

Oscos Developer Conference 2004

Party in Portland

The Open Source Convention (OSCON), July 26 through 30, was an amazingly well-attended conference that attracted 1700 Open Source-hungry visitors to Portland, Oregon for a first-hand look at the latest developments in Open Source projects. The show's sponsor is O'Reilly, and the line-up for the conference closely resembled O'Reilly's own Open Source book line, with presentations on topics such as Apache, Perl, PHP, XML, Python, MySQL, PostgreSQL, and Open Source security. Featured speakers included an assortment of CEOs, journalists, and historians, as well as the noted physicist Freeman Dyson, author of *The Sun, the Genome, and the Internet*. But the real business of the conference was down in the conference tracks, where visitors heard the latest on a range of topics from Java to Ruby.

Growing Importance of Open Content

In his keynote, conference sponsor Tim O'Reilly stated that it was not enough to guarantee open access to code. He underlined the threat of a data lock-in and stated that community-generated data, such as product recommendations in Amazon or Google Mail email archives, should not be in the hands of a few providers, locked away from the general public. O'Reilly called on the Open Source Community to ensure that this kind of data stayed "open." "Open Content" is the new buzzword. He called for the "napsterizing" of virtual address

The OSCON developer conference, which was organized by O'Reilly Publishing, had far better attendance than expected. At the heart of the show was the revolutionary new Perl6 and the open Community information portal funded by

Tim O'Reilly. **BY MICHAEL SCHILLI**

books and calendars to produce a genuinely useful open data collection.

Novell's David Patrick announced that Novell had canceled all its Microsoft license agreements at the end of March this year and would be migrating all 6000 employees to Linux desktops by the end of 2004.

The technical conference tracks indicated that a move from the legacy CVS version control system to Subversion is in progress. More and more high-profile projects, such as Apache, Samba, Debian, and of course Subversion itself, are using the technically superior Subversion system for tough daily production work.

The Security track was a new addition to the conference lineup, with sessions on "Credibility of Election Software," "Spam Filtering at Open Source Prices," and "Foiling Cross-Site Attacks." A track called "Emerging Topics" offered a grab bag of interesting subjects, from "Darwinian Software Programming" to "Why Data Stinks."

Perl6 Imminent

One of the highlights of the conference was the Perl track, where Damian

Conway and the winner of the "Open Source Awards" Gold Medal (and \$ 10,000 prize money), Larry Wall, introduced the breathtaking object and regex syntax of Perl6. Implementation dates for Perl6 have not been fixed so far. The Perl5 Community was unfazed by the announcements, however, introducing a flood of new CPAN modules.

A Big Success

O'Reilly attracted an impressive list of corporate sponsors for the show, including Hewlett-Packard, IBM, Novell, Sun, BEA, Red Hat, and even Microsoft. (Believe it or not, Microsoft always loves to get its name in front of an Open Source audience.)

The attendance figures were a pleasant surprise to the organizers. Many of the half or full-day tutorials that traditionally take place before the conference begins were sold out. People who would have paid good money to attend were left outside. Packed-to-overflowing conference rooms showed that the industry indeed has cash to spare for conferences, demonstrating the rapidly growing interest in open software. ■



Figure 1: Tim O'Reilly giving his keynote. Massive attendance figures caused a crush in the exhibition hall, with conference visitors holding their breath while Larry Wall introduced Perl6 design concepts.