

Workshops and Publications

PETER H. SALUS



Peter H. Salus is the author of *A Quarter Century of UNIX* (1994), *Casting the Net* (1995), and *The Daemon, the Gnu and the Penguin* (2008). peter@pedant.com

Although I mentioned the first graphics workshop a few months ago, after 1985 both the number of workshops and the number of publications increased dramatically over the next decade. And not all of the publications were on paper. Here's the tale.

UNIX NEWS may have been the first UNIX publication outside of AT&T, but only by a bit. On April 30, 1976, it was announced that Lew Law of the Harvard Science Center would “undertake the task of duplicating and distributing the manuals for UNIX.” That was “Sixth edition,” or v6. It was the beginning of external publication.

The same issue of *UNIX NEWS* carried an article by Bill Mayhew (of the Children’s Museum in Boston) on “How to fix your PDP-11/40’s static electricity problems for 49 cents (plus tax).” And the next issue (May-June 1976) announced “the first mailing from the software exchange.” Software exchange?

Lew Law supplied software from Harvard, and Mike O’Brien did the duplication and mailing of tapes. Freely redistributed software in 1976! And there was a second distribution in November 1976, containing software from the RAND Corporation, the Naval Postgraduate School, UCSD, Yale, and UIUC. There was a third distribution in May 1977, and contributed software was assembled and distributed on tape until 1989.

Conferences and Workshops

For the decade following the June 1975 meeting in New York, there were two USENIX conferences each year, one in the east (New York, Cambridge, Chicago, Urbana, Newark (DE), Toronto, Austin) and one in the west (Monterey, Berkeley, Menlo Park, Santa Monica, Boulder, San Francisco). Some years there were three.

The first separately published *Proceedings* was for Toronto (July 13–15, 1983), and the second was for Salt Lake City (June 13–15, 1984). There were also proceedings for the “Unicom” conferences—USENIX and /usr/group co-located—San Diego, January 1983, and Washington, DC, January 1984. Proceedings appeared for nearly 20 years. I miss them, although I realize that bits have superseded paper.

In 1984 the (newly elected) USENIX Board announced three “limited enrollment” workshops: Distributed Systems, Communications and Networking, and Graphics. For organizational reasons, the Communications and Networking Workshop was cancelled. Distributed Systems was held in what proved to be an unsatisfactory venue in Newport, RI, although nearly all of the 100 attendees regarded it as “clearly worthwhile” and “should be repeated.” The “UNIX and Computer Graphics Workshop,” held in Monterey, CA, was a great success.

The report on “Distributed UNIX” by Veigh S. Meer (a transparent pseudonym) appeared in *login*: 9.5 (November 1984), pp. 5–9.

A Digression on *login*: and on Manuals

The May–June 1977 issue of *UNIX NEWS* was its last. As of July 1977, the publication was *login*. Mel Ferentz had been phoned by an AT&T lawyer and told that the group (it still had no name) could not use “UNIX” without permission from Western Electric. At a meeting

at Columbia's College of Physicians and Surgeons (May 24–27, 1978) a committee was set up to propose bylaws for an organization. Margaret Law, then at Harvard and Radcliffe, coined the name USENIX.

UNIX NEWS was succeeded by *;login:*. As Dennis Ritchie explained, “The `;` was utilitarian. During most of the early '70s the most popular terminal was the Teletype model 37. The sequence `<esc>;` put it in full-duplex mode so the terminal didn't print characters locally, but let the system echo them. So this sequence was put into the greeting message.”

Through the 1970s, AT&T UNIX came with next to no documentation; hence Lew Law's offer of 1976. By the time Berkeley UNIX (BSD) was developed, diverging from AT&T UNIX, manuals were in real demand. The Computer Systems Research Group (CSRG) had no way of coming to grips with the demand, so the USENIX office, now in El Cerrito, just north of Berkeley, took on the printing and distribution. Thus, in April 1984, *;login:* featured an announcement of the availability of the 4.2BSD manuals in five volumes. They sold out quickly. In February 1985, a new printing was announced. A third and a fourth printing ensued in late 1985 and early 1986. In late 1986, 4.3BSD followed with an index volume (thanks to Mark Seiden) added. (The 4.4BSD set was published by O'Reilly.)

As these were CSRG documents, printed and sold by USENIX, I've never been certain whether to consider them USENIX publications.

Back to Workshops

Six papers from the 1984 Graphics Workshop appeared in *;login:* 10.4, October–November 1985 (pp. 22–83), along with a CFP for the Second Workshop, to be held in December in Monterey. Embarrassingly, there were only four issues of *;login:* in 1985. One of the consequences of this was the replacement of the Executive Director (who served for less than a year) by the present writer.

One of the things the Board asked of me in the spring of 1986 was an increase in the number of workshops and of publications. Among the items on my desk was a manila envelope containing the papers from the 1985 Graphics Workshop.

I consulted with Tom Strong and he had sheets with headers and footers printed. I hired Steven Katz to paste up the articles, and we sent the bundle off to be printed: the Association's first workshop proceedings appeared in late summer 1986.

With that, and the third Graphics Workshop under way, Rob Kolstad suggested a Large Installation Systems Administrators' Workshop, and Kirk McKusick and John S. Quarterman suggested a POSIX Workshop as well as one on C++ and a fourth Graphics Workshop for 1987.

Just over 50 people attended the first LISA in Philadelphia (April 9–10); about 30 were admitted to the POSIX event in Berkeley (October 22–23), where several thousand comments and corrections were appended to the P1003.1 draft. The Fourth Graphics Workshop was held in Cambridge, MA, October 8–9, and C++ was held in Santa Fe, November 9–10, rounding off a busy 1987.

Over the past decades, there have been a number of major changes where “gatherings” are concerned: first, the USENIX Association dropped down to a single annual meeting; parallel to that, the number of small- or medium-sized workshops has blossomed. I personally think this is less than wonderful. At a large semiannual meeting in the late 1980s or the 1990s, one might wander into a session on a new OS or a bizarre language or on networking hundreds of small CPUs. You might not have had colorful acronyms, like SOUPS or WOOT or CSET or JETS or HOTSEC, but you had a very large number of interesting people in one place.

And you never knew whom you might meet in a corridor or at the Scotch BoF.

The last big change was moving from print on paper to bits.

R.I.P. COMPUTING SYSTEMS

One of the things the USENIX Board wanted in 1986–87 was a journal that concerned software more than hardware. Think of *CACM* and that “M” for Machinery. So I spoke to folks at several academic publishers and came in with a proposal for a quarterly journal. It was announced in *;login:* 12.6 (November–December 1987). It first appeared (Mike O'Dell, Editor in Chief) the next year, published by University of California Press.

I was Managing Editor for its whole nine-year lifespan. Mike was superseded by Dave Presotto after a brilliant seven years. MIT Press took over as publisher. *Computing Systems*: I could wax nostalgic and itemize authors and articles, but I'll refrain from doing so.

However, let me note that in 1988, *CS* published an article by Mike Lesk, “Can UNIX Survive Secret Source Code?” In 1990 an entire issue (accompanied by a CD) was devoted to music. In 1992 there was an entire issue on Internet search mechanisms. And in 1996, a final issue on distributed objects.

I wish it were still being published.

Everything changes: the things we like and those we don't.