

Association for Free Software Conference

2003-2004
The year in review

Free software in a hostile world

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Major events of 2003-2004

- GNU Project 20th Anniversary
- Infrastructure attacks
- Commercial and legal threats

GNU Project - 20 years

- 27 September 1983
Initial announcement of GNU project
- 5 January 1984
RMS officially resigns from MIT to start coding
- 5 January 2004
RMS reviews project after 20 years

"The Free Software Community after 20 years: with great but incomplete success, what now?"

Great but incomplete success --- what now?

- Complete Free Unix systems
 - ▷ GNU Emacs + GNU Compiler Collection +
 - ▷ GNU C Library + GNU Debugger + GNU Bash +
 - ▷ GNU File, Shell, Text utils + ...

- 10's of millions of users

- Copyleft
 - most important result of GNU Project

- RMS
 - Freedom or popularity?
 - Proprietary software & demotivation

- Success creates problems

Security

- Attacks on major free software servers
 - 2003-08 GNU - ftp.gnu.org
 - 2003-11 GNU - savannah.gnu.org
 - 2003-11 Debian - ftp.debian.org
 - 2003-11 Linux Kernel CVS repository
 - 2003-12 Gentoo rsync repository
 - 2004-03 GNOME WWW server

- Remote/local exploit (buffer overflow)
+ privilege escalation

- Perception shift - from trusted to untrusted

Technical Defences

- A secure infrastructure
 - ▷ for decentralised development
 - ▷ for software distribution

- CVS GPG signing -- FSF
- GPG smartcards (g10code) -- keystroke logging

- Improving Unix security
 - Secure network applications
 - SELinux RBAC
 - HURD

Commercial Threats

- SCO
first of many?
- Increasing GPL violations in embedded systems
Linksys/Cisco, Belken, Buffalo, Allnet, OpenTV
- Responses
Formal copyright assignment
FSF Compliance lab

Legal Threats

- Software Patents
Powerful forces at work \$\$\$\$
- Parliament vs Council
latest directive the worst yet
- Responses
FFII (FFII-UK)
PUBPAT (USA)
- Euro Elections
10 June
Analysis available from FFII