DebConf 8

MAR DEL PLATA - ARGENTINA

FINAL REPORT

ANNUAL DEBIAN CONFERENCE 2008

FINAL REPORT

MARCH 2009

This conference was possible thanks to the generous help of these sponsors

Getting together, working together

Margarita Manterola and Martín Ferrari
DebConf8 Organizers

DebConf is the annual Debian Conference where hundreds of developers get together to share their experiences and work together towards a common goal: making Debian the greatest Operating System.

During DebConf, attendees get to participate in talks about a myriad of subjects related to Debian, from team maintenance to embedded systems, from quality assurance to reducing the amount of power consumed by our computers.

> "... a kind of bonding that lasts a longtime and helps to improve communications."

But that's not all there is to DebConf: plenty of social events allow Debian contributors not only to work together but also to have fun together, a kind of bonding that lasts a long time and helps to improve communications.

Each year DebConf is located in a different place around the world, allowing people from different latitudes and longitudes to participate in this unique event. Previously, DebConf has been held in France, Canada, Norway, Brazil, Finland, Mexico and Scotland. In 2008 it took place in Mar del Plata, Argentina, the southernmost location for a DebConf yet.

> "Previously, DebConf has been held in France, Canada, Norway, Brazil, Finland, Mexico and Scotland"

Each place has its advantages and disadvantages and there are many things that need to be taken into account when choosing where to hold it: the network connection, the food and accommodation prices, the travel logistics, the hardware availability, and so on.

But what makes a great DebConf? That's a difficult question that not even people who work organising events could answer. DebConf is *different* from most other conferences, and that's because the expectations of Debian Developers are much higher than the expectations of usual conference attendees.

Every event takes a lot of effort, and it would be great to be able to just hire a company to organise it for us. However, the cold reality of DebConf is that even if we had enough budget for that, these people wouldn't know how to cater for hundreds of geeks running around for two whole weeks!

In this report, you'll see different aspects of this, and maybe get an idea of what makes a great DebConf. We aren't humble about this, we're sure DebConf8 was a great DebConf!

Word from our DPL

STEVE MCINTYRE
Debian Project Leader

Debian is one of the biggest distributed software development organisations in the world, and we have thus evolved methods of working together remotely via email, IRC and other channels. Nonetheless, the opportunity for developers and users and other members of our community to meet face-to-face means that DebConf has earned a special place in the Debian calendar. By sharing working and living space for a week or two, the attendees can learn a lot more about each other's ideas and achieve great things.

> "By sharing working and living space for a week or two, the attendees can learn a lot more about each other's ideas and achieve great things."

Our trip to Mar del Plata in Argentina in 2008 was just such a special event. We had a concentrated series of work sessions and technical talks covering a massive range of topics: internationalisation, better ways to collaborate on team-maintained packages and the next generation of network configuration to name but a few. Alongside those, of course, also we had plenty of time to socialise and enjoy each other's company.

Over 200 people travelled the conference itself, and our decicated volunteers in the video team filmed most of the talks and streamed them live to a global audience: the people who could not manage to make the trip themselves, but who still wanted to join in as much as possible.

I would like to offer Debian's gratitude to all of the people involved in DebConf8. First of all, the volunteers from the organising team in Argentina and elsewhere around the world dedicated immense effort to setting things up and running the conference when we were there. I also need to thank our sponsors: without their help in funding and providing services to us, the conference just would not happen.

I look forward to seeing many of you again in 2009 at the next Debconf!

PICTURE BY JUAN ANGULO MORENO

TALKS

These are the key technical talks given during DebConf8, and their attendances.

Debian, 15 Years and Counting

Steve McIntyre   100

From Ian Murdock's first email about Debian to the present day, and beyond. In the first DebConf keynote, Steve gave us a relaxed and friendly introduction and opened the debate of how to improve things even more.

Debian and Ubuntu, Perspectives on Collaboration

Mark Shuttleworth   100

An analysis of current patterns of collaboration between Debian and one of its largest derivatives, Ubuntu, as well as proposals for additional pathways and processes for better collaboration in general between Debian and its derivatives.

HP and Debian, hp.com/go/debian

Bdale Garbee   100

This talk covered the history of the relationship between HP and Free Software, how HP contributes to Debian today, how it looks to consumers, and described some things worth working on in the future.

Lightning Talks

Noèl Köthe   100

* Mailinglist Analysis, Andreas Tille
* Google and Open Source, Jurij Smakov
* Cold Boot Attacks, Jacob Appelbaum
* Source-centric Views, Frank Lichtenheld
* Terminator, Asheesh Laroia
* Synfig: animation in the free world, Paul Wise
* Tor, Jacob Appelbaum
* Debian GNU/kFreeBSD, Aurelien Jarno
* Selecting Faces, Lincoln de Sousa and Thadeu Cascardo
* Guake, Gabriel Falcão and Lincoln de Sousa
* Hello From Half of keyring-maint, Jonathan McDowell
* Brainstorming About Online Services, Asheesh Laroia
* psync - A Mirror Utility, Marcos Dione
* openstreetmap.org, Noèl Köthe

Why Is Linux and Free Software Like a Player Piano?

Jon 'Maddog' Hall   80

There are a lot of correlations between Free Software and a Player Piano (and Pianos in general) that are reflected in copyright, patents, standards and other things. This talk was a fun talk, showing clips from Maddog's collection of player pianos, nickelodeons, roller organs, etc. and how it relates (ever so loosely) to our favorite operating system.

Method Diffusion in Large Volunteer Projects

Martin F. Krafft   70

This presentation is about ongoing research on innovation diffusion in the Debian project. The goal is to determine the conditions under which volunteers adopt new approaches to everyday challenges and order them into a framework, which can be used prescriptively to help improve the diffusion of certain tools and foster the competition among contenders.

OpenSSL/Debian Debacle, What Can We Learn About It?

Luciano Bello   70

Roundtable discussing how we should deal with divergences from upstream, and if it would really help us avoiding the next security issue. A number of options were discussed including their pros and cons.

The MANCOOSI Research Project

Stefano Zacchiroli   70

This talk presented the MANCOOSI project and its objectives, addressing some of the challenges related to the upgrade problem, with a particular focus on how Debian is related to and can benefit of MANCOOSI's achievements.

Bits From NMs and Users

Paul Wise   70

Presentation of the results of surveys related to new maintainer project performed by Paul Wise, and general discussion about how the process could be improved.

Sustainable Computing

Jon 'Maddog' Hall   70

This talk was about granting everybody access to computing in general and particularly to the Internet. It included a number of ideas on how to make it happen, and how to make a business model around it.

Best Practises In Team-Maintaining Packages

Gregor Herrmann   60

Team maintenance for (groups of) packages is en vogue; dozens or perhaps hundreds of packaging teams care for a subset of the Debian archive in a collaborative style.

This BOF offered the opportunity for members of different packaging teams to exchange their experiences, share their success and problem stories, and in general learn from each other.

Managing 666 packages, or How to Tame the Beast

Martín Ferrari   60

PET (Package Entropy Tracker) is a collection of scripts that gather information about your (or your group's) packages, based on the SVN repository, but reaching many external sources. It allows you to see in a bird's eye view the health of hundreds of packages, instantly realizing where work is needed.

netconf: Modern, Bottom-up, Stateless Network Interface Configuration

Martin F. Krafft   60

This presentation introduced netconf, a network configuration management system designed with modern network infrastructures and the needs of roaming users in mind. The talk described netconf's architecture and reports on the progress to date.

Locating Bugs to Kill With SOAP, and Other Approaches To Kill Bugs

Don Armstrong   60

A tutorial on using the SOAP interface to the BTS as well as other methods of tracking, organizing, modifying, and killing bugs in the interest of developer sanity.

Predictable PRNG in the Vulnerable Debian OpenSSL Package

Luciano Bello   60

This talk reviewed the OpenSSL vulnerability, its discovery and publication, its consequences, and exploitation. It also demonstrated some exploitation tools.

SPI BOF, Meet the SPI Board

Bdale Garbee   60

An opportunity to meet board members of Software in the Public Interest who are present at Debconf, and informally discuss the relationship between Debian and SPI, and the future of SPI.

Debian Wiki, License, Layout, and Lenny

Franklin Piat   60

A discussion about the current state of the wiki, licensing issues, and proposals on how to solve some of these problems.

Lenny, The Road to Release

Neil McGovern   60

This talk introduced the Release Team, the policies behind freezes, removals, binNMUs and general release management.

LessWatts

Sulamita García   60

Saving power means getting a longer battery life on mobile devices, reducing costs and increasing efficiency in data centers, reducing the impact of computing on our planet, etc. LessWatts.org is about how you can save real watts, however you use your computer or computers.

Debian Derivers Roundtable

Andreas Tille   55

The Debian-Derivers round-table brought together representatives of organizations involved in producing Debian derived distributions to discuss the political, organizational, and social barriers to collaboration with Debian and with each other.

Internationalization in Debian

Christian Perrier   50

This talk gave the overall picture of the situation of internationalization and localization in the project, covering several topics.

Packaging With Version Control Systems, Workflow Considerations

Martin F. Krafft   50

Version control systems are becoming more popular for package maintenance. This talk presented an overview of current practices and recent developments. Also reported on the work of the vcs-pkg.org effort, which tries to identify a workflow for package maintenance which could yield better cross-distro collaboration.

Virtualization in Debian - Present and Future

Jan Lübbe   50

There are now many virtualization and emulation packages available on Debian. This talk gave an overview over the different approaches, their pros/cons and current states.

dh_make_webapp: Yeah Right!

Andrew McMillan   50

Design considerations and tools to make packaging web applications a dream.

Quality Assurance in lenny+1

Lucas Nussbaum   50

What worked well in Quality Assurance for lenny? What didn't? What should we do for lenny+1?

Smaller Talks and Workshops

Peace, Love and Rockets
Bdale Garbee 50

The Debian Videoteam -- Behind the Scenes
Holger Levsen 45

Custom Debian Distributions
Andreas Tille 45

Bugs in Large Packages
Don Armstrong 40

Debian Technical Policy Update
Manoj Srivastava 40

Debian Webservices Development
Frank Lichtenheld 40

Debian-Science
Andreas Tille 35

Debian and LiMux
Florian Maier 35

Multi-winner Voting in Debian
Manoj Srivastava 35

Debian Edu 100% in main
Holger Levsen 30

Debian-HPC: Making Debian "The" Distro For Clusters and Supercomputers
Fabricio Cannini 30

Emdebian Update
Neil Williams 30

Healthy CDDs
Andreas Tille 30

Bringing Debian and Rails Closer
Gunnar Wolf 25

Workshops

dak Discussion / Hacking Session
Joerg Jaspert

Debian-Med BOF
Andreas Tille

Debian on the Neo1973/Freerunner
Jan Lübbe

I18n Mini-sessions (4 sessions)
Christian Perrier

LaTeX Beamer Debian Theme BOF
Andreas Tille

Organizing Better In-person Meetings
Lucas Nussbaum

Thinkpadding
Henrique de Moraes Holschuh

Redesigning DEHS (a.k.a. Changing the Watch Files Atmosphere)
Raphael Stephane Geissert

The Design of netconf
Martin F. Krafft

PICTURE BY GUNNAR WOLF

Behind the Scenes
Coordinating the Localteam

Martín Ferrari

DebConf8 Organizer

You probably know the tongue-in-cheek, unofficial Debian motto: "we release when it's ready". That phrase says a lot about how work is done inside Debian; after all, we're all volunteers, and we do this just for fun. Our problem is that this cannot be applied to DebConf: there are hundreds of people travelling across the globe on a certain date, so you cannot just delay the conference "until it's ready".

> ## "You cannot delay the conference *until it's ready*"

There's also another important factor: the number of local people who work on Debian all year long -and want to work on DebConf too- is usually not enough, so you need to recruit more people from local user groups, regulars on IRC channels or mailing lists, etc. As always happens, some people will offer their help but will vanish after a while; others will be only sources of noise, etc. These things happen in every community, and stabilize over time. The problem is, there's not enough time!

I think the same story more or less repeats every year, as the local teams are ad-hoc groups which exist for about a year and then disappear when the event is over. But some factors made our struggle even more complicated: Argentina has a relatively low number of active Debian contributors, but from the very beginning we aimed at high standards which relied on a strong local team, and we lacked the experience in building and managing such (or should I say, any!) groups.

In fact, there wasn't any plan on how to build a local team: we just expected people to jump in and function as an organized body. It didn't happen that way: too many people offered help and even signed up to work on specific tasks, but in the end did very little to nothing; some other people ran away when they were asked to meet deadlines. Also there were people that really wanted to help, but needed guidance.

In the end, we learned a couple of lessons. The most important lesson was that you need strong leadership to tackle a project like this. Firstly Romanella was appointed as the official prodder, chasing people around so they finished their tasks. Later, Margarita and I took the main leadership roles. This allowed us to make the organization run more quickly, but we made that change too late after months of trying to work things out in a non-hierarchical way.

> ## "Romanella was appointed as the official *prodder*, chasing people around so they finished their tasks."

We also learnt that you need to recognise and care for the valuable people that believe in the project until the end: even if they've never worked for Debian before, they make this event possible. And somebody has to remind them how important they are, when the work makes everybody crazy.

To these people, my greatest gratitude. Guys and girls, you rock!

CHOOSING THE CORRECT VENUE

MARTÍN FERRARI

DebConf8 Organizer

One of the key aspects for a successful Debian Conference is to find a good venue. This is not an easy task: it needs to be accessible for disabled people and safe for thousands of dollars worth of easily-stolen equipment (notebooks, gadgets, video and networking gear, etc.) without being so tightly locked down that it might make people uneasy. It needs friendly staff who can adapt to these strange animals we call geeks, and make them feel comfortable. It needs big rooms for talks, like those normally only found in convention centres, but the budget won't be anywhere close to what those cost.

One distinctive feature of the DebConf8 venue (as it was for DebConf4 in Porto Alegre, Brazil) was that the lodging and the food service were in the same building as the talk rooms. We decided early in the organisation that this was going to be one of our most important objectives to pursue.

In the end, this choice greatly enhanced the DebConf experience. As they were in the same building all day long, the attendees clustered naturally, and spontaneous meetings took place around the corridors, the lobby and more evidently, at the bar. It had been observed at past DebConfs that at some point people get tired of walking and start missing talks in favour of staying in one place.

Of course, for all this to happen, there was a lot of effort needed behind the scenes. We started working on finding a venue one year before the event, and as the conference got closer the amount of work only increased; it only stopped a couple of weeks after the last people left the building.

We had initially chosen a hotel around November 2007, but even after five months we weren't able to reach an agreement on costs and conditions, and found more and more obstacles in our path. It became evident that the hotel didn't want our conference, and it was going to be a failure if we stayed. But at the same time the conference date was already very close.

Hastily, we went out looking for more options. While a friend of mine walked around Mar del Plata finding out information on possible locations, I spent hours on the phone asking for details, even trying different cities, hostels, etc. Ten days later, Damián and me travelled to see various of the options in person, taking pictures and even drawing floor plans! After a week we found a new hotel and made an agreement with its managers. The risky move ended well.

Once the venue was settled, the phone bills kept growing: we needed to coordinate the rearrangement of large areas of the hotel to create the hacklabs and run power lines and networking gear all around the place. We even set up a server room hidden near the elevators' engines: the kind of thing that any hotel would hate. We also had to check the restaurant menus, assign rooms to people, negotiate the provision of decent beer (this one was tough!), and so on. These were all things which need a lot of interaction with the hotel staff and wouldn't have been possible without cooperative and helpful people on their side.

A few days before DebCamp started, some of us moved to live in the hotel as work was already too intense for us to be 400 kilometres away. From that moment on, we met with the hotel staff every day: managing the venue means dealing with all kinds of requests and complaints on both sides and constant negotiation. This was key to make things end as well as they started, or at least as well as we could manage!

NETWORK INFRASTRUCTURE

SEBASTIÁN GALLETTO

DebConf8 Infrastructure Team

Working on the network setup for a DebConf is a real challenge. On one hand there is the local area network, with high data transfer requirements on the wire, and some areas with high density of wireless connected computers. On the other hand is Internet access for 250 demanding users and high quality video streams.

"Almost one kilometre of Ethernet wire was added to link everything."

Availability of Internet access was a key factor in deciding the right place to hold DebConf; many possible interesting places in Argentina still lack good access to the network. In the beginning, the goal was to get a primary 20Mb/s connection, and a backup option through a different provider. Finally a 10Mb/s symmetric connection and an asymmetric backup of 5 Mb/s through the same provider was the best option available, and was agreed to be just about enough. Although it wasn't as much as we wanted, it was reliable and worked quite well.

The hotel already had a basic network infrastructure, but it had to be upgraded to meet DebConf needs. Luckily, the technicians working there were happy to help with running new wires and putting everything in place. Two gigabit switches bonded using four redundant wires and LACP links were the network backbone, one located on the ground floor and the other in the server room. VLAN channels were used to isolate the Internet up-link and Video Team network. Four Fast Ethernet switches supported the hacklabs.

Almost one kilometre of Ethernet wire was added to link everything.

Many computers lent by sponsors and conference attendees were used to provide network services such as firewalling, routing, DHCP, DNS, a local Debian mirror, monitoring and many others.

One of the hardest things was getting information on how to set up a high density WiFi network. Data provided by the people involved in the network teams of previous DebConfs was extremely valuable when calculating the setup and location of access points. The hotel staff fortunately trusted our network skills and allowed us to make some changes to the wireless infrastructure: relocation of some switches, fixing the setup of the access points, setting a unique IP address scheme, and a reasonable use of frequency channels. In the end, we added 14 extra access points on top of the 9 already installed.

"Roaming worked reliably, even when taking the elevator!"

Having just one venue for the whole event eased the task of providing services, as the same network was used for the conference and the rooms. Roaming worked reliably (even when taking the elevator!) for those who had support on their computer/devices. Wireless access was open, based on the fact that the number of computers in range that could use the network would not significantly affect the performance, and an open network is much easier and more comfortable for the attendees.

ELECTRIC INSTALLATION

LISANDRO PÉREZ MEYER

DebConf8 Infrastructure Team

For DebConf8 we tried to create an electric installation meeting the needs of the attendees, building upon the experiences of previous years.

The main problems to avoid were:

a) The lack of an installation with enough power available.

b) The need to isolate circuits between hacklabs, to avoid a problem in one of them propagating to others.

c) Provide enough power sockets, avoiding the use of power strips as much as possible, and

d) Provide power sockets dedicated to the video team.

It was necessary to establish the total power needed to feed the conference. In order to do so, we estimated 300 attendees as a maximum, and the number of people per hacklab. We also needed to consider the median power consumed by a laptop, so we measured a LiteOn power supply, which gave us:

Fundamental current: 0,25 ARMS

Third harmonic: 0,06 ARMS

Sixth harmonic: 0,003 ARMS

Ninth harmonic: 0,015 ARMS

We then proceed to obtain the total current per phase per room, assuming that every attendee would have their laptop connected, turned on and charging. The previous measure was done with just one power supply, but because we had such a large number of attendees, and the fact that not all would have a laptop powered on and charging at the same time, we had large enough safety margins to avoid problems.

The hotel had an electric installation with enough capacity for our requirements. However, we needed to install power breakers so as to feed each room independently. We also proceeded to install wiring and power sockets in the rooms.

We made power consumption measurements during the conference, to check our predictions and to prevent any problem that might have arisen. However, the measurements were made with a non-RMS amperometric tool, so the influence of the harmonics were barely measured, resulting in a downwards biased reading, giving non-significant results. However, we could observe that different phases were not equally loaded. Equal loading would be difficult to achieve in a environment with dynamic loads such as a hacklab.

In conclusion, even if the electric set up was not cheap, it provided DebConf with a robust installation that met our goals. For future conferences, it would be a good idea to provide the video team with a special electric circuit, separate from the sockets for the attendees machines, so as to avoid problems with the recordings.

WELCOMING PARTICIPANTS

ROMANELLA DI FERDINANDO
DebConf8 Organizer

DebConf8 was a great experience for me. Everything went so fast, it was very exhausting yet so good! When I found out about this conference I had just recently become a Debian user, and thought it was a good idea to help because I didn't know if I would have the opportunity again. By helping with my first DebConf, without realizing it, I became involved in the organization, and will certainly be involved in the future.

To organize a DebConf requires a lot of dedication and hard work. There are many things to do and I was happy to learn that I was able to help even though I don't have strong technical skills,

For example, one of my important tasks was organizing the Front Desk.

Why was this important? The people working the Front Desk are the first contact with the conference attendees. They explain the venue rules, and the schedule. They distribute badges, conference bags, and other documentation. Additionally, they handle registration, room payments and receipts.

But that's just the beginning, during the conference there are a lot of tasks for volunteers. They help people track down the conference organizers, help with the local language, city, and also recommend tourist attractions for people to visit. They are the ambassadors representing the location.

In short, you can not get bored working in there, and it is really exciting because you meet everyone.

PICTURE BY ANDREW MCMILLAN

VIDEO TEAM

HOLGER LEVSEN
Video Team Coordinator

In summary, I think DebConf8's technical setup was the best to date. The video team really went above and beyond, and the volunteers made their best showing to date. We rocked!

This feeling is also reflected on our feedback page[1]. We were very happy to see all the positive feedback from attendees and remote viewers. Thank you for taking the time to let us know how we did. It's very much appreciated!

Our ten person global team had great support from the local team as well as from the hotel. The local video team, which consisted of approximately 15 dedicated volunteers, really made our jobs easier. The venue was also very well prepared, with the hotel really going out of its way to support us as best as they could. We even had a separate video network, and the power network in the two talk rooms was specifically designed for the needs of the video team.

Working with the team was a pleasure, since all of them were very reliable and motivated. Because of this, unlike previous DebConfs, I never had to run around early in the morning looking for cameras or AV-mixer operators. Of course, it helped that most of the time we only had to cover one venue, as the smaller one was seldom used.

A nice proof that the teamwork went smoothly was that, unlike last year, no one had to stay at the venue during the day trip to work on videos. :-) We also managed to easily cope with several team members getting ill, which would not have been possible without all the local help.

The setup we used, was similar to DebConf7, with two important changes:

For the first time we used the new PIP (picture in picture) feature of dvswitch (pictured),

which makes watching a talk much more interesting and also easier to follow.

And also, the DPL (Debian Project Leader) granted us 2000 Euros, which we spent on audio hardware, which I took to mean that our work was very much appreciated and that we were being given the means to improve our work further.

My talk at DebConf8 about the video setup is available together with all the other videos we created[2].

Of course, not everything was flawless, the most important lessons we learned are:

* We should add lower resolution streams, as many people will use the wireless to watch videos even if only hi-res is available. This ended up pushing our wifi network to its limits.

* Installation services provided by the local team are only helpful to test if the hardware works. We experienced subtle differences in the various machines installed manually, and that sometimes got

DVSwitch console, showing picture-in-picture

The VideoTeam at work.

in the way. For production use, the video team computers should be set up using automated tools (which are ready now, since FOSDEM 2009)

* We needed a second file server, to allow review of existing footage, without potentially interfering with ongoing recording. In Mar del Plata we initially only had one set up. Without setting up a second server, we would not have been able to finish reviewing all of the raw material at DebConf8. Since most of the editing work needs to happen at DebConf, due to various scheduling conflicts, the ability to edit and review video during the conference is a must.

* A motivated army of volunteers, even if they had never done video work before, can be incredibly helpful.

* Having access to local equipment is not as important as having our own equipment. First, we can standardize on certain equipment, and make sure our team is fully familiar with the gear. Second, we found that local sourcing of equipment can be unreliable. For example, the guy who pledged to lend us cameras didn't show up, so we ended up having to scramble and rent some at high cost.

Thanks to everyone who made the video experience at DebConf8 a success! You know who you are and you are many! It was a real pleasure!

1: http://wiki.debconf.org/wiki/DebConf8/Videoteam/Thanks
2: http://meetings-archive.debian.net/pub/debian-meetings/2008/debconf8/

Volunteers

Matías D´Ambrosio and Nicolás Secreto

DebConf8 Volunteers

Matías D´Ambrosio

I am not sure what I was expecting when I arrived at DebConf, but it was a much better experience than I could have ever hoped for. It was great to meet with such a large group of people with a common goal, and the venue certainly lent itself to getting to know each other. I appreciated that the organizers had arranged to have everything in the same building, keeping us volunteers from having to run around too much.

"I was expecting volunteering to help with the conference would have been more of a chore, but I enjoyed it greatly."

I was expecting volunteering to help with the conference would have been more of a chore, but I enjoyed it greatly, since it gave me a chance to talk one-on-one with some very interesting people. We were also lucky to have a team of volunteers that got along well such that we were able to easily dived the tasks. The hotel staff was very nice and helpful, though a bit shocked by our seemingly endless consumption of coffee.

I learned a great deal about the internal workings of Debian, not only from the talks and other scheduled events which one could stream, but also from casual talks during meals and while socializing. I also grew to appreciate the very different kinds of people cooperating with Debian.

Other people who were attending their first DebConf also seemed to be very excited, and were very interested in becoming part of Debian, which bodes well for the growing number of Argentinian Debian developers.

Nicolás Secreto

To be a volunteer is to be... A tribute to all the volunteers

I would like to speak from the heart about what it is to be a DebConf volunteer. The tasks carried out by DebConf volunteers are not complex and could be carried out easily by any of the attendees. Welcoming the guests, giving directions, running around fixing last minute issues, labeling, recording videos and checking that everything is in order for the talks are only a few of the things volunteers do that anyone could do: but we are there precisely so that others can fully enjoy an event that brings the most committed developers together through collaborative work. But the most important thing for a volunteer is to be able to take part in the DebConf experience.

I'd like to thank all of the organizers, developers and speakers for giving us the opportunity to contribute to the Debian community, which we are all so passionate about. I enjoyed meeting everyone, whom I only see virtually the other 351 days of the year.

"It has been an honour to help and have had the opportunity to participate in this event.."

I feel confident in saying on behalf of all of the DebConf volunteers that it has been an honor to help and have had the opportunity participate in this event.

To all volunteers, thank you for your help!

MANAGING THE BUDGET

MARGARITA MANTEROLA
DebConf8 Organizer

Budgeting for a DebConf is extremely hard work, because it requires months of updating estimates based on numbers that fluctuate wildly. These numbers can change even up to the date of the conference, for example estimating and updating future exchange rates for a variety of currencies. Despite all these difficulties, we were able to pull through with another great DebConf.

The local non-profit organization Fundación Via Libre helped us a great deal in terms of accepting donations from sponsors scattered all over the world. Argentina's taxes are high in such cases, and very complex to deal with.

Since many of our sponsor companies are based on the US or in Europe, and ditto many of our attendees needing travel reimbursements, two other non-profit organizations also received money on behalf of DebConf8. SPI (Software in the Public Interest) took this task in the US, and SPI's sister organization FFIS (Förderung Freier Informationen und Software) did the same in Germany. This was all a lot of help, but it also meant we had to track three different currencies rather than just one.

Year	Venue	People	Budget (USD)
2000	Bordeaux, France	30	$0,00
2001	Bordeaux, France	50	$0,00
2002	Toronto, Canada	90	$5.000,00
2003	Oslo, Norway	130	$25.000,00
2004	Porto Alegre, Brazil	150	$75.000,00
2005	Helsinki, Finland	300	$130.000,00
2006	Oaxtepec, Mexico	310	$150.000,00
2007	Edinburgh, Scotland	400	$180.000,00
2008	Mar del Plata, Argentina	225	$160.000,00

When we started preparing for DebConf8, we were expecting 300 attendees. As always, we worked on a very tight budget: we wanted to stretch the money from our external sponsors to cover as many attendees as possible. We were fearful that many planned events would have to be cancelled or downgraded due to lack of money, as estimated prices continued rising during our preparations.

However, the sudden increase in oil prices in 2008 led to drastic increases in air fares, and unfortunately many people had to cancel their travel plans. In the end, we had 223 attendees, of which 57 and 5 respectively were in the "Professional" and "Corporate" categories where they paid the cost of their stay directly. With 39 further people deciding not to stay at the DebConf8 venue, we covered the costs of lodging and food for 122 conference attendees.

Money received	Amount (USD)
Sponsors	$127.000,00
Attendee's fees	$28.000,00
DebConf7 surplus	$23.000,00
Debian	$10.000,00
Total	$178.000,00

The slight reduction in numbers allowed us to make DebConf8 a great event for those that could attend. In terms of facilities, we were able to secure a very reliable Internet connection and a robust electrical installation. We also rented a lot of high-quality equipment for the video team to use, to help broadcast as much of the conference as possible to the people who could not make it.

From DebConf funds, we partially or fully reimbursed 38 people's travel expenses. Many of them would have been unable to come to the conference without this help, so this was an important part of our budget.

On the leisure and entertainment side, we put together a "welcome" magazine, with useful information about the host city and country. We covered half of the price of the DayTrip

Cost	Amount (USD)
Conference Rooms+Lodging+Food	$87.645,16
Internet	$7.745,76
Electricity	$2.486,18
Servers, network, other hardware	$1.703,65
Video Team	$4.707,10
Transport & Insurance	$967,74
T-shirts / Bags / Gifts	$3.587,90
Printing	$3.736,20
Travel	$40.633,87
DayTrip	$2.048,39
Debian 15 years party	$709,68
DebianDay	$1.625,81
OpenBar	$709,68
Bank and government taxes	$1.719,82
Total	$160.026,93

and provided some really nice DebConf T-shirts and Debian Bags for all attendees. Finally, we held a nice dinner to celebrate Debian's 15th birthday in appropriate style.

In summary, we received 178,000 USD in total for DebConf8, and spent 160,000 USD on the conference. We will thus be able to pass on 18,000 USD as startup funding for DebConf9 in Spain, a similar amount to what we received from DebConf7 the previous year.

PICTURE BY JUAN ANGULO MORENO

Social Events

Ready, set, relax!

Melisa Halsband

DayTrip Organizer

DebConf is such an intensive and active meeting that it leaves little free time to rest or get in touch with the local culture. The Day trip is an activity in the middle of the conference that aims to show the participants some of the tourist attractions of the host country, such as places, local food, drinks and customs. It also gives DebConf participants something to say when asked about their experience in such a remote location.

Deciding what to do, where to go and how much to spend on the DayTrip was not an easy task. Argentina has plenty of natural tourist attractions and Mar del Plata is itself a very popular tourist city. Unfortunately, Argentina is pretty spread out, so most of the places worth visiting are too far apart for a single day trip.

It was decided to spend the day in a traditional ranch of the Pampas ('estancia'), a few kilometres away from the city, now open to tourism, as a representative of the rural culture of the Buenos Aires province. This allowed the visitors to spend a day in contact with nature, relaxing at their leisure, without internet!

When we arrived at the estancia, we were welcomed by the staff with tasty empanadas and local wine. After that, we were shown into the historic ranch house, which had been

Picture by Wouter Verhelst

converted into a restaurant, where we were served another very famous Argentinian speciality: 'asado'. Asado is a technique for cooking meat, usually consisting of a variety of beef cuts alongside various other meats, which are cooked on a grill (parrilla) or open fire. Argentinians take their asado very seriously, and are rightfully very proud of it. There were also vegetable pies ('tartas') available for vegetarians, and dulce de leche and cream as dessert.

Picture by Wouter Verhelst

After lunch, the group separated to recover from such a magnificent meal. Some chose to play sports such as soccer or tennis, others played table tennis and many played the DebConf classic card game, Mao. Other activities included: playing musical instruments, wire handcrafting, or just resting in the grass.

In the end, we were invited to gather again to share the traditional 'merienda' (snack) tortas fritas (sweet pastries) served with mate (a beverage that is infused from yerba mate leaves). On the way back, everyone seemed to have enjoyed the afternoon and, fortunately, no injuries were reported due to excessive sunlight exposure or lack of internet access.

CHEESE AND WINE PARTY
CHRISTIAN PERRIER
CheeseMaster

We made it again! Despite the technical challenges of bringing enough cheese and beverages from other hemispheres, the now traditional "Cheese and Wine Party" was again a tremendous success.

The elaborate preparation even required hiding goat cheese bricks in pairs of socks, or packing the highly malodorous "Boulette d'Avesnes" cheese pyramids in seven layers of ultra-hermetic plastic labeled as "queso pasteurizado" (pasteurized cheese).

Thanks to everyone's ingenuity, we again could gather together the best cheese and wine from all over the world (the definition of "wine" being occasionally stretched to accommodate some amazing beverages).

This event has now become a must have so-cial gathering at every DebConf. So much so, that we should probably institutionalize it with a Constitutional amendment and create a "CheeseMaster" position to maintain the high standards of the event.

The organizers gave a rough estimation that we consumed 10-15 kilograms of cheese, 2 dozen bottles of wine and 2-3 dozen bottles of other amazing beverages. All this was cut and opened by only 5 knives and one corkscrew, but eaten, in its entirety, by about 100 participants.

There is currently no estimate of the number of release critical bugs that were fixed the following night. It is expected to be low and we estimate that the release of lenny was delayed by one week because of the event.

Tango Dancing

Romanella Di Ferdinando
& Wolfgang Martin Borgert.

Geeks don't dance. However, it would have been a shame to visit the Argentine and not try to dance Tango Argentino. Fortunately, we had some people with some tango experience in our community who tried their best to pass their idea of the tango to the newbies. For us, Romanella and Martin, it was a great experience. We are both tango dancers, not tango teachers, and never danced together before. So it was a double challenge for us.

Many people came to the class, and of course there were not enough women. So some men did the followers role and they learned well. It was entertaining, indeed, given that geeks don't have much reputation of performing the most romantic and passionate dance that is Tango Argentino. And it came to our surprise that quite a lot of people knew how to dance the tango, so we "could have danced all night" as they say in the musical.

Open bar
free as in free beer

Sebastián Montini

DebConf8 Organizer

First of all we have to thank Canonical, who sponsored the Open Bar this year. An event where all DebConf attendees were invited to the local beer brewery Antares to drink free beer.

Mmm, what can I say? It was a wonderful experience that I won't forget.

I've always been an Antares fan (I go there at least once or twice a week) and even though they already knew me, they will always remember me now. Every time I put my foot in there, not only do they treat me like a king, but now keep asking "how are those Europeans friends of yours?, tell them we miss them". They really did have a great time with us, and I can assure every DebConf attendee that they won't forget your faces.

Last week Antares had a party in honor of their 10th anniversary, I really wished all of you had been there, a lot of nice memories came to my head, not only about the open bar, but also the hotel bar too, one of the most crowded places at the venue, where you would always find someone to have a drink and chat a little. I know beer isn't everything, but since DebConf8, every time I drink I'll remember the good times we spent. I can't wait to see everybody (and share a drink) in Cáceres next year!

PICTURE BY GUNNAR WOLF

PICTURE BY ERIC EVANS

Personal Impressions

Andreas Tille

Despite the fact that every DebConf is always very inspiring for getting work done, I really liked having DebConf near the beach this year. This enabled me to have a short workout every morning which ended with a short swim in the sea. While 8-10°C seems cold to the uninitiated, those of use who were brave enough to join me at the end of DebConf agreed that this was an amazing experience. Because the view was so inspiring and beautiful, I preferred sitting next to the window in the main auditorium, rather than using the hacklab. We should not forget to thank all the nice people in the hotel and all over Argentina - especially our great Orga-team.

Gunnar Wolf

I first attended DebConf in Oslo, back in 2003. Since that first, and much smaller, ocassion, I felt the interaction between people involved in Debian to tend more to a family than to just a group of technically minded people - Many years later, I know I am not alone in this feeling. Since that first DebConf, I cannot imagine missing one. Each year, the amazement DebConf achieves in me continues to grow.

After being a DebConf organizer for three years (DC5 at Helsinki, DC6 at Oaxtepec, and DC7 at Edinburgh), this year I attended again as a regular attendee. I have to thank and congratulate the amazing organization and local teams - You reached levels of professionalism and organization I still find hard to believe.

Debconf continues to grow and to amaze. And I'll sure be there next time. You'd better be there too!

Frederic Lehobey

DebConf8 was my second DebConf after DebConf1, which I attended in Bordeaux. The event was a great opportunity to meet people with whom I had only had electronic exchanges, learn a lot from them and also share a lot of fun and interests.

Beforehand I hoped to work on generating live-cd flavours directly from Debian Science metapackages. Instead, I actually worked mostly on introducing po4a (for their translation) into Debian Live and Live Magic and didn't get to completing the live-cd generation stuff.

Also, I increased my Git skills mostly thanks to Daniel Baumann (my sponsor whom I have finally met in real life).

As a secondary task I was also one of the beta testers for installing Debian onto the OpenMoko Freerunner, thanks to the incredible team of porters and the patience of Luca Capello.

Another source of fun was to introduce some of the conference participants owning a GPS to the joy of OpenStreetMap mapping. Mar del Plata has since then seen its streets quickly covered, at least the ones around the conference hotel and the sea lions.

Finally, I praise the dedication and the quality of the work by all the organizing teams.

GREGOR HERRMANN

This was my second DebConf, and it was both my first time at DebCamp and the first time I had travelled to South America. Therefore, I was excited before leaving home, and although the 30 hour journey between my place and the Hotel Dorá in Mar del Plata was quite tedious I was immediately compensated for the journey by the warm reception of the members of the local team who were still awake.

The first impression summarises my general impression of the two weeks quite nicely. The local team had done a great job in preparing the conference (including producing a special magazine!) and managed to run it perfectly; we had everything we needed, got everything we asked for, and they even managed to keep a smile on their faces.

Attending DebCamp was a positive experience for me; not only because of the relaxed atmosphere but also because of the opportunity for a real-life meeting of the pkg-perl group and having time to actually work on some small projects.

Like the year before, I enjoyed many of the talks and BOFs during DebConf: it's great to learn new stuff, to see what others are working on, and of course also to have the possibility to work, chat, eat, and have fun with others in this nice community of Debian contributors. I also enjoyed the possibility to facilitate two BOFs during the week.

I'd like to thank everybody who helped to make this experience possible, and I'm looking forward to the next DebConf in Cáceres and especially to meeting so many great people again!

ANA BEATRIZ GUERRERO LÓPEZ

Like every year, DebConf8 was totally amazing. The local organizers created the best work environment one could possibly imagine and I felt at home. Good network, plenty of food, a nice place and a lot of Debian folks to share knowledge and ideas. You can not ask for more! :)

The place selected for hosting the conference made it a long trip for most of us, but I think it was totally worth it. Mar de Plata had a mild winter that allowed us to go outside of the conference building from time to time and enjoy the place.

The schedule was a bit more relaxed than previous years, and I think this was a good idea; we had some extra time for hacking and some resting between talks. Also, it helped a lot that the hacklab was next to both conference rooms.

A huge thank you to everybody who made it possible!

AURELIEN JARNO

DebConf is a unique time of the year where developers who otherwise only work together over the Internet can meet in real life, and work in a very friendly and productive atmosphere to improve the quality of Debian. Like the previous year, Debconf 8 was a great success, thanks to the incredible work of the local team: nice and comfortable place, fast network, conference room, hacklab and rooms in the same building. I am already waiting for DebConf 9 in Cáceres, Spain.

From a tourist's point of view, the week I spent visiting part of Argentina before the conference was really awesome, just like the day trip was.

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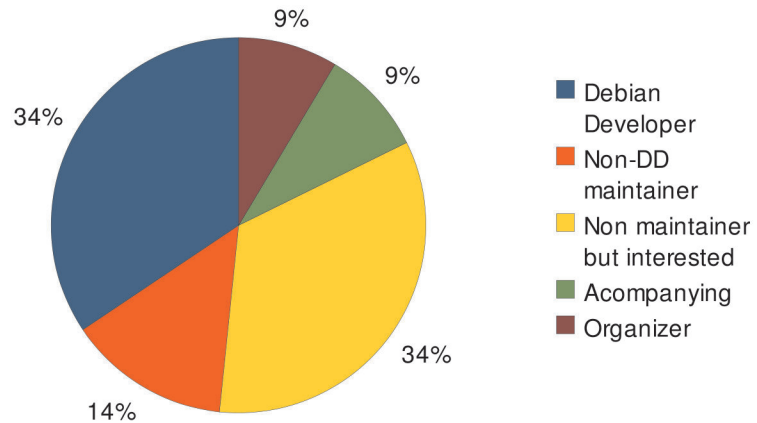Damián Viano

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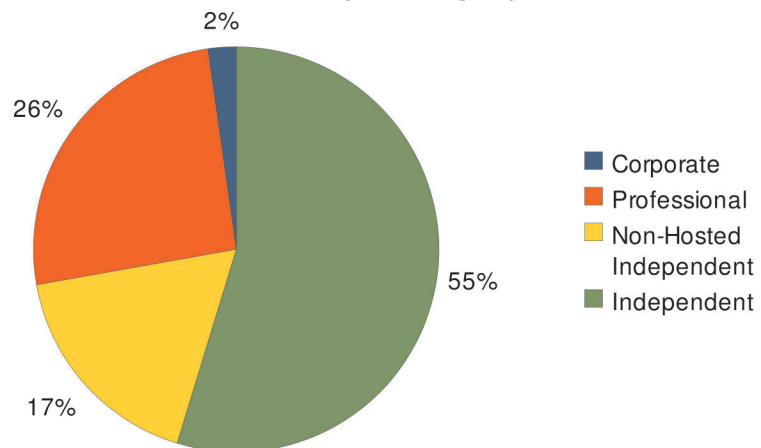Joaquín De Andrés
Alberto Bertogli

DEBCONF8 IN NUMBERS

ATTENDEES BY COUNTRY

81	Argentina
23	Brazil
20	United States of America
18	Venezuela
17	Germany
11	United Kingdom
10	France
7	Spain
6	Mexico
5	El Salvador
4	Switzerland
3	Belgium
3	Ireland
2	Austria
2	Canada
2	Japan
1	Australia
1	Bolivia
1	Colombia
1	Denmark
1	Greece
1	Italy
1	Luxembourg
1	Netherlands
1	New Zealand

ATTENDEES BY DAY

34	Setup Day
45	DebCamp Day 1
50	DebCamp Day 2
58	DebCamp Day 3
66	DebCamp Day 4
68	DebCamp Day 5
77	DebCamp Day 6
160	DebConf Arrival
205	DebConf Day 1
208	DebConf Day 2
215	DebConf Day 3
216	DayTrip & Party
215	DebConf Day 4
213	DebConf Day 5
208	DebConf Day 6
139	DebConf Departure

Attendees by role in Debian

Legend:
- Debian Developer (34%)
- Non-DD maintainer (14%)
- Non maintainer but interested (34%)
- Acompanying (9%)
- Organizer (9%)

Attendees by Category

Legend:
- Corporate (2%)
- Professional (26%)
- Non-Hosted Independent (17%)
- Independent (55%)

Attendees by Food Choice

Legend:
- Regular (71%)
- Vegetarian or Vegan (13%)
- Other (2%)
- Outside DebConf (14%)
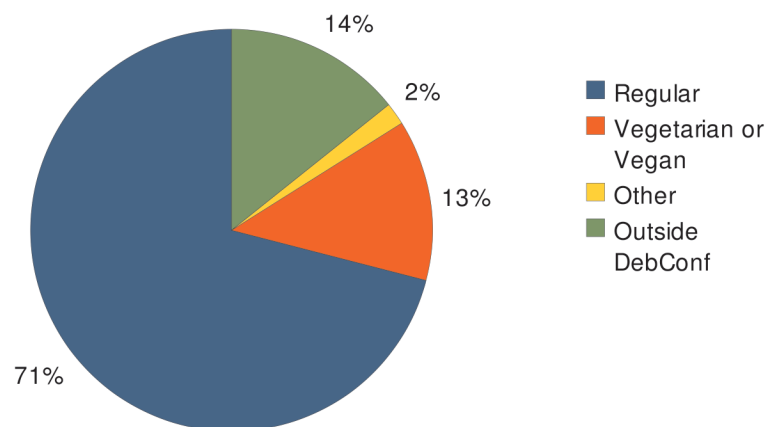
THANK YOU FOR MAKING IT POSSIBLE!