motd

by Rob Kolstad

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News from All Over

On the SAGE front, I am excited to announce SAGE's biggest current news: the largest reported barrier to joining SAGE has fallen. SAGE and USENIX dues are now separated! Anyone can join USENIX for $110/year; anyone can join SAGE for $40/year – and there is no longer a requirement for membership in USENIX as a prerequisite for membership in SAGE. If you're in the computer administration world, please urge your friends and associates to join. (See page 36 for details.)

One of the benefits of SAGE membership is access to the results of the annual salary survey. This year's survey was the largest yet (we teamed with SANS and *Sys Admin*, with almost 10,000 participants). Results are now posted on the SAGE Web site. Enjoy!

You probably know that USENIX (this year along with SANS) sponsors the USA Computing Olympiad, the premier high school computing competition (and I am the head coach). Goals including encouragement of careers in computing, in addition to identification and recognition of outstanding programmers.

In 2003, Don Piele (long-time USACO director) hosted the international programming championships (the "International Olympiad on Informatics") at his institutional home, the University of Wisconsin–Parkside. Fully 75 countries competed (about 300 competitors) in the week-long event held August 16th-23rd which included 10 hours of grueling programming competition.

For the first time ever, the USA team tied for highest honors, with two gold medals (for juniors Alex Schwendner and Tiankai Liu) and two silver medals (for junior Anders Kaseorg and MIT-bound Timothy Abbott). Being the host country, a second team also competed for honor and earned scores that otherwise would have earned medals. Only one senior is graduating this year, so we've got great chances for next year, as well. Best of all, the competition was run flawlessly for the first time, with no glitches or major protests. Congratulations to the competitors, coaches, and organizers.

As I type this, the master copies of the LISA Conference proceedings are printed and shortly to be sent to the publisher. The subjects range across the spectrum from Alva Couch's new theory work to Josh Simon's and Liza Weissler's super practical document repository implementation.

A new "lunch with the speakers" program will widen access to presenters, who will appear at informal tables in the courtyard shortly after their talks for lunch (or, in the case of afternoon presenters, late-afternoon drinks). Yet another reason why LISA is the premier conference for administrators.

Several topics are appearing on my radar this month, and space won't permit me to write 650 words about all of them. They are interesting enough, though, that I hope you'll think about them and let me know if you hear report-worthy developments. They are presented here in no particular order.

Some Predict the Death of the Internet

I'm hearing more pundits (including some traditionally associated with the USENIX community) bemoaning current Internet problems. Of course, the recent worms/viruses have done nothing to help, but spam and the general noise level (including pop-up ads for browsers) has prompted ever more to suggest that the usefulness of email and the Web is declining. Some suggest that solutions involving balkanization (creation of smaller [sub-]nets that serve specific [potentially distributed] communities) is the only answer. I imagine that will happen anyway, but more as an addition than as a partition.

Some Predict Quicker Rise of Linux

Pundits, *Information Week*, and of course the vocal evangelists are saying that Linux will rise to become a/the dominant operating system. Larger corporations (who really do move most of the money in the IT world) are now in the "when" phase of Linux deployments rather than the "if" phase, according to *Information Week* magazine polls and others. Why mention this now? Because the security issues are really pushing management to understand what's going on in the machine rooms, performance and usability are now seen as assets, and the SCO lawsuit is providing publicity and visibility to Linux. Regrettably, the rise of Linux means the death-knell for the BSD line.

Mixed Predictions on Future Job Markets

While outsourcing comments led all others in the free-format section of the salary survey, many on the Net also voice concern about future careers in IT, administration, software, etc. New criticisms are appearing that academic education is diverging from the needs of industry. The worries include: lack of curriculum relevance means college graduates are not as employable, industry will have to step in to make its own program (which will surely be more focused on the near term), enrollments in

traditional programs will drop even more (they're already way down from highs during the dot-com boom), and foreign outsourcing will drive anyone still interested into other careers, anyway.

More next time.

Results of the First Haiku Contest

Two months ago, I asked people to send me haiku about the Internet. What a fabulous set of entries I received! I culled them down to some of the best, shown below. Thanks to all who wrote; the topic of the next contest is at the end of this article.

Matthew W. Hurlburt's first entry worked in a sort of anthropomorphism, raising the specter of digital isolation:

Alone in my room
Digitally connected
To others like me

Matthew also sent a more traditional haiku, that included both technology and a season:

Like a Spring rainstorm
The server stops and restarts
Over and over

Steve C. Johnson submitted several snippets; here are my favorites:

Innocent action
violates segmentation
it's a null pointer

For systems admin
Professional adventure
come visit LISA

UNIX eternal
From PDP-11
To my PDA

Edward Chrzanowski sent in an interesting set of haiku where changing spacing or single letters makes for new haiku with new meanings. Consider changing "infinite" to "in finite" or changing "wander" to "wonder":

Stateless I wander
My passage HTTP
Infinite roaming

My favorite of Tobias J. Kreidl's submissions ended with a twist, a sort of apocalyptic tone:

Slipping though a pipe
Bits propagate through routers
Filling us with fright

One of John Sellens's entries sported a similar theme:

Contemplating bits
Intrusion detection works
Machine is now owned

My favorite (though it's really hard to choose!) was Heather Fox's more traditional entry, with its digital, emotional, and outdoor themes:

Shooting stars of bytes
breathing ether in and out
this world has no sun

Heather wins the first haiku author polo shirt.

This was great fun!

Let's try for another topic. Compose a haiku that reveals the joys or frustrations that surround the process of developing scripts or programs. Send it to *haiku@usenix.org.*

Haiku are little three line poems with five syllables in the first line, seven in the second line, and five more in the last line. Syllabic stresses (accents) are not important. The brief haiku captures a thought, a moment, a scene, or a vision. The best haiku amplify insight or even cause an "Aha!" or epiphany. Many haiku traditionally describe the seasons of the year.