Presidents Report to the Firebird Foundation 2005

Welcome to the FirebirdSQL Foundation AGM.

The Firebird project has been active since the middle of 2000, The Firebird Foundation has been active since November 2002. Both are thriving. A lot of water has passed under the bridge since 2000 and Firebird is proving that there is room in the world for another open source database alongside MySQL and PostgreSQL.

Over the past year the growth of both memberships and sponsorship in the Foundation have enabled us to maintain funding assistance for core coding (Dmitry Yemanov and Alex Peshkov), core development coordination (Dmitry), security development (Alex), QA testbed development (Pavel Cisar) and code scrutiny (Claudio Valderrama).

This growth enabled us, at the mid-year reviews, to extend our support to core code development and to allocate funds to assist some ancillary projects as well. In the core area, the grant extensions have enabled Dmitry to devote all of his working hours to Firebird and Vlad Horsun to make half of his working week available. Two major driver projects, ODBC (Vladimir Tsvigun) and the .NET providers (Carlos Guzmán Álvarez) are now receiving the benefit of grants. A short-term grant made it possible for the project website to get a makeover (Helen Borrie).

If support and growth continue into our third year as successfully as they have done over the past two years, we can envisage the ability to make new grant allocations as soon as need arises, a situation that should make us all proud of what we are achieving.

Highlights

The major highlight of last year was the Firebird 1.5 release in February 2004, a major step forward from the previous Firebird 1.0x releases. A huge amount of time and effort was put into this release, by the developers, the platform maintainers, testers and documenters. Many thanks to all of those who were involved. Firebird 1.5 was then followed by bugfix releases of Firebird 1.5.1 and Firebird 1.5.2 later in the year.

Following on from Firebird 1.5, a major effort is now being directed towards Firebird 2.0. The number of people who should be thanked is too long to list. Most of them are here amongst us and you all know who they are. Join with me in thanking them for their hard work and their significant achievements. We can all support their efforts by helping with extra testing and assisting them in every way possible to make sure that this release is the best one yet.

Firebird 2.0 is in alpha release at this time. This marks the start of the long careful process of getting a lot of new features and internal structures into good shape for final release later in the year. The merger of the appropriate passages of code from the contributed Yaffil codebase have been completed by Dimitry and folded into Firebird 2.0

Sights are set on design goals for Firebird 3, even as this report goes to air. For a year, as most of you will know, Firebird's original author, Jim Starkey, has been re-architecting the Firebird 2 code for a commercial client. The client intended all along for the new codebase, code-named Vulcan, to be contributed to the Firebird Project. This project is now effectively complete and the Vulcan codebase has been imported into the Firebird CVS tree and will be going through alpha and beta cycles in parallel with Firebird 2. Both will be merged as the new generation Firebird 3, later in the year.

Throughout the year, new versions of the Jaybird JDBC driver, the ODBC driver and the .NET drivers have continued to appear as the developers responsible (Roman Rokytskyy, Vladimir Tsvigun and Carlos Guzmán Álvarez, respectively) continue to maintain and improve these critical pieces of software.

Pavel Cisar has been hard at work building and documenting a new QA test system for Firebird using QMTest.

Some detailed analysis work over the past few months, by Dimitrios Ioannidis and others, involved evaluating open source and source-accessible solutions to arrive at a better solution than our current bug reporting and management tools provide, ideally with Firebird as the back-end. The outcome is that Jira will be the first choice of the project administrators. The task of finding a suitable host server, setting up the tools, configuring and tuning them and porting the existing bug database to Firebird is still ahead of us.

Earlier in the year, many of our members travelled to Fulda in Germany to attend the second Firebird Conference. The second conference was bigger and better than the first. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the 2005 conference in Prague, later in the year.

Concerned about Firebird's lack of visibility in the open source database scene, Artur Anjos initiated the Connect! project under the auspices of the Foundation. You can read the plans in the Foundation's area of the website. I can only encourage you all to assist in this "guerrilla marketing campaign" and support this mission to spread the word and the news about Firebird to those who have not found out about us yet.

Another noteworthy event was the publication of "The Firebird Book: a Reference for Database Developers", authored by our Secretary, Helen Borrie, in August. The first book on Firebird (or even InterBase) in English to ever to see the light of day, it had sold out the first run of 3,500 copies by October and is now in reprint.

September 24th 2004 was the 20th Anniversary of InterBase, as Firebird continues to build on 20 years of history. We should have had a party. Let's hope Firebird is still around in the 20 years to come.

Thank You

I would like to thank all the Foundation members who contribute in their various ways to enable the Foundation and the Project to continue to succeed. We have had a great year.

I would like to also thank all the members of the Foundation Committee for their hard work during the year.

Future

As the Foundation progresses into its third year, the problems that need to be resolved are somewhat different to the issues that faced the Foundation at the end of 2003. The Foundation needs to continue to attract funding and be ready to assist contributors who are making a significant difference to the development, support and growth of Firebird. We need to continue to assist more of our essential developers, documenters, and ancillary project leads to commit time to the project without incurring personal loss.

With growth has come unrelenting upward pressure on the time and income of volunteers who administer the Foundation's affairs. For several months, administrative demands have far exceeded what we should expect a volunteer to do. We have now started to address the matter of allocating funds for administration.

2005 is going to be a very busy year, with releases of Firebird 2.0 and Vulcan and the emergence of Firebird 3.0 to plan and document. There is no question that all this work will take significant resources if it is to succeed. I believe it is up to the Foundation to be active in seeking out the appropriate funding resources to do what it takes to make sure that we are there to meet those needs.

Regards
Paul Beach

President FirebirdSQL Foundation - May 2005