

# new faces

## of FreeBSD

BY DRU LAVIGNE

This column shines a spotlight on contributors who recently received a commit bit and introduces them to the FreeBSD community. In this installment, the spotlight is on **Kai Knoblich**, who received his ports bit in February.



*“the feeling of your first commit is priceless.”*

Tell us a bit about yourself, your background, and your interests.

- I was born in Hanover but have lived with my family in Nuremberg for a while now. I have been hearing impaired since birth, but thanks to modern technology, this can be dealt with. You can probably classify me as a cyborg since I have a CI.

When I was 10 years old, my Dad brought me an i286 that had been discarded by his company. That i286 was an Olivetti M290S as I recall, and it initiated my interest in computers. Over time, I realized that I also liked to code and learn new programming languages. I taught myself a lot during my free time after school.

At work, I am a network-/system-engineer and am responsible for third-level matters. When I'm not in front of a computer/notebook, I like to read (nonfiction) books, climb, hike, and play retro video games from the 8-bit/16-bit era, including text/graphic adventures.

How did you first learn about FreeBSD and what about FreeBSD interested you?

- My first encounter with FreeBSD (which was release 5.3 at that time) was in 2005. I already knew about FreeBSD but had not had an opportunity to look at it up close.

I had a project in which I set up a server that was used for development of web applications. The customer had already had positive experiences with FreeBSD and wanted to use FreeBSD on the new server. The challenge was that some components had to be specially configured. As a result, the Ports collection had to be used instead of the binary packages. I quickly realized how flexible working with the Ports collection was and above all, how well everything is documented.

After the project was successfully completed, I got more involved with the universe of the BSDs. I had been a pure admin/user of FreeBSD for a while, which meant I switched between the releases by upgrading, was happy with the selection of ports, and in case of problems, I found the answers either in the mailing lists or via search

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engines.

With more free time at the beginning of 2017, I got interested in the processes from the point of view of a developer. I asked myself questions like: Who does what at FreeBSD? What work is done to bring out new releases/ports? What are the next goals? And, can I get involved somehow? The last question particularly interested me, and I began to look more and more into the matter.

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### How did you end up becoming a committer?

- As I briefly mentioned earlier, I had been a passive user of open-source software over the years. I'd always thought that as soon as the time was right, I'd want to give back something to the community.

At the beginning of 2018, I got a new notebook with freshly installed FreeBSD on it. I studied the Porter's Handbook and started initially to submit patches for smaller ports. Not much later, I was already working on new ports and larger projects, such as net-mgmt/netbox, which depended on further packages.

After NetBox became available in the Ports tree, I sent quite a lot of patches for many Django ports to cope with the aftermath of the Django 1.8 to 1.11 transition. In July 2018, I was asked by Martin (miwi@) if I was interested in a commit bit.

I decided to give it some thought, and a little later Jochen (joneum@) and Tobias (tcberner@) also asked if a commit bit would be an option for me. I agreed in late autumn and at the beginning of February 2019 I had my commit bit.

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### How has your experience been since joining the FreeBSD Project? Do you have any advice for readers who may also be interested in becoming a FreeBSD committer?

- The welcome after I sent my introduction mail to the mailing list was great and the feeling of your first commit is priceless. At the moment, I can't give advice based on a lot of experience but I can offer some hints for getting started on the road to becoming a committer:

- Pick an area (/doc, /ports, or /src) you enjoy.
- Contribute clean and working patches via Bugzilla that do not need to be heavily revised by the committers.
- Remember that the FreeBSD community is made up of volunteers and many have other priorities dealing with real life, family, and job.
- And the most important thing: it should be fun.

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