

World News

■ Ukrainian schools experiment with Linux

“First give it a try, and then let them build a distribution that suits our needs”: Under the aegis of the Institute of Biology of the Southern Seas (<http://www.ibss.iuf.net/>), a branch of the Ukrainian National Academy of Sciences, and of the Russian Linux distributor ASPLinux (<http://www.asplinux.ru/>), six secondary schools in the city of Sevastopol gave Linux and Open Source software a try.

In three of the schools, ASPLinux was used solely, the remaining ones installed and used ASPLinux along with Windows.

Evaluating their experience with this setup, the school tutors recently came up

with lots of suggestions how to improve ASPLinux’ user interface, installation procedure and choice of application programs to suit both pupils and teachers better.

Based on this feedback, in September the Moscow-based distributor plans to release a distribution adopted to the needs of secondary schools corresponding with Russian and Ukrainian government programs in the field of education. This new distribution will be deployed in the schools that took part in this research program, and in the course of half a year all Sevastopol schools plan to use Linux. ■

■ Chinese electronic bi-weekly replaces “Linuxer” magazine

When the Taiwanese monthly magazine “Linuxer” ceased publication in February 2003, due to its publisher’s financial problems, readers lost the main Chinese-language publication on free and Open Source software in Taiwan.

To fill this gap, a new electronic magazine titled “Open Foundry” has been started by the Institute of Computer Science at the Academia Sinica, the highest academic institution in Taiwan.

According to Ms. Wong, the ex-editor of “Linuxer”, there were several reasons why the Taiwanese Linux magazine did not succeed: As the Linux market in Taiwan is still under development, the magazine hardly had any advertisement income.

Originally aimed at beginners, this target group dropped out when the magazine started introducing articles on programming techniques and system design, and thus confused potential readers with a vague profile.

But apart from these ordinary failures in

the publishing market, there is another interesting aspect: The Chinese Big5 Linux distributions cannot keep up with the fast-paced development in the Linux community. Therefore, readers had no matching Chinese Big5 distribution at hand when the magazine introduced new developments.

Its successor “Open Foundry” is intended to be published bi-weekly in the form of an e-mail newsletter and tries to sustain the functions of the hard-copy magazine. Subscription is free of charge. ■

<http://ossf.iis.sinica.edu.tw/mailman/listinfo/OpenFoundry>



■ Africa moves to Linux

Saving money, pushing forward the local software industry, and hence letting the money circulate within the country rather than feed it to foreign companies – according to Mojalefa Moseki, the chief information officer of South Africa’s State Information Technology Agency, that’s the main reasons for why South Africa’s government recently approved an Open Source strategy. It implies that government institutions are obliged to implement Open Source solutions if analysis shows this being a reasonable option.

After her announcement in mid-June, Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, the South African Minister of Public Services and Administration admitted that this plan was not just something to be deployed sometime in the future: “Some elements of Open Source applications already exist on government networks, particularly in e-mail applications.”

But Open Source is – at times faint-heartedly – blossoming in the poorer parts of Africa as well, mainly in the educational sector. Since the formation of the “Free and Open Source Foundation for Africa” (FOSSFA) at the world summit on the Information Society in Geneva in February, several projects have been started or are at least better known. Thus, for example, the Finish Ministry of Foreign affairs sponsors a pilot project to deploy Open Source software in public libraries in Tanzania.

Among the countries where governmental authorities consider utilization of Open Source software are Kenya and Ghana. In Nigeria, the non-profit organization SchoolNet Nigeria, the country’s Ministry of Education and the local Education Tax fund have sponsored internet access via Linux machines for 35 Nigerian high schools. Since the year 2000, sister organization SchoolNet Namibia has been helping pupils of close to 250 Namibian schools to utilize the internet using Linux. And there are more national SchoolNets in Angola, Egypt, Lesotho, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, Benin, Gambia, Morocco, South Africa, Zambia and – only recently formed – Malawi. ■

<http://www.linuxsouthafrica.co.za/>

<http://www.schoolnet.na/>

<http://www.fossfa.org/>

