Today's leftovers

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- **Layout the DVA | BSD Now 342** [2]
  
  OpenBSD Full disk encryption with coreboot and tianocore, FreeBSD 12.0 EOL, ZFS DVA layout, OpenBSD's Go situation, AD updates requires changes in TrueNAS and FreeNAS, full name of FreeBSD's root account, and more.

- **Solus + Visual Studio Code | Choose Linux 31** [3]
  
  We try out Solus and are all impressed by this independent distro. Then Ell and Drew sing the praises of Visual Studio Code - a text editor that's packed full of features.

- **Whonix VirtualBox 15.0.0.9.4 - Point Release!** [4]
  
  Whonix is being used by Edward Snowden, journalists such as Micah Lee, used by the Freedom of the Press Foundation and Qubes OS. It has a 7 years history of keeping its users safe from real world attacks. [1]

  The split architecture of Whonix relies on leveraging virtualization technology as a sandbox for vulnerable user applications on endpoints. This is a widely known weakness exploited by entities that want to circumvent cryptography and system integrity. Our Linux distribution come with a wide selection of data protection tools and hardened applications for document/image publishing and communications. We are the first to deploy tirdad, which addresses the long known problem of CPU activity affecting TCP traffic properties in visible
ways on the network and vanguards, an enhancement for Tor produced by the developers of
Tor, which protects against guard discovery and related traffic analysis attacks. Live Mode
was recently added. We deliver the first ever solutions for user behavior masking privacy
protections such as Kloak. Kloak prevents websites from recognizing who the typist is by
altering keystroke timing signatures that are unique to everyone.

openSUSE’s board turmoil [5]

Like many larger free-software projects, openSUSE has an elected board that is charged with
handling various non-technical tasks: organizing events, dealing with conduct issues,
managing the project's money, etc. Sitting on such a board is usually a relatively low-profile
activity; development communities tend to pay more attention to technical contributions than
other types of service. Every now and then, though, board-related issues burst into
prominence; that is the case now in the openSUSE project, which will be holding a special
election after the abrupt resignation of one-third of its board.

The openSUSE project has, in fact, just held a board election that closed on January 31. There
were four candidates for the two available seats; in the end, Simon Lees was returned to the
board for another term and Sarah Julia Kriesch won the other seat. The discussion over the
course of the election was perhaps a bit more contentious than usual, with Kriesch in particular
stirring things up by claiming to be the driving force behind the in-progress openSUSE
foundation effort and seemingly overlooking the existence of openSUSE contributors in China
(something she later apologized for). That all settled down, though, and it appeared that the
new board was set to get to work after the announcement of the results on February 1.

Whiskey Lake thin Mini-ITX board has PCIe golden finger [6]

Avalue’s Linux-ready ?EMX-WHL-GP? is a thin Mini-ITX board with 8th Gen Whiskey
Lake CPUs, triple displays, 3x GbE, SATA with power, 2x M.2, PCIe, and optional -20 to
60°C support.

Avalue announced an industrial thin Mini-ITX board that runs Linux or Win 10 on Intel’s 8th
Gen Whiskey Lake U-series processors. The EMX-WHL-GP has much in common with its
6th or 7th Gen EMX-KBLU2P thin Mini-ITX model, but adds a third GbE port and a PCIe
golden finger interface among other enhancements.

Building a split mechanical keyboard with a Raspberry Pi Zero controller [7]

Looking to build their own ergonomic mechanical split keyboard, Gosse Adema turned to the
The reckless, infinite scope of web browsers [8]

Since the first browser war between Netscape and Internet Explorer, web browsers have been using features as their primary means of competing with each other. This strategy of unlimited scope and perpetual feature creep is reckless, and has been allowed to go on for far too long.

I used wget to download all 1,217 of the W3C specifications which have been published at the time of writing1, of which web browsers need to implement a substantial subset in order to provide a modern web experience. I ran a word count on all of these specifications. How complex would you guess the web is?

The total word count of the W3C specification catalogue is 114 million words at the time of writing. If you added the combined word counts of the C11, C++17, UEFI, USB 3.2, and POSIX specifications, all 8,754 published RFCs, and the combined word counts of everything on Wikipedia’s list of longest novels, you would be 12 million words short of the W3C specifications.2

I conclude that it is impossible to build a new web browser. The complexity of the web is obscene. The creation of a new web browser would be comparable in effort to the Apollo program or the Manhattan project.

[...]

The major projects are open source, and usually when an open-source project misbehaves, we’re able to to fork them to offer an alternative. But even this is an impossible task where web browsers are concerned. The number of W3C specifications grows at an average rate of 200 new specs per year, or about 4 million words, or about one POSIX every 4 to 6 months. How can a new team possibly keep up with this on top of implementing the outrageous scope web browsers already have now?

The browser wars have been allowed to continue for far too long. They should have long ago focused on competing in terms of performance and stability, not in adding new web ?features?. This is absolutely ridiculous, and it has to stop.

Firefox 76 Enabling VA-API Wayland Acceleration For All Video Codecs[9]

With the upcoming Firefox 75 there is VA-API GPU-based video acceleration working on Wayland. While this built off FFmpeg, the initial code was limited to supporting H.264 while for Firefox 76 that is being extended.

There has been the bug report to track VP9 decode support using VA-API. That was done by Red Hat’s Martin Stránský who has been leading this Wayland and VA-API work.

Raspberry Pi Zero W for help.
As of Wednesday, support was merged so VA-API on Wayland uses all video formats available. Up until now (and for Firefox 75) there was code limiting the support to the H.264 codec while for Firefox 76 those limitations are set to be cleared.

● **The Unicode Standard Now Includes CC License Symbols** [10]

The latest Unicode Standard adds 5,930 characters, including 4 new scripts, 55 new emoji characters, and the following CC license symbols:

● **African WhatsApp Modders are the Masters of Worldwide Adversarial Interoperability** [11]

Since the earliest days of consumer computing, computer users have asserted their right to have a say in how their tools worked: whether it was Gopher delivering easy new ways to access services that had originally been designed for power users who could memorize obscure addresses and arcane commands; or toolkits like Hypercard and Visual Basic, which let everyday people automate their work; or Scratch, which lets kids design games and apps that come from their imaginations, rather than an app store.

This ability to adapt your tools is especially urgent when those tools are designed by people who live very different lives from your own. The disability rights movement's rallying cry of "Nothing about us without us," crystallizes generations of discontent with the high-handed attitude of distant ?experts? who built systems and tools without truly working together with those who use and are affected by them. Technologists are especially notorious for this high-handedness: ?like the Honeywell 316, a $10,600 "kitchen computer" for storing recipes that was offered for sale in the 1969 Nieman Marcus catalog. It was designed for women by men, but no women wanted or needed a kitchen computer, and they didn't sell a single one. Despite this ghastly failure, early computer vendors continued to market their wares to women by advertising the ability to store and retrieve recipes.

● **Uber open-sources Piranha, a tool that automatically deletes stale code** [12]

Uber today made available in open source Piranha, a tool that automatically deletes stale and unused code from app codebases. The company says it eliminates the need for engineers to engage in the task of code removal themselves, which often prevents them from working on newer features.

● **Amazon is looking to bring Target and Walmart into an open source technology group** [13]
The e-tailer, which formed an open source organization called Dent last year, is now looking to bring Target and Walmart into the fold, per The Wall Street Journal.

But Target and Walmart reportedly don’t plan to participate at this point. Dent has access to some of the technologies that enable Amazon to operate its Go stores, which feature autonomous checkout, and already works with technology solutions firm Marvell Technology Group and networking software provider Cumulus Networks. The open source nature of Dent means that firms that download Amazon’s software can use it as they like without collaborating directly with Amazon.