

HOME PLATE **TUX** shows you how to create a vacation Web page with Nvu



Choices available with open-source software



Linspire Reaches Out to the Open Source Community with Freespire

TUX

the first and only magazine for the new LINUX USER

Reviews:

- *Gadget Guy Takes a Few Portable Hard Drives for a Spin*
- *Delivering the News with Popular RSS Readers*
- *We Resurrect a Classic PC Game with OpenTTD*

ISSUE 14 • JUNE 2006

This Month TUX Shows You Not Only How to Konquer the Web with Kioslaves, but also CD Ripping and Many Other Essential Activities.

PLUS:

**A NEW DIRECTION FOR LINUX INTERNATIONAL:
A TALK WITH JON "MADDOG" HALL**

**¿QUÉ ESTÁ PASANDO AQUÍ?
LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGES WITH JVL AND STARDICT**

TUX TAKES AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT XANDROS 3 DELUXE LINUX DESKTOP

THIS MONTH, MANGO PARFAIT:

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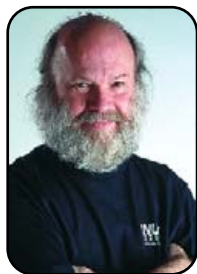


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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Open-Source Software: the Best Way to Ensure You Have Choices in the Future

A demanding project leverages the freedoms made possible by open-source licensing.

PHIL HUGHES

I don't mean to get geeky on you here, but I have been working with some other people on a project recently—probably working too much. But, these recent experiences offer another example of how Linux and open-source software fit in well with other computing platforms. They also help show what tools really are available to get your job done.

First, the project involves multiple people with different levels of computer experience. Although the Web and other servers and many of the desktop systems involved in the work are running Linux, they are not all running the same version of Linux, and there also are Microsoft and Mac desktops involved.

The project involves people spread over many locations on the planet and over many time zones, which basically means the only practical communication methods are e-mail and occasionally on-line chat. We use both. There's nothing special about the e-mail other than an assortment of e-mail clients are being used on an assortment of different systems.

For chat, we selected Jabber, which is a platform-independent protocol that handles instant

messages, chat rooms and a lot more. We run our own secure server for this, but if encryption isn't needed, public servers are available. We are using various clients, the program that you run on your desktop system, but the protocol is well defined and a published standard, so everything communicates with no problems.

For project organization, we use a wiki. If you are not familiar with a wiki, take a look at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki>. Besides offering a good definition, the Wikipedia site itself is possibly the largest example of what a wiki is. Many versions of wiki software are available. Most of them are free. We have used both MoinMoin (<http://moinmoin.wikiwikiweb.de>) and DokuWiki (wiki.splitbrain.org/wiki:dokuwiki).

A wiki offers remote access to information pages using a Web browser. You can modify those pages remotely from within your browser, making it easy to learn quickly. Depending on which wiki you choose, you may get image storage, access control facilities and a lot more. In any case, it is a handy tool for

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developing and updating documentation.

Our project involves storage of data in a database. Again, open-source software offers some good choices. The two most popular high-end database systems of the Open Source world are PostgreSQL (<http://www.postgresql.org>) and MySQL (<http://www.mysql.com>). People will debate which is “better”, but the reality is that both are very complete and powerful database management systems. Although we picked PostgreSQL for a number of reasons, including more recent experience with it, either could do the task at hand.

The development project is a Web application. Although the most popular language for developing Web applications is PHP, it seldom is the best. I don’t mean to pick on PHP here, but it has “evolved” a bit too much, and you will find many applications that either are poorly designed or poorly implemented.

On the other hand, Web development in both Python and Ruby tend to be better designed, and these languages encourage better design. Specifically, each language enables (excuse the the geek buzzword) object-oriented programming. Each of these languages also offers a nice development framework (and others not nearly as nice). For Python, that framework is called Django (<http://www.djangoproject.com>),

and for Ruby, it is called Rails (<http://www.rubyonrails.org>).

So, what is a development framework? It is essentially a set of programs that help you build the basic structure of a Web site with little work. The common word here, a word from construction, is that they build the scaffolding. This gives you a working, but far from optimal, application very quickly. This application scaffold is produced in such a way that it is easy to modify it to create the production version. For example, the generated Web pages may be functionally correct but not attractive. However, the structure is such that you need to modify only one thing (a template) to change the appearance of all the generated pages.

Although we haven’t started writing the actual application yet, we likely will use Rails rather than Django, and, thus, the application itself will be written in Ruby. But, along the way, we have used both Ruby and Python as languages to test concepts. Like Linux and many open-source projects, both languages work well with each other. That means, for example, that a program in one language can store data in a PostgreSQL database, and a program in the other could extract data to produce reports.

Along the way, we will need to produce graphic images for Web pages, spell-

check our work and perform the tens, if not hundreds, of other tasks we have all come to rely on computers to do for us. We most certainly will use Linux and open-source tools for all the tasks.

My point? You have choices. Each step along the way, I was offered many choices—all free—to get the job done. The choices of PostgreSQL over MySQL and Ruby with Rails over Python with Django were not hard and possibly not important. That is, for no cost, we can download all the options and test them out. The evaluation process was not encumbered by license fees and paperwork.

It also means what we saw as the best tool set for the job can be selected without needing to look at financial or political issues. In addition, because everything we selected is open source and well documented, we are not locked in. If, for example, we find that PostgreSQL was the wrong choice for our database, it would take very little work to replace it with another database, such as MySQL.

So, next time people suggest that selecting Linux and/or open-source software is painting yourself into a corner, suggest they think again. Choosing an open option today is the best way to ensure you will have choices in the future. ■

Phil Hughes is Group Publisher for SSC Media Corp.



FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF

Linspire Embraces the Open Source Community with a Proprietary Solution Twist

By combining a new community-driven Linux distribution with proprietary technology, Linspire will drive Linux adoption to new levels.

KEVIN SHOCKEY

At last month's 4th Annual Desktop Linux summit, Linspire announced an open-source, no-cost version of its operating system entitled Freespire. Kevin Carmony, Linspire's President and CEO, unveiled the Freespire Project in his keynote address, claiming that Freespire will eliminate the resistance some potential users have with using Linux on their desktop or laptop computers. Carmony hopes that offering proprietary drivers and software as a choice will create more desktop Linux users, because of the out-of-the-box legal support for MP3, DVD, Windows Media, QuickTime, Java, Flash, Real, ATI drivers, NVIDIA drivers, Adobe Acrobat Reader, third-party fonts and so on. Even though Linspire has made this new product announcement, it has no plans to eliminate its commercial Linspire offering. Indeed, like many other companies that support both open-source and commercial versions of software (for example,

Fedora and Red Hat and OpenSUSE and Novell), Freespire will become the proving grounds for new enhancements, helping to improve the commercial version of the Linspire OS.

Carmony explained in his address how Freespire is a community-driven and developed project, which has been under development for approximately two years. Still, the first beta version download won't be available until around August 2006. Freespire will be unique for open-source Linux distributions in that it will give users the choice to download a version that is 100% open source or one that includes proprietary software. As a free, community-driven distribution, Freespire should appeal to users, but it also will appeal to developers by including common software development tools by default. Although developers will be among the target users, Freespire will not target the server market; it will be opti-

mized for desktop and laptop computers.

Hopefully, a good part of the two years spent on Freespire thus far will have been on managing the Linspire/Freespire architecture. If they remain as one code base, this will simplify life for Linspire engineers; however, if with the addition of Freespire there are now two code bases, migrating functionality from one to the other might be difficult. It will be interesting to put the two distributions side by side when Freespire becomes available.

As part of this new project, Linspire also will release its Click and Run (CNR) software with an open-source license and include it in the Freespire Project. The CNR utility provides one-click graphical installation and de-installation of software from Linspire's CNR warehouse. According to information provided by the company, the CNR client has better than a 98% installation success rate, attributing most failures to modem drop-offs.

With the release of CNR as open source, it is clear that Linspire hopes, through adoption of Freespire and the adoption by other distributions of the Click and Run client, it will be able to drive up subscriptions (\$20 US for the basic CNR subscription) and software sales from its CNR warehouse (the CNR warehouse includes commercial programs, such as StarOffice, CrossOver Office, Cedega and many others). Clearly, with Freespire, I think the company will be successful; however, its dream of widespread adoption of CNR is a stretch. The community must perceive the CNR client to be of such great value that those projects will assume the task of modifying the client to work with non-Debian distributions. Because Linspire is a Debian derivative, it is reasonable to believe that Debian and all other derivatives could use the client with relatively little effort. Beyond Debian, I can't see Novell departing from YaST for SUSE or Red Hat/Fedora departing from Yum.

Perhaps the biggest question this announcement raises is, why now? Why after five years is Linspire finally releasing an open-source version of its operating system? According to the company, the answer revolves around laying the groundwork with OEM and retail channels and making sure that Linspire had a sound and viable business model first. So, when it started Freespire, Linspire was satisfied with the success of its model, and felt comfortable it would be around for a long

time. The second reason Linspire felt it was the right time is that before, the Open Source world probably wasn't ready to be open minded to the notion of including some proprietary software in a community distribution of Linux. Linspire's vision is that the community will see the value in such an approach as a way to further the adoption of Linux and open-source software.

In fact, Linspire believes the larger community will recognize that Freespire won't hurt the momentum of open source by offering the option of proprietary codecs, drivers and applications. It sees Freespire as an opportunity to influence the future of computing to become more open, by expanding Linux adoption and thus expanding its circle of influence by gaining a much larger user base. Linspire believes that a big portion of the world is turned off by Linux, because it doesn't legally support things like MP3, DVD, Java, Flash, Windows Media, QuickTime and so on, out of the box. The core premise Freespire was founded on is that asking millions of people to throw away their iPods (or other favorite MP3 player), or not legally watch DVDs on their computers, is just too much to ask. Linspire believes that the Freespire Project provides a free marketplace where the user can decide what software to install and use.

I agree with Linspire that many Windows users are looking for an easy "it just works"

alternative, and although media support is an important obstacle to breach, it is not the only or the largest hurdle. I wish Linspire would also announce soon the availability of Photoshop, AutoCAD, Quicken and Quickbooks within its CNR warehouse. For without these applications (and many more) and greatly increased support for proprietary hardware drivers, we'll still be missing the lion's share of the desktop market.

In at least providing a new alternative to grow the volume of Linux users, I commend Linspire on its new Freespire Project. With it, we'll hopefully be able to demonstrate objectively to companies like Adobe, Quicken and AutoDesk that there will be sufficient volume within Linux. Then, hopefully, these companies will decide to release a Linux version and fan the fires of widespread Linux desktop adoption. ■

Kevin Shockey is Editor in Chief of *TUX*.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Following the announcement of Freespire and writing this article, I applied for and was accepted onto the leadership board of the Freespire Project. It is an honor to join the board, and I look forward to reporting on the progress of the project as it matures.

LETTERS

Praise for “Linux’s Fundamental Difference”

I’m not much for writing letters, but after reading Kevin Shockey’s “Linux’s Fundamental Difference” in the May 2006 issue, I could not help myself. He hit the nail right on the head with his answer—control. The reason I joined the Linux camp was to get back the control I had when I first got into computers.

This brings back memories of why I like computers and really took an interest in them. My first computer was a Atari XL800, which I spent many hours on writing programs. And the reason I like to program was that I found I could save money, because I could write my own programs instead of spending money to buy them. I had control. Then came MS-DOS, and then MS Windows, which started to change my way of thinking. I found myself buying software, because it was cheap back then and quicker than writing my own code. (But this has changed—the quickness is there, but the cost is out of reach.)

Well, now that I joined Linux camp, I find that if I want to, I can get top-notch software, because others have made the code available for others to improve on (open source). In short, I really have the control

back that I had when I first got into computing. Kevin, thanks for the great article.

--
Irv Risch

I’m really glad my editorial hit the mark. When I discovered the answer, it was a bit of a revelation for me as well, so I knew I had to share it with everyone.—Ed.

Accentuate the Positive

I enjoy reading your editorials over all of the other articles in *TUX*. I support Windows Server and my company’s products that run on Windows Server. Recently, after seven years of not adopting Linux, I have embraced Linux. My company plans to offer products on Linux, and I see the writing on the wall. I see many positives, as your May 2006 editorial points out. The thing that upsets me most, and this does not include you, is the Windows-bashing in *TUX* and other communications that I purchase. Being open, honest and to the point does not have to include bashing. Bashing is a turn-off to folks like me that intend to use Linux and Windows. I recently vowed never to return to a local Linux Users Group (NTLUG) that spent at least half of the meeting bashing Microsoft rather than teaching me an alternative for my

benefit. Linux can stand on its own. Thank you and I’ll keep reading *TUX*.

--
Ron Hudson

I’ve spoken to many people on this point. We are a divisive and tribal species that reap perverse pleasure in alienating people. I learned a powerful lesson from one of the worst bosses I ever had. He thought that because he was intelligent, which he was, that meant everyone else was stupid, which they were not. My point is that one of our fundamental motivations is to be right, and sometimes we can feel right only by making someone wrong. Any company, any software or any product neatly fills in that equation, and voilà, through reverse deduction, we can claim someone is wrong, so we must be right. And, being right makes us feel better about ourselves. The tragedy is that we all do it to one extent or another. What you are calling for is my wish for the Open Source community.—Ed.

Looking for My Killer App

I’ve used a few distros at home over the years, but they’ve never lasted in the long run, and I’ve reverted to XP for my killer apps: games and kids’ home video editing/creation/burning to DivX/DVD for

playback on the big TV.

Checking out your back issues soon had me installing Kubuntu 5.10 onto my AMD64 PC to see the current state of desktop Linux. I'm a GNOME guy who grew up from Red Hat 5.2, SUSE and more recently, Ubuntu/Kubuntu, and I've even gone so far as to check out the "dark side" that is KDE. Good stuff—I'm having fun using KDE, and your great mag is providing a good starting point in that regard—thanks.

So, on to my killer apps. I can live with an XP partition for my occasional gaming addiction, but I'd like to know what my options are with regard to out-of-the-box video editing, similar to out-of-the-box Windows Movie Maker and the like. I'd like to take advantage of my 64-bit CPU rendering power and would rather follow the Linux path instead of Vista when that ships.

It looks like Diva and Kino are the two video-editing apps out there for Linux. Are there any others I'm missing or that may be coming down the pipe sometime soon? I'd rather just `apt-get install` them instead of jumping through fiery hoops in a yappy dog suit just to install them via their myriad of scripts. Any thoughts and future articles in this area?

--

iain charlton

Request for More Coverage of BSD

Just wanted to say kudos on a great magazine! I've been looking for a magazine like this that covers a lot of software available for Linux as well as different distributions and practical how-tos. I downloaded all your issues, and I have read about four magazines so far. I love your coverage on OpenOffice.org! I've been using OpenOffice.org for more than a year now, but there is still so much to learn. Your articles have been very informative. I would like to see a little more coverage on the BSDs, which are also free, although a lot of the software you cover still applies to BSD (such as KDE). Maybe an article on the up-and-coming DesktopBSD and PCBSD aimed at making FreeBSD easier to use (both use KDE) just to make the readers aware of alternatives?

I have been playing around with Linux since the mid 1990s off and on, but I'm not an expert (except for installing it). I've gone from Slackware, Red Hat 6.0, Mandrake 8.0 (fell in love with its user-friendliness) all the way to Mandriva 2006.0. I'm currently interested in trying Kubuntu and seeing how easy it is to use. I really believe that I'm at a point where I can migrate most of my machines over to Linux/BSD and be happy without Windows except for certain development projects.

--

J. Atkinson

Thanks for the Smackdown

I discovered *TUX* in its second issue and have never missed an issue since. By far, your greatest single piece to date is the Distribution Smackdown. I am not entirely new to Linux. I have used a variety of distributions during the past four years, but I still felt the desire to keep exploring to learn more about the different distributions available. Comparing seven in one place really helped me there. I had used Mandriva, Fedora and SUSE. I also had played with Ubuntu/Kubuntu, and partly because of what I had read in *TUX*, I had tried Linspire. Thanks to the Smackdown, I decided to give MEPIS a try to see how it really did on some of the less Linux-friendly media I had, like the QuickTime movies from my digital camera.

Download, burn, install, play—as advertised, it worked better on every type of media I tried than anything before had done. I still plan to keep tabs on various distributions and take advantage of the improvements born of competition between them, but I am switching my main OS to MEPIS.

Sadly, the Smackdown was not fully satisfying. I was disappointed when I got to the "review" of the Editors' Choice. It seems that the party shouts of "Go Mandriva!" interfered with actually writing a review where the various areas were broken down. For example, Mandriva scored a five on multimedia, but even on reviewing the

article, I can't find more than a passing reference on the order of "Mandriva plays media" to explain how it got that score.

Once again, thanks for the Smackdown. It should be a regular feature—perhaps annual. Next time, try to make sure that the party for the winner doesn't drown out an actual review of the highest-rated distribution.

--
David

Impatience Slows Linux Adoption

In the April 2006 issue of *TUX*, the impatience displayed by some hobbyists toward "the current influx of Linux users" demonstrates at least one reason why Linux is not more popular than it is and should be.

New Linux users don't want Linux to be like Windows; they want Linux to be as easy to use as Windows. They don't want the DRM and spyware-ridden Windows bloatware any more than longtime Linux fans do. And, they're just as supportive of the concept of open-source software as those ready to compile their own installations.

Many of them, however, are not hobbyists. They truly don't have time to construct Linux kits. They have real jobs to do with their new Linux software. They need to write letters, print labels, send out bills, scan photographs and publish newsletters. The hours they have to spend figuring out how to install or use

their software come straight out of their income or profit margin.

And, Linux distributions continue to get better, become easier to install, and more functional, because more and more new Linux users persevere despite the snobbish attitudes of some hobbyists who would like us all to go away.

--
Robert Smits

Kudos for the Letters Section

Great magazine. Not only are the articles useful and interesting, but even some of the letters contain very helpful tips for new Linux users. I found the letter on Adding Multimedia to SUSE 10.0 by Petar Sarajcev [May 2006 issue] extremely useful. Offer him a regular column!

--
Dr Stephen Hinton

Praise and Article Suggestions

First of all, I would like to thank you immensely for filling a need with your magazine. I am an in-house Digital Media Designer in the Washington DC Metro Area (remember when we were just called Graphic Designers?) and I am hooked on Linux, although at work I have a PC and a Mac on my desk. I have been unsuccessful at getting our IT department to allow me to partition the PC so I can install Linux on it. In addition to expressing my gratitude for your efforts, I would like to know if any of the following topics

are forthcoming in your magazine, as I will be waiting with baited breath.

Scribus: a more in-depth look, particularly with its publishing and interactive PDF tools. Right now, I think Scribus is the closest alternative to running a full-blown version of Acrobat in Linux for creating interactive PDF documents. I would love to see you guys do a mini-series on it in the same way that you did one on Inkscape.

Blender: I have been studying this one for a little more than a year. One of the most powerful open-source tools out there, I would love to see a series on this one. As the only designer where I work, I use 3-D tools to create digital imagery for my layouts and multimedia presentations. I find Blender to be a very useful addition to my arsenal.

Kino and Cinelerra: these are the one-two punch for video in Linux. Again, I would love to read any articles you would publish on these.

Jahshaka: ironically enough, I have not been able to get the newer versions of Jahshaka to run on my Fedora Core (GNOME) or Mandriva (KDE) distributions. It seems to run like a clock on my XP computer at work; however, I attribute this to the fact that my XP box at work is a P4/3GHz, while my home box is a PIII/1.1GHz (the on-line documentation even states that it was being devel-

oped on 2GHz boxes). I will be choosing a 3GHz box in the near future and installing Mandriva on it, so I will let you know. The main reason that I mention Jahshaka is that I find it to be one of the few contenders to being a true open-source motion graphics editor with any teeth out there.

Fink (for Mac OS X): I am not a programmer, but I would like to run several of the above tools through OS X, and their respective sites state that this is possible through Fink. I know for a fact that it is possible to run Inkscape, Scribus and GIMP through Fink.

I have no idea if there is a community of designers out there who would be interested in reading articles on the aforementioned software packages; if not, thank you for listening. I have to get back to downloading the rest of your back issues. Oh, and tell Mango that, as cartoons and comics were the things that initially got me into art, I'm a huge fan of Ghost in the Shell, Vampire Hunter D and anything Shirow. Thank you for your time.

--

graphixgeek

We'll be delving more into Scribus, and introducing Blender sounds like a great idea. We'll be getting into video editing in our Linux Media Center issue coming in August 2006.—Ed.

Control Extends to Privacy as Well

Many thanks for your magazine. It is a wonderful help and resource for all of the computer users who are and have been moving to Linux. I was reading Mr Shockey's article in the May 2006 issue and his answer of control. I wanted to mention that control also comes in when Microsoft and other proprietary software allow themselves to look into your computer to see where you browse, where you send e-mail and purchase things. This is a privacy issue that certainly comes under your heading of control. With the music and video market trying to keep users from sharing products they want to see, they invade your privacy and control what you can and can't do with your computer. For example, if you don't have the proper software—say, Windows and some other proprietary software—you won't be able to play certain DVD movies or music CDs.

They may even check your hardware and mac addresses, and so forth, without your permission or knowledge. Privacy is a big issue. I believe that your big-time CEO might be interested and it comes in under what you say of control.

Thanks again for the great magazine and community of cooperation and collaboration, freedom and right for the individual as well as the group. These are very basic things that make us more cultured and

civilised and can lead us to our higher selves and higher than the godhead of commercialism. It can help the world live together in harmony and diversity, peace and opportunity and the openness and respect to grow into our true highest selves, which can respect the planet and its resources as well as the groups and individuals that live on it.

--

Markandeya

The Need for One Distro to Rule Them All?

I am now retired but have used, built and supported PC hardware and software since the 8086 and DOS. I have been dabbling with Linux distros for a few years but still regard myself as a newbie. Referring to the article "Linux's Fundamental Difference" in the May 2006 edition of *TUX*, I find that the biggest difference is that there is only one Microsoft Windows (that is, the current XP version let's say), but there are umpteen Linux distros. Yes, there is strength in diversity, but there is also confusion. Your excellent magazine helps to focus the attention of a newbie onto the top ten distros at any one time, but even the top ten change from year to year. For me, the most annoying feature of Linux is that it is split four ways between GNOME, KDE, Debian-based and RPM-based, all of which have pros and cons. Fewer choices would be better long term, as this is currently a repeat of

VHS or Betamax, -R or +R and so on. What we need is a +_R now please.

Picking a winner out of all these and deciding where best to invest your time as a newbie is a nightmare. If I had to, I could live with one of your current top ten if Microsoft folded up tomorrow. And if that happened, I might eventually find more than a handful of friends who used Linux from whom I could seek advice, assuming that they picked the same one as me. So my somewhat controversial opinion on Linux is that it is a hopeless case—or, rather, umpteen hopeless cases at the moment. Having said that, I can appreciate that the writing is on the wall and one day, possibly in my lifetime, it could make it into the big time. My definition of making it into the big time is when my 15 year old daughter knows as much about Linux as she does about Windows. Okay, it's not going to be my daughter but maybe it will be her daughter or granddaughter? I am at least happy that my daughter knows of the existence of Linux as something strange that Dad uses on his PC, but that is where it stops. So the difference between Windows and Linux? Windows is a proprietary technology that has been focused into successive single products that have worldwide success, and Linux is public domain, unfocused and has umpteen products with no real worldwide suc-

cess. Linux has at best isolated regional successes—Fedora in the US, SUSE in Europe and Ubuntu in Africa.

My letter may not be well received in your mag, but if it helps to focus the Linux cause in any way I will be pleased.

--
Bob Owen

Thanks for the great letter. This brings into focus the most critical issues for new Linux users. After choosing to adopt Linux, they are faced with countless decisions and alternatives. However, refuting these choices in some ways refutes everything that makes Linux and open source special. I would go so far as to say that I believe that Linux and open-source's ability to meet even the smallest of needs, fundamentally makes it much more desirable than anything previously available. The opposite approach is to build one piece of software and try to make it do everything for everybody. With this approach, most users end up using a small percentage of the software they acquire.

If you are looking for some blanket advice, any newcomer to Linux that finds the alternatives too perplexing should turn to the commercial distributions that are aiming to make the end-user experience as simple as possible. The two distribution options I would recommend are Linspire and Mandriva.—Ed.

Slackware Review Please

This is my third mail; however, none of my previous mails have been published. Still I have not lost hope. I hope that at least this one will be published.

I am disappointed to find that Slackware was not included in the distribution smackdown of the April 2006 Issue. I accept that Slackware is not as simple as many of the modern distros, but it is definitely not a difficult thing to handle. It would get a good score in many of the sections considered in the smackdown. It has excellent support for multimedia too. Several common formats like MP3 and DVDs can be played out of the box. It is also completely free of cost, and it is rock stable by nature. Even though it was not included in the smackdown, it would be great if you could do a review of it as a separate article.

--
Chandru

Although Slackware isn't known for its popularity with new Linux users (which is why we didn't review it in the Smackdown issue), we'll review it next month.—Ed.

A Scared Reader Sounds Off on the Digital Millennium Copyright Act

As I explore Linux more and more, I'm running into discussions about the Digital Millennium Copyright Act. And, it's scary.

Let's back up a bit. I run Windows XP, and

I run Linspire 5.0.

Linspire has shown me that there is an alternative to Windows. So far, so good. Now I'm looking at Ubuntu. So, I installed it. But, it doesn't play my DVDs or film clips and so on. Looking around the Web, I found information on Automatix. But, it appears, if you live in the US, installing Automatix is a crime.

TUX needs to do an in-depth story on DMCA, the Linux distros that allow users to play DVD/music content legally and the programs and apps out there that may place us in legal jeopardy.

No one, on any of the forums I've visited, can give me a definitive answer. Frankly, I'm erasing my HD of Ubuntu until I get an explanation from someone in the know. You folks at *TUX* just may be the ones to provide it for me and many others. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

--

Mark

Thanks for sharing your concern and shedding a little light on this confusing issue. I agree with you; I'll address this personally in our August Linux Media Center Issue.—Ed.

Looking for Linux Printing Help? Try TurboPrint

David A. Tigue writes that one has to be careful about buying printers that are also Linux-friendly [May 2006 Letters]. I can say "amen" to that as I found out after

purchasing a Canon printer that they are the equivalent of Windoze modems—that is, they work only with Windoze. However, there is a fairly cheap and straightforward way out: there is a package called TurboPrint that allows strange printers such as Canon to be used under Linux. I can recommend it as my expensive Canon i860 is now usable.

--

Croombe F. Pensom

Another Point of Control Gained by Using Linux: Control over Your Data

Regarding "Linux's Fundamental Difference" in the May 2006 issue, I agree with you that the biggest difference between Windows and Linux is the control. But not necessarily control over costs and so forth, but control over your data. Who owns your data? That is the response I would use. This is one of the main reasons that I can tell as to why the Council of Massachusetts is wanting to get all documents in ODF as standard.

I also came across this at home. I wanted to sort my photos, tag them and so on—20,000 of them. So on my Linux desktop I used digiKam. It has a nice interface and just worked.

Now, my wife wanted to do some of the sorting on her Windows notebook. But digiKam is not available for that. So she had a look around and found Adobe Photo

Album, which has almost all the features she wanted. But once she started to sort things out, we found that we couldn't get the data that we had entered out of it. Now Adobe owned my data, my tags and descriptions, even if not the photos themselves.

Now, with digiKam, it stores the data in an SQLite database, which I can read with standard tools that have nothing at all to do with digiKam.

Sure, I might have trouble decoding the tables (which I didn't, by the way), but then the code on how it all ties together is in the digiKam source anyway. So in this case, I own the data.

Now you could say that the program has a way to export the data out to something that can be read (such as XML, text, HTML and so on), and then I have my data. But if that is not the default (something easy to read), then when it comes time to migrate, or use that data, does the original program still exist, work or have something that will run it?

So, to sum it all up, I would answer that the biggest difference between a proprietary and open-source solution is control of the data and ownership of the data.

Thank you for the wonderful mag that I get to read, and for the time to read this.

--

Fran Firman ■



Q&A with Mango Parfait

Mango gets a better answer to fast clocks, gives advice to an NVIDIA TNT2 user, provides tips to a user of buggy Fedora Core 3 and shows you how to integrate on-screen-display messages into your applications.

MANGO PARFAIT

I love spring. Spring is when the pretty flowers bloom. I take pictures of pretty flowers. I paint pretty flowers. Flowers are not as pretty as I am, but they are pretty enough for pictures and paintings.

My boyfriend Otaku thinks I am too old fashioned. I use a 35mm Nikon N90S camera to take my pictures. It uses real film not digital film. I like real film. I like the Kodachrome colors. I like the depth-of-field preview feature on my Nikon camera. It shows me what will be in focus and what will not be in focus. This way I can change the camera settings to take a sharp picture of a flower and keep the leaves in the background blurred. Some digital cameras can do this too, but I still like my Nikon.

Why? I print my own photographs too. I use Ilfochrome Classic. Somebody told me it used to be called Cibachrome. I do not know why they changed the name. I only know I like the way Ilfochrome prints look. They do not look like the real flowers. They are brighter, and there is bleeding and high contrast. Some people think this is bad, but I think it makes the flower pictures look so pretty. I do not know any way to get pictures from an ink jet printer that look as good as my Ilfochrome pictures, so I do not care if I am old fashioned. I am too young to be old fashioned anyway. I am just fashioned.

I like the way you fashion your questions with passion. But you do not send me as many questions now. What happened? Are you afraid of me? How can you be afraid of a cute, humble, delicate princess such as me? I will not bite you, I promise. Please send me more questions.

Q In your column in the May 2006 issue, you advised Nils, who had a clock problem with an ECS computer to try several software solutions. If the ECS computer uses a 64-bit microprocessor, the more likely problem is that the clock is running double speed under MEPIS. My Compaq Presario 2175US uses an AMD Turion chip, and I had the exact same problem. The solution, rather simple, is to add noapic to the boot line in GRUB.—*Mark*

A I thought of the same answer, but I did not want to say it.

Okay, I did not think of the same answer. You have good information, and I think that this is the problem Nils has with his computer. Why? Because he says his clock runs two times as fast as it should run. I never have a problem with my computer clocks running twice as fast as they are supposed to run. They run way too fast, but not twice as fast.

Thank you very much for this information. I hope Nils reads this issue, just in case this is the problem with his computer, and this is why his clock is running too fast.

Q I am using NVIDIA TNT2 Pro and am wondering if I should install the NVIDIA Linux drivers (for OpenSUSE 10). Any idea what the effect will be? Will it enhance the graphics, or is it good only for 3-D? I added Guru's FTP as my installation source and a few others, but I am still unable to use YaST to find the NVIDIA driver to install. What should I do in order to install the

NVIDIA driver using YaST? I went to the NVIDIA Web site to download the driver and noticed that I had two options: to download the newest driver or download the driver for TNT2 specifically, which is dated 2002.

Which driver should I use?—Michal

A The NVIDIA proprietary driver is most tuned for 3-D performance. The NVIDIA TNT2 Pro is an old graphics card, so it does not do 3-D as well as a new card. The proprietary driver will not improve your display enough to be worth your trouble. So do not worry about using the special driver. Use the normal driver.

You can buy a cheap new NVIDIA graphics card that is so much better than the TNT2 Pro that you will not believe the difference. Here is your problem. If you are using a TNT2 Pro, I think you are using an old computer with an old, slow AGP slot. If you buy a new NVIDIA card, it will not work very well in this system. So, you still will not get much better graphics with the new card and the NVIDIA proprietary driver.

I think you must upgrade more stuff if you want to use fancy 3-D on your computer. Here is how I think you should upgrade. Look behind the computer. Do you see where the power cord is attached to the power supply? Unplug this power cord. Do not throw away the power cord. You will need it later. Now give away your old computer and buy a new one. Put the new computer where the old one was. Now plug the power cord from the old computer into the power supply of the new computer. You are done.

Maybe your new computer comes with its own power cord. That is okay. Now you have a new computer and an extra power cord. When you get the new computer working, let me know and I will tell you how to install the NVIDIA driver.

Q I have tried so many different places to solve this problem—Google, forums, other magazines—and no one has been able to solve it for me! You are my last hope to solve what is a very annoying problem! While I’m working away in Linux—this problem has occurred for me in both Ubuntu and Fedora—the window I’m in just disappears! It has happened when I’m listening to audio in the window and the audio has kept playing but the window is gone. More recently, however, the processes are seeming to disappear from the system monitor as well.

I can’t believe this is a problem for all Linux users, because it’s so annoying, nobody would ever use it! I have been using Fedora for nearly six months now, and I am very happy with everything, besides the disappearing windows...please help!—Jon

A I think you are running Fedora Core 3 and GNOME, right? I think to myself, GNOME uses Metacity for a window manager for a long time, right? Fedora Core 3 must be using Metacity, right? But I do not think I am right, because many people who use Fedora Core 3 complain about disappearing windows. The answer is always that there is a bug in the sawfish window manager. The sawfish window manager used to be called sawmill. It is important for you to know this, because someday you may play a trivia game and someone will ask you, “What was sawfish called before it was called sawfish?” Now you can win a point because you know the answer is sawmill.

Maybe you can get a fixed version of sawfish for Fedora Core 3. I do not think so, because I know many people who complain about this problem and they do not know where to get the fix.

I do know three ways you can avoid this bug.

Here is one way to work around the bug. You can add a window list to the panel. Do not think I am talking about a taskbar. I am not talking about a taskbar. I mean a drop-down window

STOP USING SAWFISH AND SWITCH TO A WINDOW MANAGER THAT WORKS.

list. I think the windows will show up in this list even when they disappear. Select the window that disappeared from this list, and it should reappear like magic.

You also can change window managers. Stop using sawfish and switch to a window manager that works. If you are using GNOME, there are many other window managers that will work. Metacity works, and it is the default window manager for GNOME. IceWM works too, and there is a version made for GNOME.

I want to tell you the menu choices to add a window list or change window managers, but Fedora Core 3 is too old for me. I do not use it. I do not want to guess about the commands, so I hope you will find the right menu choices on your own.

But I think these are bad answers. Here is my best answer. Fedora Core 5 is ready now. Why do you not upgrade from Fedora Core 3 to Fedora Core 5? You can upgrade to Fedora Core 4 if this is too much change. This will fix the disappearing window problem and give you the better software that is available in the latest versions.

FUN WITH OSD

I have a fun trick to tell you. I think maybe you have a television that shows a green volume number or slider when you change the volume, right? This is called on-screen-display. Maybe you even have an on-screen-display for things like the volume on your computer. Did you know you can make your own on-screen-display messages?

Here is how. First, you need to install the on-screen-display package. The package is called `xosd-bin` for my distribution. Maybe it is called `xosd` for your distribution. You look for it. I am sure you will find it okay. Install this package with your favorite

package manager.

This installs a program called `osd_cat`. Make sure you have `osd_cat` installed. Open a terminal or simply press Alt-F2 in KDE, and type the command `osd_cat`, then press the Enter key. If KDE complains (or you see an error at a command line in the terminal), you do not have the right `xosd` package installed.

Now, let's try to use `osd_cat`. The command is not very friendly. So I will not bore you with all of the details on why the command I am giving you looks the way it does. Trust me. This should work for you. Press Alt-F2 in KDE to type in a command, and then type this:

```
echo "Hello" | osd_cat -p middle -A
↳center -f *-lucida-*-*-*-*-*240
```

Do this with careful typing. The hard part is the font which is `*-lucida-*-*-*-*-*240`. There are five stars with dashes before you get to the number 240. The other hard part is the vertical line after "Hello". This is a vertical bar that is above the backslash (`\`) on your keyboard. This command should be all one line when you type it (there isn't enough space to make it all one

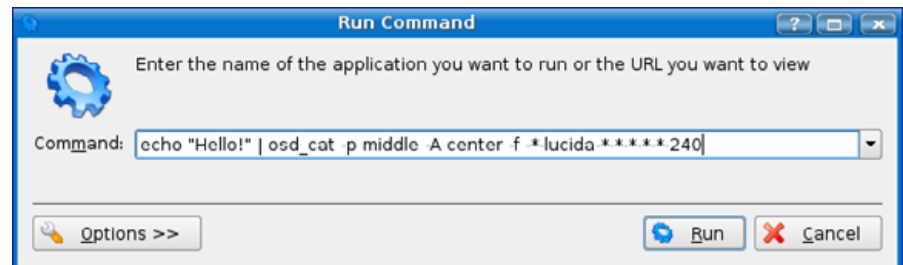


Figure 1. Run `osd_cat` in the KDE command window.

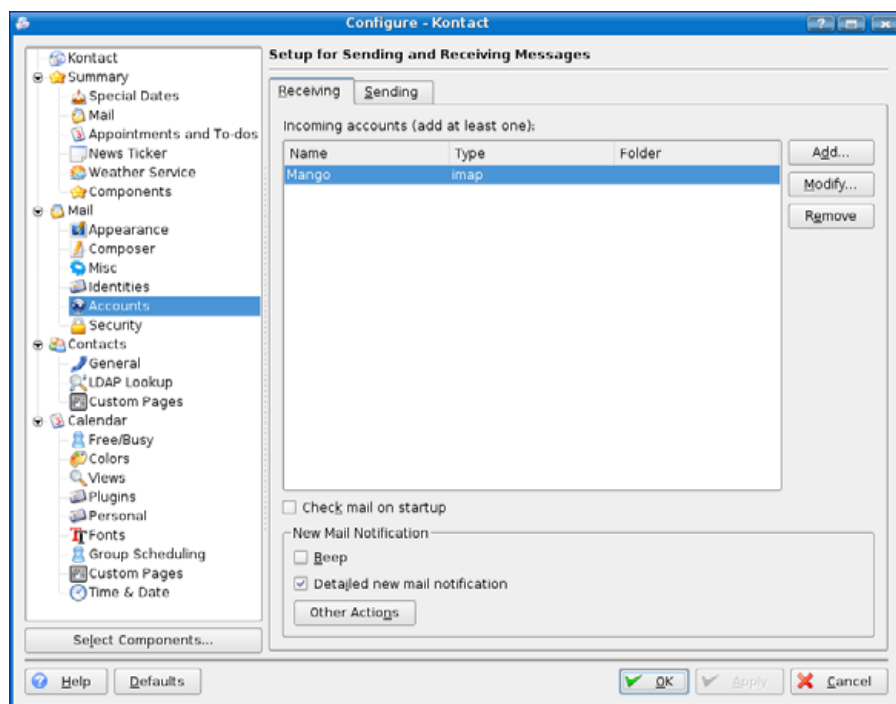


Figure 2. Mail Settings for Kontact

line here, so we add a continuation arrow).

If you pressed Alt-F2 in KDE you should see something like what you see in Figure 1.

Did you type it okay? Press Enter. You should see a big red “Hello” in the middle of the screen. Clap for yourself! You put an on-screen-display message on your screen. If you do not see “Hello” in the middle of the screen, maybe you typed something incorrectly. Maybe you do not have the lucida font installed. You should have the lucida font installed. It is a very popular font.

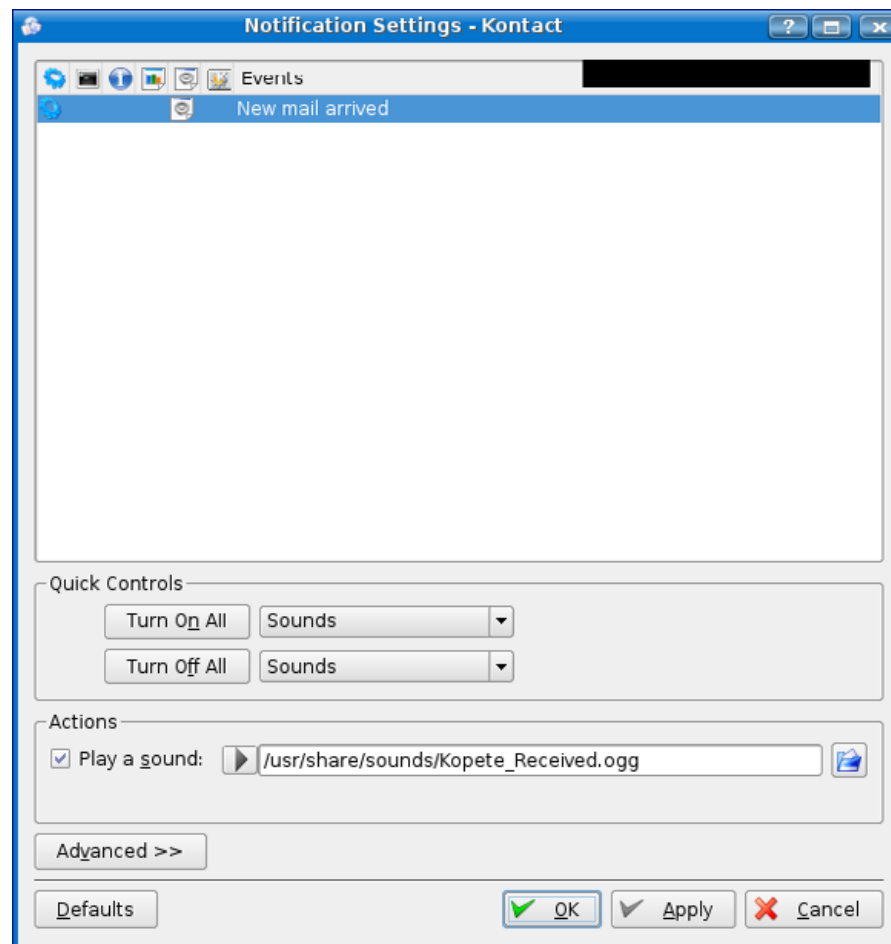


Figure 3. Setting How Kontact Will Notify You When Mail Arrives

I know you are thinking, “What is the point? Why do I want to say hello to myself?” You are very impatient. Maybe you need to stop drinking so much green tea or switch to

decaf coffee. I am getting to the good part. Be patient. It will not take long. I am not the kind of person who rambles on and on and wastes your time before I get to the good part. I get to it right away. You wait and see. I do not dilly dally. I do not even dilly. I go right past dilly and dally and tell you the good parts.

By the way, did I tell you about my friend Bunny and her obsession with Armadillos? I am teasing you. I will get to the good part now.

You can tell some applications to run a program to alert you when something important happens. Kontact has this feature. Kontact is the KDE personal information manager. It contains Kmail, a mail program. Open up Kontact. From the main menu, click Settings→Configure Kontact. Click on Accounts in the list on the left. You should see something like what you see in Figure 2.

Click on the Other Actions button. You should see a window like the one shown in Figure 3.

You can tell Kontact to play a sound when mail arrives. This is good. But maybe other programs use the same sound for different reasons. So how do you know that the sound means you have new mail? We are going to fix that. You must press the Advanced >> button first. Then you will see a screen like the one shown in Figure 4.

Do you see that you can execute a program in addition to play a sound? This is what you want to do. Click the box that says execute a program. Then, use the edit field to type in a command like the one we have above with a little change:

```
echo "Mango has new mail!" | osd_cat -p middle
  ↪-A center -f *-lucida*-*-*-*-240
```

Do not use the name Mango unless your name is Mango. If

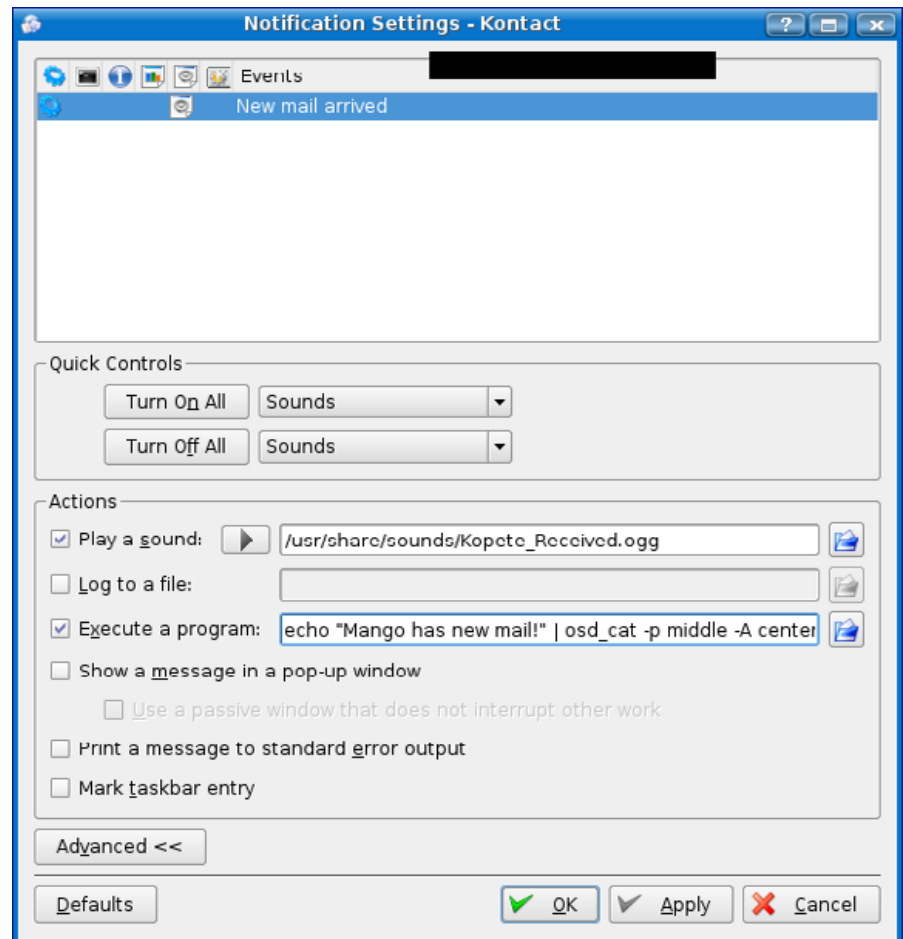


Figure 4. Advanced Mail Notification Settings

your name is Mango, I am pleased to meet you. I am so happy to meet someone else named Mango. Maybe we are related? If your name is not Mango, I feel sorry for you, but you still need to put your name in the place of Mango in this command.

Click the Apply button and then the Okay button. Close the settings windows until you get back to the Kontact program.

If you typed everything okay, you should hear the incoming mail sound and see a message on your screen whenever new mail arrives. See Figure 5 for an example. The example shows the message on a blank screen. If you are using an application like a word processor, the message will still show up on top of your word processor.

The program `osd_cat` will display the message for five seconds. If you want to change the time it waits before it takes away the message, add `-d <time in seconds>` to the command. If you want the message to stay on the screen for ten seconds, the new command would be:

```
echo "Mango has new mail!" | osd_cat -d 10 -p
➔middle -A center -f *-lucida-*-*-*-*-*240
```

Not every application will let you run a command when something important happens. But some programs do. J-Pilot is another personal information program that lets you run a command for an alarm, like when J-Pilot must tell you that you have an appointment. Play with the applications you use and see if they

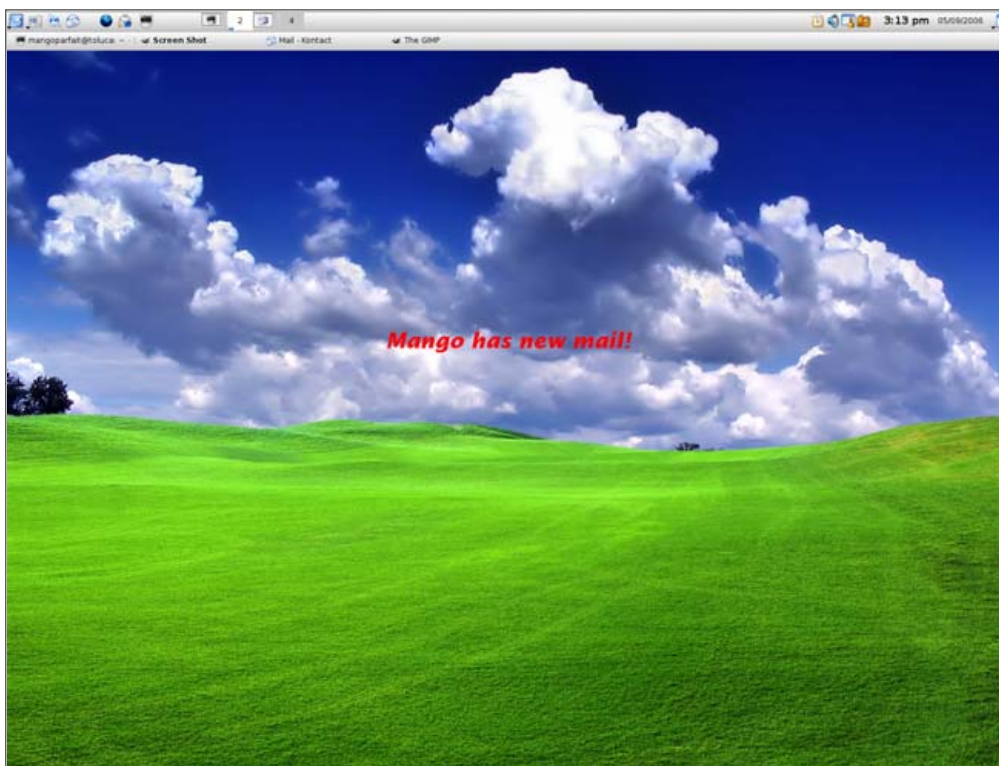


Figure 5. Mango has a new mail alert.

let you run commands for alerts. It is nice to have an on-screen message for an alarm because it is harder to ignore than a sound.

Have fun! Keep sending me your questions!■

I am a sweet, humble, delicate and very cute genius who is at your service to answer your Linux questions. Send your questions to mango@tuxmagazine.com. I am deeply sorry that I do not have time to respond to anyone directly by e-mail, but I will select as many questions as I can and answer them here.

Learning Foreign Languages with jVLT and StarDict

For many new users, the breadth of free applications available becomes one of the most appealing features of Linux. Dmitri Popov introduces two such applications available to help learn a foreign language.

DMITRI POPOV

Plenty of textbooks and teaching materials can help you learn foreign languages one way or another. Yet, there is no way to learn a foreign language without memorizing vocabulary and looking up words in a dictionary. This is difficult and often not very exciting work, but a few tools can make the process of acquiring new words and expressions a bit more tolerable and effective.

JVLT

jVLT (<http://jvlt.sourceforge.net>) is described as, “a flash-card-based vocabulary learning tool”, but there is much more to it than that. Besides the flash-card part called Quiz, the application also contains rather useful Vocabulary and Examples modules that allow you to store not only words and their translations, but also other useful context information. jVLT is a Java-based application, so before you can run it, make sure you have the Java Runtime Environment (JRE) installed on your machine. If your distribution doesn't include JRE, you can download it free of charge from <http://www.java.com>. jVLT is available as a .jar file that requires no installation. Simply download the latest version from <http://prdownloads.sourceforge.net/jvlt/jvlt-0.8.1.jar?download> and run it by double-clicking on the `jvlt-x.x.x.jar` file. If double-clicking doesn't work, launch the terminal, switch to the application's directory and run the `java -jar jvlt-x.x.x.jar` command.

Once jVLT is up and running, you must populate it with vocabulary data. Click on the Create new file icon, and press the Add button. This opens the Add entry dialog window, where you enter a word, its pronunciation and senses (translations and their definitions). The ability to manage multiple senses sets jVLT apart from other similar applications and allows you to capture all possible meanings of the word. Moreover, if you press the

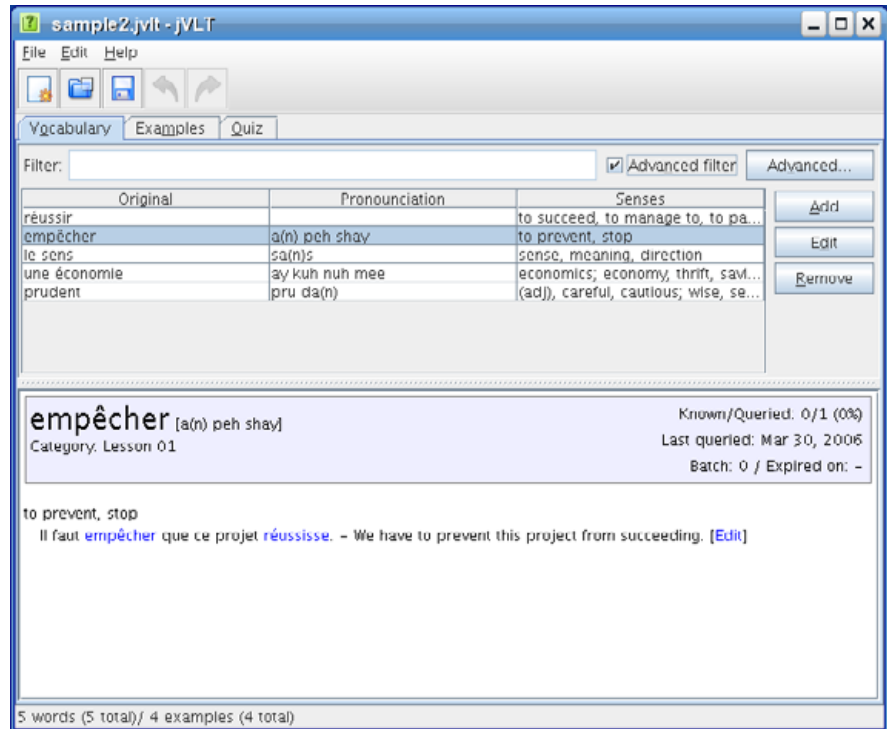


Figure 1. jVLT includes three modules to help you learn new words.

Advanced button, you can add more information about the word, such as categories and multimedia files. Under the Categories tab, you can assign multiple categories to the word, which comes in handy when you want, for example, to browse the words from a particular lesson or topic. In the Multimedia files section, you can add a sound file and a picture. Once you've added all the word's data, press the OK button. In this way, you can add as many words as you like.

As you keep adding new entries to jVLT, locating certain words simply by

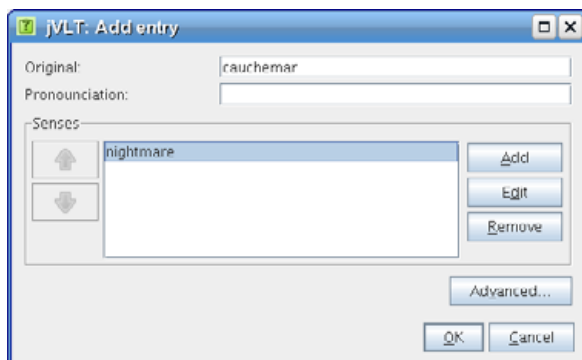


Figure 2. Adding a Word to the jVLT Vocabulary Data

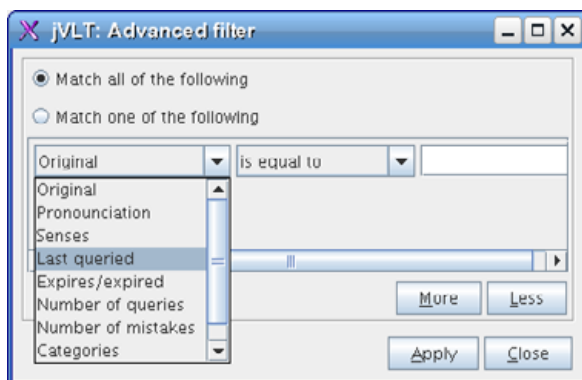


Figure 3. Using filters, you quickly can find words that match the defined criteria.

the database. In this way, you can not only record the words' meanings, but also their real-life usage. To add a new example sentence, click on the Examples tab and press the Add button. Enter the example and its translation in the respective fields. To link the example to a word in the database, select the desired word in the example sentence. This displays the word and its senses in the lower part of the window. By default, jVLT displays the exact matches to the selected word. This means that if you want to connect the

scrolling through the list becomes more difficult. Fortunately, jVLT includes a filtering feature that makes it easier to view the words that match the defined criteria. If you tick the Advanced filter check box, you can define a filter based on one or multiple criteria. For example, you can define a filter that finds all the words belonging to a particular category (assuming you've assigned categories), having a certain expiration date, having specified senses and so on.

These are all useful features, but what really makes jVLT stand out from the crowd is its Examples section. Basically, jVLT allows you to add example sentences and link them to the words in

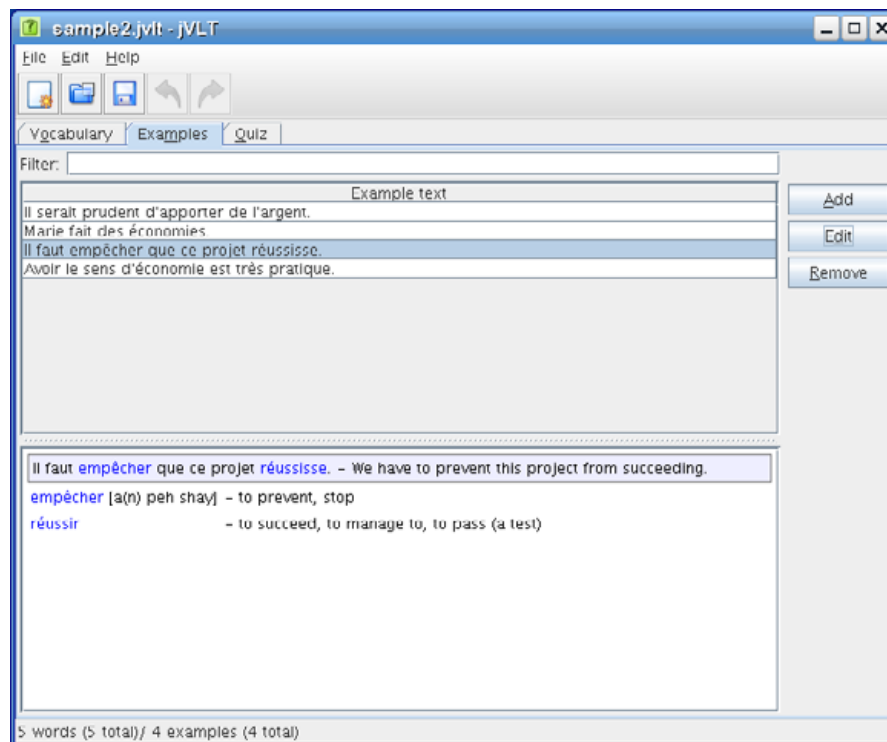


Figure 4. The Examples section lets you add example sentences and link words to them.

verb connu to its infinitive form connaître, you have to edit the word manually in the Filter field. Next, select the sense you want and press the Add button. The clever bit is that you can link multiple words to the same example—provided, of course, that these words are in the example sentence. When you are satisfied with the result, press OK.

Now that you've added the words, you are ready to start memorizing them using jVLT's Quiz section. This part is loosely based on the selective learning system proposed by German psychologist Sebastian Leitner in the 1970s. The purpose of this system was to make learning using flash cards more efficient and less time consuming than the traditional method. Leitner's

system divides flash cards into groups, and how often you review the cards in a group depends on the group's level of difficulty. In jVLT, all the words are placed in different batches. During a quiz, words are moved into a "higher" batch if you know the word. Moreover, the word becomes inactive for a predefined period of time, meaning that it will not appear in the subsequent quizzes. The word is re-activated once its inactivity period has expired. It may sound a bit complicated, but jVLT hides all the theory behind a user-friendly interface.

Before you start a quiz, you can decide whether you want to include all the words in the database or only a subset of them. This feature can come in handy if you want to brush up on words from a particular category or lesson.

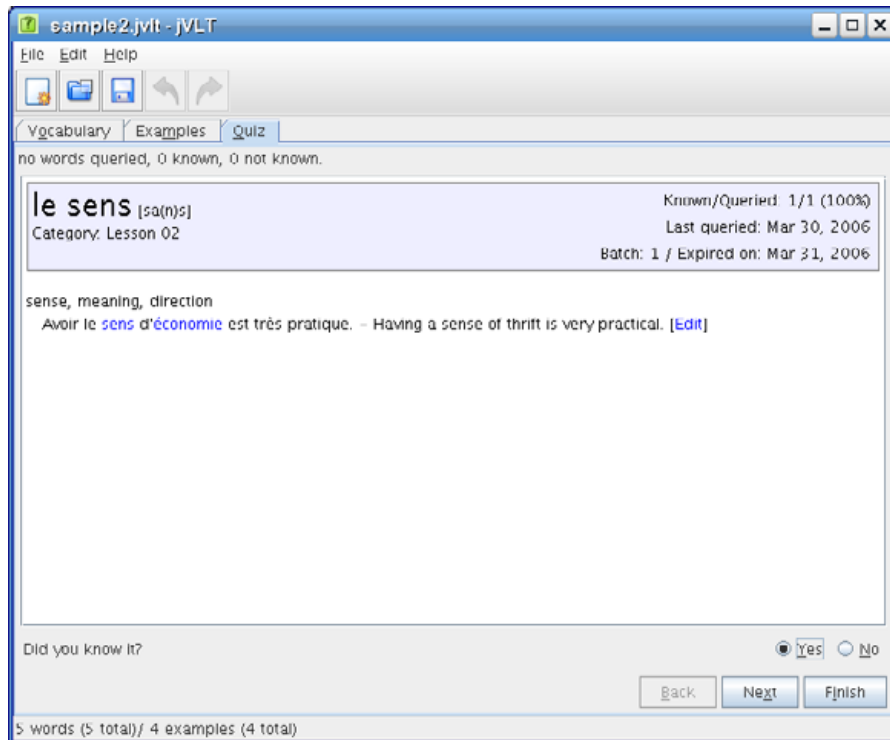


Figure 5. Use the Quiz section to test your knowledge.

For example, if you are planning to eat at a restaurant, you might want to go through all the words in the Food category. To do this, press the Select words button and define a filter. During the quiz, jVLT displays the word's senses first, and your task is to provide the corresponding word. When you press the Next button, jVLT shows the word, and if your guess was correct, answer Yes to the "Did you know it?" question; otherwise, answer No. Once you have completed the quiz, jVLT displays some statistics, including your success rate and the number of words in different batches. You can use this information to monitor your overall progress, but don't focus on it too much. The most important thing is that jVLT ensures that you learn more efficiently.

STARDICT

A good dictionary is an indispensable tool when you are learning a foreign language, and if you need a solid dictionary application, look no further than StarDict (<http://stardict.sourceforge.net>). This seemingly

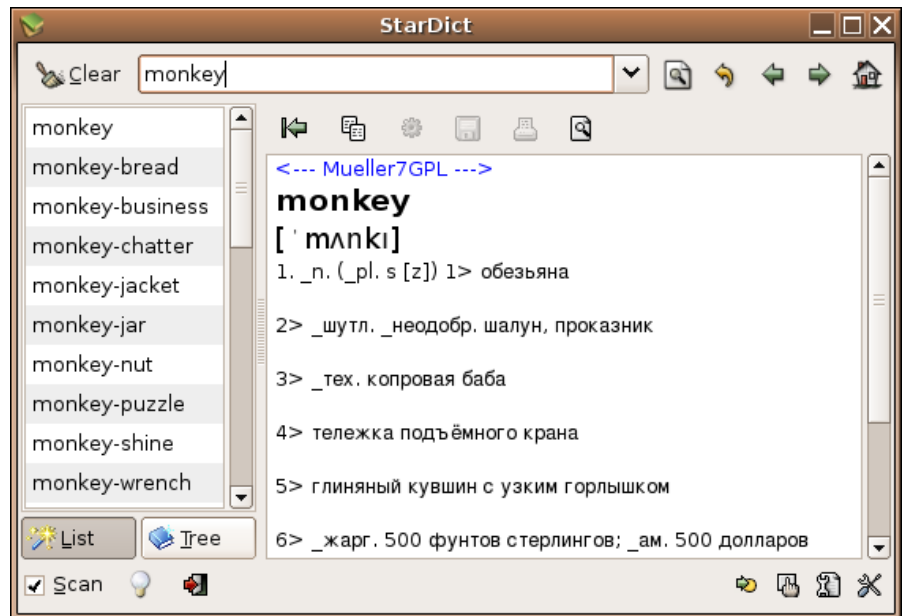


Figure 6. StarDict is a dictionary program that sports a couple of clever features.

simple application hides quite a few useful features that can help you look up words and translate texts quickly and efficiently. StarDict is available with most mainstream Linux distributions. For example, to install StarDict on Ubuntu, you simply can use the Add Programs manager (you may be prompted to enable the Universe repository in order to install StarDict). StarDict can also be run via klick (<http://stardict.klick.atekon.de>), so you can try it without actually installing it on your machine. Before you launch StarDict, you have to add some dictionaries to it, and StarDict's Web site provides a comprehensive list of the available dictionaries. Simply choose the dictionary you want, download its tarball version and unpack it using either an archive manager or the `tar -xjvf dictionary.tar.bz2` command, where *dictionary* is the exact file name. Move the resulting archive

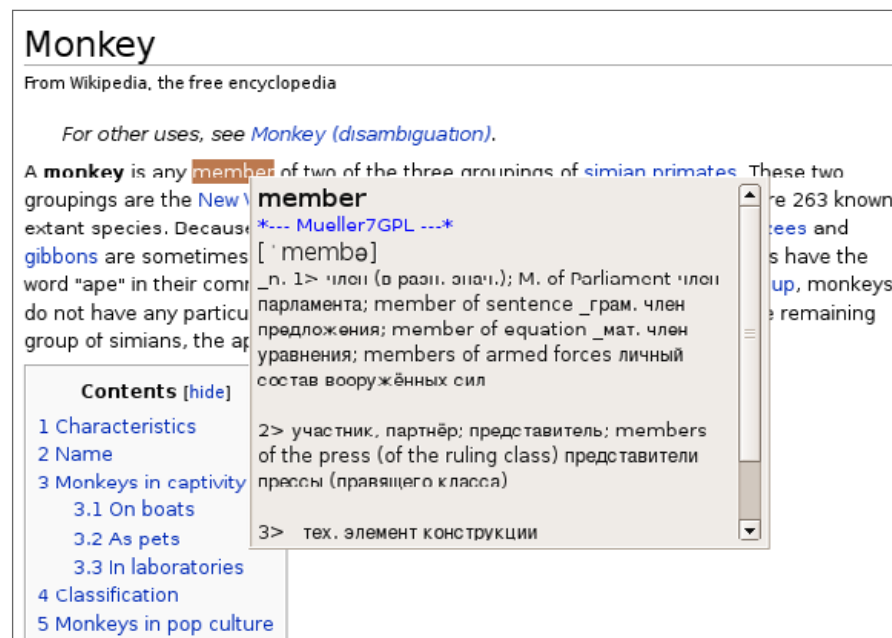


Figure 7. Using the Scan feature, you can look up words from within any application.

using the following command:

```
mv dictionary /usr/share/stardict/dic
```

Using this procedure, you can install as many dictionaries as you like. You can use StarDict's dictionary manager later to enable and disable the installed dictionaries as well as to change their order.

Launch StarDict, and start using it by entering the desired word into the search field. As you type, StarDict displays a list of possible matches from all the installed dictionaries. You also can look up the word using several Web search engines and on-line dictionaries, such as Google, Yahoo!, LEO and so on. To do this, right-click on the Internet search button, and select the search engine you want. Better yet, if the desired search engine is not on the list, you easily can add it. To do this, press the Preferences button, select the Main window→Search Web site, and add your search engine.

StarDict also allows you to perform so-called fuzzy queries, which can be rather useful when you don't remember the exact spelling of the word. To run a fuzzy query, use a slash (/) before the search word. StarDict utilizes the Levenshtein distance (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Levenshtein_distance) to find the possible match to the search word.

StarDict also sports another nifty feature called Scan. When it's enabled, select a word in any application, and StarDict displays its translation in a pop-up window. This lets you look up words quickly when you, for example, read Web pages in Firefox or view documents in OpenOffice.org.

FINAL WORD

No matter how clever the language applications are, it's ultimately you who has to do most of the work. However, language tools like jVLT and StarDict can make the learning process more effective and fun. ■



Dmitri Popov is a freelance writer whose articles have appeared in Russian, British and Danish computer magazines. His articles cover open-source software, Linux, Web applications and other computer-related topics.

Creating Web Pages with Nvu

In this tutorial, Daniel Bartholomew uses Nvu to create a small Web site for viewing family pictures. The Nvu Web site editor provides what you see is what you get (WYSIWYG) editing in Linux.

DANIEL BARTHOLOMEW

In the early days of the World Wide Web, Web pages were created by hand. Although this approach still may appeal to some, I think most of us would prefer to see our Web page as we create it.

In fact, several programs, most of them quite expensive, exist that help you create nice-looking Web sites graphically. Back in Netscape's heyday, a free Web site editor was built into the old Mozilla browser suite, but it was abandoned when the Mozilla development stopped. Now, thanks to some enterprising programmers who resurrected the old Mozilla code, we have Nvu.

Nvu is short for new view. Think of Nvu as a word processor for Web pages. It helps you—quickly, easily and graphically—create attractive Web pages and entire Web sites.

The easiest way to get Nvu is through your distribution's package manager. For example, on my home computer, which runs Ubuntu, I simply launched the Synaptic package manager, searched for nvu, selected it, and then pressed the Apply button. After the install, I found it sitting in the Applications→Programming menu.

If you can't find Nvu in your distribution's package manager, go to <http://www.nvu.com> and click on the Downloads link to find several packages that are suitable for many different distributions.

When you first launch Nvu, you are presented with what essentially amounts to a blank canvas.

This blank sheet can be daunting, but creating Web pages with Nvu is surprisingly easy. To demonstrate a little of what it can do, let's create a simple Web site.

I recently took my family to the beach, and the grandparents have been pestering me for the photos, so that seems like a natural place to start.

When it comes to creating a Web page, the sky is the limit. Because this is a small site, I'm going to try to keep things simple. The first thing I want to do is set up a couple of tables, one inside the other, to hold my pictures and text. Think of tables as little boxes that you can put stuff into.

There is a fancier way of laying out a Web site, called Cascading Style Sheets, and Nvu supports it, but for simple sites it seems like overkill. Tables have been used for years for basic Web page layout tasks, and they are quick and easy to set up—exactly what I need.

To create a table in Nvu, click on the Table menu and choose Insert→Table. A dialog box pops up with a 6x6 grid on it. To create a table, simply move the mouse around the grid, and click when you have the appropriate number of rows and columns highlighted.

The first table I want to create is simple—two rows with a single column. I highlight them, as shown in Figure 3, and click OK with my mouse. Presto—I have a table.

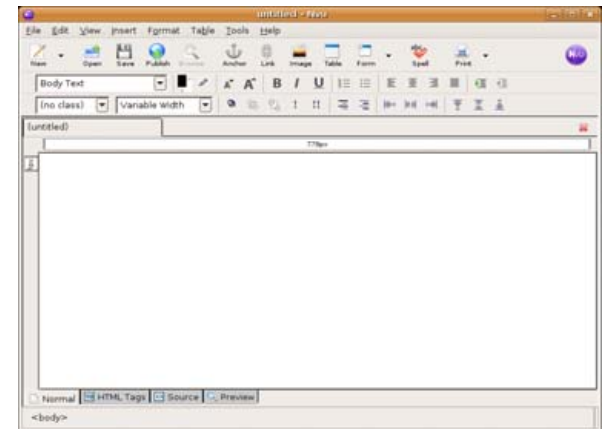


Figure 1. Nvu Ready for Action

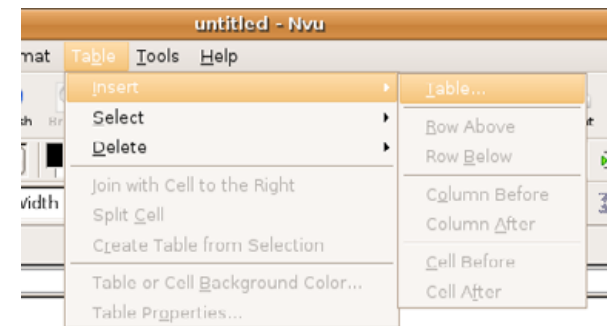


Figure 2. Creating a Table

Before moving on to the second table, I want to make sure to hide the borders of this table. Because I'm using the table for layout, I do not want the table border to be seen. To change the visibility of the border, I click inside one of the cells, and then click on the Table button in the toolbar. The Table Properties window opens, and under the Table tab, I set the border to 0. As the rest of the settings are fine, I click the OK button. The border

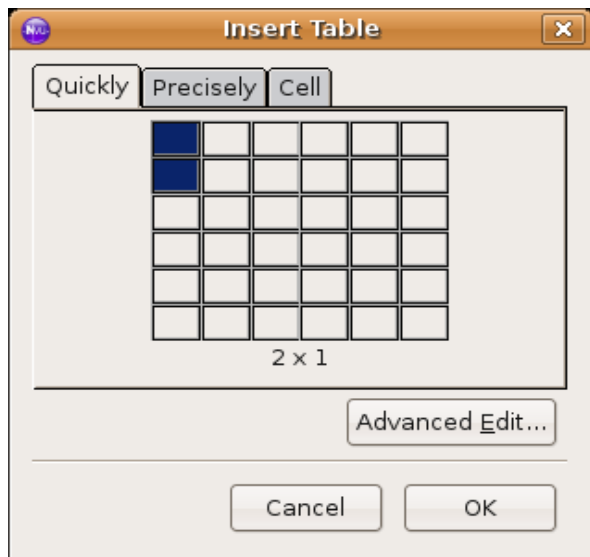


Figure 3. Defining My Table Dimensions

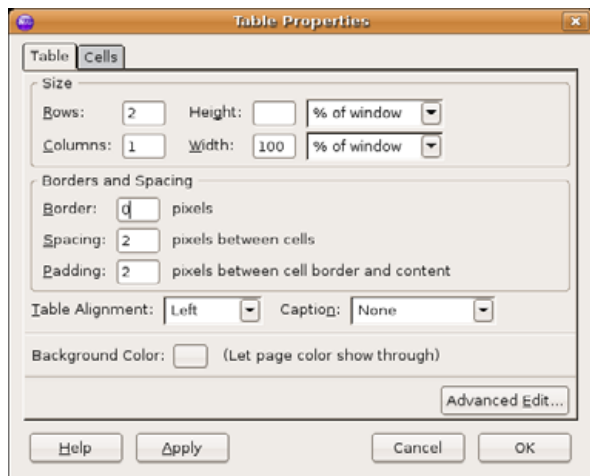


Figure 4. Setting Other Table Options

can be set to any number you want, from zero up.

After setting the border to zero, you will notice that the table is represented by colored lines instead of black lines. Don't worry; they won't show when you view the page in your Web browser.

Now, on to the second table. I want this table to be nested or placed inside of the other table, inside the bottom cell to be exact. To do this, I simply click inside the bottom cell, and then go to the Table menu and choose Insert→Table as I did when creating the first table.

I have six pictures that I want on this page, with some text about each picture, so for this table, I want six rows and two columns. I highlight the appropriate boxes until it says 6x2 and then click OK. I then select my new table and set the border to zero as I did with the first table.

If you've been following along, your Web page should now look similar to the one shown in Figure 5.

Before moving on, I want to save my Web page. I want to do this for two reasons. First, saving often is a good thing to do. Second, Nvu likes to know where the things are in relation to each other; otherwise, it has to guess, and it can make mistakes. Until we save the file, the changes I have made do not really exist.

When I was getting ready to create my Web page, one of the first things I did was create a folder to hold all of the files. Unlike a word-processing document, items on a Web page are not necessarily in the same file. The text and layout portion of the Web page are in the HTML file, and the images, movies and sounds are in separate files. For a large Web page, this can mean hundreds of files. I don't plan to have quite that many, but to keep things neat and tidy, I always create a folder to put everything in.

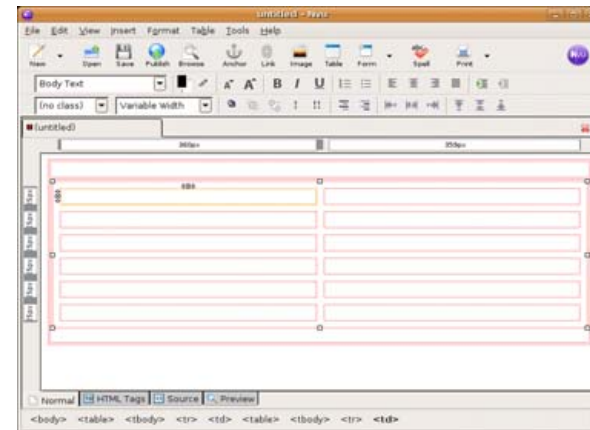


Figure 5. My Finished Tables, One inside the Other

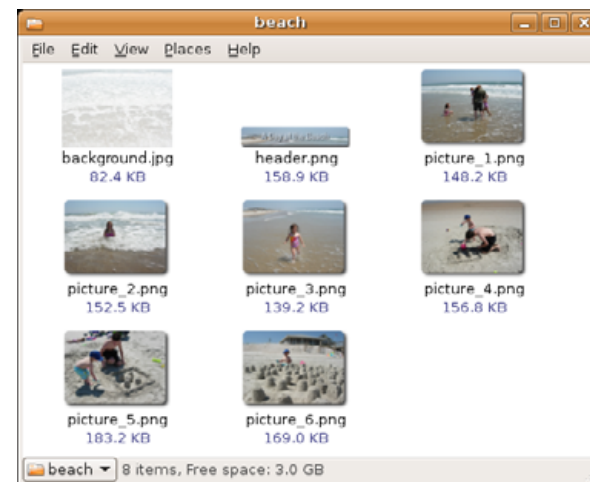


Figure 6. Images for My Web Page

Because my Web page is about a trip to the beach, I called the folder beach. I put the selected beach photos in the folder I had prepared, along with a title picture and a picture I prepared to use

as the background. Having title and background pictures is not necessary, but they can make things look nice. All of the pictures were prepared using The GIMP image editor included with most Linux distributions.

One thing to be aware of when preparing images for the Web is that, straight from your digital camera, most pictures are far too large to present comfortably at full size on a Web page. For my images, I opened them in GIMP, went to the Image menu and chose the Scale Image... option. I then resized them to a comfortable 320x240 pixel size. I also made other modifications to make them look nice. When preparing your images, experiment on a copy of your images until you get results you like. I prefer to save my images in the PNG format.

Back to the task at hand—to save my Web page, I click on the Save icon. The first thing that happens is a window pops up asking for the Page Title. This is a necessary part of every Web page. I just put in “A Day at the Beach”, and then click OK.

Now that I’ve gotten the title dialog out of the way, a normal save dialog appears. I navigate to the beach folder, put in a file name of index.html and click the Save button. The reason I name this file index.html is because that is what most Web servers expect the first file of a Web site to be named.

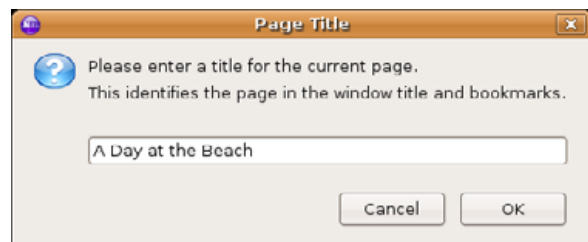


Figure 7. Setting the Title of My Web Page

Now that I have saved my page, it is time to add my title picture. To do this, I first select the cell where I want it to appear (the big one on top) by clicking inside the table cell, and then I click the Image button.

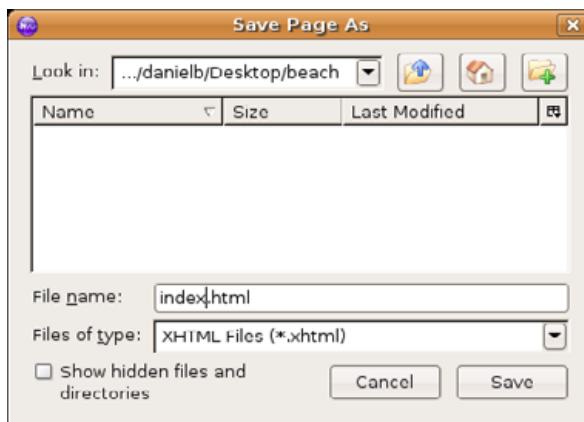


Figure 8. Saving My Web Page

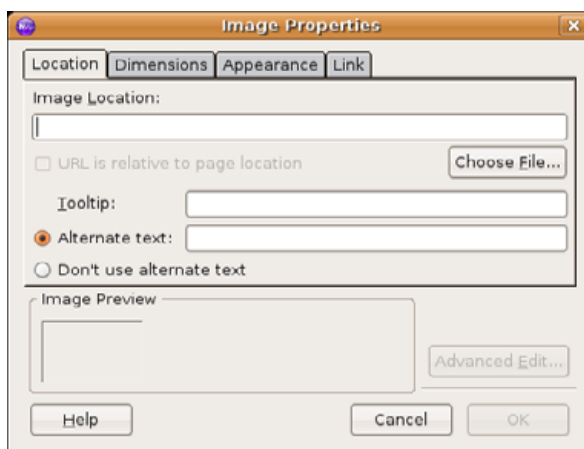


Figure 9. Getting Ready to Insert an Image

Next, I click on the Choose File... button and see the Select Image File dialog, shown in Figure 10. Don’t worry about the index.html file not showing up; this dialog shows only image files by default. From here, I select my header.png image and click the Open button.

After selecting the image file, I am redirected back to the Image Properties window. I enter some alternate text for the image and then click the OK button. Alternate text is displayed while the image is loading or if images are turned off. It also is used by screen readers and other tools for people with disabilities, so it is always a good idea to put it in and make it descriptive.

Now that I have my title graphic in place, I can put in all of my other pictures. The process is the same as for the title graphic. I first select the cell where I want the picture to be and then click on the image button and so on.

You may notice after putting the first picture in the nested table that the column it is in expands to fill the screen. The other column is still there,

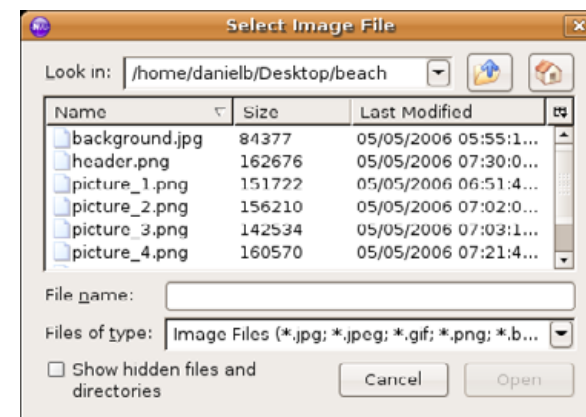


Figure 10. Choosing an Image

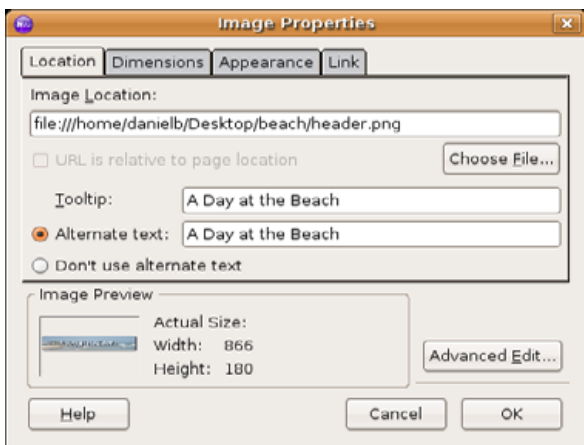


Figure 11. Setting Image Properties

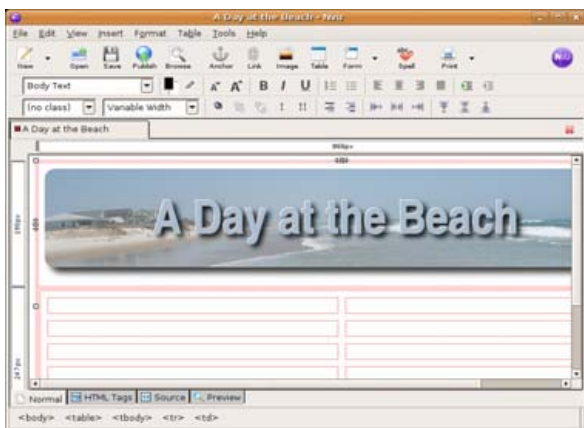


Figure 12. The Image Is Now Inserted

but it has been pushed to the side. Simply scroll sideways until you find it, select the cell for the second picture, and insert it as before. After you have pictures or other content in both columns, the cells will even out.

After placing all of my pictures, I noticed they

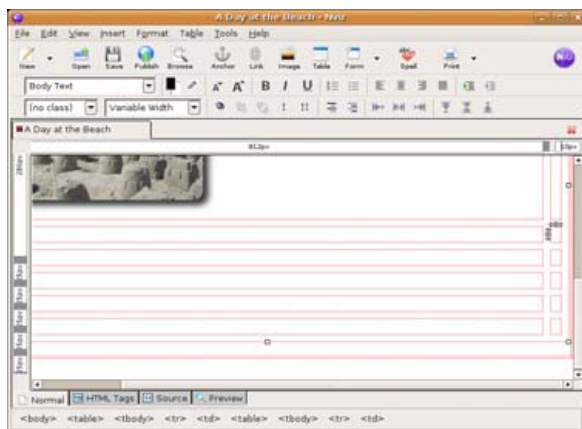


Figure 13. Selecting the Correct Cell to Insert the Third Image

were not centered in their cells, so I centered them by first selecting the picture by clicking on it and then clicking the Align Center icon (Figure 14). It works like the equivalent icon in OpenOffice.org and other word processors. In fact, the other icons in the toolbar that you may recognize work similarly to what you would expect from working in a word processor.

I now have placed most of my pictures—all except the background picture. To place this one, I choose Page Colors and Background... from the Format menu. From the Page Colors and Background window, I can set the background color of the page, link colors and more. I'm interested only in the background image at this point, so I click the Choose File... button, select the file, click on the Open button and then the OK button.

Now things are starting to look the way I want them. I put in my text, save the file, and I am basically done. Figure 17 shows what the site looks like in Firefox.

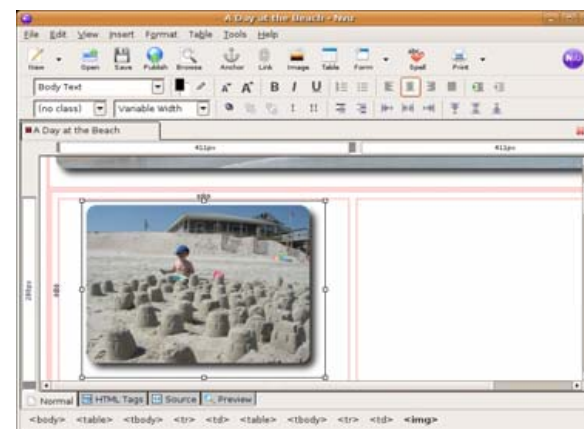


Figure 14. Centering the Image in the Cell

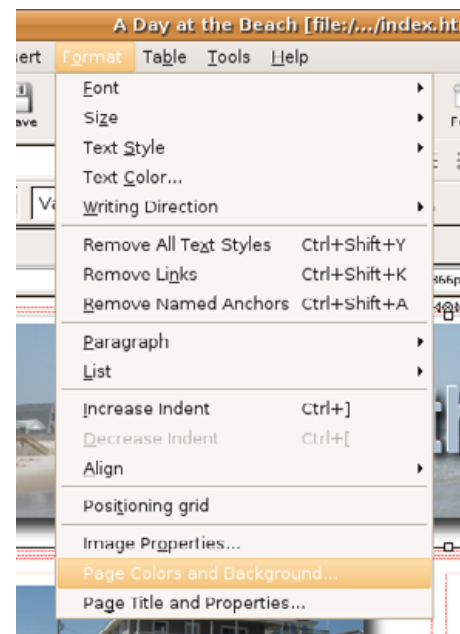


Figure 15. Setting the background image is done here.

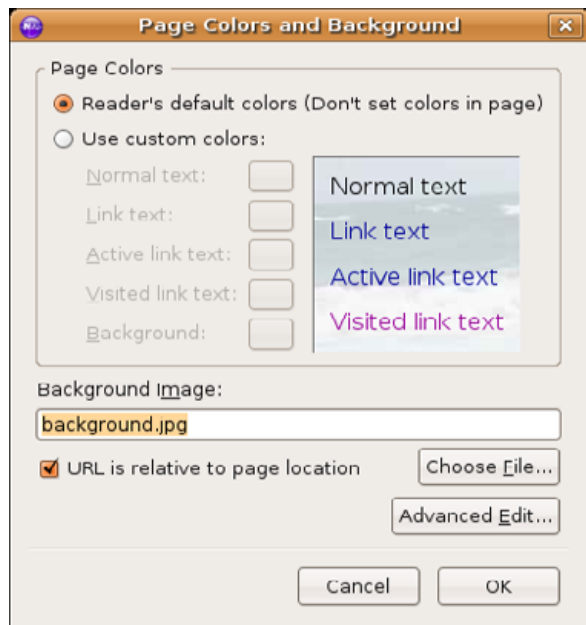


Figure 16. The Page Colors and Background Dialog

All that is left for me to do is add some links and then put it on the Internet.

Links are those (usually) blue underlined words that take you from place to place on the Internet. Nvu makes adding links easy. Simply highlight the text you want to turn into a link, and then click the Link button. If you are linking to another HTML or other file in the page folder, simply enter its name and click on the OK button. If you are linking to another Web site, enter in the URL (don't forget the http:// part). And, if you are putting in an e-mail address, make sure you check the indicated check box.

The final step in creating a Web page is to publish it. To publish a site from Nvu, click the Publish button. It then prompts you for the set-



Figure 17. The Newly Created Web Page

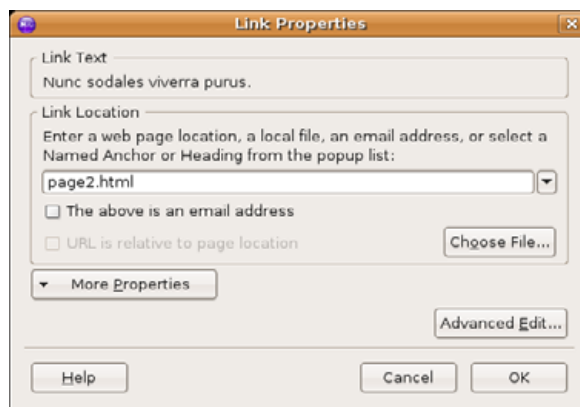


Figure 18. Adding a Link to a Second Page

tings it needs to copy your files to the server. Filling in this information can be the most difficult step. Most ISPs provide customers with space on their server to put up Web pages. Contact your ISP for help in filling in this information.

That's it for now. If you've been following

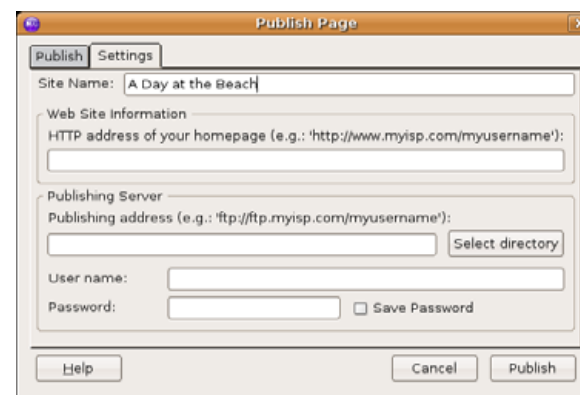


Figure 19. Publishing My Web Page

along, congratulations! You've just created your own Web page! Now play around, add to it and create your own Web site. ■



Daniel Bartholomew has been using computers since the early 1980s when his parents purchased an Apple IIe. After stints on Mac and Windows machines, he discovered Linux in 1996 and has been using various distributions ever since. He lives with his wife and children in North Carolina.

RESOURCES

A lot of resources are available on-line to help you learn more about Nvu. Here are some of my favorites:

WebBriefcase: <http://www.webbriefcase.com.au/categories/how-tos/nvu>

Designing & Publishing a Site with Nvu, by Christopher Heng: <http://www.thesitewizard.com/gettingstarted/nvu1.shtml>

Introduction to Nvu: <http://learn.dccc.edu/~lori/nvu>

forum.nvudev.org: <http://forum.nvudev.org>

Konquer Your File Management with KIO

K Input/Output libraries, or kioslaves, are favorite features for most new KDE and Linux users.

JES HALL

In the course of my day, I generally use a wide variety of desktop environments. Although I spend most of my time in KDE, I do use GNOME, Microsoft Windows and Apple's OS X on an almost daily basis. When using these other environments, I realize just how much I've come to depend on Konqueror to simplify my work flow. I try to type fish:/ URLs into Apple's Finder. I am momentarily confused when a quick Alt-F2 `media:/` fails to work as expected in GNOME. I feel downright lost in Windows without help:/. I guess I need to accept the fact that I'm addicted to KIO.

Kioslaves are plugins that extend functionality all over KDE. They can be accessed through every standard file dialog, as well as through Konqueror and the run command box. They form the core of Konqueror's functionality as both Web browser and file manager. You probably already use kioslaves without realizing it, as Konqueror's HTTP and FTP functionality is implemented through KIO.

SYSTEM

The system kioslave is, in essence, a meta-kioslave. To access the system kioslave, type `system:/` into the Konqueror address bar. From here, you can access the Home, Remote, Media, Trash and Users kioslaves.

HOME

The Home kioslave takes you to your home folder, and the Users kioslave shows you the home directories of other users on the system. This allows you to manipulate files in home directories of other users who might have chosen to give permissions for others to read or modify.

REMOTE

The remote places kioslave (accessed directly with `remote:/`) allows you to

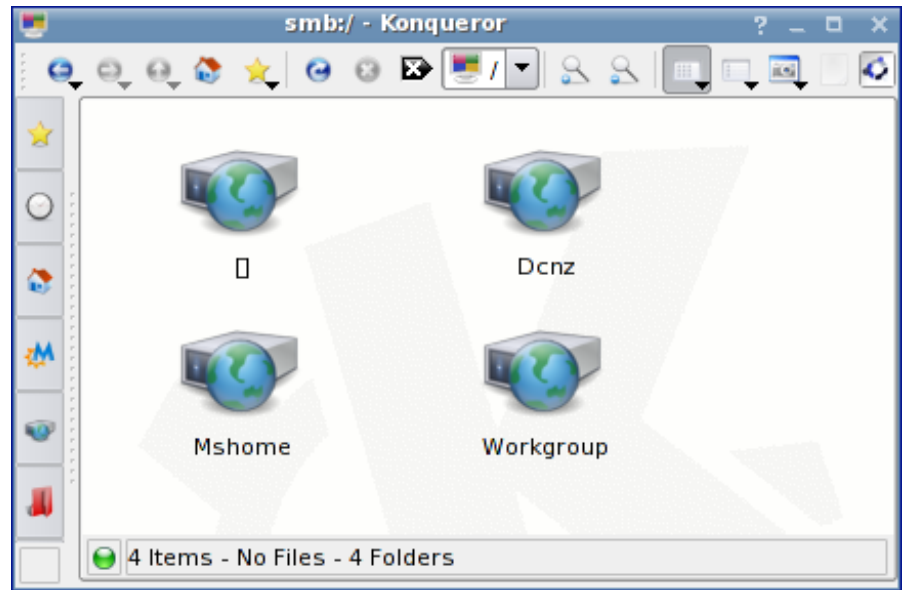


Figure 1. My Home Network. Showing Various SMB Workgroups

browse files on remote hosts using Microsoft Windows SMB file sharing, NFS, Bluetooth and SSH, all through the familiar Konqueror interface.

The Add a Network Folder wizard helps you create a shortcut to a network share you plan to access often. To create a shortcut, click Add a Network Folder, and select the type of network share you would like to access. Click Next, and then fill out the details in the provided form. If you have left the box Create an icon for this remote folder ticked, a shortcut to this connection appears in the remote:/ kioslave window.

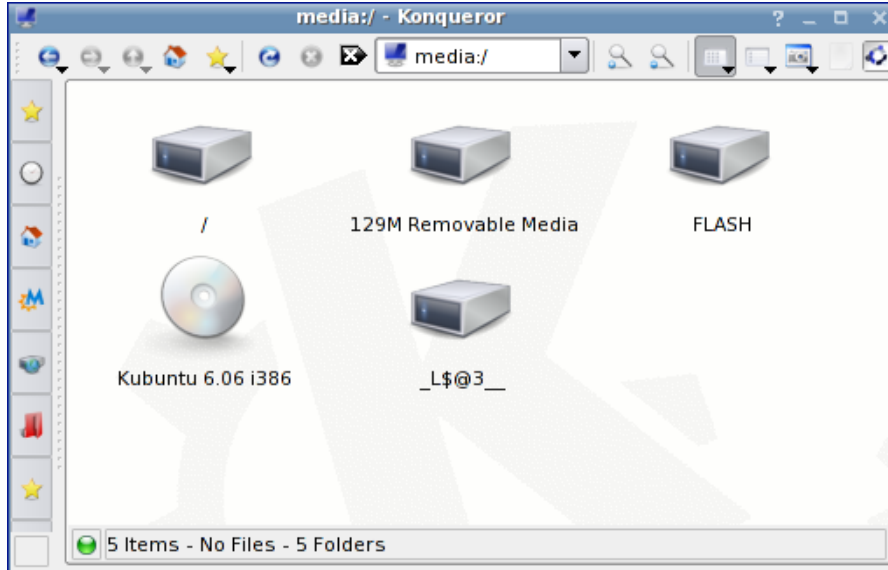


Figure 2. The Media Kioslave. Showing Various Types of Removable Media

MEDIA

The media kioslave lets you access storage media in a user-friendly manner. On recent KDE versions, support for the hal + dbus back end allows for removable devices to be displayed and accessed dynamically without the need to resort to the command line. CD and DVD media can be accessed through `media:/`, as well as USB Flash keys, MP3 players, cameras, hard disks and any other device that acts as a generic USB storage medium.

TRASH

The trash kioslave in KDE versions 3.4 and greater provides a freedesktop.org-compliant trash protocol for KDE applications. This specification supplies some nifty new features.

Previously, if you trashed two files with the same name, the older file would have been overwritten. Now, thanks to the enhanced trash standard, KDE trash supports trashing of multiple files with the same name.

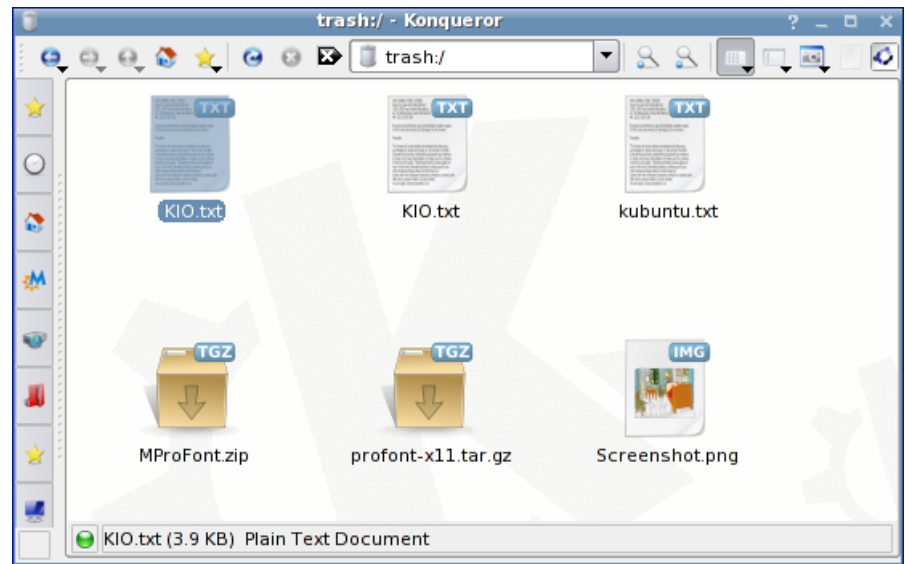


Figure 3. The Trash Kioslave. Showing Two Files with the Same Name in the Trash

For example, if you had trashed two revisions of the same file or two files with the same name from different locations on the disk, they will both show up in the trash. To see what time the file was trashed or where it came from, right-click on the file, and select Properties. The Meta Info tab shows the time and date the file was deleted and its original location in the filesystem. To restore the file, right-click on the file and select restore, or simply drag the file out of the trash into any other directory in the Konqueror file manager.

SETTINGS

The settings kioslave (`settings:/`) provides a simplified view of system settings—a little like the Microsoft Windows' control panel. All of the configuration options from the KDE Control Center can be found here. One advantage to using this view of the KDE Control Center is that you

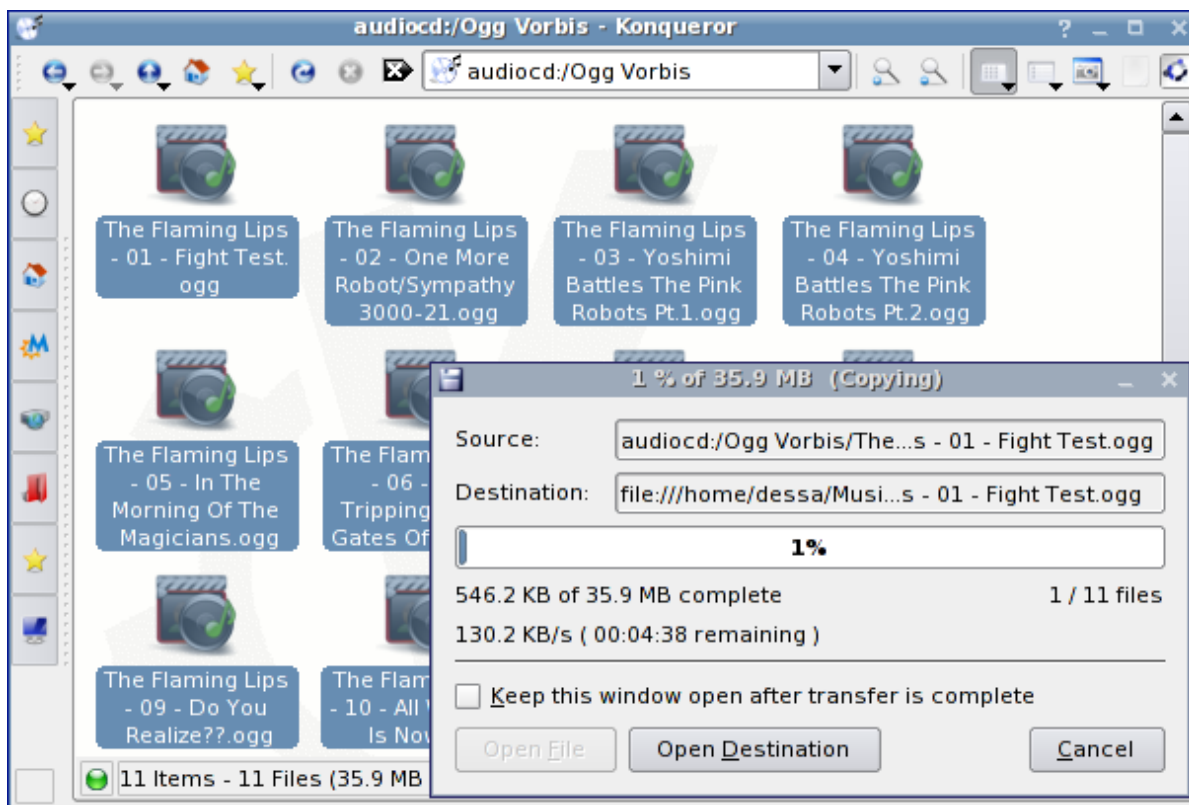


Figure 4. The Audiocd Kioslave. Ripping and Encoding a CD to Ogg Vorbis Format

can create a shortcut on your desktop to an often-used settings dialog by dragging the icon to your desktop and selecting Link here.

AUDIOCD

The audiocd kioslave is a favorite of mine. If the correct libraries and codecs are installed, audiocd:/ lets you rip and encode to Flac, Ogg or MP3 by drag and drop. It doesn't get much easier than that. KDE even queries on-line CD databases to fill in the album, artist and track names for you.



Jes Hall is a Systems Administrator and open-source developer from New Zealand. She's passionate about helping open source bring life-changing software and information to those who might otherwise not have them.

Dragging and dropping the folders entitled MP3, Ogg Vorbis or FLAC lets you get the entire CD or any individual track. To rip the entire CD as a single file, drag and drop the encoding you prefer from the Full CD folder.

You can tweak the quality settings of MP3 and Ogg encoding in the KDE Control Center as well as the format of the file names. Navigate to Sound & Multimedia→Audio CDs, and adjust the settings accordingly. Here you also can set the default CD device if you have more than one.

HELP

The help kioslave is a simplified help browser for the KDE desktop. Typing `help:/kappname` into the Konqueror address bar displays the help documentation for that application. Incidentally, typing `help:/kioslave` lists the installed kioslaves on the system and lets you access the help files for those that are documented.

Many more kioslaves exist than are detailed here. To see a full listing, type `help:/kioslave` in any Konqueror window or in the run command box, or navigate to Protocols in the KDE Info Centre. Many KDE add-on applications install their own kioslaves, and user-contributed kioslaves can be found at <http://kde-apps.org>. ■

Linux RSS Readers: Blam!, Liferea and RSSOwl

Really simple syndication (RSS) provides an effortless way to pull content from Web sites and read at your leisure with one of these Linux applications.

DONALD EMMACK

Hunting for information and knowledge on the Web is often entertaining. Although, I'm sure all of us feel embarrassed about how much time we waste looking for interesting stuff to read. This month, *TUX* is Konquering the Web, and a big part of that is increasing your productivity. I readily admit spending far too much time surfing various news and information Web sites to get my daily dose of current events. So, to make more time for real work, I installed RSS readers and put them to my daily efficiency tests.

NOT ENOUGH TIME?

My business needs up-to-date information on current industry events. I have a small cadre of Web sites I typically examine for interesting tidbits of information. Just like everyone else, I'm often lured by some unrelated headline or story posted to the main body of the site and soon find myself surfing the Web instead of using it for my benefit.

In short, RSS readers surf preselected Web sites, looking for new events that interest you. This way, you don't need to start your browser to read the latest news. Instead, the RSS reader focuses your attention in a "what you see is what you need" (WYSIWYN) format.

After defining preferences, the information brought into the reader contains only relevant text for your interests. You even can search through these predefined feeds and find specific information to reduce search and scanning time further. If you are a hard-core Web surfer, you may find it boring to read news feeds without all of the usual graphics presented; however, if needed, most RSS readers include browser links to the full site. Sometimes they even include graphics to spice up appearances.

WHICH ONE TO CHOOSE?

There are several well-known Linux RSS readers on the Web. In fact, *TUX* [<http://www.tuxmagazine.com/node/1000127>] suggests seven RSS readers you can use to get feeds from the magazine Web site. Blam!, Liferea and RSSOwl get a lot of attention on the Internet, so we're focusing on them in this article.

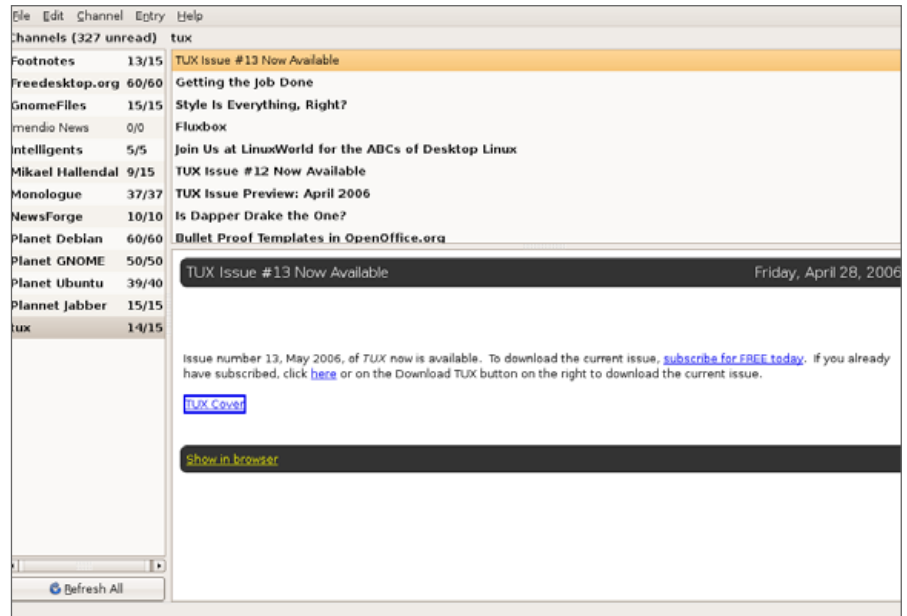


Figure 1. The Blam! RSS Reader Main View

BLAM!

This reader is one of the projects listed on Imendio's Web site at <http://developer.imendio.com/wiki/Blam>. Blam! is a streamlined news reader, enabling you to track an unlimited number of news feeds. The user interface is plain and organized like a typical e-mail program.

On initial start-up, Blam! displays various sample news feeds so you have an idea of how the reader works. Simply click the Refresh All button at the bottom left of the screen, and the feeds begin to populate with data. When updated, click on the feed, and then scan new items posted to the site.

To add a new RSS-enabled site, go to Channel→Add or press Ctrl-N. Blam! presents a URL window, so you can type or paste the feed location. I've found copying the feed location directly from the browser is best. For

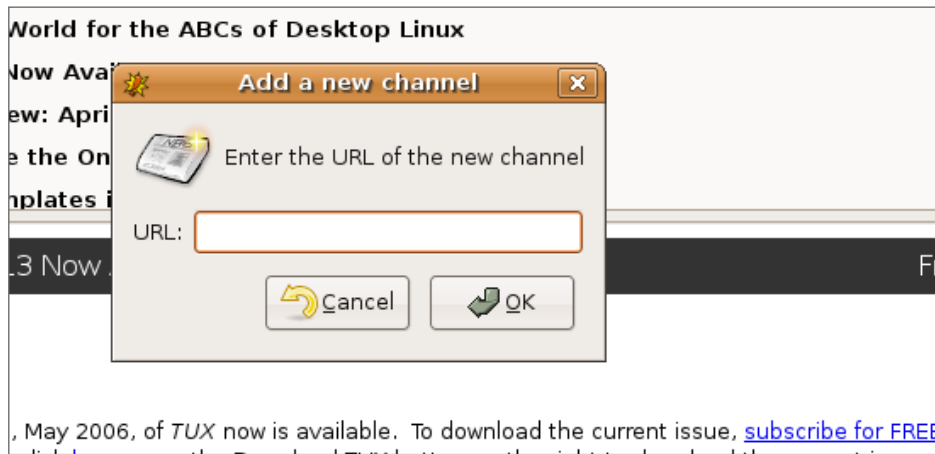


Figure 2. Adding a New Feed to the Blam! RSS Reader

example, to add the RSS feed from *TUX*, open <http://www.tuxmagazine.com>. Then, right-click on the RSS logo on the bottom left and copy the location. Paste the location in Blam!, and it loads the latest and greatest *TUX* posts for you to enjoy. Blam! includes a link to related graphics in the detail window. To see them, simply click on the link to open it in your browser.

LIFEREA

SourceForge hosts Liferea at <http://liferea.sourceforge.net/index.htm>. At first glance, it's easy to see why Liferea gets so much attention on the Web. The layout and user feel is similar to Blam! However, Liferea adds function buttons at the top of the screen, providing easy access to frequent tasks like adding and manipulating feeds.

By default, Liferea has several feeds already set up for your review. Adding a new feed is simple. Click the + icon, and insert the URL to the RSS-enabled site and you're done. Again, I copied the RSS location from *TUX* and quickly added it to the reader feed list.

Unlike Blam!, Liferea presents graphics embedded in the feed data. Clicking on the graphic opens the linked location in your selected browser. Another nice feature is the ability to search through the feeds, looking for only the information you want.

Under Program→Preferences, users can define several software features, such as cache handling, folder preferences and browser selection. An optimization setting manages memory by keeping feed contents in memory or loading them from disk.

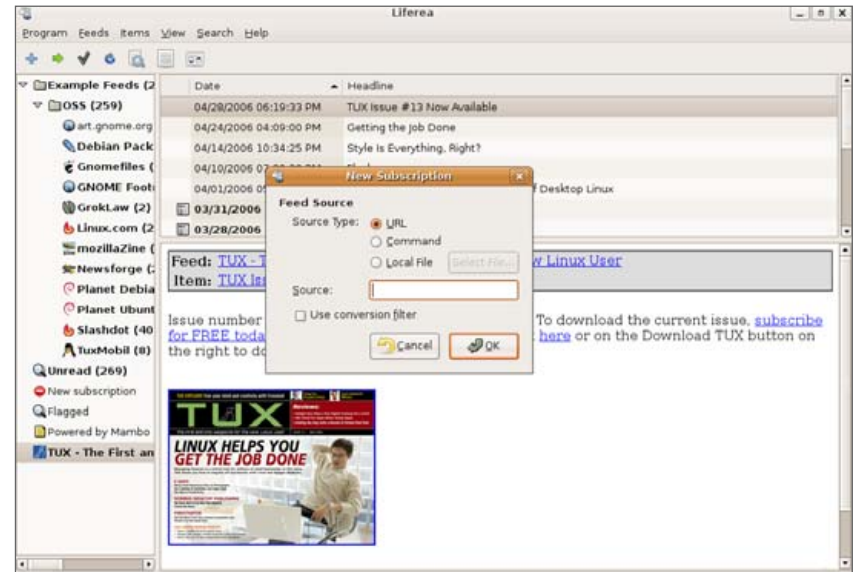


Figure 3. Adding a New Feed to the Liferea RSS Reader

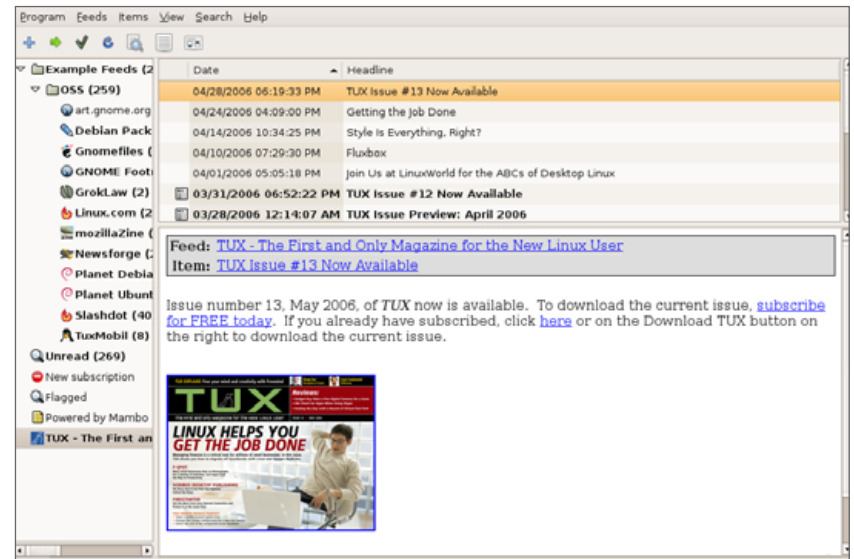


Figure 4. The Liferea RSS Reader displays an image embedded in a news item.

RSSOWL

Java-designed RSSOwl is different because it is platform-independent and runs on Windows, Linux and Mac (<http://www.rssowl.org>). After installation, RSSOwl starts and includes many preset feeds separated by category.

Like Blam! and Liferea, adding new feeds is easy. Select the new button at the top of the screen, and input your selected URL and description. Once again, I added *TUX* to the feed list, refreshed the feed, and now the most current news from *TUX* is on my machine.

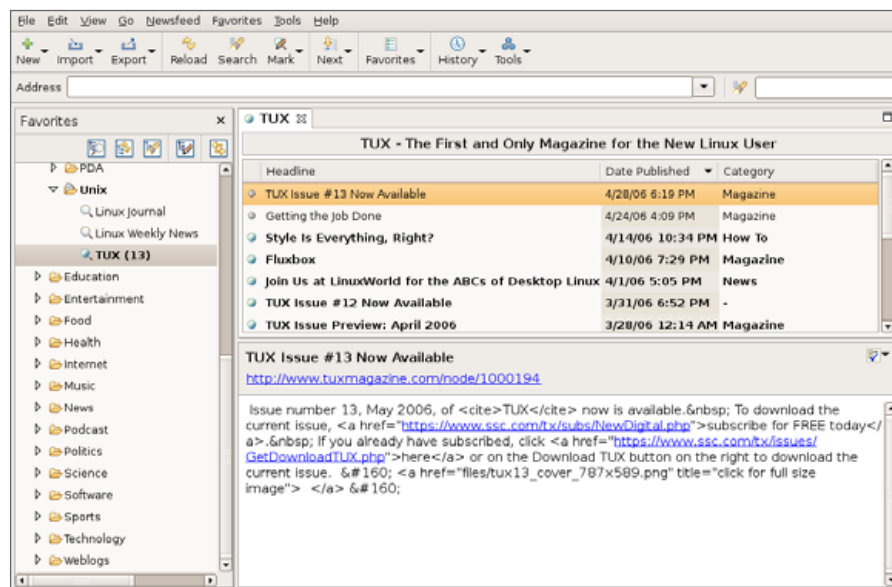


Figure 5. A Detailed Illustration of the RSSOwl RSS Reader Main View

RSSOwl boasts features not found in other programs, such as feed validation and the ability to import blogroles (a collection of feeds) into the program. Personally, my favorite feature is the ability to view the selected feed in PDF format. This feature is often handy for passing out news items in hard-copy format.

Similar to the other applications, RSSOwl looks like an e-mail application. Although, you can change the windows' layout in Tools→Preferences, along with other program features to suit your taste.

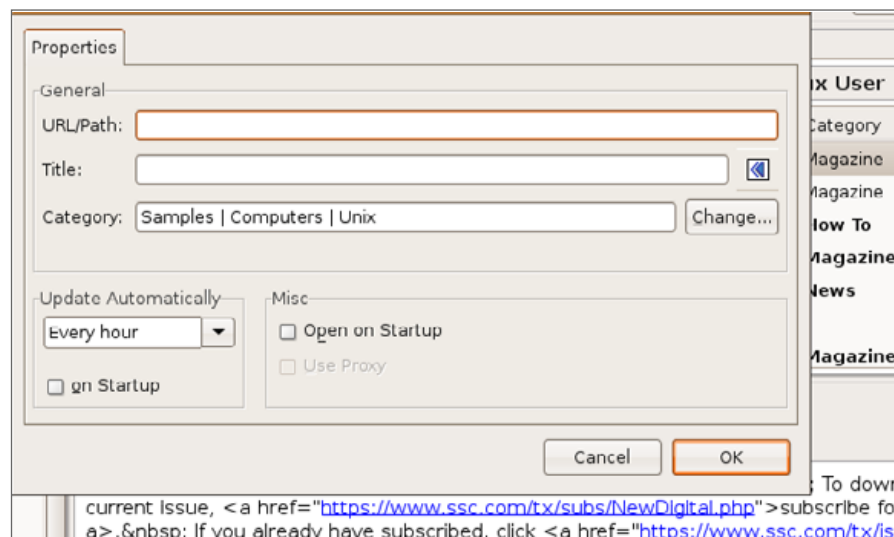


Figure 6. Adding a New Feed to the RSSOwl RSS Reader

THE TAKE AWAY

Until last year, I didn't care much about RSS readers. But, the volume of information I sort through for current events expands daily. Thus, the number of sites I must look through presents the temptation to surf and waste time reading stories that kill productivity.

Like everyone else, it's sometimes relaxing to wander around the Internet. But, using the RSS reader saves valuable time. Each of these applications has a healthy following of devoted users. Ranking the best one is tough and beyond the scope of this brief review (maybe we will dig deeper in a future issue).

My choice—I use Liferea, because it has a balance of features, and my distro includes it in the base application set. That said, each of the readers introduced here get the job done. ■



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Introducing the New Linux International: a Talk with Jon “maddog” Hall

Linux International, Jon “maddog” Hall and TUX focus on end users to usher in the next wave of Linux world domination.

KEVIN SHOCKEY

Since 1994, Linux International (LI) has been a friend of Linux and vendors wanting to use the Linux operating system. Founded by Patrick D’Cruze of Australia, the organization very quickly spread, with the help of several US-based companies, and became a worldwide association. Its original focus was helping companies accept Linux as a commercially viable operating system, thus creating a sense of community around the commercialization of free and open-source software.

Some of Linux International’s achievements up to this point have included the creation of the Linux Mark Institute (<http://www.linuxmark.org>) to protect the public and Linux users of the world from unauthorized and confusing use of the Linux mark and to issue proper licenses to authorized users of the Linux mark. It also raised awareness of the importance of allowing applications to work across distributions. These efforts led to the formation of the Free Standards Group (<http://www.freestandards.org>). The Free Standards Group is a nonprofit organization dedicated to accelerating the use of free and open-source software by developing and promoting standards. Key Free Standards Group projects include the Linux Standard Base (LSB) and Open18N, the internationalization initiative.

Finally, LI recognized the need for certification for Linux system administrators, and it helped form the Linux Professional Institute (<http://www.lpi.org>). LI funded the creation of the initial test evaluation, helped promote certification and participated on its advisory board.

Together, all of these achievements, and many years work as consultants and promoters of Linux user groups, prove that LI is one of the reasons we all enjoy a vibrant economy surrounding Linux. LI recognizes that much has been accomplished, but there is still much more to do. However, it believes the needs of the Linux community have changed.

Back in 1994, LI witnessed hardly enough end users of Linux to create an end-user organization; now it sees more than 60-million Linux systems worldwide. So, as *TUX* magazine foresaw more than a year ago, it too will turn its focus to Linux end users. Through a vote by the LI board of directors, LI will become an end-user organization.

Currently, Linux International is completing a massive change in its home page (<http://www.li.org>), which should be finished by the time this issue is published. Currently, the Web site offers little explanation about its new direction or the structure of the reformed organization, except for a brief definition of an end user. An end user is a person who uses free and open-source software on a daily basis. To learn more about the Linux International change and what lies ahead for Linux, I sat down with one of the leaders of Linux International, Jon “maddog” Hall, during LinuxWorld Toronto, late in April 2006.

I began by asking for more information regarding the new focus, and Hall immediately started by contrasting with what it was like in the beginning. According to Hall, Linux International was originally a vendor-oriented organization helping Linux get started. LI simply worked with vendors wanting to market Linux, and it became very successful in achieving that goal. However, after the many achievements and the strong growth of Linux, LI noticed the growing need from end users of Linux. Although details are forthcoming on the Web site, Hall offered a few hints as to the organization of the new LI. First, no corporations will be voting members. Employees of those corporations can join as corporate members; however, they will have only the same rights as any other member.

Our conversation naturally flowed into a discussion of some of the obstacles preventing more end-user adoption of Linux. Hall was quick to

note that a lack of applications was one of the critical obstacles. He also quickly refuted a commonly identified obstacle—that Linux is hard to use. To demonstrate his point, he conjectured that if you were to put people who had never seen either Windows or Linux in front of two computers (one with Linux and the other with Windows), they would find them both equally easy to use.

Our discussion of applications included talking about what it would take for companies like Adobe, Quicken and AutoCad to port their popular applications to Linux. On this topic, Hall pointed out clearly that if the volume of sales was evident, vendors would take notice. He repeated, "It's all about volume!" We finished our discussion of applications with one final admonition from Hall. When asked for recommendations for application developers, he strongly suggested that they needed to pay more attention to the Linux Standard Base so that an application can be used easily across distributions.

My final question for Hall was, what is the next big challenge for Linux. Once again, there was little hesitation when he told me he believed the next challenge to Linux would be fighting back the next set of products from Microsoft. He feels that with these products, Microsoft will mount a large campaign to fight the Free and Open Source Software movement. Digging a little deeper, he shared that Microsoft will likely continue the fear, uncertainty and doubt (FUD) campaigns it has used so successfully in the past.

Hall went on to justify this perspective by noting that the entire information technology industry was moving from a product to a services economy. He pointed out that considering this trend, the future doesn't look good for Microsoft, because it lacks any real service-based business model. Putting these comments together, it would seem that because Microsoft will not be able to grow any significant services revenue, it will have to fight for every licensing dollar it can get. Of course, this does not factor in any unforeseen acquisition by Microsoft, made possible by its significant cash reserves.

To exemplify Hall's last point further, a couple days after I interviewed Hall, Microsoft announced that it was investing \$2 billion of its 2007 fiscal year profits in research and development to pump up its software as service, advertising and MSN businesses. Many analysts, including close personal friend and information technology consultant Francisco Martinez, used this announcement to point to Microsoft's lack of faith in its licensing revenues. All of these events seem to confirm Hall's perception that Microsoft may be in trouble. With the Vista release dragging into 2007, Microsoft can only

hope to slow the advance of free and open-source software by ramping up its expenditures on FUD. That my dear readers, as Hall predicts, is the proverbial shoe we are waiting to hear fall. ■



Kevin Shockey is Editor in Chief of TUX.

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Xandros—A Final Look but Not the Last

The Xandros Desktop OS Version 3 - Deluxe Edition targets users that want the best of both Linux and Windows on one machine. With special features and the inclusion of CodeWeavers CrossOver Office, Xandros Desktop excels at providing Windows compatibility. JAY KRUIZENGA

Xandros is designed with the former Windows user in mind. Recognizing the fact that certain Windows programs are not yet available for Linux, Xandros takes the extra steps necessary to enable the dual-boot option so those programs can still be run via Windows, while defaulting into Xandros for all else. With the addition of CrossOver Office, some Windows programs can run directly from the Linux desktop with no Windows installation necessary. In addition, the entire Xandros desktop experience is reminiscent of Windows, so very little time is needed to learn a new operating system. The Xandros desktop and included applications are tweaked to work perfectly, each and every time, without exception. With Xandros there is no need to straddle the fence of indecision any longer. Don't delay—take that important first step.

If you're confused over the current deluge of Linux distributions, join the club. Some distributions cater to techno-geeks who have experience in optimizing their systems and time on their hands to configure everything themselves. Others aim at newbie Linux users who are taking their first steps into the wonderful world of Linux. It is not always easy to take that first step, and some would-be Linux users are hesitant to take the plunge, choosing instead to test the waters. What is it that keeps these fence-straddlers from using Linux? Certainly, they know that Linux is a far more secure operating system with virtually no

viruses or spyware to attack it, yet still they remain hesitant. The reason so many refrain from using Linux is directly related to the fact that one or more Windows programs they have grown accustomed to are not available for Linux. So, is there a Linux distribution designed for the new Linux user that plays nicely with Windows? Yes, there is. The subject of this review is the Xandros 3 Deluxe Linux desktop, which can repartition your Windows drive to make room to install itself, leaving all Windows files intact and unharmed. What is more, Xandros Deluxe includes a program that actually allows some Windows programs to run from the Linux desktop! The Xandros motto is "making Linux work for you", and if you are one of the numerous fence-straddlers out there, Xandros is speaking to you.

INSTALLATION

Xandros is certainly one of the easiest Linux installations we have ever encountered. The entire process takes less than 30 minutes in four quick and easy steps. We attempted a dual-boot install where Xandros makes room from an existing Windows partition, and we were successful in our venture. This repartitioning works for both FAT-32 and NTFS-formatted drives. With a dual-boot install, the user is presented with a boot screen to select either Xandros (default) or Windows. This is a great feature for beginning Linux users who want to dip their feet into the pool but are not

quite ready to swim. Many Windows users fit into this category and have been unwilling to use Linux, because one or two programs available on the Windows platform are not yet available for Linux. With this dual-boot option, the problem is solved. Boot into Windows for those special programs and into Xandros for all the rest.

Although Xandros was able to detect and configure all of our test hardware properly, no Linux distribution is able to detect and utilize every piece of hardware that is out there. This is not a Xandros-specific problem. Neither is it a Linux problem. The problem lies with narrow-minded manufacturers refusing to write Linux drivers for



Figure 1. Register your copy of Xandros to enable support.

their respective hardware. So, it is best to check the Xandros Web site and Xandros forums for support in this area. No matter which Linux distribution you choose to install, you are going to have to do a little homework first. If in doubt, post your system components on the Xandros User Forums for a compatibility check.

The entire graphical installation process is detailed in a step-by-step manner in both the User Guide and the Getting Started Guide (to be discussed later).

After installation and the initial boot, you are presented with the First Run Wizard enabling you to configure your mouse, select regional (language) settings, make certain date and time are correct, add printers and select system behavior (default is Windows-like but this can be made to resemble Mac and others if you so choose). You also will be prompted to register your copy of Xandros, which is recommended so that you can receive your e-mail support and appropriate updates via the Xandros Networks.

Installation: good

EASE OF USE/CAPABILITY

Xandros exclusively uses the KDE 3.3 desktop with a little Xandros tweaking so that everything works as it should. What you will not find in Xandros is a hodge-podge of multiple programs, but the very best chosen applications modified so they work reliably and consistently every time. This does limit the number of applications installed by default, but Xandros has the capability of installing any .deb or .rpm file through Xandros Networks, so you are definitely not limited by any means.

Included with Xandros 3 are the following apps: Firefox 1.07, for the ultimate tabbed browsing experience minus pop-up ads; Thunderbird



Figure 2. The Default Xandros 3 Deluxe Desktop

1.07 with intelligent spam filtering; Skype 1.1 for secure encrypted computer-to-computer calls; an instant messenger service that allows connection to MSN, Yahoo, AOL, ICQ and Jabber; GIMP 2.0 for editing and manipulating images; OpenOffice.org 1.1, compatible with Microsoft Office; RealPlayer 10, for streaming audio and video; and much more.

Xandros Networks (XN) enables the user to install numerous applications from the Xandros servers. Some of these applications are available only to paid Xandros Premium Members (annual cost \$39 US). For instance, StarOffice 8, which retails for \$69.95 US, is available to Premium Members at a special discounted price of only \$29.95 US, and it installs with one click. Other exclusive applications for Premium Members include KOffice, amaroK, Quanta Plus, *Quake 3*, *Unreal 2004*, Inkscape SVG vector illustrator, OpenOffice.org 2 (boxed set comes with 1.1) and Xandros Antivirus (again, all tweaked to work perfectly with Xandros).

In addition to the Premium Membership, numerous free applications are available to all registered members. Simply sign in and click to install.

XN allows the installation of any .deb or .rpm file (but these do not include support from Xandros). You can point XN to the unsupported Debian repositories to search for and install a large number of applications from these sites.

Although XN is quite easy to use, our only fault was the limited number of applications available, especially for paying Premium Members. The technology is in place, but the Networks could be so much more than it presently is.

The Xandros File Manager (XFM) is the proprietary component of Xandros that makes it unique from all other distributions. Many people mistake the XFM as an optimized KDE Konqueror, but it is not. XFM was built from scratch long before

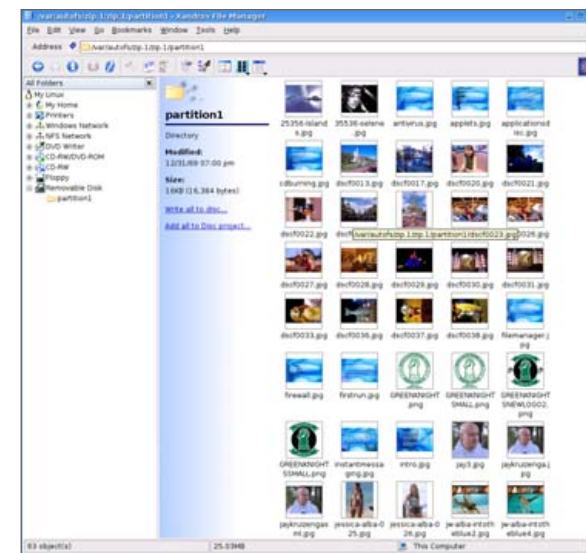


Figure 3. Browse pictures with XFM.

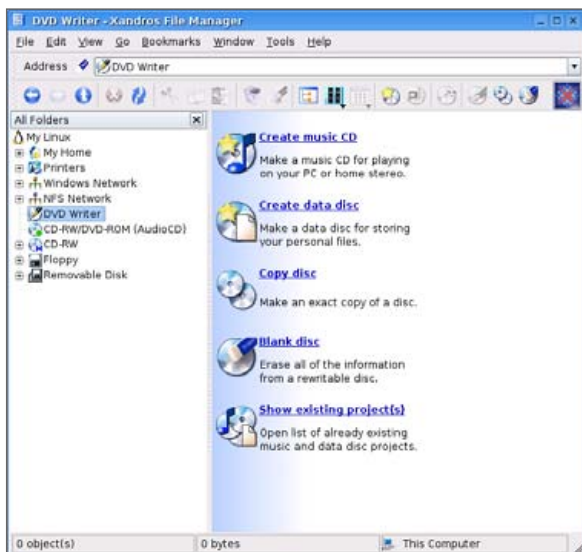


Figure 4. It is easy to rip and burn CDs with XFM.

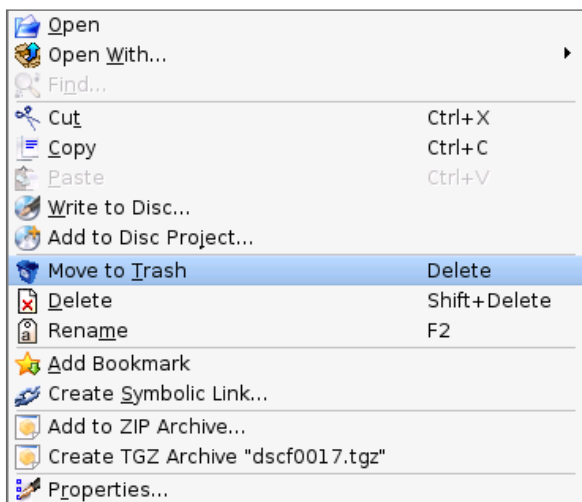


Figure 5. Right-clicking on a file gives you many options to include zipping files

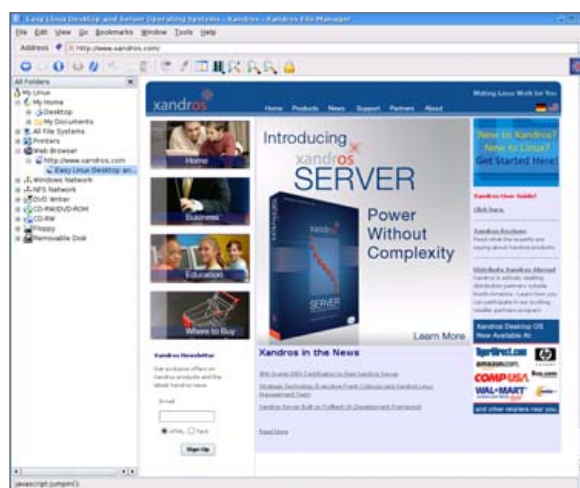


Figure 6. XFM also acts as a second browser.

Konqueror existed, and what an awe-inspiring tool it is. With XFM, you can access and search for files on your computer with thumbnail pictures, browse the Net through its internal browser, create music and data CDs, copy disks, erase rewriteable disks, and even zip or tgz archives with simplicity.

It was a snap to rip CDs with XFM. Xandros does not come with MP3 support, due to licensing restrictions; however, you can install support yourself through an application called LAME. You will have to search the Net for this file, download, and install via Xandros Networks. Supported formats include Ogg Vorbis and WAV.

CodeWeavers' CrossOver Office retails for \$39.95 US and is included free with the Xandros 3 Deluxe edition. This is a spectacular program that allows users to run certain Windows applications directly from the Linux desktop. No Windows installation is necessary. With CrossOver

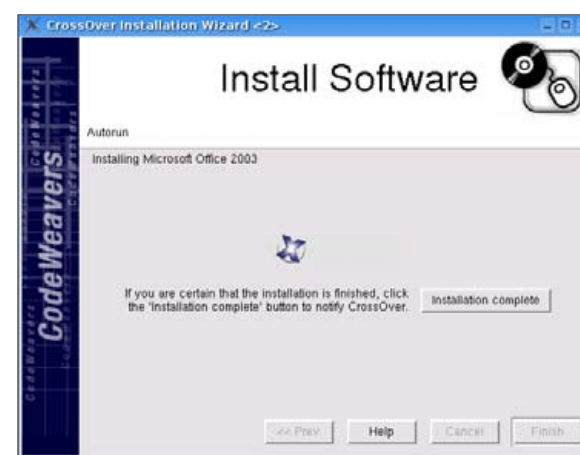


Figure 7. CrossOver allows many Windows apps to run directly from the Linux desktop—no Windows required.

Office you can run Microsoft Office, Adobe Photoshop, Lotus Notes, Intuit Quicken, Framemaker, iTunes, browser plugins like QuickTime and Windows Media Player, and many more. Unfortunately, most of the supported applications are older editions than are presently available. Xandros Networks now has access to CrossOver version 5.01 with improved support, and we did not find any way to update this free of charge; however, a couple of posts on the Xandros Forums alerted us to the possibility of contacting CodeWeavers directly with your Xandros registration number for a free upgrade. We have not attempted this though, so don't take it as gospel truth.

We were able to install our licensed copy of Microsoft Office XP effortlessly (2003 works through CrossOver Office 5.01), iTunes 4.9 (only audio works—no video) and QuickTime and

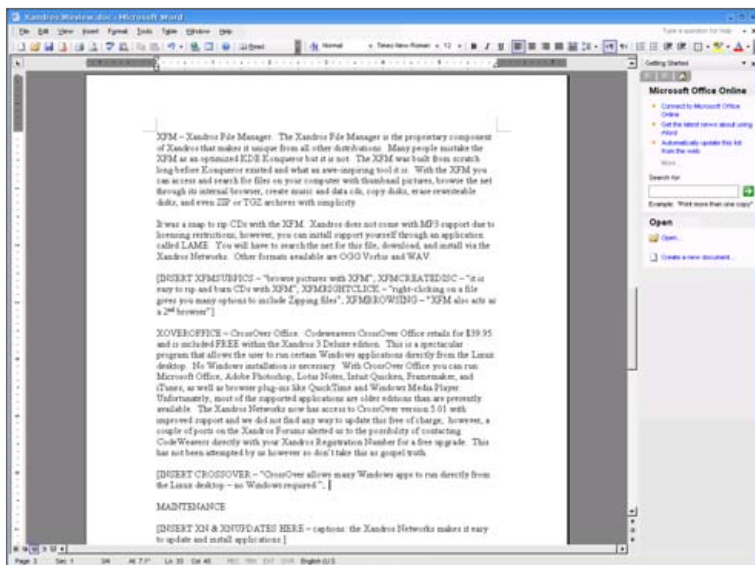


Figure 8. Microsoft Office Running through CrossOver Office

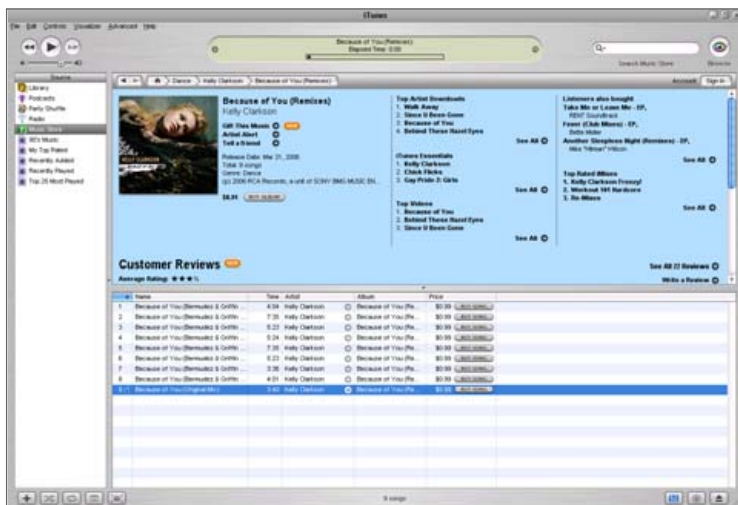


Figure 9. Apple iTunes Running through CrossOver Office

Windows Media Player plugins. Note: the Windows Media Player is an older edition that does not work on most Web sites.

Many other programs are rumored to work well through CrossOver Office—check the official Web site at <http://www.codeweavers.com> for more details.

All in all, we found the Xandros experience to be very user-friendly, an absolute enjoyment to use, spruced up and tweaked to work right each time and every time, which makes this edition a very wise investment. Simply put, Xandros rocks! Xandros is very secure with a built-in firewall configurable through the Firewall Wizard, providing user access to keep system files safe from intruders. In addition, the optional Xandros Antivirus provides resistance to Windows spyware and viruses with a program that scans for malicious files giving you the option to delete or quarantine, preventing their spread to non-Linux PCs.

In addition to the above features, Xandros has the ability to network to Windows PCs with relative ease and the ability to log in securely to school or business via the built-in VPN (virtual private network).

Peripherals also seem to work

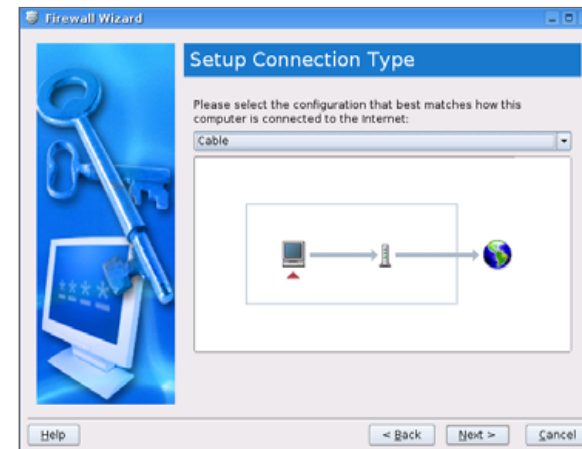


Figure 10. Configure the built-in firewall with a simple wizard.

flawlessly. We plugged in our Flash drive via the front USB slot of our PC, which triggered XFM to open, detailing the contents of our drive—a very nice feature. We then were able to drag these files into our Home folder. Our Hewlett Packard scanner was picked up and recognized at boot, as was our USB Plantronics .45 audio headset. Our wired cable Internet connection was detected at boot-up, but we had trouble getting our wireless connection to work.

On another occasion, we plugged in our USB Fuji camera and again, similar to the Flash drive, XFM opened and revealed to us the contents of our camera. It was easy to view our pictures, select those we desired and drag them to our Home folder for later editing with GIMP.

Xandros is easy to customize to your own liking as we did here. The Xandros Control Center lets you change numerous settings in order to customize your Xandros to your unique taste. Our custom desktop was created with a child

taskbar made transparent, resized and centered below with added icons that we normally would use on a daily basis.

There is so much more that could be said about

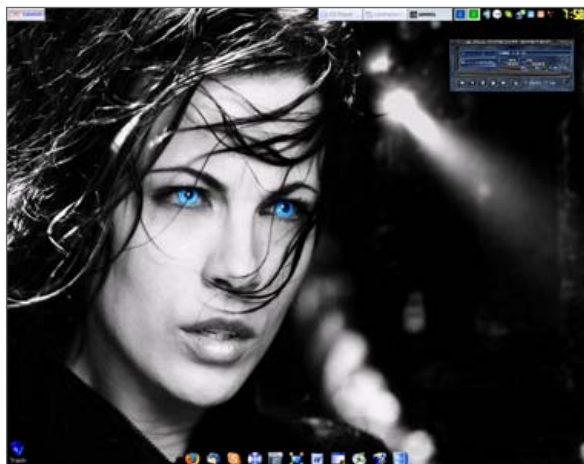


Figure 11. Customize Xandros to your liking.

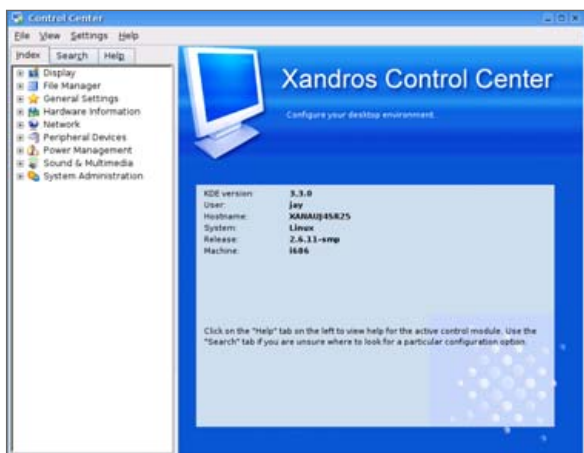


Figure 12. Change desktop/system settings with the Xandros Control Settings.

Xandros than space will allow. It is obvious that the Xandros development team worked hard on this release, and though it would not seem there is much room for improvement (other than additional hardware support and applications via the Xandros Networks), the development team is again hard at work on the future Xandros 4 release.

Ease of use/capability: good

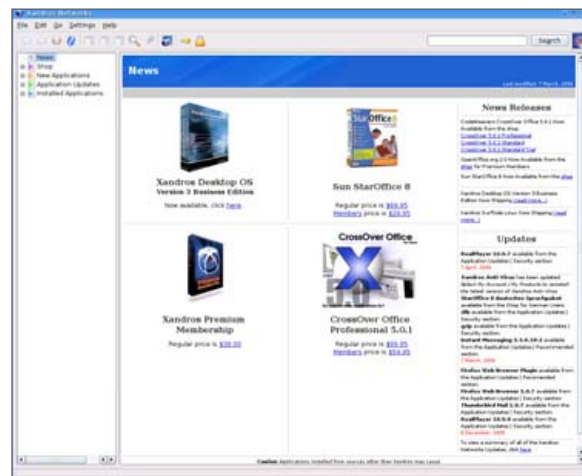


Figure 13. The Xandros Networks makes it easy to update and install applications.

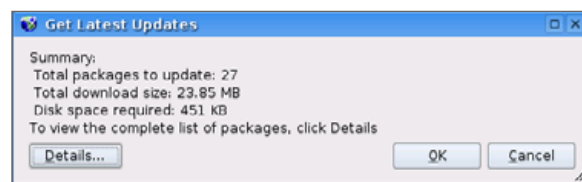


Figure 14. The results of updating our system while using Xandros Networks.

MAINTENANCE

Xandros makes it easy to update applications through XN. Any type of application or security update is conducted through XN, making the entire process relatively simple.

You will know that updates are available if you see the blue globe on the taskbar turn from a green check mark to a red exclamation point. Click on the icon, and XN opens to install the appropriate updates. As a user, you will be prompted for administrative (root) password for your security before changes are made to your system.

XN makes it easy to install and maintain applications running on your system. Simply one click, and it is accomplished.

Maintenance: excellent

DOCUMENTATION/SUPPORT

Xandros boxed sets come complete with a 350-page User Guide written in plain English. We found this guide to be quite exhaustive, covering every aspect of the Xandros desktop and included applications. Also accompanying Xandros boxed

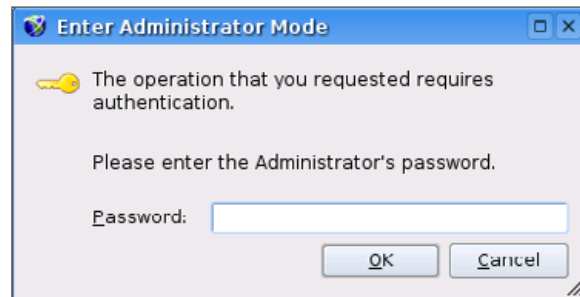


Figure 16. System changes will prompt for your administrative password for security.



Figure 15. The Xandros system tray indicates the need to update our system.

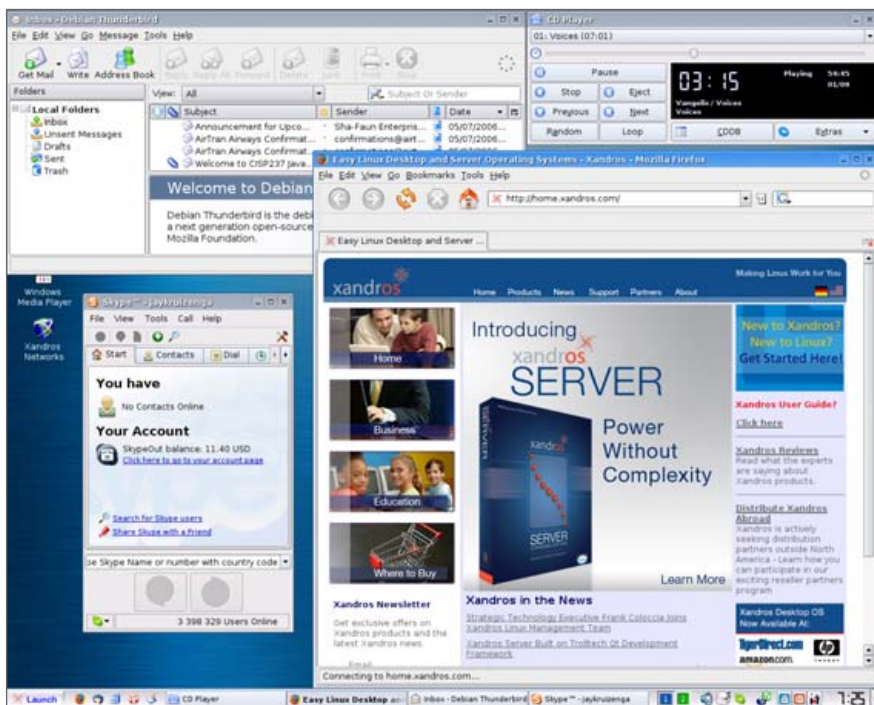


Figure 17. Xandros Running Firefox, Thunderbird and Skype

sets is a Getting Started Guide, covering installation and troubleshooting procedures—excellent documentation with easy-to-follow step-by-step instructions.

The Xandros 3 Deluxe Edition includes 60 days of installation technical support via e-mail. Also included is unlimited access to the Xandros User Forums where you may find needed answers from the active registered user base.

Documentation/support: excellent

EXCLUSIVE TUX READER INCENTIVE

If you purchase Xandros 3 between June 15 and August 15, use coupon code 606tux100 to receive a free Xandros 4 upgrade.

use Linux. So what are you waiting for? Put Xandros to the test. You'll be glad you did.■



small home-based Internet business.

Jay Kruizenga is a former Marine who started using computers with the Commodore 64 in the service. Dissatisfied with Windows, he started looking for viable options and discovered Linux in the late 1990s, which he now uses exclusively for the operation of a

CONCLUSION

We think you'll agree that Xandros provides everything you need for an extremely enjoyable user-friendly experience, where everything works as it should. Xandros makes it fun to surf the Web again, free of worry over the latest virus or worm that threatens Windows users. The ability to dual boot into either Windows or Xandros, and/or to run certain Windows applications from the Linux desktop are both awe-inspiring additions to Xandros. These features aid new Linux users in taking that first step by giving them the confidence needed to get off the fence and finally

HARDWARE TESTED

- Hewlett Packard Pavilion 543x
- AMD Athlon XP 2200+ processor running at 1.8GHz
- Creative Labs Live! Soundblaster PCI card
- Generic CD-RW/DVD player
- Lite-On CD-RW player
- 756MB of RAM
- Plantronics USB .45 audio headset
- Lexar 128MB jumpdrive
- NVIDIA GeForce FX 5200 AGP card
- Proview 17" LCD monitor
- Altec stereo speakers
- Hewlett-Packard Deskjet 5440 printer
- PS2 Labtec mouse
- Wireless USB Hewlett-Packard keyboard
- 160GB Seagate IDE hard drive

SUMMARY

- INSTALLATION: good
- EASE OF USE/CAPABILITY: good
- MAINTENANCE: excellent
- DOCUMENTATION/SUPPORT: excellent
- PRICE: \$89 US
- WEB SITE: <http://www.xandros.com>

Gadget Guy: Storage on the Go

Looking to add a little bit of hard disk breathing room or a portable backup device? The Gadget Guy reviews some USB-based external hard drives. SEAN CARRUTHERS

If you're one of the brave few who have decided to convert your laptop over to Linux, you'll run into one of the same key problems that Mac and Windows users run into while they're in the field—a distinct lack of hard drive space. It doesn't take long before the tiny hard drives that come as standard gear inside most notebooks get filled up with clutter, whether it's all of your documents and applications, your music or even your videos.

Luckily, if your notebook supports USB mass storage class devices, you're in luck. A growing number of higher-capacity portable hard drives that require nothing more than a USB cable for both data transfer and power are available. (If you're not sure whether your notebook can handle USB mass storage class products, check to see if it will automatically recognize a USB memory key. If it does, you're good to go.)

The big downside with bus-powered external hard drives is that the drives inside are notebook drives, which means they're pricey. The upside is you'll have a drive that can tuck away inside your notebook bag, without the hassle of lugging along the power cord too.

If you're paying that much for a device to tote around your precious data, one thing that may be worth keeping in mind is how rugged the drive will be. Almost inevitably, it's going to take a spill onto the floor at some point, either because the airplane hit a bump (the unforeseeable), it fell out of your laptop bag (the unfortunate) or you forgot

it was connected to your notebook (the just plain dumb—which I have been guilty of more than once, I'll admit).

It's worth noting that an external USB hard drive also can be an excellent way to transfer large amounts of data between Linux, Mac and Windows machines, so long as you remember to keep them formatted as FAT32 drives.

PLEXTOR PX-SP08U 80GB SHOCK-PROOF PORTABLE HARD DRIVE

<http://www.plextor.com>
\$169 US

There are two ways to protect an external hard drive from the shocks it will be dealt throughout its career: internal shock mounting or external padding. The Plextor series of shock-proof hard drives chose the latter method, wrapping a silicon bumper layer around all of the edges of the drive, leaving the long sides of the drive open for heat dissipation. This allows the Plextor drive to sport a very small metal casing—if you don't need the shock protection, you can remove the silicon wrap and tuck it into an even smaller pocket. Unfortunately, it means the top and bottom are exposed to shocks from items falling on the drive, so you'll have to use extra caution.

The PX-SP08U connects to your Linux machine via USB. It uses USB 2.0 for maximum data transfer speed, but it will work with the slower USB



1.1, if you've got time to kill while transferring files. It's worth noting that the drive doesn't have a spot for an external power adapter, so if your notebook's USB ports don't deliver enough power, you may want to try before you buy.

Plextor also offers a 120GB version (the PX-SP12U) for \$260 US.

SEAGATE 160GB USB 2.0 PORTABLE HARD DRIVE

<http://www.seagate.com>
\$379 US

At a glance, Seagate's Portable Hard Drive line doesn't look that rugged, sporting an all-metal casing and no obvious shock protection. All of that is hidden on the inside, however; the metal casing surrounds a protective silicon layer that surrounds the drive, allowing the drive to move around a bit inside the casing without sustaining damage. Because the hard metal exterior isn't directly up against the drive or the circuitry, it also provides an extra bit of protection if the drive gets hit directly on the side.

Though Seagate offers external portable drives



LACIE 120GB RUGGED ALL-TERRAIN HARD DRIVE

<http://www.lacie.com>
\$299 US

Rubber baby buggy bumpers? No! Rubber hard drive bumpers is what LaCie's Rugged All-Terrain Hard Drive has, in bright orange, no less. It also comes with a scratch-resistant aluminum case that's designed to protect the top and bottom of the drive.

What really sells the drive is triple connectivity. Not only can you connect it to your computer using USB 2.0, but you also can hook it up via FireWire 400 and FireWire 800, which means no matter what type of notebook you're using, you should be able to get peppy data transfer.

The drive is also available in 80GB and 100GB versions, and if you don't really need FireWire connectivity, you can opt for the USB-only version, which unfortunately comes only in an 80GB version.



in a number of capacities, the 160GB is notable because it's the first drive of its size to use Hitachi's new perpendicular recording technology. That allows a drive of a much higher capacity—in this case, 160GB, which is 40GB larger than the previous capacity champ. For the time being, you'll pay for the privilege of using that new, high-capacity technology. (If a 100GB or 120GB drive is enough for your needs, you can save quite a bit of cash.)

One really nice feature with the Seagate portables—the USB cable has two ends instead of only one. If your computer's USB ports deliver enough power, you can plug in the cable marked Power+Data only; if you need a bit of a power boost, you can plug in the second USB cable, marked Power Only.

If you're really hungry for portable storage, LaCie also offers the non-ruggedized Little Big Disk, which comes with a whopping 320GB of hard drive space onboard, and both USB 2.0 and FireWire 400/800 interfaces. Be forewarned, though, it sports a hefty \$799 US price tag. ■



Sean Carruthers is a freelance technology journalist from Toronto. He spent six years at Canada Computer Paper, first as Products Editor at *The Computer* and later at *HUB Digital Living* magazine. As a freelancer, he has written for the *Globe and Mail*, <http://globetechnology.com>, *HUB Digital Living*, *Computer Dealer News*, *Homefront* and *CE-Biz*. Although a relative newbie with Linux (SUSE, thank you very much), he has extensive experience with tech gadgets of all sorts and is enjoying figuring out which ones are compatible with Linux.

POCKET-SIZED STORAGE



If you don't need quite as much storage as an external hard drive can provide, but you need more than the typical USB memory drive comes with, there's one stop in between—the pocket drive.

Because these pocket drives use the same type of microdrive found inside consumer-friendly gadgets like the iPod Mini, they're able to store up to 8GB on a device that easily fits into the palm of your hand. The downside is they're slower than the full-sized external drives, so they're not a suitable choice for any task that requires extended data streaming.

Pocket drives are available from manufacturers of both hard drives and USB Flash memory drives, such as Seagate, Western Digital, LaCie, Memorex, Verbatim and more.

OpenTTD

Open source hauls the classic *Transport Tycoon Deluxe* game into the future.

DMITRY POPOV

Written in 1995 by British computer game developer Chris Sawyer, *Transport Tycoon Deluxe* has thousands of fans around the world to this day. Although the game's development ceased a long time ago, *Transport Tycoon Deluxe* continues to live and evolve through *OpenTTD* (<http://www.openttd.org>), an open-source version of the original game. *OpenTTD* takes over where *Transport Tycoon Deluxe* left off and adds a wealth of improvements and new features, including bigger maps, new and significantly improved artificial intelligence (AI), support for more than 24 languages, a reworked airport system, an autorail build tool, improved terraforming and even a dubious ability to bribe the town authority. These are only a few picks from the steadily growing list of *OpenTTD's* new features and improvements.

OpenTTD's game play remains the same though. It's 1950, you have \$100,000 in your pocket, and you've got 100 years to build a prosperous transport company. To achieve this ambitious goal, you build roads, railways, airports and ports that you use to move goods, mail and passengers to earn money. As the years go by and the money starts rolling in, you can buy faster vehicles, bigger airplanes and ships. Building a successful company also means dealing with competitors and local authorities, and *OpenTTD* gives you an opportunity to play against other players or its own AI engine.

OpenTTD requires some data files from the original game, so you must have a copy of *Transport Tycoon Deluxe* either on diskettes or CD-ROM. The good news is that you can buy a copy of the game cheaply on eBay. Like any Linux application, *OpenTTD* can be installed in several ways:

- Your Linux distribution may include a packaged version of *OpenTTD*. In this case, use your package management software to install the game.
- *OpenTTD* is available as Deb and RPM packages on the project's SourceForge page.



Figure 1. The opening dialog lets you choose the scenario you want to play and change the game's settings.

- You can download the source code and compile the game yourself, and *OpenTTD's* wiki provides detailed instructions on how to do this (http://wiki.openttd.org/index.php/Compiling_on_Linux).

Once *OpenTTD* is installed, you have to copy several original *Transport Tycoon Deluxe* files into the `/usr/share/games/openttd/data` directory. You need to copy the following files:

- Graphics: `trg1r.grf`, `trgcr.grf`, `trghr.grf`, `trgir.grf` and `trgrtr.grf`.
- Sound: `sample.cat`.
- Music: all the `*.gm` files. Copy the music files into the `gm` folder. If the

folder doesn't exist, create it in the /usr/share/games/openttd/ directory.

If you played *Transport Tycoon Deluxe* before, you'll feel at home with *OpenTTD*. For those who aren't so lucky, the game can be a bit tricky to come to grips with, and the lack of a coherent manual doesn't make life easier for *OpenTTD* newbies. There is no reason to panic, however; the following description will get you started in no time.

The opening dialog window allows you to choose the game you want to play. You have four options here: New Game, Load Game, Create Scenario and Play Scenario. Let's start from scratch and choose New Game, leaving the other settings as they are. Click on the New Game button, select a scenario from the list, for example Super Britannia, and double-click on it. This opens the main window with a map and a toolbar at the top. The next step is to figure out where to start and what to build. Obviously, you should find two places on the map that need to be connected and have something you can transport between them to earn money. For example, a power station requires coal, and you can build a road to the neighboring coal mine and transport the coal using trucks. In this case, you have to locate both places on the map. One way to do this is to click on the Industries button (the one that looks like a factory), which displays a floating window containing a list of all industrial locations on the map. Each item on the list contains important information about its production capacity and percentage of the transported goods.

For example, you can see that the Brinfield Coal Mine has 120 tons of coal, and none of the produced coal has been transported. If you double-click on the Brinfield Coal Mine, you'll see its exact location on the map. And, if you take a closer look at the map, you'll see that the mine is located not far from the Brinfield Power Station, which requires coal to run. This means you can make some money by building a road and transporting coal from the mine to the station. To build a road between the mine and the station:

1. Press the Road button and select the appropriate road segment. Use the mouse to place the road segment in the desired location.
2. Right-click to add the road segment to the map.

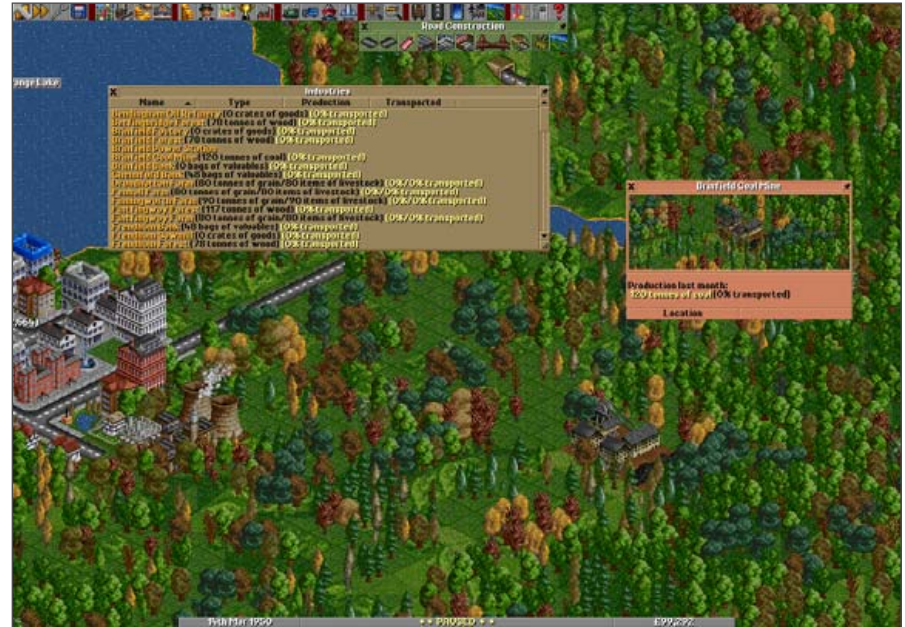


Figure 2. The Industries window can help you find places that may need you.

3. Repeat this step until the road is built.
4. Next, you have to add lorry (truck) stations at both ends. Click on the Road button and select the lorry station with the appropriate orientation (so that the station faces the road). Add one lorry station somewhere close to the power station and another one next to the coal mine.
5. You also have to add a road depot to produce and maintain trucks. Again, click the Road button, select the Road Depot (remember the correct orientation) and place it on the road, for example, close to Brinfield.
6. Finally, you have to add a truck. Double-click on the road depot, and click the New Vehicles button in the Brinfield Road Vehicle Depot. Select the



Figure 3. Here is a truck transporting coal from the coal mine to the power station.

Balogh Coal Truck and press Build Vehicle. This places a new truck in the Road Vehicle Depot and opens the Road Vehicle 1 window.

7. The very last thing you have to do is to specify orders for your truck.

In this case, you have to instruct it to pick up coal at the coal mine and deliver the load to the power station. To do this:

1. Press the Orders button (it looks like a broken arrow) in the Road Vehicle 1 window.
2. Press Go to.
3. Click on the lorry station next to the coal mine.

4. Then, press the Full load button.
5. Now, press the Go to button again.
6. Click on the lorry station next to the power station.
7. Press the Unload button.
8. In the Road Vehicle 1 window, press the Stopped button to get the truck going, and you are done.

Note: this may all sound complicated, but once you've figured out the basics, you easily can build more-complicated transport connections.

Of course, there is much more to the game, and you'll undoubtedly figure out most of *OpenTTD's* features as you spend time building your transport empire. The good thing is that you don't have to play alone. *OpenTTD* supports multiplayer mode, and it can act as a server. To start your own *OpenTTD* server, press the Multiplayer button in the Welcome dialog window, and press Start server. Select the desired scenario, and press the Start Game button. Now your friends and family members can join the fun.

OpenTTD comes with a limited selection of scenarios, but you can build your own scenarios as well. You also can download and install scenarios available on the Web (<http://easttown.co.uk/TTDX/index.php> and <http://ttdscenarios.com/index.php> are good places to start). Download the scenario you want, unzip it and place the scenario file into the `/usr/share/games/openttd/scenario` directory.

Finally, a word of caution—*OpenTTD* can be very addictive, and once you get started, it is difficult to stop. So, make sure you don't have any deadlines or homework looming before you start the game. And, don't forget to join the Transport Tycoon Forums (<http://www.tt-forums.net>) to meet *OpenTTD* players and developers as well as to check out other people's creations. ■



Dmitri Popov is a freelance writer whose articles have appeared in Russian, British and Danish computer magazines. His articles cover open-source software, Linux, Web applications and other computer-related topics.