

Open Geospatial in Bonn Attracts 900 GI People - FOSS4G 2016



With a theme of Building Bridges, FOSS4G 2016 attracted some 900 delegates to hear and discuss the latest developments in open source geospatial software around four key topics: Land Information, Disaster Management, Remote Sensing for Earth Observation and Open Data. Codrina Ilie reports.

Between the 24th and the 26th of August 2016, the city of Bonn, Germany was host for approximately 900 GI people, arriving from more than 50 different countries to attend the Open Source Geospatial Foundation (OSGeo) annual global conference Free and Open Source Software for Geospatial – FOSS4G 2016.

This year, OSGeo celebrated its 10th successful flagship gathering. The event has constantly expanded from a few hundred people to approximately 1000 (<https://wiki.osgeo.org/wiki/FOSS4G>), portraying the steady expansion of interest in free and open source software for processing and visualizing geospatial data. The event has traditionally been a high-tech one for geospatial software professionals, but with the increase of geospatial data usage, the conference has grown diverse, spanning pure software development to power users case studies, from scientific to operational and now seeps through all domains and permeating every imaginable workflow. The founder, the Open Source Geospatial Foundation (OSGeo) (www.osgeo.org/) is a not-for-profit organization with the mission to foster global adoption of open geospatial technology by being an inclusive software foundation devoted to an open philosophy and participatory community-driven development.

The selected conference chairman for 2016 was Till Adams from terrestris GmbH (www.terrestris.de/en/), whom, together with a dedicated team of 20 enthusiastic people, shaped FOSS4G2016 Bonn. Regularly, each such event is comprised of a number of meetings and seminars with various scopes and configurations. This year's FOSS4G was no exception. The core conference was embedded within three types of different manifestations.

Code Sprint

A code sprint is part of all FOSS4G events. It is a gathering of software developers, power users, users of a certain software that get together and actively contribute to improve the software and its documentation. The code sprints are crucial in the advancement of the software, as the events are usually guided by the core developers of the software. Even more, at code sprints that reunite a significant number of community contributors, there are high objectives set. As an example, at FOSS4G 2016, the GRASS team released the last GRASS GIS 6 version on Sunday (<https://grass.osgeo.org/news/58/15/GRASSGIS646released/>). They planned next releases, fixed a number of bugs, backported numerous features, cleaned outdated tickets, added new features, developed a new addon, wrote a complete tutorial on working with time series and Sentinel2 satellite data, discussed the new website for the project and prepared a new flyer for GRASS.

This year's code sprint was split into two parts: before and after the conference, summing up a total of five complete days. Over one hundred participants were working on various projects such as: OSGeoLive, GRASS GIS, GeoTool, GeoServer, QGIS, PyWPS, GIS.lab, Mappender, MapServer, OpenLayers, EOxServer and more.

Workshops

Workshops offer hands-on experience of the power of FOSS4G, guided by experienced members of the free and open source geospatial community, very often by the actual developers of the software used. Workshops run for half-day and provide the unique opportunity to learn and interact with the best in the field. FOSS4G 2016 hosted 30 workshops, with various topics: from web mapping to complex spatial analysis and with different complexity ranges, from introductory workshops (e.g. Introduction to GeoTools, Introduction to OpenLayers, GeoNetwork from scratch, Introduction to MapFish Print 3: Maps, Templates and Reports etc.) to highly specialized seminars (e.g. Beyond GeoServer Basics, Advanced spatial analysis with the QGIS Processing framework, Hook your own customizations into GeoNetwork etc.).

Business to Business

This type of activity was new in the current form, acknowledging the importance of the FOSS4G role of business and as a networking platform. Even though the professional element has always been present, the 2016 B2B meeting proposed a framework that would allow an equal amount of attention to all participants in an organized manner. Everyone got a chance to present their business – in exactly five

minutes (not six!), with exactly 20 slides which remained on screen for 15 seconds each. At the end, all participants voted and determined the best presentation and asked the presenter to give another five-minute talk, based on the organizer's slides.

Thus, the complete event of Free and Open Source Software for Geospatial 2016 Bonn, spanned from Sunday the 21st to Sunday the 28th. The core conference developed over three days under the Building Bridges theme, having the classic topics enhanced with four key ones: Land Information, Disaster Management, Remote Sensing for Earth Observation and Open Data. True to its motto, the event was shaped with the clear scope of bringing together all geospatial users, developers, fans, from professional to absolute beginner, from business to university teachers, from nonprofits to public institutions.

The core conference was composed out of keynotes, traditional 20 minutes talks, and a new form of interaction: the topic talk.

FOSS4G 2016 initiated a new kind of interaction: the topic talk. Within the conference days, the Lab was the place to foster new ideas and encourage discussions around subjects such as: the intertwine between open source and open standards, led by Athina Trakas and Ingo Simonis from OGC; how to best couple land information and open source led by Arnulf Christl from meta-spatial and John Gitau from UNHabitat United Nations Human Settlements Programme. The Land Information Topic Talk brought Land experts and the Open Source Geospatial community together. Chrit Lemmen from Kadaster, Netherlands gave an introduction to the topic from the perspective of the Global Land Tool Network (www.gltm.net). Athina Trakas presented the new OGC DWG information "Land Administration" and Arnulf Christl introduced the Social Tenure Domain Model (STDM - www.stdm.gltm.net/), a broadly accepted fit-for-purpose implementation of the ISO standard LADM based on Open Source tools (QGIS, PostGIS, Mapbender, OpenLayers) initiated by UN-Habitat and GLTN. The Topic Talk was a great opportunity to interact for players from both domains and underlined the tagline of the conference: Building Bridges.

Regional FOSS4G Events all over the World

Alongside the global annual FOSS4G conference, there are many regional and local FOSS4G events taking place all over the globe. OSGeo has provided the community with the possibility of keeping track of all such gatherings around the world through the OSGeo events calendar (www.osgeo.org/event/2016/09/01/month/all/all/1).

The week after FOSS4G Bonn, FOSS4G Norway in Oslo (<http://foss4g.no/>) took place. The conference organized by geomatics students from NTNU in Trondheim, attracted approximately 80 attendees GI professionals from a wide range of industries. All talks from FOSS4G Norway are available online at <https://vimeo.com/album/4125736>.

A complete overview of global events can be found here: https://wiki.osgeo.org/wiki/Global_conferences_o_verview.

The next global OSGeo event, FOSS4G 2017 has been awarded to Boston (United States) and will unfold in 14-18 August. <http://2017.foss4g.org/>.

This article was published in GIS Professional October 2016