

13 of free software's Unsung Heroes

Without the tireless efforts of dedicated folk, free software wouldn't be what it is today. **Jonathan Roberts** introduces us to some of its lesser-known stars.

01 Dimitris Glezos Free software is a truly international affair with large communities of users on almost every continent. All of this vital work wouldn't be possible without the teams of extremely skilled, patient and dedicated volunteer translators, but Dimitris Glezos's project, *Transifex*, has helped to make translations easier than ever.

Transifex interfaces with upstream source code repositories, extracts all their translatable 'strings', and puts them into an easy-to-use web interface from which anybody can translate them. This has allowed many smaller projects to engage with translators and opened up this form of contribution to many non-technical users.

02 Dan Williams Dan Williams has worked for Red Hat as the primary developer of *Network Manager* – the network connection tool – for many years now. Not only has the software he's developed delivered a vastly improved

experience for desktop and laptop users, he's also been an excellent maintainer, responding to the shifting needs of users and overseeing the emergence of an active community of contributors. Since *Network Manager* is so rarely thought about these days, just working as it does, we think it's fair to say that Dan Williams is a true unsung hero of free software.

“It required hours of hard work and a very thick skin...”

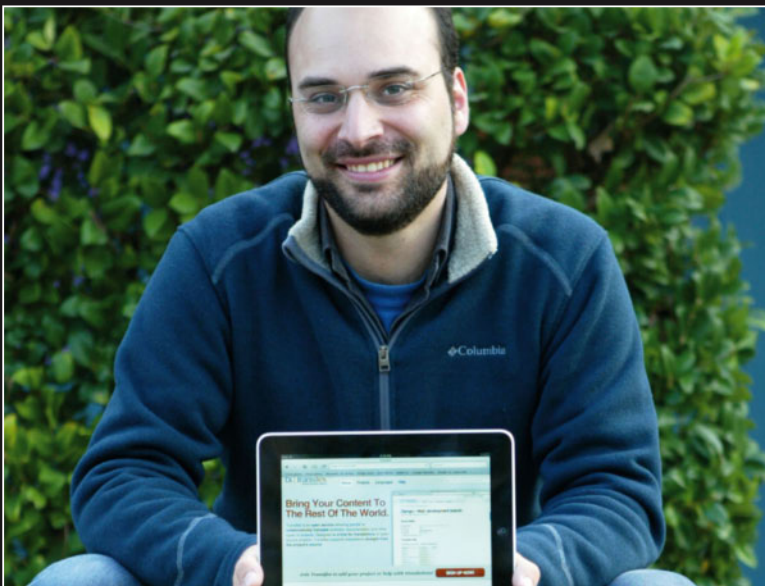
03 William Jon McCann On the GNOME wiki, Jon McCann is described as the 'user experience shepherd for GNOME Shell'. In this role, he's helped to make a 'design first'

approach to software development a central part of the GNOME Project. This approach to development is helping to bring about a new breed of free software that's better integrated, easier to use and more beautiful than anything we've had before. Implementing it, however, has required hour upon hour of hard work and a very thick skin. And for that he deserves our thanks.

04 Jonathan Corbet Here at **LXF** towers, we believe that we deliver the best Linux magazine available, but that's not to say there aren't other great sources for Linux news. One of the best is Linux Weekly News which was started, and continues to be edited, by Jonathan Corbet. **LWN.net** provides a vital source of news for developers and users alike, and its comments are nearly always detailed and passionate. It's a fantastic resource and Jonathan has done an amazing job maintaining it.

05 Jarkko Oikarinen Jarkko Oikarinen's contribution to the free software ecosystem was made quite some time ago but he continues to play a major role in almost all projects. What was it he did? In 1988, he created Internet Relay Chat. Many of us use it on an almost daily basis, while others pop-in quickly when we have a problem. Regardless of how we use it, it's undeniable that it's facilitated the distributed development model that's made free software so successful; without Jarkko's contribution, things would have been very different.

› Dimitri Glezos's *Transifex* project has helped free software break down language barriers.



06 Pamela Jones

Maybe not unsung, but Pamela's work documenting the SCO lawsuits on Groklaw was incredible and ought never to be forgotten. Not only did she provide an insight into the confusing world of the courtroom for all of us who were worried about how this would play out, she did it with so much passion and enthusiasm (four years with only two days off at one point) that she proved to be a real inspiration as well.

07 Greg Kroah-Hartman

While Linus Torvalds is the Godfather of Linux, there are many developers who contribute code and a number who have large responsibilities within the project. Greg Kroah-Hartman is one of these. Along with Chris Wright, he helps maintain the stable branch of the kernel, as well as many key subsystems, including USB and sysfs. Greg is also the founder of the Linux Driver Project, facilitating the creation of free drivers for companies, and is an outspoken critic of firms that fail to develop the open source way.

08 Deb Richardson

LinuxChix was founded way back in 1999 by Deb Richardson with the goal of supporting women in Linux by creating an alternative to the 'locker room atmosphere' found in some online forums. Given the uneven ratio of male to female contributors in open source, this is vital. Its two main rules, be polite and be helpful, have made it a welcoming place and have resulted in a great range of mailing lists where anybody can find friendly support, courses on open source development and software, and much more.

09 Chris DiBona

Open source software is the ultimate resource for computer science students. Not only does it make massive amounts of high quality code available for anybody to read, it also lets anybody get involved. It can be an intimidating world to enter, however, since many students have little experience on real world projects. Thankfully, Chris DiBona oversees Google's Summer of Code every year which pairs up students with projects and mentors. This introduces students to open source, and lets open source benefit from a lot of extra manpower – win win!

10 Raphael Bauduin

No matter how much we can get done with IRC, mailing lists and distributed version control systems, it's always good to get together in person. There's a lot of great people to meet, lots of work to be done and plenty of beer to drink. Raphael Bauduin, then, did a great service to open source software by founding the Free and Open Source Software Developers' European Meeting (aka FOSDEM). It's free to attend, there's thousands of people, great speakers and even better beer. A really fantastic event, so thank you Raphael.

11 Simon Phipps

Java is one of the most popular programming languages available, but for a long time it was proprietary which caused all kinds of problems for free software



› Simon Phipps made a huge contribution to free software when he oversaw the release of Java under GPL.

developers – Richard Stallman even wrote a piece about the problems called 'The Java Trap'. When Simon Phipps became Sun's chief open source officer, however, all this changed as he oversaw the release of Java under GPL. It resulted in the creation of the IcedTea package and Stallman even suggested this was the largest contribution of any company to free software.

12 Chris Gray

Chris Gray founded the OpenDisc project in 2007 as a successor to the very popular OpenCD. For those that don't know, the OpenDisc is a collection of the best free and open source applications for Microsoft Windows. You pop the disc in your drive, and a menu lets you read about the programs and install them. It's the ideal way to introduce people to free software, and there's a spin-off that specifically targets the educational sector. A great way to spread the word.

13 Walter Bender

One of the best features of the OLPC (One Laptop Per Child) was always the 'show source' button. This meant that as children got older, they could carry on learning with their machine by exploring the software, making changes and understanding how it works – a valuable skill in the modern world. When OLPC began working with Microsoft, however, this and the entire 'constructionist education' agenda that had sounded so promising was threatened. Fortunately, Bender stepped up and created a company to ensure that Sugar, the original interface, would go on being developed and improved. **LXF**