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Unix-on-Intel players work on a common binary format

- *To:* debian-announce@lists.debian.org
 - *Subject:* Unix-on-Intel players work on a common binary format
 - *From:* bruce@debian.org (Bruce Perens)
 - *Date:* Fri, 10 Oct 97 10:07 PDT
 - *Approved:* bruce@pixar.com
 - *Reply-To:* Bruce Perens <bruce@debian.org>
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Dear Debian users and developers,

Here's an announcement from the 86open project, a project to make binary compatibility across all Unix variants on Intel architectures. In short, it's an effort to support ELF LIBC6 executables on all of the platforms, so that vendors can build a single application that runs on all Intel Unix variants. As you can see from the announcement, this project already has a substantial amount of commercial support.

I think this has much more of a chance to succeed where previous Unix standardization efforts have fallen short. Rather than produce a paper standard, the project will release a reference implementation that runs on the various platforms. Because this will be free software, the cost of implementing compatibility will be much lower than that of implementing new software to run a paper standard.

The fact that commercial Unix vendors are turning to free software for this solution is a real triumph for the free software movement, and one I expect to see repeated. I'm happy to see the major Linux distributions represented on the steering committee along with the largest commercial Unix vendors, and I'm proud to represent Debian on this project.

Thanks

Bruce Perens

The 86open Project

Unix-on-Intel players work on a common binary

A group which includes some of the key developers of Unix operating systems on Intel architecture computers have agreed to work on a common programming and binary interface.

At a meeting held mid-August at the head office of SCO, participants achieved consensus on a way to create software applications which would run, without modification or emulation, on the Intel-based versions of:

- * BSDI
- * FreeBSD
- * Linux
- * NetBSD
- * SCO OpenServer
- * Sunsoft Solaris
- * SCO UnixWare

The goal of this effort is to encourage software developers to port to the Unix-Intel platform by reducing the effort needed to support the diverse mix of operating systems of this kind currently available.

The specification, called "86open", will be published and freely available to any environment wishing compliance. It involves the use of a standardized libc shared library of basic functions to be provided on all systems. This library will provide a consistent interface to programmers, hiding the differences between the various operating systems and allowing the resulting binary programs to run unaltered on any compliant system. Whenever possible, it will be consistent with The Open Group's Single Unix Specification.

Each participating operating system will be free to implement the 86open library specification on its own. However, the reference implementation will be based upon GNU's glibc version 2, ensuring that it will remain open and freely available. The actual list and behavior of the 86open functions is presently being determined.

Participants in the meeting, who will be involved with the ongoing evolution of the 86open specification, include people deeply involved with the operating systems mentioned in this project. The 86open steering committee, a core of this group which will assemble the work and produce the final specification, comprises:

Marc Ewing, Dion Johnson, Evan Leibovitch, Bruce Perens, Andrew Roach, Bryan Sparks and Linus Torvalds

For more information, contact 86open@telly.org.

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