News and Comment

Eclipse continues to grow in user acceptance and in scope.  This was evident at the EclipseCon convention which I attended earlier this month.  This month's newsletter provides a few tidbits of information that I absorbed while I was there.

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EclipseCon 2006 Report

As has been described several times in this newsletter, Eclipse is an open source Integrated Development Environment (IDE) that is the basis for the DDT feature of DB/C DX.  Eclipse with DDT dramatically improves the edit-compile-test cycle of DB/C program development when compared with traditional command line tools.  If you've not yet migrated to using DDT, you should give it a try.  You'll be hooked.

EclipseCon is an annual convention for Eclipse developers.  The term "developers" means both those who build applications with Eclipse as well as those who develop actual Eclipse tools (commonly called plug-ins). (There is another convention called EclipseWorld that is generally for developers who build applications.)

EclipseCon 2006 was the third EclipseCon, and it was noticeably bigger than last year. Instead being held in a hotel as the first two EclipseCons were, this year's convention was held in the Santa Clara Convention Center, which it mostly filled.  EclipseCon 2006 was a three day convention with five keynote addresses, five different tracks of sessions, an exhibit hall with more than fifty exhibitors, various demo break-outs, and dozens of nine minute "Short Talks". Some sixty extra-cost half and full day tutorials were also available on the day before the convention.  Trying to see and hear everything interesting would be pretty much impossible. One just tries to soak up as much information as possible.

Information about EclipseCon 2006 can be found at www.eclipsecon.org.  The most useful information at that web site is the slides from almost all of the tutorials, keynotes and sessions presentations.  This information is really useful if you are just trying to figure out what a technology or product is about.

The most interesting keynote was the one titled "Comparing Apache and Eclipse".  Most of the speech wasn't about what the title says, but was instead about the various ways that software is created and licensed today.  The speech was given by Greg Stein, Chairman of the Apache Software Foundation.  He broke down software development and licensing into these four broad and somewhat overlapping categories:

1.  Proprietary, commercially licensed non-free software with no outside access to source code.

2.  Proprietary, commercially licensed free software where the source code is published, but development is controlled by a single corporation or group.

3.  Free, open source software developed by various independent groups with a restrictive use license.

4.  Free, open source software developed by various independent groups with a completely unrestrictive use license.

The examples he provided were, by category:

1.  Most Microsoft products including Windows and Office

2.  Sun's Java

3.  LINUX and other GNU-licensed software

4.  Apache and Eclipse products

The point of Mr. Stein's speech was that, in general, all software is moving from category 1 towards category 4, and that various interested parties should plan accordingly or they will get passed by.  One of his memorable comments was that because Sun has not moved Java from category 2 toward category 4, Apache is now supporting two independent development efforts to build completely free and unrestricted versions of Java - J2SE (the Harmony project) and J2EE (the Geronimo project).

Another keynote of interest was given by Tod Nielsen, the new CEO of Borland.  He basically explained that Borland was getting out of the small developer tools business because of pressure from software like Eclipse.  Borland has announced it is either going to sell or spin off its JBuilder products, its Delphi products and other small developer tools, so that it can focus on Application Lifecycle Management (ALM) products sold to very large companies and government agencies.

Several more companies have recently joined the Eclipse Foundation including MySQL AB and salesforce.com.

Eclipse has two important projects under way that are building tools for developers to build web applications.  The Web Tools Project (WTP) is a mature project that provides basic tooling in Eclipse for development of web applications.  The AJAX Toolkit Framework (ATF) project is a new Eclipse project that will add on features to enable development of more sophisticated AJAX enabled web applications.

Another project that is probably of interest to readers of this newsletter is the Business Intelligence and Report Tools (BIRT) project.  This project is one year old and is mostly staffed with Actuate Corporation employees.  BIRT 2.0 was recently released and contains many new features.  Two comprehensive books about BIRT, written by members of the BIRT team, have just been published by Addison-Wesley.  If you are using Crystal Reports now, or are in need of a capable reporting tool, you should look into adopting BIRT.

There were many other new projects and releases announced at EclipseCon 2006.  A press release with a complete list of new Eclipse products, projects and initiatives can be found at:

http://www.eclipse.org/org/press-release/20060321eclipsecommunity.php

Eclipse is a great development tool that is being adopted by more and more programmers.  If you haven't yet taken a look at it, you owe it to yourself to give it a try.  EclipseCon 2007 will be held in March 2007 at the same location - put it on your calendar.

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### DB/C DX Class Schedule

Class:       DB/C DX Fundamentals
Date:        June, 2006
Location:    Woodridge, Illinois

For information, send email to admin@dbcsoftware.com.

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