StirTrek 2017 Recap

On Friday May 5th, I attended StirTrek 2017 at the Schottenstein Center on the campus of Ohio State University. For those of you who are unfamiliar with this event, "Stir Trek is a one-day conference on May 5th, 2017 focused on teaching software developers, and others in the industry, the latest and greatest in technologies, techniques, and tools." (from https://stirtrek.com). Below is my recap of the conference as a whole and the sessions I attended.

Logistics

The Good:

Session options across all time slots offered all attendees solid choices from which to choose. Kudos to the volunteers (of which I was one) who spent lots of time reviewing session proposals to help select a very solid speaker and session lineup

Parking was plentiful and free. There was a bit of confusion about where to park on Game Night and whether or not one needed a pass but that was cleared up relatively quickly.

Schottenstein Center is centrally located in Columbus just off of SR-315 so arriving and departing were easy. This arena offers plenty of space inside the concourse area to move around and visit the sponsors so the time between sessions never felt crowded.

Food and beverages were easy to locate and plentiful. Feeding a group this large is always a challenge so I thought going the relatively easy route (bagels, donuts and coffee in the morning, prepacked sandwiches and chips for lunch) made a lot of sense.

Like all other conferences I attend, it was great to catch up and talk with my colleagues in the tech community. The list of familiar faces continues to grow.

The Not-So-Good:

There was no public wifi available. The venue probably made setting this up a bit difficult but in my opinion, not insurmountable. Fortunately, my cell phone plan offers tethering support. Those without this were not so lucky. Hopefully, this will be addressed at StirTrek 2018.

Sessions "rooms" were sectioned off seating areas separated by empty seating sections and curtains. This resulted in less than ideal acoustics. I personally found it difficult to hear speakers when sitting near the back because I don't think the sound carried well from the arena floor. And it was a bit distracting to overhear sounds coming from other sessions. Kudos to the StirTrek staff and the Schottenstein Center staff for coming up with a workable solution. If StirTrek remains at this location, hopefully the acoustics can be improved.

Sessions:

Are You Ready for Chaos? Horizontal Scaling in a Briefcase

After reviewing this session proposal, I immediately noted this as one I wanted to attend if ultimately selected. Unfortunately, this session fell a bit short of my expectations due to demo difficulties and due to a lack of more in depth technical information about how Cloudbase implements scaling and failover. The lack of public wifi may have had some impact on the demo difficulties.

Zero to DevOps in Under an Hour with kubernetes

I heard references to kubernetes on podcasts talking about containerization but until this session, I had not spend any time looking into it. This session ultimately proved to be a perfect intro with a demo that really showed off what kubernetes could do. The speaker was quite enthusiastic and was very knowledgeable. If you are not familiar with kubernetes and are looking into doing container orchestration, check out this presentation online along with the associated demos on GitHub. The links are below:

Presentation: http://slides.com/dalealleshouse/kube

Demo: https://github.com/dalealleshouse/zero-to-devops

Automate/Script all of the Things from a DBA Point of View

Automating and scripting updates across over 2,700 databases sounded like a really interesting topic. Unfortunately, this session only covered what CoverMyMeds is doing and did not go into any technical details about how the automation and scripting is implemented. Not covering the technical details was not due to a lack of time because this session ended 20 minutes early. Attendees were referred to a GitHub repo to get the "nuts and bolts".

CSS Architecture

I am currently working at a client where the large amount of SCSS files in the project (several hundred) makes developing and maintain styles very challenging. So, this session held quite a bit of appeal to me and it did not disappoint. The presenter did an excellent job of explaining a style breakdown and a style naming convention based on the style usage within markup that will make developing and maintaining styles within a project significantly more efficient and self-describing. I will certainly use this information going forward when working on web projects.

Final Comments

So, was attending StirTrek worth my time? Overall, I would say yes. I attended two really good sessions whose content will be directly applicable to my current and future work. I also had the opportunity to have really good conversations with colleagues in the tech community.