

# Develop in the Cloud - Karl Hakkarainen - Perl in the Cloud

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## Karl Hakkarainen Perl in the Cloud



**Karl Hakkarainen**, Consultant & Blogger, 10/5/2012

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The language that built the early Web still has a place in the cloud.

When you want to know the current state of Perl, you probably want to check with its author and Benevolent Dictator for Life, Larry Wall. You go to [his Website](#) and click on the [Perl](#) link.







This doesn't look good.

In spite of apparent inattention by its BDL (who recently [celebrated a birthday](#)), Perl is still an important language. The folks at RedMonk reviewed data from GitHub and Stack Overflow. They [found](#) that Perl is still in the far upper-right quadrant of programming languages along with C and its derivatives: Java, JavaScript, Python, Ruby, and PHP.

Why is Perl still used? People know it. It's solid. It runs everywhere. It's been around for a long time and there's a lot of legacy code that still works.

My first real encounter with Perl was in the CGI files used by Digital Equipment's VMS to power its Web server (c. 1993). At the time, the implementations were fairly simple and direct -- get some input, munge it a bit, fetch some other data, and deliver formatted output.

Since then, when I need to get something done, Perl remains the first wrench I reach for in the tool box.

System administrators can use Perl to access and manage cloud resources, for example at RackSpace or AWS. Most cloud services that provide APIs, such as Facebook, Amazon, or Salesforce, play nicely with Perl.

Amazon's [dnscurl](#) uses both Perl and XML. With dnscurl, you can manage Amazon's Route 53 DNS services. (The Route 53 name comes from the port number used by DNS services.)

The Apache http server includes mod\_perl, a persistent Perl interpreter that allows fast execution of Perl scripts.

Toph Whitmore, marketing vice president at ActiveState, [notes](#) that customers are continuing to ask for IDE support for both Python and Perl.

ActiveState's [Stackato](#) gives developers a platform-as-a-service configuration that sits on top of private or shared clouds. Developers and system administrators can move their existing configurations to the cloud without rewriting.

There are a few projects underway that will allow developers to run Perl on mobile devices. The [perldroid](#) project is bringing Perl to Android. You can embed Perl within your APK and as a stand-alone project. There are a few iOS implementations, but none running natively on devices that have not been jailbroken.

While a good number of resources are available for developers and administrators in the current V5 versions of Perl, the direction of the language is not yet entirely clear. Larry Wall has been silent on the subject of cloud computing.

Perl 6, under development since 2000, [includes](#) a couple of Web app modules as well as the standard server. Perl 6 is a major rewrite of the language, necessitating conversion and rethinking based on an evolutionary view of languages (human and computer). You can read more about Perl 6's design philosophy [here](#).

Tim O'Reilly [wrote about Perl in 2005](#): "It's a powerful, adaptable language, and the folks creating Perl 6 have a history of 'seeing around corners' and developing features that turn out to be just right for some emerging market."

That was seven years ago.

Perl 5 arrived just as the Web hit. Perl 6 may (or may not) arrive at the next major inflection point. Until then, Perl continues to work. It works well. It works hard. There are plenty of jobs for people who know Perl.