The first concerted effort to support accessibility under Linux was undertaken by Sun Microsystems when they decided to use GNOME for Solaris. Sun put together a team focused on building the pieces to make GNOME 2 fully accessible and worked with hardware makers to make sure things like Braille devices worked well. I even heard claims that GNOME and Linux had the best accessibility of any operating system for a while due to this effort. As Sun started struggling and got acquired by Oracle this accessibility effort eventually trailed off with the community trying to pick up the slack afterwards. Especially engineers from Igalia were quite active for a while trying to keep the accessibility support working well.

But over the years we definitely lost a bit of focus on this and we know that various parts of GNOME 3 for instance aren’t great in terms of accessibility. So at Red Hat we have had a lot of focus over the last few years trying to ensure we are mindful about diversity and inclusion when hiring, trying to ensure that we don’t accidentally pre-select against underrepresented groups based on for instance gender or ethnicity. But one area we realized we hadn’t given so much focus recently was around technologies that allowed people with various disabilities to make use of our software. Thus I am very happy to announce that Red Hat has just hired Lukas Tyrychtr, who is a blind software engineer, to lead our effort in making sure Red Hat Enterprise Linux and Fedora Workstation has excellent accessibility support!
Links: