



↙ The crazy cats of The Document Foundation show us all how to run LibreOffice on a Raspberry Pi.

↖ Semi-recursively, the Fedora team used Fedora to print little Fedora badges.

FOSDEM 2014

Free Software, free stickers and delicious beer – **Mike Saunders** and **Andrew Gregory** just had to be there...

Geeks work hard, but they play hard as well. While the vast majority of Linux and Free Software development takes place over the internet, real-life meetups are hugely important as well. One of the biggest such European meetups is FOSDEM, which takes place every February in Brussels. We went along to see the action, and we didn't come away disappointed.

Scattered across various halls of the ULB Solbosch Campus, FOSDEM was packed with talks from developers working on projects across the whole Free Software spectrum: desktop applications, networking,

security, games and open hardware. Hackers could watch presentations about new technologies, before exchanging ideas with other programmers and doing some on-the-spot coding.

Many, many speakers

Michael Mrozek introduced the DragonBox Pyra, the follow-up to the Pandora open source handheld games console, while Daniel Naber explained how LanguageTool, a Free Software proofreading program, has been used to find over a million style and grammar errors in the English-language Wikipedia.



The latest build of OpenSUSE works on ARM chips, as shown here on a humble Tegra laptop.

OpenMandriva and Rosa teamed up to talk about porting their distros to ARM devices, and Laurent Eschenauer showed off the Nodecopter, a drone that's programmable with JavaScript.

People power

We met a bunch of awesome people on our travels. Pieter Hintjens, anti-software patents campaigner and author of the ZeroMQ distributed computing framework, kindly gave us a copy of his latest book, *Culture & Empire: Digital Revolution* (see page 28). Red Hat evangelist and "transnational citizen" Jan Wildeboer told us how he disabled the RFID chip in his passport using his microwave – he's a fascinating guy, and we hope to get an interview with him in the next few months.

We also spoke to Wolfram Sang, a kernel hacker who is trying to get non-coders involved in kernel development. How can you improve the kernel if you don't know any C? Well, Wolfram explained how it's fairly easy to add new device IDs to drivers, so if you buy a new webcam and it doesn't work out-of-the-box in Linux, you may be able to add its device ID to an existing driver to make it function. We'll have more from Wolfram in Linux Voice soon, so stay tuned.

Take a stand

But our favourite part of FOSDEM 2014 was the stands. Most computer shows tend to have boring stands with gelled-hair salesdrones parroting the latest blurb about their products, but it's totally different at FOSDEM. Small projects are well represented, and the people at the stands are the geeks who work on them. Anyone could walk up and chat to developers of the Enlightenment window manager, for example, and the same goes for CentOS, LibreOffice and OpenSUSE.

The OpenSUSE team showed us their VM-based automated distro testing system (that sends keyboard and mouse input to the VM window to perform automatic installations), while the Fedora stand wooed everyone with an awesome 3D printer creating Fedora badges. Also present were the Free Software Foundation Europe, the Mozilla Foundation, and the Apache OpenOffice project.

Beer was tasty and plentiful; the WiFi network did a good job as well, given that there were several thousand geeks connected to it at any one time. It was great to meet so many Linux Voice fans as well – your support and enthusiasm is amazing. So, thanks to everyone who attended and showed off their awesome work, and see you next year! 🍻

The relaxed crowds and fast-food vans give FOSDEM the feel of a music festival rather than a tech conference.



The canteen, where all the best people hang out and much of the unofficial 'beer track' takes place.