicated to GNOME developers. The third day was co-presented with Linux@Work and was geared towards users of GNOME, Linux and other open source software. **BY LESLIE PROCTOR**

The sessions have been well attended, but by far the most popular room at the conference was the hacking room. At any given time, between 50 and 100 developers milling around, working on their computers and looking over one another's shoulders. "Getting together to hack is one of the main features of GU4DEC," said Telsa Gwynne, former GNOME Foundation board member. "People who have been working together for months over IRC can sit side-by-side and really see what the other person is doing."

GU4DEC opened on June 16th with a rousing welcome from Miguel de Icaza, GNOME Foundation president, Jeff Waugh and Glynn Foster, GNOME Foundation board members, and Timothy Ney, the foundation's executive director. Attendees then got down to work, with four tracks of technical sessions.

Robin Rowe, founder of Linux Movies Group, gave a keynote address on the growth of Linux in the movie and television industries. He attributes the rapid adoption of Linux by movie, television, animation and special effects houses to Hollywood's attitudes of saving money and using what works. Rowe noted that all of the major studios have adopted Linux, not only for rendering or special effects, but for the desktops of their creative departments as well. "This is a big moment for open source software on the desktop," said Jim Gettys, GNOME Foundation

board member and principal member of the technical staff at HP.

The second day kicked off with a keynote address from Alan Kay, one of the earliest pioneers of personal computing and senior technologist at HP. Alan spoke via videoconference and despite having risen in the middle of night his time, he gave a great presentation. Kay spoke of the need for designers and developers of user interfaces to keep things as simple as possible and highlighted how needlessly complex and confusing many of them are. Kay used examples from his early work with personal computing and on the Dynabook, which was designed for "children of all ages". He noted that computers are exponentially more powerful today, yet user interfaces have not improved, and in many cases, have gotten worse.

Technical sessions on the second day included a session on desktop integration with GNOME, which focused on the



issues that are present in the current GNOME desktop, and provided a roadmap to avoid future issues.

News generated from the conference includes an announcement by the GNOME Foundation that 80,000 computers using Debian GNU/Linux and GNOME have been installed in schools in the region of Extremadura, Spain. The ratio is one computer for every two students. The region has also founded 33 computer centers to serve the general population. The centers feature one-on-one computer assistance and have attracted local users as old as 99 years.

GU4DEC has attracted visitors from all over Europe and also brought a large contingent from Japan, Canada, the United States, as well as Mexico, Chile, Peru and Brazil. "We are so happy that top IT officials from the EU, Spain, Ireland, India, France, the Netherlands and Brazil have all chosen to speak at GU4DEC," said Timothy Ney, GNOME Foundation executive director.

The location of the next GU4DEC has not been determined yet, but Tim Ney expects that a location will be selected in the next few weeks. "We've seen past GU4DECs have a tremendous impact on the places it's been held and we've also seen an almost 400 percent growth over the past four years," Ney said. Archives of all three days of the conference, as well as the slide sets from the speakers will be found at <http://www.guadec.org/>. ■



Figure 1: Opening Talk at GU4DEC