

Technical UNIX® User Group

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September 1988
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newsletter of the
Technical UNIX®
User Group

This month ...

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Editors Note

by Darren Besler

Welcome to the very first newsletter of the Technical UNIX User Group. Let's hope that this is the beginning of a long series of newsletters to be produced by this user group. Our current plans are to produce a newsletter every month to be mailed out such that you will receive it approximately one week prior to the next scheduled meeting. This will give the Executive a method of forwarding any last minute meeting changes to all members.

Initially, each newsletter will provide the minutes from the previous meeting, a regular column from the President, any article contributions, and the Agenda for the next meeting.

I will stress at this point that this newsletters success is significantly dependent upon your contributions. It would be nice if we could produce a newsletter every month based solely on member contributions, but I am sure that that may be hard to do, based on my past experience with other user groups. So, when there is an insufficient number of member contributions, articles from of other user group newsletters may likely be used as filler. If you are reading this newsletter and know about other newsletters that deal with the UNIX or XENIX operating systems, I would like hear from you. It would be nice to develop a healthy newsletter exchange program with other user groups.

The preferred method of acticle submission is in some machine readable form. The preferred method is on

a Macintosh or MS/PC-DOS diskette. Articles may also be submitted via modem. If you have an article to contribute, give me a call and we can work out a convenient method of submission.

Many of you who are receiving this issue are not registered members of the Technical UNIX User Group. Those of you who are not, you will receive a few more issues as an enticement to come out and join our user group. Membership naturally will include a subscription to this newsletter. Those of you who havn't been out to one of the meetings, how about dropping by the next one. There is an abundance of UNIX technical knowledge within the group and I am sure that if someone is having a problem there will be someone else at a meeting that can help you out.

I would like to take this time to thank Gilles Detillieux, Gilbert Detillieux, Susan Zuk, INFO WEST, and UNISYS for their assistance in producing this newsletter. Another word of thanks goes out to Peter Somers for designing our logo that is in the upper left hand corner of the front page.

As a closing note I would like to mention that this issue was composed using PageMaker on an Apple Macintosh Plus microcomputer and printed using an Apple LaserWriter printer.

See you at the next meeting...

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President's Corner

by Gilbert Detillieux, Acting President

Well, here we are! Our first real newsletter. I would like to start by thanking all those who helped put this together and mail it out, particularly Darren, our newsletter editor. I would also like to invite all of you out there to submit material for inclusion in the newsletter. It doesn't have to be much; just a short review of a UNIX application or a news item that would be of interest to other UNIX users, and that sort of thing.

A lot was accomplished at the September meeting; most notably, we got this newsletter organized. It was also decided that an annual membership fee of \$20 would be charged, most of which will go toward production and mailing costs associated with this newsletter. This fee will be due October 11, the date of the next meeting. Cheques should be made out to the "Technical UNIX User Group" and can either be mailed to the group, or given at the next meeting.

We also have volunteers for most of the executive positions, and elections will be held at the next meeting. Here are the nominations, so far:

President: Gilbert Detillieux
Vice-President: (vacant)
Secretary: Susan Zuk
Treasurer: Gilles Detillieux
Newsletter Editor: Darren Besler
Membership Secretary: (vacant) *Pat McDonald*
Programme Secretaries: (vacant)

We will be accepting nominations until October 11. As you can see, we still have several positions to be filled, and not a single contested position. Come on, let's make this an interesting election! Please get in touch with either Susan Zuk (786-8483) during business hours, or me, Gilbert Detillieux (261-9146) anytime, if you would like to get involved.

Briefly the duties of each position are as follows. The president chairs the monthly meetings, and writes this monthly column. The vice-president fills in for the president when he can't make it to meetings, and assists the executive in any areas where help may be required. The secretary keeps minutes of the business portion of each meeting, and reports these in the following newsletter. The treasurer keeps the group's bank account and fi-

nances in order. The newsletter editor collects articles submitted by members of the group, as well as any other material he receives, and puts the whole thing together. The membership secretary handles new membership, renewals, keeps an up to date list of all members, and produces mailing labels for the monthly newsletter. The programme secretaries plan future meetings, arrange to have guest speakers, and so on (we would like to have several people, rather than have one person responsible for planning all the meetings). None of these positions are very demanding, and its a fun way to get to know others in the group, so please consider getting involved.

Our last meeting ran a little long, so we didn't have time for the presented topic, Shell Programming Tips. That will therefore be the topic for the October meeting. The business portion of that meeting will be kept short. (We promise!)

So, we hope to see you at 7:30 PM, on Tuesday October 11. We are meeting in Room 431 of the Basic Medical Sciences Building. The entrance is at the Medical College, 770 Bannatyne.

The November meeting will end off with a workshop, rather than a presented topic. The workshop topic will be UNIX system administration and resource accounting. We hope to have a terminal set up in the meeting room, for demonstrations. The format of these workshops will be much the same as our usual round table discussions, but focussed on a more specific topic. So have your system administration related questions, problems, hints, and suggestions ready for then.

Until next time, take care, and may the daemons be good to you!

Meeting Schedule

2nd Tuesday of every month
7:30 PM
Room 431,
Basic Medical Sciences Building
Health Sciences Center

Review:

MKS Toolkit from Mortice Kern Systems Inc., Waterloo, Ont.

by Gilles Detillieux, INFO WEST, Winnipeg

The proliferation of cheap PCs in the market has been a mixed blessing. The obvious advantage is that a lot of people (myself included) could now afford computers of their own. The biggest disadvantage was that the fairly crude hardware was not at all enhanced by the even cruder MS-DOS operating system. This crudeness was most sorely felt by UNIX users, who had grown accustomed to systems that let the user do what he wants to do, without having to go as far as writing a program to do it.

Fortunately, an enterprising group of UNIX users felt the same way as I did, and set out to do something about it. They produced the MKS Toolkit - a package of programs for the PC that provide the most used, and most useful UNIX utilities, which for some reason or other had been left out of DOS.

You may have seen their ads in UNIX World magazine, and wondered if the package is worth the price they are asking. Well, after using it for several months, I can say that it certainly is. Don't get me wrong - this package will not miraculously turn your PC into a full-blown UNIX box. It will, however, allow you to do many things under DOS that you took for granted under UNIX.

The most useful of these utilities, by far, is the *VI* editor. This is a complete implementation of the UNIX EX/VI editor, with a few extra goodies thrown in. One of these extras is that it can handle 8-bit characters, which are fairly important on PCs. It also can be set up to display control characters and extended characters in native mode, using the PCs graphic characters, or using the \wedge (character) convention. One disadvantage of it is the poor choice of a line kill character (they used the '@' sign, taking UNIX fanaticism a step too far), which requires setting up an EXINIT environment variable to correct this. Another disadvantage is that you have to remember to take it with you when you work on another system; you'll be lost without it.

The *sort* utility appears to be a full-featured UNIX sort/merge. Not only does it let you get around the size restriction of the DOS sort (which apparently used only one 64K segment for its data, and choked on large files), but it also allows sorts on multiple fields, numeric sorts, and all that other good stuff.

The *pg* utility is a big improvement over the DOS more command, allowing multiple file name arguments, and wildcards. The *grep* and *diff* utilities are also two welcome additions to the DOS world.

For dealing with DOS directories, you have the *find* command, to help you locate files. The *mv* command lets you move files from one directory to another, without copying and deleting. It also lets you rename directories, on DOS 3.0 or later. The *rm* command lets you remove several files at once, or even recursively remove sub-directories.

And the list goes on...

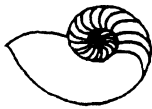
With this toolkit, you can install as little or as much of it as you want. If you are limited in disk space, and already familiar with the DOS command language, you can simply install the utilities you find most useful, and run them from COMMAND.COM.

If you want to go a little further, you can set up the *Korn Shell* as your boot shell. This DOS implementation of the UNIX shell features a command history, typed variables, and built-in evaluation of arithmetic expressions - all missing even from the Bourne shell. It also gets you around the ridiculous 126 character limit for DOS command lines, when running other MKS programs from the shell.

Real UNIX fanatics may want to install *letclinit* as a replacement for the initial COMMAND.COM. This program will require users to log-in to the PC, and provide a password, before running the shell of their choice, and gaining access to their home directory. This is not really multi-user capability, due to the lack of multi-tasking, but it can still be useful in situations where a group of users share a PC.

The toolkit does contain a few bugs and annoying quirks. The VI editor hung on a few occasions, on my machine, when editing very large files. I got into the habit of writing out my files often. Also, some operations in VI have a slightly different behaviour than the UNIX VI. The *date* command also does not set the date properly on my machine - it triggers a divide by zero error instead. Some of the other utilities also have subtle differences in their behaviour, from their UNIX counterparts.

All in all, the MKS toolkit is well worth the price. It is an excellent addition to any UNIX fan's PC systems, and is a must for serious C programmers on DOS machines.



Minutes From the Business Meeting September 13, 1988

1. Survey Results

At the present time there are 19 respondents with more surveys still arriving. Please see the attachment at the end of the minutes to see detailed results. A few notable items are mentioned below:

- a) There is an abundance of UNIX hardware in Winnipeg.
- b) There are an abundance of commercial software packages on the UNIX hardware. The major types of applications are word processing, accounting, and there is ongoing program development.
- c) The topics listed for meetings were very popular, with DOS/UNIX interfacing being the most predominant. The group has noted the popular topics and will try to accomodate member wishes.
- d) Most respondents would like to be affiliated with a national/international user group. NOTE: The user group to become affiliated with would be /usr/group (the American UNIX group located in Santa Clara, California). Members receive a product and software directory once a year. This details all hardware vendors and software applications in the UNIX environment. The members would also receive CommUNIXations, a quarterly magazine and other tidbits. The cost is \$100.00 per person per year. If we are to become affiliated at last discussion we would require 10 paid members. The Winnipeg group would receive a portion of the membership fee. This will be discussed at future meetings. British Columbia has a large /usr/group with whom we keep in contact.
- e) The interest in an electronic bulletin board is high with most respondents wanting dial-in access only. NOTE: At one point we were discussing a hook-up to the University of Manitoba's Amdahl. This would allow the user to read messages. This will be discussed at future meetings.

2. Membership Dues:

Previously, the group had no fees since there was no cost to the group. Members were contacted by phone and so expenses were not incurred. Provisions have been put in place to have regular monthly mailings (agenda, minutes and newsletters). A membership fee would help cover these costs as well as photocopying, envelopes, etc.

MOVED: (Gilbert Detillieux) Begin charging dues of \$20.00/year effective October meeting.

SECONDED: (Peter Somers)

DISCUSSION: (Keith Green) Will it be enough to cover postage? Yes, for twelve mailings a year. A bank account should be set up.

AMMENDMENT: On the meeting of the 2nd week of October, a membership fee of \$20.00 will be charged. Members joining later will pay a pro-rated amount. Membership fees will not be refundable.

In Favour: 9

Opposed: 0

Carried

3. Newsletters:

Will include the agenda, minutes, news items, questions from members and other pertinent information.

MOVED: (Gilbert Detillieux) Membership dues will be used for producing a newsletter, photo-copying, postage, envelopes, mailing labels, and other miscellaneous costs. It will be a monthly newsletter sent out preceding each meeting.

SECONDED: (Peter Somers)

No Discussion

In Favour: 9 Opposed: 0 Carried

MOVED: (Gilbert Detillieux) Newsletters will be received by all paid members. For the next 4 months they will be sent to everyone on the mailing list regardless of membership status. There will be a notice stating this in the newsletter.

SECONDED: (Peter Somers)

In Favour: 9 Opposed: 0 Carried

MOVED: (Gilbert Detillieux) Posting of bulletins and notices about the group at University of Manitoba and any other appropriate places will be covered by membership fees.

SECONDED: (Darren Besler)

In Favour: 9 Opposed: 0 Carried

4. Meeting Schedule

It was discussed that meetings will be held every second Tuesday of every month except for July and August. The meetings will alternate in style of presentation (ie. discussion, workshop, etc).

MOVED: (Peter Somers) Monthly meetings will be held on every second Tuesday of the month with the exception of July and August.

SECONDED: (Gilles Detillieux)

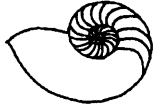
In Favour: 9 Opposed: 0 Carried

5. Future Meetings

1. There will not be a presentation every month. There may also be workshops or visits to other sites, etc.
2. The meetings will always begin with a round table discussion.
3. In November there will be a workshop on System Administration accounting functions.

6. Positions

Treasurer: Gilles Detillieux
Membership Secretary : Vacant
President (Acting): Gilbert Detillieux
Vice President: Vacant
Secretary: Susan Zuk
Newsletter Editor: Darren Besler



Technical UNIX® User Group

Agenda
for
Tuesday, October 11, 1988
7:30pm
Room 431, Basic Medical Sciences Building
Entrance at Medical College
770 Bannatyne Avenue

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|------------------------|---|
| 1. Round Table | 7:30 |
| 2. Business Meeting | 8:00 |
| a) Membership Dues | <i>\$20/yr renew in Oct. 89; receipts mailed w/ next newsletter</i> |
| b) Newsletters | <i>— submissions - reviews, tips, news, etc.</i> |
| c) Elections | |
| 3. Break | 8:30 |
| 4. Presented Topic | 8:40 |
| Shell Programming Tips | |
| 5. Adjourn | 9:30 |