

18th Large Installation System Administration Conference (LISA '04)

Sponsored by USENIX, the Advanced Computing Systems Association, and SAGE, the System Administrators Guild

<http://www.usenix.org/lisa04>

November 14–19, 2004

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Program Chair

Lee Damon, *University of Washington*

Important Dates

Extended abstracts and invited talk and workshop proposals due: April 20, 2004

Notification to authors: May 2004

Final papers due: September 7, 2004

“System Administration Reality: Automation, Configuration, and Users”

The annual LISA conference is the meeting place of choice for system and network administrators. System administrators of all specialties and levels of expertise meet at LISA to exchange ideas, sharpen old skills, learn new techniques, debate current issues, and meet colleagues and friends.

People come from over 30 different countries to attend LISA. They include a wide range of administration specialties, including system, network, storage, and security administration, to name a few. They hail from computing environments of all sorts, including large corporations, small businesses, academic institutions, and government agencies. Attendees are full time, part time, student, and volunteer admins, as well as those who find themselves performing “admin duties” in addition to their day jobs. They support combinations of operating systems ranging across the board from Open Source, such as Linux and the BSD releases, to vendor-specific, including Solaris, Windows, Mac OS, HP-UX, and AIX.

Get Involved!

- Submit an extended abstract for a refereed paper.
- Suggest an Invited Talk speaker or a Panel discussion topic.
- Share your experience by leading a Guru Is In session.
- Propose a tutorial topic.
- Organize or suggest a Birds-of-a-Feather (BoF) session.
- Email an idea to the program chair.

These options are all described later in this announcement.

The conference’s diverse group of participants is matched by an equally broad spectrum of activities:

- A **training program** for both beginners and experienced attendees covers many administrative topics, ranging from basic administrative procedures to using cutting-edge technologies.
- **Technical sessions** present the latest developments and ideas related to system and network administration.
- **Invited talks and panels** discuss important and timely topics and often spark lively debates and conversation.
- **Work-in-Progress reports** (WiPs) provide brief peeks at next year’s innovations.

LISA also makes it easy for people to interact in more informal settings:

- Noted experts answer questions from anyone who wants to attend at **Guru Is In** sessions.
- LISA participants discuss/celebrate/comiserate about a shared interest at **Birds-of-a-Feather** (BoF) sessions.
- Attendees can talk with vendors and explore the solutions they offer at the **Exhibition**.

Conference Themes

The conference covers all facets of the practice and theory of computer administration—System, Network, Database, Security, and Storage being only some examples. The following is a small selection of possible topics.

Technical Practices: *Papers describing and analyzing important system administration tasks/problems/issues and solutions to them. LISA papers present such discussions in the context of previous work and focus on new and innovative ideas, comparisons, and analysis.*

- Applying tools, techniques, and methods from other disciplines
- Automated system administration
- Best practices in system administration
- Comparison of alternative approaches/solutions to system administration tasks
- Distributed system administration
- High availability and disaster recovery
- Integration of emerging technologies in system administration

- Managing heterogeneous environments
- Managing very large installations; scaling issues
- OS/platform migration strategies
- Performance analysis, monitoring, and tuning
- Proactive problem management
- Problem tracking
- Security

Working with Users, Solving Their Problems:

- Helping users understand their needs
- How to build and maintain effective collaboration with users
- Understanding user requests in context

Tools and Meta-Tools: *Discussions of new tools you have developed or tools you have used to solve an important and widely applicable system administration problem. Tools-oriented papers must focus on new approaches/solutions to administrative tasks/issues.*

- Configuration management
- Evaluations/comparisons of system administration tools
- Innovative system administration tools and meta-tools
- Software development in a highly interrupt-driven environment
- Surprising new uses for existing tools
- Tools for automating system administration

Analysis and Theory: *Consideration of system administration issues and practices from a theoretical viewpoint (although some applicability to real practice is also required):*

- Computer immunology
- Convergent automation in distributed systems
- Fundamental underpinnings to the profession
- Identifying the important issues in system administration and its tasks
- Metrics for system administration

Case Studies: *Discussions of how you or your site addressed an important system administration problem or issue. As with other topics, these papers should focus on new approaches and innovative solutions with applicability to the system administration community at large:*

- Experiences supporting large sites (>1000 users or machines)

- Intranet planning, development, support, and maintenance
- Managing enterprise-wide email

Organizational and Social Issues: *Discussions of and solutions for any of the many nontechnical issues that system administrators face:*

- Budgeting, cost analyses, and project planning for system administration
- Effective strategies for personal (technical and managerial) growth
- Effective training techniques for system administration and users
- Ethics and system administration
- System administration management issues
- The system administrator's role in the organization
- Working as a contractor or a consultant
- Working effectively with/managing contractors or consultants

This topic list should not be considered exhaustive. Good proposals related to any important aspect of system administration are always welcome. If you are unsure whether your topic is appropriate, contact the Program Chair by sending email to lisa04chair@usenix.org.

Refereed Papers

Refereed papers explore techniques, tools, theory, and case histories that extend our understanding of system and network administration. They present results in the context of previous related work.

System administration is a broad topic, and good papers take a variety of approaches. A few examples:

- Description/analysis of a new technique, tool, technology, or theory
- Applying an existing technique, tool, etc., in a novel way
- Critical analysis of the alternatives for solving a common problem, including new recommendations
- New lessons learned from a detailed and honest evaluation of a case history

The crucial component of all of these is something new or timely, something that was not previously available, discussed, considered, or recognized.

The Program Committee is particularly interested in contributions from full-time students. Cash prizes will be awarded at the conference for the best refereed paper and the best refereed paper with a student as lead author.

Writing a refereed paper for LISA is a rewarding challenge. A properly crafted paper can make a difference in the thinking or practice of thousands of your colleagues. For the best possible impact, your paper should be written so that it is understandable by and relevant to a majority of our attendees. An ideal paper is understandable by an intermediate-level system administrator while containing

ideas that are new and timely for expert administrators.

It is particularly important to fit your own work into the context of past work and practice. LISA papers must provide references to prior relevant work and describe the differences between that work and their own. Authors should browse proceedings of previous LISA conferences for references and can use the online proceedings (going back to 1993) at <http://www.usenix.org/events/bytopic/lisa.html>, search the USENIX site for specific papers or topics at <http://www.usenix.org/publications/library/proceedings/>, or use the bibliography and resource page at Oslo University College (<http://www.iu.hio.no/SystemAdmin>) to find references to related work. The Program Chair and Program Committee members can also give you tips on previous work that might be relevant (send email to lisa04chair@usenix.org for help).

Proposal and Submission Details

Potential authors must submit the following items for review:

- An extended abstract of 500–1500 words (not counting figures and references)
- A brief outline of the final paper

Full papers and papers lacking outlines will not be accepted. Proposals can be submitted only by the author of the paper.

For administrative reasons, every submission must begin by listing:

1. Paper title and names and affiliations of all authors. Indicate whether each author is a full-time student.
2. The author who will be the contact for the Program Committee. Include his/her name, affiliation, paper mail address, daytime and evening phone numbers, email address, and fax number (as applicable).
3. Whether the paper's lead author is a student (for award purposes).
4. Whether you would prefer to present the paper as a "long talk" or a "short talk" (see below), if you have a strong preference.

All abstract submissions must be electronic, in ASCII or PDF format only. ASCII format is greatly preferred. Proposals must be submitted using the Web form located on the LISA 2004 Web site at <http://www.usenix.org/lisa04>.

Papers whose only purpose is to promote a commercial product will not be accepted. For more information, please consult the detailed author guidelines at <http://www.usenix.org/events/lisa04/cfp/papers.html>.

Proposals are due by April 20, 2004.

The Program Committee will judge submissions on the quality of the written submission, the novelty of approach, and its technical correctness. Be aware that the best abstracts

provide many specific details about the work they describe.

To aid authors in creating a paper suitable for LISA's audience, authors of accepted papers will be assigned one or more "shepherds" to help with the process of completing the paper. The shepherds will read one or more intermediate drafts and provide comments before the authors complete the final draft.

Like most conferences and journals, LISA requires that papers not be submitted simultaneously to more than one conference or publication and that submitted papers not be previously or subsequently published elsewhere for a certain period of time. All submissions are held in the highest confidence prior to publication in the conference proceedings both as a matter of policy and as protected by the U.S. Copyright Act of 1976. Copyrighted materials and papers or proposals accompanied by nondisclosure agreement forms are not acceptable and will be returned unread.

All accepted papers must be presented at the LISA conference by at least one author. One author per paper may take a registration discount of \$200. If the registration fee poses a hardship to the presenter, USENIX can offer a complimentary registration.

Presenting the Paper at the Conference

There are two lengths of presentations at the conference: 20 and 30 minutes (both formats include 5 minutes of Q&A). These "short" or "long" talks are assigned to accepted papers based on the Program Committee's judgment as to how straightforward the content is to describe. Presentation length is not a reflection of perceived paper quality, and it has no effect on the best paper competition.

Authors of an accepted paper must provide a final paper for publication in the conference proceedings. Final papers are limited to 16 pages, including diagrams, figures, references, and appendices. Complete instructions will be sent to the authors of accepted papers.

Invited Talks

An invited talk discusses a topic of general interest to attendees. Unlike a refereed paper, this topic need not be new or unique but should be timely and relevant or perhaps entertaining. An ideal invited talk is approachable, and possibly controversial. The material should be understandable by beginners, but the conclusions may be disagreed with by experts. Invited talks are 80 minutes long and are expected to be high-caliber presentations.

A special form of invited talk is a panel discussion, in which several acknowledged experts discuss some aspect of the practice.

Proposals for invited talks and panel discussions can take either of two forms. First, you can propose a topic about which you would feel comfortable giving an invited talk.

This should be accompanied by an abstract describing the content of the talk. Similarly, you can propose a panel discussion topic. It is most helpful to us if you suggest potential panelists.

Alternatively, you can propose an invited talk you would like to hear someone else present. Suggestions for possible speakers are helpful in this case.

Past invited talks have addressed a wide variety of topics:

- Cryptography and security hot topics
- Emergent trends in the profession
- Legal issues and developments affecting system administrators
- Myths and realities of the profession
- Overviews of new technologies and/or languages
- Personal experiences (case studies) with broad appeal/applicability to the system administration community

Participants in panel discussions give opinions on issues of the day, possibly with audience participation. Some past panels have addressed questions such as:

- The best scripting language for system administration
- The future of computer security
- What computer buzzwords really mean
- The problems that plague university environments
- Whether certification should be a job requirement

If you have a topic of interest to system administrators that is suitable for an invited talk or panel discussion, please submit a proposal to the invited talk coordinators. Proposals of a business development or marketing nature are not appropriate.

Please email your proposal to lisa04it@usenix.org. **Invited talk proposals are due April 20, 2004.**

Workshops

Since 2000, the LISA conference has included a workshop track during the training program days. These one-day workshops have been hands-on, participatory, interactive sessions where small groups of system administrators have discussions ranging from highly detailed to high-level.

Past workshop topics have included AFS, benchmarking, cfengine, intrusion detection, metaLISA, and teaching system administration. We are looking both for proposals for new topics and for endorsements of previously held sessions.

A workshop proposal should include the following information:

- Title
- Objective
- Organizer names and contact information
- Potential attendee profile
- An outline of potential topics

Please email your proposal to lisa04workshops@usenix.org. **Workshop proposals are due April 20, 2004.**

Training Program

LISA offers state-of-the-art tutorials from top experts in their fields. Topics range from introductory skills to advanced topics, updates on developments, and news. You can choose from over 40 full- and half-day tutorials covering everything from performance tuning, through Linux, Solaris, Windows, Perl, TCP/IP troubleshooting, security, networking, network services, sendmail, Samba, and legal issues, to professional development.

To provide the best possible tutorial offerings, USENIX continually solicits proposals and ideas for new tutorials. If you are interested in presenting a tutorial at this or other USENIX conferences or have an idea for a tutorial you would like to see offered, please contact the Training Program Coordinator:

Daniel V. Klein
Tel: +1.412.422.0285
Email: dvk@usenix.org

Work-in-Progress Reports

A Work-in-Progress report (WiP) is a very short presentation about work you are currently undertaking. It is a great way to poll the LISA audience for feedback and interest. We are particularly interested in presentations of student work.

Do you have interesting work you would like to share, or a cool idea that is not yet ready to be published? To schedule your short report, send email to lisa04wips@usenix.org.

WiP submissions will also be accepted the first day of the technical sessions. The final list of accepted WiPs will be posted at least 2 hours before the WiPs session.

Birds-of-a-Feather Sessions

Birds-of-a-Feather sessions (BoFs) are very informal gatherings organized by attendees interested in a particular topic.

BoFs are held Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings. BoFs may be scheduled in advance by telephone or email:

Tel.: +1.510.528.8649

Email: conference@usenix.org

BoFs may also be scheduled at the conference.

Guru Is In Sessions

Everyone is invited to bring perplexing technical questions to the experts at LISA's unique The Guru Is In sessions. These informal gatherings are organized around a single technical area or topic. Past sessions have focused on such topics as Samba, email, Perl, and backups. We welcome suggestions for Guru Is In sessions, as well as volunteers to be a Guru.

Please email suggestions for Guru Is In sessions, or your offer to be a Guru, to lisa04guru@usenix.org.

Contact the Chair

The Program Chair, Lee Damon, is always open to new ideas that might improve the conference. Please email any and all ideas to lisa04chair@usenix.org.

Final Program and Registration Information

Complete program and registration information will be available in August 2004 at the conference Web site, <http://www.usenix.org/lisa04>.

If you would like to receive the program booklet in print, please email your request, including your postal address, to conference@usenix.org.

Sponsorship and Exhibit Opportunities

The oldest and largest conference exclusively for system administrators presents an unparalleled marketing and selling opportunity for sponsoring and exhibiting organizations. Your company will gain both mind share and market share as you present your products and services to a prequalified audience that heavily influences the purchasing decisions of your targeted prospects. For more details please contact:

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