This week happened to see new releases of two prominent open-source AV1 video encoders.

Meanwhile ending out the week is SVT-AV1 0.8.7. SVT-AV1 is the high performance AV1 encoder originally developed by Intel but since then the development has shifted to the Alliance for Open Media members. While it's another point release in the v0.8 series, it is coming with many improvements. SVT-AV1 0.8.7 has more AVX2 and AVX-512 optimizations, various feature optimizations, tuning of the presets, HDR support, memory optimizations, and a variety of other enhancements.

A year ago, video calling tools became part of everyday life for many people. Few were spared having meetings with family, friends and co-workers, several in a single day. The advance of the pandemic and the containment measures have relaxed that situation, but they are still very much needed.

If we ask, everyone has their favorite tool, either because they already have the application installed, it is the one they use at work, because it allows them to record meetings, or because it offers more games and funds to have a good time. Google Meet, Microsoft Team, Skype or Zoom? they are many and very similar, but Jitsi Meet has gone more unnoticed, despite having been available for years and offer a lot for free.
Typewriter turned into mechanical keyboard for gaming | Arduino Blog

Although mechanical keyboards are more popular than ever in gaming communities, getting that perfect “click” when you press down on the key is still being chased. That’s why maker Jason Ron wanted to convert an old typewriter into the perfect gaming controller. It works by using some tape wrapped around several of the typebars that either reflects more light when held up or none when it’s lowered. A pair of IR emitters and receivers were used to detect these changes in light levels, where their values were then read by an Arduino Leonardo.

The code Ron wrote takes advantage of the Leonardo’s native USB peripheral, letting it act as a keyboard for a host device. When the light level falls between certain predetermined values a key is pressed virtually and then sent to the computer, although this functionality can be toggled on or off to prevent unwanted keypresses.

Utkarsh Gupta: FOSS Activities in April 2021

Here’s my (nineteenth) monthly update about the activities I’ve done in the F/L/OSS world.

Thorsten Alteholz: My Debian Activities in April 2021

FTP master

This month I accepted 103 and rejected 10 packages, which is again an increase compared to last month. The overall number of packages that got accepted was only 107.

Debian LTS

This was my eighty-second month that I did some work for the Debian LTS initiative, started by Raphael Hertzog at Freexian.

Xpand your horizons: MariaDB launches distributed query engine into proprietary DBaaS

MariaDB has added proprietary bells and whistles, in the form of distributed SQL, for its DBaaS and supposedly developer-friendly front end.

The biz supporting the open-source MySQL-derived database introduced its DBaaS SkySQL last year and has now announced the general availability of its distributed SQL as one of the engines in MariaDB’s SkySQL system, said CMO Franz Aman.

"What’s cool about distributed SQL is that you get all the scale of NoSQL, but you get it with
all the benefits of relational," he said. "So, you have strong consistency, you have full SQL vocabulary, but at a scale that is ready for the internet for internet-scale."

Dubbed Xpand, the DBaaS engine is designed to tolerate infrastructure failures and maintain availability by storing multiple copies of data on different database nodes. MariaDB is adding zone awareness to ensure that redundant data is kept in all the right places and survives if a zone goes down entirely.

**m4-1.4.18b released [beta] [8]**

Hello M4 users,
GNU M4 1.4.18b has been released. This release is a minor update, and is marked beta in order to give translators the time to upload translations before the stable 1.4.19 is released later this month. The bulk of the changes have been to portability fixes inherited from gnulib, since it has been more than four years since the last release. GNU 'm4' is an implementation of the traditional Unix macro processor. It is mostly SVR4 compatible, although it has some extensions (for example, handling more than 9 positional parameters to macros). 'm4' also has built-in functions for including files, running shell commands, doing arithmetic, etc. Autoconf needs GNU 'm4' for generating 'configure' scripts, but not for running them.

**GitLab's 10-day certification freebie offer lasted only two because, surprise surprise, people really like freebies [9]**

GitLab says a surge in demand and a technical shortcoming resulted in the DevOps outfit yanking a free certification offer barely two days after turning on the tap.

In a postmortem write-up this week, GitLab manager Christine Yoshida said the infrastructure of its glossy "learning experience ... eventually hit a system limit" as excited users piled on, and the promotion period was ended early.

A discount code was made available in April to people who wanted to get GitLab-certified. The 100 per cent discount was planned to last for ten days, and the GitLab gang figured 4,000 users would sign up.

David Sakamoto, veep of customer success, told The Register that, as it turned out, "in just two days, there were over 59,000 enrollments with over 7,000 people using the hands-on training lab infrastructure."
Riffing on the topic of what unusual jobs people had before tech, a few of our responses from the community were more focused on jobs that led to a job in tech.

What I Learned by Relearning HTML

Accessibility was also something I had never considered in depth. I knew that images should have alt descriptions, and that was about it. One of the course’s key points is that using the appropriate semantic elements is important to making a site more accessible.

For example, people who use screen readers can jump around using heading elements (\texttt{<h1> through \texttt{<h6>}), so it’s important to use them and make sure they’re in the correct order. It’s wrong to use them only to make text bigger because their real purpose is to define the structure of the content. They’re like a table of contents.

Instead of headings, we could use \texttt{<p>} elements and alter their font sizes with CSS to create a website that looks identical, but it’d be less semantic and less accessible. There is more to web development than making websites look the way we want. It’s important to make the content mean what we want as well.

Accessibility isn’t just about improving how websites work with screen readers. We should think about font size, font style, and color contrast for people who have visual impairments or color blindness. We should consider that people who have hearing loss may have a harder time recognizing that audio or video is playing. We should make tab navigation work well for people who rely primarily on the keyboard, perhaps because they have a difficult time using a mouse. When we add animations, we should take care to avoid ones that make it more difficult for someone to actually use the website, such as animations that change the page layout in the middle of interactions. And we should consider when a page is overloaded with too much information or too many elements, making it hard for people to understand things or how to actually use the website.

It’s easy to forget about accessibility, but we should strive to make websites work well for as many people as possible. Accessibility also goes hand in hand with usability and search engine optimization. The course points out that improving one frequently means improving all the others.