



conference **REPORT**

FOSDEM 2018 / BSDDevRoom / FreeBSD Developer Summit

I recently had the opportunity to attend FOSDEM 2018 (<https://fosdem.org/2018/about/>), a two-day, free and open-source software conference, held in Brussels, Belgium, on February 2–3. Founded in 2000, this is an annual conference organized and run by volunteers, and it's free! Because it's free, they get a lot of attendees—in fact, over 5,000 attendees this year!

Though FreeBSD has been promoted at this conference over the years, it was my first time attending. I wasn't exactly sure what to expect. I had heard stories that it was overwhelming with lots of people, and to not expect to find lunch, unless you wanted to wait 30+ minutes in a queue in front of one of the lunch trucks. It turns out most of what I had heard was true, but I have to say it was an amazing conference and a perfect opportunity to raise awareness about FreeBSD.

The Foundation sponsored the FreeBSD Developer Summit that preceded the conference, and the FreeBSD stand at the conference. With a two-bag, 70-pound/bag allowance on United, I decided to stuff my bags with as many FreeBSD Journals, handouts, and swag as I could carry. I ended up with two super-heavy bags, that were a little difficult to navigate and lift off the luggage carousel. But, what's not to like about getting a good workout while traveling?

The Foundation sponsors these types of events to promote FreeBSD and recruit new users and contributors to the Project. We also sponsor developer summits around the world to provide face-to-face opportunities for FreeBSD contributors to work together, share knowledge, and have productive discussions on different areas of the FreeBSD Project.

FreeBSD Developer Summit

The summit was held in the basement of one of the local hotels. Benedict Reuschling organized and

ran the event, which had about two dozen attendees. The summit kicked off at 9 a.m., with everyone introducing themselves, including what they were working on, and what they would be interested in discussing during the day.

After all the introductions, Allan Jude talked about the Google Summer of Code (GSoC) program, explaining what a typical project would look like and how we needed more small projects submitted, as well as more volunteer mentors. I brought up the Outreachy program, which is modeled after the GSoC program, though directed to women and minorities. I've wanted to participate in this program for years, and finally believe we are ready to support it. GSoC is so beneficial for the project that I don't want to take resources away from it. Since attending the conference, we decided to apply for the next session in six months.

Matthew Rice and Fabian Thorns from Linux Professional Institute discussed their taking ownership of the BSD certifications, explaining why, and what their plans are for expanding online tutorials. Right now, they offer various levels of certifications for Linux, and other areas such as DevOps. Going forward, they plan to put material together that is common to both operating systems to provide operating system agnostic educational material. They have a BSD advisory group that is headed by Dru Lavigne, who will have oversight into the BSD certification support.

Some of the other topics discussed were DTrace, graphics support, storage, and possible release models. The discussions were productive, and I felt like we accomplished a lot. Many of the attendees continued conversations over dinner at a nearby restaurant. I joined a group of open-source leaders at a dinner sponsored by Google. Connecting with other open-source people outside of FreeBSD is important for finding out what others are doing to improve their projects and communities. It's also an

opportunity to lend our voice to keeping open source a healthy ecosystem.

FOSDEM and the BSD devroom

As I mentioned earlier, FOSDEM is big! There were 651 speakers, 690 events, and 57 tracks, all of which took over 33 rooms spread across several buildings of the Solbosch campus of the Université Libre de Bruxelles. There were keynotes, main tracks, and at least 42 developer rooms, lightning talks, and certification exams including a BSDCG exam.

The BSD devroom, organized by Rodrigo Osorio, took place the first day of FOSDEM. There were 11 talks that day, to a full room of over 100 people. I gave my talk first, *The FreeBSD Foundation and How We Are Changing the World* (https://fosdem.org/2018/schedule/event/the_freebsd_foundation_how_we_can_change_the_world/).

A handful of people wanted to learn more about FreeBSD. That was a concern I had as I prepared—would the room be only BSD people? Or, would there be non-BSD people too? I usually give this talk to highlight the work we are doing to support FreeBSD, so that was my focus. I realized after speaking with someone who expressed an interest in more technical information that we should give an *Introduction to FreeBSD* or *FreeBSD Advantages* talk next year as well as the *Foundation Highlights* talk. It was valuable feedback.

After my talk, a few people asked for my card because they wanted to talk with me about their companies using FreeBSD. One gentleman wanted to discuss whether we were considering offering FreeBSD support, which led to a long discussion.

I sat in a few other talks that I found interesting, including *BSD from scratch— from source to OS with ease on NetBSD* and *pot: another container framework based on jails and ZFS*.

We also had a FreeBSD stand, also known as a table or booth in the U.S. FreeBSD contributors volunteered to staff the stand and talk to people. I showed up at our swamped stand right around lunch time. I quickly understood why so many people asked me if we had a stand this year. You couldn't see our table with all the people in front of it! We all agreed that next year we will need a big sign to help us stand out (no pun intended!). However, it didn't stop hundreds, if not thousands, of people from stopping by our stand. Most of the visitors were familiar with FreeBSD. Many had questions about their setups, and

our volunteers were able to help them. I had my Raspberry Pi 3 FreeBSD demo setup on display, which drew a lot of people to check it out. We also had a sign that showcased many of the companies that use FreeBSD. The purpose was to highlight how FreeBSD is growing and that there are many marquee companies successfully using it. Lastly, there were a few people who genuinely wanted to contribute to the Project, which was exciting to hear.

Our stand was next to the illumos stand, which allowed Allan Jude to sit between the two projects, and install bhyve on illumos with UEFI.

I spent the rest of the day either behind, or in front of, our stand. At times, we had five people behind the stand.

Stickers are the commodity there. You must have stickers! At one point, we thought we ran out, but luckily I found more hiding away. The luggage identifiers we gave away didn't last long, and someone suggested we create a man page for them, since we are so good at documentation. I thought that was an excellent idea. Next year, we definitely need to bring at least 1,000 stickers and maybe t-shirts to sell.

The free swag, Groff the BSD Goat, and the RPi 3 demo drew many people to the stand, but most people stayed to talk with us, to either learn more about FreeBSD, or, if they were familiar with FreeBSD, to ask questions.

FOSDEM Day 2

The second day of FOSDEM was pretty much like Day 1, except we had more volunteers at our table. Plus, you could actually walk through the crowd without elbowing people. We also discovered that the lunch truck lines were short if you went early enough! Besides talking to attendees about FreeBSD, I also spent time getting to know some of our community members, some of whom I had

met over social media, and others I had never met before. Not only do I enjoy hearing what people are working on, but these conversations also provide a chance to talk about what we can do to help, encourage them to give a talk at a conference or meetup, or write an article about their work. A lot of information exchange happens when you can meet with people from the community face-to-face.

Later in the day, another interesting discussion began when a FreeBSD developer commented that he didn't want people switching to FreeBSD, just because of systemd,



but because of FreeBSD's many positive attributes. I asked him the top three things he liked about FreeBSD. Then two others from the Project joined in the discussion, which made for an informative conversation!

Some of the reasons were:

- DTrace, ZFS, netgraph, and DummyNet
- Interface between base system and packages is well defined
- Base system is a whole system, including kernel, userland, and tools
- Tons of third-party software available in the ports

When the conference was over, everyone stepped up to help clean up. The rule was that we had to leave the space as we had found it. The whole effort took a while, not because there was a lot to pack and clean up, but because we needed to say goodbye to many of the people we had met over the weekend.

The Chocolate Mission

Unknown to the others coming back with me for dinner, I had one more mission to accomplish. I had to get chocolate to bring back for my friends and family. Unfortunately, it was Sunday evening. I didn't think anything would be open, but at least I wanted to try. We left as quickly as we could, ordering two Ubers for the seven of us. I was a little smug, when I ordered mine first. The two groups waited along the busy road, and then my group noticed on the tracker that our Uber wasn't moving. It still wasn't moving when Benedict's group was picked up and smiled and waved at us, as we continued to stand there confused in the bitter cold. Fortunately, the Uber cancelled, and I quickly ordered another one that showed up soon afterward.

We all met up shortly after dropping off our bags at the hotel and headed out to look for chocolate. Finding chocolate stores around Grand Place is like finding health food stores in Boulder. They are everywhere! Fortunately for us, they were all open. The best part is that you get to sample chocolates at all the stores, and then decide which store (or chocolate) you like the best. We all ended

up buying tons of chocolate at Allan Jude's favorite store, Corné Port-Royal. It was another social opportunity for our community to have some fun.

One can never have too much Belgian chocolate!

Our community is made up of some truly wonderful people. They like to hang out with each other, whether it's working on a project together, or exploring a new city together. Our group of seven FreeBSD contributors' true colors shined when we went out to dinner the last night. After we were satisfied with our chocolate purchases, we quickly dropped off our loot at our hotel and headed out for dinner. Benedict had found a restaurant earlier that he thought looked good, so we went there to check it out. Unfortunately, we quickly realized there was an issue. One of us was vegan and two were vegetarians. This place had no vegan selections. While our FreeBSD vegan friend

suggested that he was fine going off on his own, there was no way we were going to leave him.

Determined to find a vegan-friendly restaurant, we headed off following Google Maps. Sadly, that didn't work out very well. The one place we found was closed. Undeterred, I stepped next door, which happened to be a chocolate shop. I managed to control

myself and asked the employee if she knew of any vegan places. Luckily, she recommended one only a few blocks away. Finding that place was not easy, and when we finally found it, they didn't have seating for eight. Did I mention one of the illumos people joined us in our hunt? Yes, we are a friendly group of people! At that point we decided to split up. Three of us stayed at the vegan-friendly café and the rest went off and found a restaurant that they were happy with. Our vegan friend enjoyed his vegan cake! I liked my meal there too, and yes, it was vegan.

Overall, it was a great experience. It provided an excellent opportunity not only to promote FreeBSD, but also to meet others from the community, and people interested in open source. I look forward to promoting FreeBSD at more open-source conferences around the world this year. ●



DEB GOODKIN is the Executive Director of the FreeBSD Foundation. She's thrilled to be in her 13th year at the Foundation and is proud of her hardworking and dedicated team. She spent over 20 years in the data storage industry in engineering development, technical sales, and technical marketing. When not working, you'll find her on her road, gravel, or mountain bikes, training for a running race, hiking with her dogs, or playing with FreeBSD on her various systems.