

# of course

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 1

SPRING 2005

KEEPING GOOD COMPANY BY  
**Going on a  
Geek Cruise**

ALL HANDS ON DECK

**When Open  
Source has  
commercial  
interests**

NAVIGATIONAL SKILLS

**Do a lot with  
a little Python**

*From our cabin looking up, as we leave Venice, we all marvelled at the colours of day's end. It was too beautiful to not be struck by, and too perfect to not capture on film. As it was, a fitting beginning to many more days of picture taking...*

*...and many more days of being awestruck by the company we had on the boat.*

# Cruising with the Geek gods



It's a huge decision for an organisation to turn off its revenue stream for a week or two to attend such an event, then to put that stream into reverse by spending on flights, hotels and transfers, the cruise, and the conference itself. But as trainers in these technologies, we need to understand not only what we teach but also the more advanced application of what we teach, and the philosophies of the movers and shakers behind the technologies. Only with this insight can we teach you not only about what the products do today, but about WHY they work like that, and where they'll be going in the future.

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ROBERT SPIER



RANDAL L. SCHWARTZ, Geekcruses.com



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Featured: (far left) David Axmark watching the sunset; (top) Brian Aker talks on MySQL; Casey West and Robert Spier watch as Perl creator, Larry Wall, is welcomed by Neil Bauman; Graham takes notes; (middle) Dave Cross at a market stall; photographer Kevin Gilbert; the enrapt audience; Allison Randal shares Perl 6 developments; Marty Pauley gives Perl points; PHP founder, Rasmus Lerdorf, and Neil Bauman; (bottom) MySQL's Monty Widenius; Randal Schwartz; Ted Ts'o and Stacey Quandt.



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## Geek Cruising

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Sunday afternoon, Venice, and we joined Costa Line's Costa Mediterranea for a Geek Cruise on the Mediterranean. A glorious sunset over the city as we sail past St. Peter's square and smile at the chap clicking away on the balcony of the cabin just above ours who turns out to be one of the co-founders of MySQL AB. And the scene is set for an unusually intensive and mixed week even for us.

At sea, MySQL swell kicks off. Hearing Monty Widenius and David Axmark talking about their "baby", the listener comes to appreciate just how technically astute these gentlemen are, and just how commercially aware they are too. Even though they're in the Open Source world - Eric Raymond's Bazaar rather than his Cathedral - one leaves with the background knowledge that here's a product that can and *will* stand up against the traditional giants such as Oracle and SQL Server. Speaking personally, it was a privilege to listen and it equips me so much better to talk about MySQL when I'm training. I can talk not only of the mechanisms, but the philosophies behind them, too.

Katakolon, Greece. The ship docks, and the passengers transfer to coaches for the drive to ancient Olympia. Like all the other destinations on this cruise, Lisa and I mark Olympia as somewhere we must come back to when we have more time, and it was somewhat surreal to see the very arena where the original Olympics were held, at the same time knowing that mixed in amongst the crowds are some people whose names we mention with great reverence and whom we would never have expected to meet a few years back.

From Greece, onwards to Turkey. A day's cruising with the chance to sample ship foods, gamble and sunbathe. But many of those activities are for others. We're up at first light, in the bar where there's a wireless Internet hotspot specially set up for the Geek cruise and not available for the other passengers. Lecturers and attendees mix as they check their email, upload pictures, and generally stay in touch with base before another intensive day. With any "multi-track" conference, there will be schedule clashes even with the best possible planning. Today, Rasmus Lerdorf (the man behind

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(top) the Grand Canal in Venice, our departure city, taken the night before the cruise; (below) "But is it art?" interior of our ship; (right) Graham leads the tour group in Turkey; (bottom) the library at Ephesus



GRANT MCWILLIAMS





# The Schwartzian Transform

This Rumplemint, Baileys and Jaegermeister concoction quickly became a mascot of sorts. "This drink was dubbed a 'Schwartzian Transform' by my fellow cruisers. Notice the map-sort-map layers," noted its namesake, Randal L. Schwartz.

The original Schwartzian Transform was named by Tom Christiansen during a Usenet discussion that became the "FMTEYEWTK (Far More Than Everything You Ever Wanted To Know) about

Sorting" in CPAN's documentation section because it was first pointed out by Randal. Mark-Jason Dominus in his "Perl Paraphernalia" summarises: "Construct a data structure that has both kinds of information, names and dates in it, sort by the appropriate one, and then throw it away again."

Learn more about the Schwartzian Transform in the third edition of "Programming Perl", ISBN: 0-596-00027-8.



(left) pillars at the Topkapi palace in Istanbul, built by the Ottomans in the 15th century, and much enlarged since; (right) our very patient waiter on board the Costa Mediterranea, Enrico Golosino; (below) Dubrovnik Croatia [commented photographer Grant McWilliams "I had to run along the wall on a slippery wet rock surface to get that picture because I only had about 10 minutes to see everything."]; (bottom, left) The Suliman mosque, one of many in Istanbul; (bottom, right) the gala night.



PHOTOS BY GRAHAM AND LISA ELLIS, UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED



GRANT MCWILLIAMS



# Latest Versions of Open Source Software

as of 1 March 2005

## Geek Cruising

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Here's our regular table of current releases. As well as the ones listed below, amongst new and ancilliary products that you might also like to have a look at are:

- MySQL Administrator and MySQL Query Browser - from the MySQL team  
download from <http://dev.mysql.com>
- Pugscode interpreter for Perl 6 if you would like some pre-exposure to the language  
see <http://www.pugscode.org>
- Expect for Windows - a licensed product from Active State  
see <http://www.activestate.com>

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Perl	5.8.6 Stable	<a href="http://www.perl.com">www.perl.com</a>
	5.9.1 Development see <a href="http://www.cpan.org">http://www.cpan.org</a> for additional modules	
Tcl/Tk	8.4.9 Stable	<a href="http://www.tcl.tk">www.tcl.tk</a>
	8.5a2 Alpha release	
Expect	5.43.0 Stable	<a href="http://expect.nist.gov">expect.nist.gov</a>
PHP	4.3.10 Stable	<a href="http://www.php.net">www.php.net</a>
	5.0.3 Stable see <a href="http://pera.php.net">http://pera.php.net</a> and <a href="http://pecl.php.net">http://pecl.php.net</a> for PHP extensions  <small>Note: PHP4 and PHP5 are not 100% compatible. Many PHP programmers aren't even aware of the copying quirks of the old object model and, therefore, the majority of PHP applications will work out of the box, or with very few modifications, under PHP5.</small>	
Python	2.4 Stable	<a href="http://www.python.org">www.python.org</a>  see <a href="http://www.vex.net/parnassus/">http://www.vex.net/parnassus/</a> for Python resources
MySQL	4.1.10 Generally Available	<a href="http://dev.mysql.com">dev.mysql.com</a>
	5.0.2 Alpha	
Apache Tomcat	5.0.28 Stable	<a href="http://jakarta.apache.org/tomcat">jakarta.apache.org/tomcat</a> <a href="http://httpd.apache.org">httpd.apache.org</a>  5.5.7 requires JRE version 5

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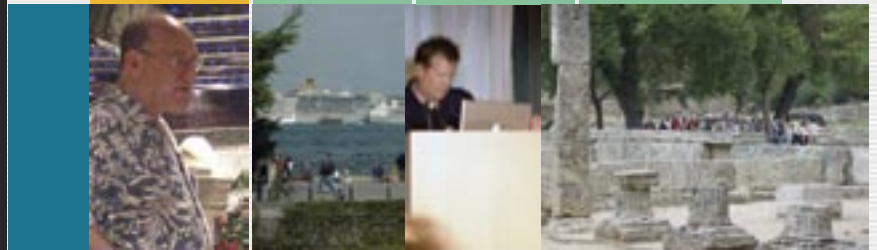
PHP) has kindly offered to run an extra session of "Do you PHP?" and perhaps a dozen of us listen enthralled. With PHP, you can write superb code or a dog's dinner of a solution, and Rasmus gave us his guidelines for the former, in addition to a great deal else including a few answers to "why" questions about the language design that had me wondering, and a view to where he sees PHP going. Rasmus, THANK YOU for that extra session; you don't know what a difference it made.

Turkey is "where East meets West". And there's a feeling of really *being* somewhere as you stand in the grounds of the Topkapi palace in Istanbul, in Europe looking out over the Bosphorus to Asia. And so much to do during the boat's call. On a Geek Cruise, though, we had too much else to do as well, and elected to spend the morning catching up on writing up notes, then relaxed on a half-day tour that took in some of the streets of the old city, the blue mosque, and the Topkapi. We could easily have spent several more days in Turkey, but then we could easily have spent several more weeks on the cruise.

Across the Adriatic, and Allison Randal and Larry Wall are telling us about Perl 6. Perl 6 is coming along, and the foundations are there. For us, it's moving from a spectre that's somewhere in the future towards an exciting prospect that's getting much closer, and Allison and Larry, both of whom have been working on the design and the code, gave us a great deal to think on (and mostly agree with ;-)), so much so that we chose to stay on board and digest their inputs when we docked for a few hours in Dubrovnik, Croatia.

And so, a final evening on board Costa Mediterranea. Enjoying a glass of wine and a technochat with a high energy physics computer administrator from Chicago, a senior member of the White House press corps who knows George Bush on first name terms, and other geeks who came from Finland and Northern Ireland, from Australia, Canada and the USA. Truly a memorable week that we'll look back on long after other memories of 2004 have faded away.

Will you be reading of yet further adventures on board Geek Cruises in the future? We're eyeing the next one now!



[www.geekcruises.com](http://www.geekcruises.com)

Listen to some of the big names in the development of programming languages and systems software, have a great holiday to some spectacular destinations, and meet with other IT professionals in your field. Sound too good to be true? Well, it's the formula that's successfully applied by Neil Baumann of Geek Cruises. He's now organised and personally run more than 20 events such as "MacMania" and "Photoshop Fling". Destinations include Alaska, Hawaii and the Caribbean, and Neil has just completed his first European Geek Cruise with "Linux Lunacy", "MySQL Swell" and "Perl Whirl" cruising out of Venice to Greece, Turkey and Croatia.

A sampling of upcoming cruises:

**MacMania 3.5 and Northern Light**

• Baltic Sea, June 30 - July 10, 2005

**Linux Lunacy V and Perl Whirl '05**

• Caribbean, October 2-9, 2005

**Chess Moves**

• Eastern Caribbean, January 14-21, 2006

**Mac Mania IV and Photoshop Fling III**

• Mexican Riviera, February 4-11, 2006



*We learned a lot, saw a lot and made many friends. We were reluctant to go home, yet anxious to practise our new skills. It was exhilarating and exhausting. But definitely to be repeated.*



## Distributing open source applications easier than you think

If you develop a web-based application using Apache, MySQL and PHP, but then want to distribute it so that anyone can run it on their Windows PC, it might be easier and cheaper than you think. Apache httpd, MySQL and PHP are all available as open source downloads for Windows as well as for Linux. You can configure your system, add a few start-up scripts, then burn the “AMP” of “LAMP” onto a CD. At run time, just a few directories need to be installed on the hard disk of the user’s machine. Once the services start, your user is up and running. If you’ve written the scripts well, all this will happen automatically.

Further details can be found online at: <http://www.wellho.net/solutions/general-windows-running-apache-and-mysql-from-a-cd.html>



## WHC welcomes new employee, Leah

I’m delighted to welcome Leah Davies onto our team.

Investment in good resources and efficient systems has meant that we’ve been well able to run the business with just two staff. An excellent opportunity arose to grab someone we much admire to add to the team at a time when we were beginning to feel stretched was just too good to pass up, and Leah joined us around Christmas time.

Leah is a specialist through practical experience of web applications such as YaBB and Simple Machines forums – open source products which are (respectively) Perl- and PHP-based, so she’ll be doing a lot of our web site and contract support work. She’s also very familiar with small company operation and she’ll be looking after our books.

But we’re a small company and each of us

turns our hand to whatever needs to be done; whoever’s in the office – be it Lisa, Graham or Leah – we will be happy to advise you on anything from course suitability to the arrangements for on-site courses.

### BOOK REVIEW

## Apress’s distinctive looks filling shelves

It’s good to see some old favourite books, and some new, published by Apress whose black and yellow covers have started to decorate the shelves of our local specialist bookstores in recent months.

“Regular Expression Recipes” starts off with a short, 20-page syntax review covering



by Nathan A. Good  
published by Apress  
ISBN: 1-59059-441-X

regular expressions in Perl, PHP and Python, as well as vim, grep and sed before jumping into a large number of worked examples in each of the languages. The examples consistently give a regular expression to perform

a task such as validating a date or stripping white space out of cascaded style sheets, then explain how the regular expression works, element by element. For newcomers to regular expressions, the examples in this book are an excellent springboard to some really useful tasks, with sufficient explanation to allow the user to tune the examples to meet his specific needs, and to learn further and write his own examples.

With any book of this nature, some of the patterns will vary around the world. An international telephone number dialled for the USA is not of the same format as an international number dialled from the UK, and it’s open to interpretation whether 01/04/05 is the 1st of April or the 4th January. This book is heavily USA-biased. It’ll give you a pattern for a USA Zip code, without even a mention of a UK postcode. But then with a little thought and time and learning from the other examples, you should be able to figure out your own postcode match anyway.

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Our office hours are 08:00 to 18:00 Monday to Friday.

You’ll usually reach us at the weekend and in the evenings, too, as phone messages and faxes are emailed to us automatically. If you email us, we’ll receive your email within 24 hours, 365 days a year.

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