FOREWORD

JESA: A Milestone on an Interesting Journey

I remember seeing an actual milestone for the first time as a child, when walking along an old roman road in Germany. I didn’t pay much attention to it. In fact, the whole village was called “Milestone,” or Merkstein, so the fact that this was the stone that marked a certain distance to some city (not Rome) didn’t convey the same meaning as it would to a traveler in olden times.

Now I look upon a new milestone which means a lot more, and that has just been placed. USENIX has for over a decade supported those who teach system administration. During the annual USENIX LISA conferences, we were granted a small workshop that combined teachers and practitioners: the system administration education workshop. Personally, my first workshop was in December of 2003. This was before the digital explosion that was to come with the likes of Google and Facebook. Virtualization was just about to burst on the scene, and cloud computing would follow half a decade later. In IT timekeeping, this was an age ago. Over the years, the group continued to show up and we heard of educational programs appearing. As IT exploded, we tried to keep up with updating our courses and programs, incorporating new languages, technologies and practices. We watched in fascination as the LISA community discussed the newfound place, role, and identity of their profession in the light of the IT revolution.

In 2012, I was approached to organize the first USENIX Summit for Educators in System Administration (SESA). This was a major step for our group. USENIX recognized the importance for the profession to have good and coordinated educational programs around the world and was prepared to back our group further. The first summit was in 2013, and next in 2014. These summits had a great effect on expanding the community and the recognition we got from the industry. Now, we witness our next and latest milestone: our first own-written body of knowledge.

It is our hope that through annual SESA events and JESA releases, the community, education, and identity of the system administration profession will continue to grow. SESA and JESA should not be the educators’ voice, where educators write about education to other educators. It should continue to be the forum that is owned by the community for the exchange of ideas and experience. Our community is strong because it contains members of the industry as well as academia. We will continue to seek contributions about courses, programs, and pedagogical work as well as new trends and practices that happen locally and how the identity of the profession changes.

This first issue contains papers from educators and also a column from a member of the industry by the venerable textbook author, speaker, and former LISA Chair Tom Limoncelli. We consider this industry relationship to be extremely important as they are the profession we try so hard to prepare our students for. They also represent how it all started, with us under the wings of the premier conference of system administration.

We hope you will enjoy the first issue of JESA.

Kyrre Begnum, JESA Co-Editor-in-Chief