

Leading KDE Developer **Daniel Molkentin** talks about KDE 3.5



Choice taken
for granted?



Will you
buy anything?

TUX

the first and only magazine for the new LINUX USER

**The Gadget Guy's
Ideas For a
Merry Xmas**



ISSUE 9 • DECEMBER 2005

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KDE DESKTOP
BEDTIME STORY**

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CUSTOM ACTIONS
FOR YOUR
KONQUEROR FILES**

**THIS MONTH'S
MANGO PARFAIT:**

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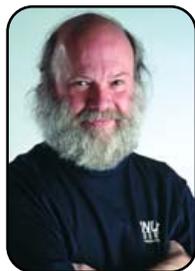
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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Promoting Free Markets

Competition relies on choice and others in the market recognizing that they should not take our choices for granted.

PHIL HUGHES

A few days ago, I signed up for an account on the <http://amplalian.com> Web site. I then made a purchase, and at the end of credit-card processing, I got nothing back. That is, no completion page—only a blank page like the form I had just submitted.

As I had received the usual “welcome to our site” e-mail, I responded to it with my concern about my order. Here is what I said:

I am somewhat concerned. I placed an order. Clicked on confirm (for credit-card processing), and after about a minute, I just got back a blank version of the page I had previously been on. So, not sure it got ordered. Note that I am using the Konqueror Web browser, and some sites don't handle the pages properly.

I received two responses. One was from the sales people about sorting out my order. The second one, however, surprised me. Here it is:

Phil,

I apologize for the problem you had with your order. We have recently installed a new credit-card processing system, and unfortunately we didn't have the opportunity to test it with Konqueror.

The minute delay you experienced is the time taken for our server to contact the HSBC secure payment server and to receive the response from them. However, it concerns me that you were taken back to the payment details page after this point.

In order to solve this problem, I wonder if you could answer a couple of questions for me please:

Do you know if your browser is set up to accept session cookies?

Did you do anything on the site after being taken back to the payment details page?

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How did you come to the site originally?

Were you behind a proxy server or firewall when you accessed the site?

Also, I'd be very grateful to know the version of your OS and of Konqueror you are using so that we can test this process fully.

Thank you for your help, Chris

I believe this is the first time I have received a reply to a Web-related problem that didn't include an explanation of how the site would likely work better with IE or that possibly it would also work with Netscape.

Beyond that, Chris didn't ask me what Konqueror was, and he didn't use the M word once. It was as if he has taken seriously the idea that the Web is really platform-independent.

Why do I believe this is so important? I feel it has implications way beyond the Web. Take the Oasis Open Document Format as another example. The MS-Word format for documents became a de facto standard at the expense of its competitors. There wasn't anyone saying that Microsoft shouldn't be able to sell a word

IN ALL THESE CASES, WE ARE JUST SUPPORTING THE IDEA THAT THE CONSUMER SHOULD NOT GET LOCKED IN—THAT THE CONSUMER SHOULD CONTINUE TO HAVE A CHOICE.

processor. The issue was that Microsoft should not get special treatment in the market. With the adoption of the Oasis format, Microsoft will be forced to "play fair". That is, as people move to this portable format, they will pick Microsoft Word only if it is the best choice technically and financially.

At the very least, we are just promoting a free market. Linux itself is, of course, a big player there. In all these cases, we are just supporting the idea that the consumer should not get locked in—that the consumer should continue to have a choice.

We see this in the GNOME vs. KDE wars. At a minimum, having choice out there encourages each to try to be better than the competition. Some parts of better are clear. More reliable, more secure and runs faster are just plain good. But, there is more. If we do what we can to make sure there are choices that interoperate, market share will no longer be just a function of marketing.

Customer demand actually gets back into the equation.

If you want to help promote this openness, there are some things you can do. First, if you are using Konqueror, make sure it identifies itself as Konqueror. In the Browser Identification configuration menu, you can set this. Generally this is the default. The point is, don't pretend you are IE—show your Linux stripes.

When sharing documents, suggest an open format such as the Oasis one. Or, better yet, suggest to others that they at least try an office suite such as OpenOffice.org. It's just, well, open.

And remember, none of this means you saying Linux is the only answer. It is just you saying there should be choices. Even with choices, not everyone will pick Linux, but a lot of us will. And, the more we have on our team, the easier it is to make our team grow.■

Phil Hughes is Group Publisher for SSC Publishing, Ltd.



FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF

What Will You Pay For?

The trend toward favoring all things free, as in free beer, raises the question as to whether Linux users will pay for anything at all.

NICHOLAS PETRELEY

I no longer work for Evans Data Corporation. It was a terrific experience, and I will miss many things about my work for Evans. But it's hard enough balancing my job as a full-time single father of two young children with more than full-time work, so I had to give up something. Evans was that something.

I finished about half of the most recent Evans Linux developer survey report, however. It contained many interesting trends that are relevant to desktop users despite the fact that the survey is aimed at Linux developers. First, you should know that the respondents in this particular survey seemed to include more Windows fans and Windows users than previous surveys. This skewed the results just a bit, but not enough to mask some very significant trends.

The trend that stood out the most for me was the fact that Linux developers are switching from commercial Linux to non-commercial Linux in a big way. Examples of commercial Linux are Red Hat Enterprise, SUSE and Mandriva. Linspire is commercial, too, but it isn't targeted at

developers, so the survey didn't really have any useful information about Linspire.

This trend isn't something I extrapolated from the data. Evans specifically asked developers if they prefer commercial or noncommercial Linux. During the past year or so, developers shifted from favoring commercial Linux over noncommercial Linux to favoring noncommercial Linux by a near landslide.

When Evans asked what Linux people were using, the data showed significant growth for Debian and Fedora. Both are noncommercial and free. But the biggest winner in the category of favorite distribution was always "Other". Maybe Evans will find out what distributions fell in the Other category in the next survey, but I think I can guess. I'll bet the Other category represented distributions like Knoppix/Gnoppix (Knoppix uses KDE by default, Gnoppix uses GNOME) and Kubuntu/Ubuntu (Kubuntu uses KDE by default, Ubuntu uses GNOME). Evans didn't identify these distributions by name, so Other is where they would have to show up. I don't think Other was limited

to these few distributions, however. There are plenty more noncommercial distributions enjoying popularity right now.

Here's another thing to think about. Each Evans survey asks how much Linux developers are willing to pay for compilers, editors, databases and so on. A surprising number of people are still willing to pay \$500 US or more for these tools, but the vast majority of developers say they intend to pay little or nothing at all. Who can blame them? They have tools like KDevelop, Quanta, Eclipse and more. These tools are top-notch, ridiculously feature-rich and free as in free beer.

EI-EI-OFFICE

All of this information haunted me while I was editing Ricky Freedlander's review of EIOffice for last month's issue of *TUX*. I kept thinking, "So it's better than OpenOffice.org. So what? Given the trend among Linux developers, will any Linux users actually pay for a software product when they can get something equivalent to it that is good enough and free?"

For the record, I can think of only a few

Linux software products on the market that I would pay for. I would pay for Linspire (<http://www.linspire.com>), Win4Lin (<http://www.netraverse.com>), CrossOver Office (<http://www.codeweavers.com>) and EIOffice (<http://www.evermoresw.com/weben/index.jsp>). I admit, I added EIOffice based only on Ricky's review. I personally reviewed an earlier version of EIOffice, and although the early version was quite good, it had problems that would have prevented me from buying it. The problems seem to have been solved in this latest version, so it finally made it to my list of products I'd buy.

In case you're not familiar with the above products, Linspire is by far the slickest desktop Linux on the planet. Win4Lin lets you install and run Windows from within Linux. It's an easier way to run Windows applications than, say, VMware (although VMware is well worth the money if you need certain features you can't get with Win4Lin). CrossOver Office lets you run Windows programs on Linux without having to install Windows. Why would I want both? The full answer is material for another column, but trust me, I like having both. EIOffice is a Java-based office suite that looks and works almost exactly like Microsoft Office with an amazing twist. We reviewed it in the last issue of *TUX*, so download that issue for more details.

Let me add one more bit of information. I am about to purchase a subscription to Transgaming (the Transgaming product called Cedega allows you to play Windows games on Linux). At this point, I don't know if it will be money well spent, but I might have to add it to the list of products I would buy.

Don't read too much into the obvious pattern that three of the products I've mentioned have to do with running Windows programs on Linux. Evans Data and some book publishers insist on working with Microsoft Word. This means I have to use Microsoft Word to get some of my work done, hence the need for software that allows me to run Windows programs on Linux. If you don't need to use Windows programs for business reasons, you won't need products like these. Fortunately, SSC, the company behind *TUX* and *Linux Journal*, doesn't rely on legacy software like Microsoft Word.

As for Cedega, what can I say? My kids play games (and so do I in my spare seconds per week). Some of the best nonconsole games are still available only for Windows, and I want my kids to run Linux by default. If they're going to run Linux, they need a product that lets them play their favorite games on Linux. More people play games than write books, so this is a more-significant area where Linux

is still haunted by the "everyone runs Windows" legacy.

THE \$64 QUESTION

Okay, the current state of games aside, my \$64 question is this: what would you put on your list of software products that you are willing to buy? Did you buy your copy of SUSE or Mandrake, or are you using the free limited editions? Would you buy Linspire or EIOffice? Would you buy a commercial graphics program like Photogenics, or perhaps a commercial DVD player for Linux so you can avoid the controversy over the legality of free DVD players? Of course, if you buy Linspire, you won't have to worry about legal issues, which is an advantage we didn't know about until this issue (see Letters). A few terrific games are available that run natively on Linux. If more games ran natively on Linux, how many of you would buy them?

How many of you would actually pay for superior Linux software even if an equivalent "good enough" program was available free? This is not a rhetorical question. I'd really like to know. I'll be checking my inbox. ■

TUX Editor in Chief Nicholas Petreley is an author, consultant, programmer, award-winning columnist and previously was Linux analyst for Evans Data Corp.

LETTERS

The Desktop War That Wouldn't Die

Mango should love this one—Novell will be standardizing on GNOME for their Linux Desktop's default desktop, and this is where they will be focusing their development efforts. This seems to me to be a monumentally foolish move. As someone who has been pushing for more adoption of Linux on the desktop in government, I find this move very frustrating. GNOME, in its current state, is not appropriate for new Linux users.

I have found through personal experience, overwhelmingly, that if you put current Windows users in front of a Linux desktop with KDE, they become accustomed to it fairly quickly. However, if you do the same thing with a GNOME desktop, expect an order of magnitude more calls to the help desk with questions like, "Okay, how do I do this...." GNOME is getting better, but for those that like it (not me, I prefer KDE for myself), it is still really ready only for admins and those already well accustomed to Linux. Even Ubuntu, one of my other favorite distros, is going to be focusing more efforts on KDE (<http://www.kubuntu.org/announcements/kde-commitment.php>). Mark Shuttleworth, Ubuntu founder, even is using Kubuntu with KDE as his desktop now.

Who at Red Hat and Novell is making these decisions to standardize on GNOME, and have they actually talked with customers or those trying to get new users migrated to Linux? Red Hat and Novell, the two top corporate distros, are *not* helping us.

--
Eric

Hubert Mantel, cofounder of SUSE, recently left Novell, saying, "I'm very confident the Novell management will find a competent successor very quickly. After all, there are lots of extremely skilled

people over there in the Ximian division." This sounds (to me) like a pot-shot at Ximian, which is GNOME-centric. Chris Schlaeger, a longtime KDE contributor and former vice president of research and development at SUSE Linux, just resigned too. What's going on? Sounds to me like there was a political war between SUSE and Ximian over GNOME vs. KDE, and Ximian won.—Ed.

Desktop Poll Results

This is a poll from the tuxmachine Web site. KDE [was favored over] GNOME 51% to 21%—that's 3 to 1. So GNOME dogs have no [foundation] for their complaints. And Kubuntu is growing fast, and it will be an official distribution of the Ubuntu community

From (<http://distrowatch.com/weekly.php?issue=20051107#2>):

The fans of Kubuntu had a reason to celebrate last week as their preferred distribution is gradually getting the recognition it deserves from the Ubuntu founder. In his opening remarks at the start of the conference, Ubuntu founder Mark Shuttleworth announced that he was now using Kubuntu on his desktop machine and said he wanted Kubuntu to move to a first-class distribution within the Ubuntu community. The large number of Kubuntu users at the conference was evidence as the need for this.

Free CDs for Kubuntu through shipit should be available for the next release if the planned Live CD Installer removes the need for a separate install CD.

On a related note, a rough feature list of the upcoming Kubuntu Dapper Drake is now also available for your reading pleasure (<https://wiki.ubuntu.com/KubuntuDapperRoadmap>).

And your magazine is great...keep doing it.

--

E. Vargas

Happy User Anyway

I have been an avid reader since your first edition. It was enough encouragement for me to have another go at Linux. Regarding the letters about KDE being the preferred desktop—I have been using Ubuntu and Fedora distributions that use GNOME as the default. Then along comes the latest SUSE, and in a local mag review, a glowing KDE. I could not resist spending a little of my pension dollars. Have you guessed the outcome? Only the GNOME desktop loads. I am still smiling, despite still not being able to set up a printer.

--

73-year-old learner, Sale Victoria

Want Command-line Tips and Giving Praise

I am grateful for the existence of this magazine. I'll be happy if every now and then you could give a few tips on how to use the command line (explaining one or two special commands at a time). Linux is not only GUI after all.

I am a strong supporter of Mango Parfait (even though she doesn't like Mandrake/driva, my preferred distro), and I really enjoy her wit and sarcasm.

There is a lot to learn from her page. I also appreciated your/her comments on GNOME a lot, a desktop that I really find difficult to work with. I could say more in appreciation of your work (and in a better way, but English is not my mother tongue). So, thanks and keep up with your good work.

--

Santo

GNOME Not So Bad

Thanks for the great mag—I'm hooked! I've been a Linux user for only a few years, but I'm having plenty of fun. As for the KDE/GNOME issue, well, I use both. I'm finding KDE is much more accessible, and after using GNOME, I find it really does have a quirky logic, but once you get to used to it, well, it becomes familiar in a logical sense. For example, the usual complaint about Nautilus leaving a trail of open windows easily can be solved by right-clicking on the desired directory and selecting browse. Thanks again for the great work guys, I really enjoy the layout/format in particular.

--

Dan Penny

What's in the Open Box?

I switched to Linux (Ubuntu distro) at the ripe young age of 17 (my current age apparently) and just so happened to come across *TUX* magazine through a friend of mine, who ironically hasn't changed to Linux yet. I really like the magazine so far; however, I couldn't help but notice the ongoing debate about which is better to use, KDE with its artsy Apple chic, or GNOME with its uhhh, GNOMEy feeling (no offense GNOME users/fans).

But what about using Openbox? Although it is believed that Openbox is simply a WDM (window manager) for GNOME or KDE, it is possible to run it alone. As a GUI, it is very light and runs faster than Fluxbox! It is not a RAM-suck like KDE and does not require as many resources as GNOME. In fact, when I ran no apps and I viewed my RAM usage with Conky (an Ubuntu system monitor) I used less than 42MB. However, the only drawback is that there is no panel(s), and some experience may be required for customization (for example, the background may require the use of bbrb, and if you want a panel, you need fbpanel and so on).

If you are interested in using Openbox, visit <http://icculus.org/openbox>.

Or, if you are running Ubuntu like me, type `sudo apt-get install openbox obconf` and view this thread: <http://ubuntuforums.org/showthread.php?t=75471>.

--
Bryan Baraoidan

We have an article on how to set up and use Fluxbox already scheduled (Fluxbox is one of my personal favorite desktops, by the way). We'll look into covering Openbox too (another favorite of mine).—Ed.

There's a Gem, Ndiswrapper

Your article on Ndiswrapper [see the November 2005 issue of *TUX*] is a very good read for people trying to get their wireless cards up and running under Linux. I notice that you are using SUSE 9.3 and you say that it is the same to set up a wireless network in most distros. I am a Slackware user who tried using the wireless tools that come with Slackware 10.2, and I cannot get the wireless card up and running. The only way that I know how to do it is to do everything through the console when setting it up, but of course, I am one of those people who like to use the console more than the KDE GUI for setting up settings and other tweaks.

--
Matt Donovan

Xpdf Does Too

So I finally found the link to write you about your nice *TUX* magazine, hidden deeply in this drupal installation of yours.

I'm afraid I have a small correction to make. In your November 2005 article about Evince you claim that xpdf isn't able to select text from a PDF file, but this is wrong. Simply select it with the rec-

tangular select tool and paste via the middle mouse button. You are right on the other critical points though. I always wondered why xpdf is so keen on re-rendering complex PDF again and again, taking hours to get in sync with a window resize. Notable, though perhaps less apt to a new user magazine, are the command-line tools xpdf provides to extract text and images from PDF files.

Let me close with my best wishes for your magazine—it's a nice read for the seasoned Linux user too. I especially liked Mango Parfait's "I anal too" legal disclaimer. Perhaps you have to be into anime to appreciate the humour.

--
Thomas

Married to Xandros

I just subscribed to *TUX*. Why? I heard that it was slanted. I wanted to judge for myself. Let me start by saying that I am a Linux user with ten years of experience. I believe Linux is the best operating system. The distros I've installed are multiple versions of Slackware, Caldera, Red Hat, SUSE, Debian, TurboLinux, Stampede Linux, Corel and others I can't recall. My point? I'm not a newbie.

I read the November 2005 issue and don't understand your dissatisfaction with the Xandros distro. From where I stand, it is a step forward for Linux users who need to work in a Windows network with some Windows tools. It does it right and it does it slick—great for the new and seasoned user alike. I switched from SUSE because Xandros installs out of the box as a svelte install without extraneous software. Everything I need is up and running for desktop use without effort, and if I do need a server, I'll get the server package. The support has been great. The forum system is excellent.

Lastly, comparing is good; showing disdain for another distro is bad. It reminds me of these popular hate radio/TV programs that pit Republicans against Democrats. Yeah, us against them—

just what your competition wants to see, Divide and Conquer. Each distro has its strengths; none are bad.

You're reading this Bill. You're smiling Bill, this you already knew.

--

R Talbot

Linux will die if anyone dares criticize a Linux distribution? No Linux distribution is bad; they're all great? Come visit the real world sometime. I don't like the current version of Xandros. Others like it. Time permitting, I'll review Xandros and then you'll see exactly what I don't like. Until then, deal with the fact that people have different opinions.—Ed.

A Brief Affair with Xandros

In May of this year, Windows and I agreed to a trial separation. I installed Xandros and quickly realized that Windows is much better at marketing than it is at building software. Actually their OS (Windows XP) is pretty good, except for security.

Anyway, after I had used Xandros for a while, I realized that it had some shortcomings I just could not live with. I started reading reviews of Ubuntu/Kubuntu, installed it and expect to live happily ever after. I am now ready to turn my separation from Windows into a divorce, except for one problem that I cannot find an answer to. For years I have been doing my annual taxes on Turbo Tax. How does the Linux community do its taxes? If I can find a way to do taxes on Linux, I will be able to sign the divorce papers.

Thank you for providing a wonderful magazine. I read it cover to cover every month.

--

Bill Rowland

A Xandros Divorcee

You describe *TUX* as targeted at new users, but as someone who's been using Debian for two and a half years (a Mac OS X escapee), I find your magazine entertaining and informative—one can't ask for much more than that; so thanks.

We work in the business of migrating clients to Linux (Debian and related distros), and keeping in touch with what newly converted users use and like is essential. I share your antipathy to Xandros on two counts: I prefer to avoid using MS Windows applications if possible, although I understand it is very polished in that area; when I tried it, LILO was its boot loader, which is incompatible with running GRUB-based multiboot installations.

After many months of testing a number of distributions, we have a few we recommend: Debian for those who are of an inquisitive bent. Kubuntu and Ubuntu (we prefer KDE; although with use, GNOME grows on you).

--

Clive

The problems I had with Xandros' custom version of LILO is one of my many complaints about the distribution too.—Ed.

A Love Affair with Linspire and Breakup with OpenOffice.org

After trying a number of distros, I decided to follow your advice and bought Linspire. I am very happy with the decision. It is especially pleasing to be able to download applications with Click & Run and find that they work well. I now have all the applications I need. I found the slow loading of OpenOffice.org annoying and thus downloaded Abiword and KOffice.

I hope Linux programmers can work on the problem of the slow loading of the OS and OpenOffice.org. In a modern system, speed is essential.

--
Alan Duval

Click & Run is wonderful, isn't it? Unfortunately, you have to experience it yourself to really appreciate it. OpenOffice.org loads slowly on every distribution, unless you're using the quickstarter program that comes with OpenOffice.org. You have to sacrifice some resources to have the quickstarter running all the time, but it often solves the problem for OpenOffice.org fans.—Ed.

About TUX

I've discovered TUX magazine today, and I want to send you my congratulations. I'm pleased to read your magazine 'cause it's easy, nice and free! Thank you for doing that!

--
Ziz0u

Mango Is Appreciated

This mail comes to you from India.

I really appreciate the efforts involved in bringing out a wonderful magazine meant for newbies, and being able to download it for free, even though it's in a locked-in format (PDF files).

Mango reminds me of my girlfriend. She speaks her opinion, and those who object to her are most welcome not to read her column. As for me, I look forward to the issues because she explains everything so succinctly and in a clear and lucid style. As a newbie (even after one year of Linux), I believe that I could welcome any kind of help to make me able to control the distro

the way I want and not use the defaults. Mango's columns help me achieve that.

--
Dr Abhishek Puri

Don't Forget SCSI

Great mag! Great articles for a newb like me. (New to the world of birds in tuxedos—my first computer was a Sinclair that I assumed I was going to assemble myself, but they ran out of kits and sent me a fully assembled unit.) In Nick's (may I call you that?) article on booting multiple distros (TUX, November 2005), I didn't think I'd get all the way to page 31 on the first day! An explanation of GRUB drive numbering was given and was easily understandable for as far as it went. What could *really* help me—and others in a similar situation—would be a few pages on how drives are “counted” in Linux, GRUB and any other OS-level drive schemes *that include* SCSI and IDE (including Serial).

--
Leyden

I apologize for leaving SCSI users out of the loop in that article. It was a very long article as it was, and I wanted to keep it simple. Perhaps we can do a follow up on GRUB and SCSI sometime.—Ed.

Love TUX

Thank you! You are publishing a magazine modeled for the future. TUX magazine in its e-mailed, PDF format shows up in my inbox and opens into a glorious glossy-like spread that nearly takes my breath away. I caught myself sniffing the screen for that “new paper” smell that I get from my other very high-quality publications (*LJ*, *Dr Dobbs* and so on). Your magazine should

serve as a model for many others to come. Come to think of it, I would actually be willing to *pay* for it, especially if it gets a little thicker and more technical, similar to *LJ*. This is a mag that I could actually get my parents to read.

I have many other good things to say about it, but for now, keep up the good work! Looking forward to the next issue already and wishing I had the back issues. (Is there a way to get them—you're only on issue #7?)

--

Jonathan Harmon

You can download whichever issue you like if you're a subscriber. Simply go to <http://www.tuxmagazine.com> and click on Download TUX on the top right of the page. There you can select the issue you want.—Ed.

More Love for TUX

I just wanted to let you know how much I love and appreciate your magazine. I love the format, content and colorful layout. It's a pleasure to read. Although I have been a Linux enthusiast for years, there are still many things that I learn (and re-learn) from your magazine. For example, the article on The GIMP [see the first five issues of *TUX* for articles on The GIMP] was a great help to me. It jump-started me into something that I wanted to learn for a long time. Thanks for doing such a great job. Please don't change a thing.

--

Rick Lucent

More Support for Mango

Congratulations for your grrrrrrrrreat magazine.

I'm a new reader from Chile, and I'm a total newbie on Linux, and your articles have been very helpful. I really loved The GIMP and Inkscape articles, and I have a lot of fun with

the Mango Q&A section. I don't think she's rambling or something—personally I think she's the coolest girl in *TUX* magazine, and I find her opinions both unbiased and funny. I don't think she deserves all the "bad press" she's getting. So one letter supporting Mango is the least I can do for her.

I also enjoyed the lightweight window manager article [see the September and November 2005 issues of *TUX* for the lightweight window manager articles by John Knight], cause I have a veeeeeeery old machine (K6-2 450MHz, 192 RAM) running with Kubuntu on it. The performance is acceptable, but I'd like to hear if you have any suggestions on this subject. Anyway, I'm getting a new PC, and I think Linspire will be my choice, not only for the great press Linspire is getting, but because I tried the live CD version of Linspire, and I was very, very impressed—'nuff said.

--

Jorge

I'm sure Mango is blushing but will never admit it.—Ed.

Evermore Appreciation

Thank you for that amazing review of the Linux version of Evermore Integrated Office [November 2005].

If I am ever able to get approval from Gus Tsao, stay tuned for news over the next several months....

--

Steve Leon

What Linux Needs

Recently I've really gotten into working with Linux. I'm currently using CentOS 4.0. I really like this distro out of all the others I've tried in the past. The only major drawback I have to using Linux full-time is the fact that it is so damn hard to get my Windows

games to run. Yes, I understand that WINE and another tool are available for making this happen, but the problem is (at least with WINE) that it is so difficult to get a game running. If Linux really wants to have a greater market share, they need to stop thinking like geeks and make things work so that any dummy can use it. Microsoft, no matter how much the Linux community hates it, has done just that. Users don't need to make a ton of command-line switches and point to a third-party utility to make their games work. They stick a CD in, let it autorun, install, then play the game.

I personally would love an alternative to MS Windows. I would love for a change to buy the "18-port switch" and jack in all my computers without a EULA stating I have a license to use only 5 of those 18 working ports.

--
Michael Heath

For the benefit of other readers, CentOS is based on the open-source code for Red Hat Enterprise Linux. Cedega (<http://www.transgaming.com>) makes it possible, not necessarily easy, to run many Windows games on Linux. Personally, I'd rather see native Linux games than a better solution to running Windows games, but that's a market demand issue.—Ed.

Do the Moneydance

I read the Letter to the Editor about a Quicken replacement for Linux in the November 2005 issue and offer the following suggestion.

I've been using Linux for several years and even though I replaced most all my other Windows application software with Linux equivalents, I was still stuck with Windows and

Quicken because of their on-line bill payment option. I tried a version of GNUcash, and it just did not have the on-line option available at that time. Then I found Moneydance (<http://www.moneydance.com>). No more dual-booting to do my banking under Windows and Quicken. Moneydance has given me the freedom to do on-line banking and manage my finances directly in Linux.

--
Kevin F. Crosby

Good-Bye Humor, Abyssinia

[In reference to Mango Parfait referring to Lithuania as a name in the November 2005 issue.]

Now, let me explain something to you...LITHUANIA is a country *not* a name, so this guy's (or girl's) name is Gytis, and he/she is from Lithuania (Europe).

PS: Ireland is NOT my name! eheheheh....

--
Paulo Jacob, Ireland

Dear Mr. Ireland Paulo Jacob, Mango was joking. Didn't you notice that she recommended that he use the alias "Abyssinia"?—Ed.

Civil Disobedience

[Re: "Civil Disobedience and Linux" by Nicholas Petreley in the November 2005 issue.]

You are mistaken in your metaphor comparing a book and chapters of a book to Windows and Windows drivers, in order

to clarify your ethical opposition to the copying of Windows drivers by people who do not own Windows.

Windows is not the book, but the book reader, and Microsoft is working very very hard to make all books readable only with their reader. Microsoft's past business strategy has been to make people as dependent as possible upon their technology by way of exclusive tied selling of their products with other companies. This is an illegal practice for which they were convicted in both Europe and America. As their punishment was a mild slap on the hand, they have not been dissuaded from continuing this practice.

Until such time as Microsoft loses their virtual monopoly on personal computer technology or there is a serious effort by authorities to regulate them properly, any small infractions of copyright in order to promote compatibility should be considered "fair use".

This is a perfectly reasonable ethical point of view, even as you say, it is not legal.

--

Darryl Moore

More on Civil Disobedience

In your November 2005 article, "Civil Disobedience and Linux", you mention that:

In this issue, Mango Parfait explains to a reader how to play wma (Windows Media audio files) on Linux. The process involves downloading a set of Microsoft codec files and installing them on your Linux distribution. *I don't know of any Linux distributions that include these proprietary files with their software.*

Linspire OS includes WMA though 9 support and has received full permission to do so by the Microsoft Corporation. We are also licensed to use the Quicktime Windows codec. We, however, do *not* have permission for Windows Lossless and Windows Speech codecs or DRM.

--

John Sanborn, Director of IT, Linspire Inc.

I sit corrected. Thanks to bringing this to my, er, our attention.—Ed.

Database Development Environments?

I have been looking for a database system development product in the Linux world that is similar to FileMaker Pro or to Access. Thanks to your magazine I did find the LAMP product XAMPP which is very nice, but still not a whole system (from db definition to screen design to report writer) that FileMaker and Access provide. (I presently use FileMaker and have bid Access adieu.) I really want to do this in a Linux environment and say goodbye to Windows, but without having to do the complex set up of multiple products that is required to emulate that sort of environment in MySQL or PostgreSQL and so on. Maybe you all could do a piece (hopefully not outside the charter of *TUX*) about complete, and maybe even integrated, database development environments.

Thanks for bringing *TUX* to market. Even though I'm a longtime computer user and wrestler with Linux, I'm still learning a bunch for your publication.

--

Bill Cole



Q&A with Mango Parfait

Mango explains how to upgrade Ubuntu/Kubuntu, pick a distribution, synchronize with a PocketPC armadillo and why not to call her kumquat. MANGO PARFAIT

My best friend, Bunny, is always going on about fashion. She is like the Bratz girls, only not as smart. I do not like the Bratz girls, but I like Bunny even if she is not so smart and has OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder). Her OCD is funny. It does not matter what we talk about. She always has to use the word armadillo, even if she has to make up a reason to say it. Bunny tells me yesterday that makeup comes from armadillos. She says this when she tries to get me to wear more makeup.

I do not need makeup, but when I use makeup I use Clinique because other makeup gives me allergy reactions. You will not see me with my makeup unless the famous *TUX* artist, Garrick, makes another drawing with my makeup on. I have only one drawing right now. Garrick should make another so you can flip back and forth between the two pictures and I will go from Manga Mango to Anime Mango. Do you know the difference? Manga is a Japanese comic. Anime is Japanese cartoons. Manga uses

many drawings because it has many pages. Anime uses at least two drawings and much camera panning and zooming.

If *TUX* did animate me, I would want to wear my high heels in the anime version. I like to wear high heels and I do not have trouble walking in them like some girls do. I like them because I am small. I cannot tell you exactly how small I am because it depends mostly on the size of your monitor or, if you like me on paper, your printer settings. I really like wearing heels because they make me almost as tall as my boyfriend Otaku unless he is piloting one of his Powerful and Humungous Aggressive Robot Thingies. I would need 30-foot heels to be as tall as Otaku then. I think I would have trouble walking in those. No, Bunny, my high heels are not made from armadillo leather.

I do not have any trouble answering your questions because I am not only beauty in a small package, I am a modest and feminine Linux genius.

Q Dear Mango, I am new to the Linux OS and I enjoy it very much. I enjoy reading your column in every issue that I receive. I also enjoy your humor and wit.

I need your assistance on upgrading software applications that were installed on my laptop when I installed a Linux OS. I am using Ubuntu 5.04 with KDE. I would like to upgrade to the latest versions of various programs—that is, OpenOffice.org, Gramps, Firefox and other various applications that were initially installed from the installation disc.

When I use the Ubuntu Update Manager, it will update various files and programs, but it never seems to update the ones that I want. I even updated the repositories/multi-verse, but still, the installed version of the various programs are the same as the latest version, as listed in the Synaptic Package Manager. Am I missing something here?

Is there a way I can upgrade these programs easily to their latest versions? I am sure that there are others who are having this same problem. Can you help us dear Mango?—*Toivo*

A Dear Toivo. Yes, you are missing something. You are missing all the latest software. But if I need to tell you that, your question makes no sense. You are smart to add multiverse. But that will not get you the latest packages.

Here is the problem. Ubuntu and Kubuntu have distinct releases with different names. You are using 5.04. This version is called Hoary Hedgehog. The new version is called Breezy Badger. My best friend Bunny says the next version will be Angry Armadillo but I think this is another thing she makes up. If the Ubuntu persons want me to suggest a name for the next version, I like Pickled Platypus.

Your package repositories use the word hoary because you are using Hoary Hedgehog. This is why you do not update to the latest software. Your packages come from the hoary repository, so you are not finding the latest software. You need to change your repositories to breezy to get the latest software.

Here is an easy way to do that. Select System→Administration→Synaptic Package Manager from the desktop menu to start the Ubuntu update manager. You will ask, "Why do we use this instead of the Ubuntu Update Manager?" The Ubuntu Update Manager is not smart enough to upgrade to Breezy Badger. The

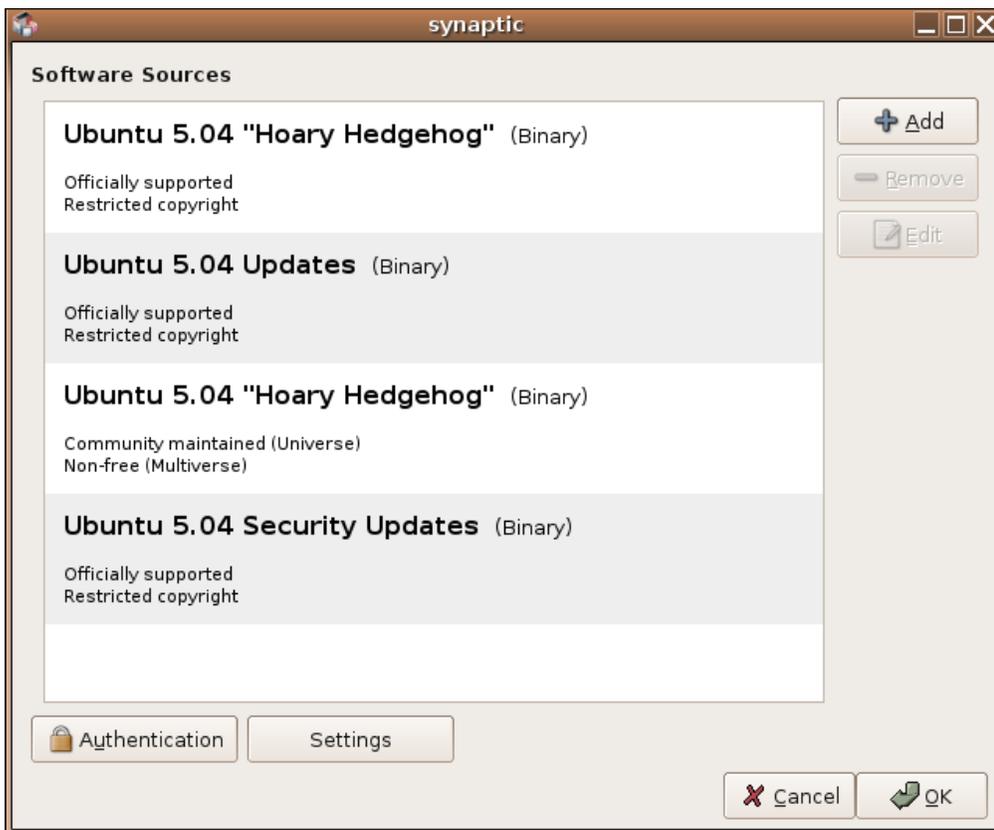


Figure 1. A List of Default Repositories for Ubuntu

Synaptic Package Manager is smart enough, so that is what we use.

Select Settings→Repositories from the Synaptic menu. You will see a pop-up

window like the one shown in Figure 1.

Click on the first repository and then click the Edit button. You should see something like Figure 2.



Figure 2. A Repository for Hoary Hedgehog

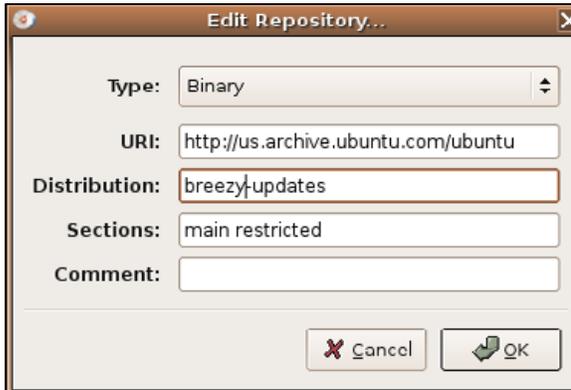


Figure 4. Change Only Part of the Description



Figure 3. Changing to Breezy Badger

Change the word hoary to breezy, like you see in Figure 3, and click the OK button.

Repeat this for every repository in the list. If the word hoary is part of a longer word like hoary-updates, then just change



Figure 5. Choose the Smart Upgrade

the hoary part to breezy like you see in Figure 4.

When you are finished, click OK. Maybe Synaptic will ask you if you want to reload repository information, maybe it

will reload automatically. If Synaptic asks, you will see a dialog box that includes this text: "You need to reload the package list from the servers for your changes to take effect. Do you want to do this now?" Click the Yes button.

Now click the Mark All Upgrades button in the Synaptic toolbar. You may see a dialog box like the one in Figure 5. Click the Smart Upgrade button. Now click the Apply button in the Synaptic toolbar.

Now it is time to read a book or play a game on your Playstation 2 or Game Cube. This upgrade will download and install maybe 1,000 files or more, and it will take a long time.

No, I change my mind. Do not go play a game. Sometimes when you upgrade packages, the package will ask you a question. Sometimes the question shows up in a pop-up dialog. Sometimes the question appears in a terminal. But the Synaptic upgrade window does not open a terminal automatically. So if you see that

your upgrade is standing still for a long time, maybe it is waiting for you to answer a question in the terminal.

The upgrade window has a place where you will see a triangle next to the

word terminal. Click this triangle to see the terminal. Answer any questions you see in this terminal so that the upgrade can continue. Then go play a game or watch your favorite anime show.

There is one more thing I want to tell you. You may see many warnings that talk about your locale. Ignore these warnings. They are not important. The upgrade session will fix this problem when it is maybe two-thirds done (maybe more, maybe less). You will not see any more warnings after that.

If you (Mr and Ms reader) are using Kubuntu, you need to do basically the same thing. Change hoary to breezy in your repositories and then upgrade.

Q Hello Mango (may I call you Mango?), I'm a noob Linux user who is having a little difficulty finding the right distro to call my home. I had started with Debian and it was alright, but it didn't quite do everything that I wanted it to do. Next I tried to move on to Fedora Core 4 and Mandrake, but they really didn't work out for me either. Now I'm hearing about a new distro, Mandriva, which is supposed to be a spin-off of Mandrake. Have you had any experience with it, and if so, what do you think of it for someone like me who's really looking to "walk the Linux walk"?—Yardell

A Yes, you may call me Mango because that is my name. If you call me Kumquat, I will probably not answer your question because I will think you are talking to someone else. I can forward your e-mail to Kumquat, but I do not know anyone named Kumquat. So do not call me Kumquat in your e-mail because I do not know how to forward the e-mail to her.

Everybody asks this question or a question just like this one. They ask, which Linux distribution should I use? How can I answer this question? I do not know who you are or what you like. I also do not like this question because it is a "love and hate Mango Parfait" question. It does not matter which distribution I recommend. If I recommend a distribution people like, they will love me. If I do not mention or do not recommend a distribution people like, then they will hate me. I do not care. I am too pretty to care.

There is another reason I do not like this question. Linux distributions change. New ones show up. Old ones get bad. Ask me this question again in three months, and I will probably have different answers.

You want to know about Mandriva? The old version smells like rotten sushi. There is a new Mandriva 2006 available. You must pay to join a club to get the

new version. I joined the club for \$132 US. There is a cheaper club membership, but it is not a good one. Mandriva 2006 is okay, but it is not worth \$132. One of the Mandriva club Web pages tells me that OpenOffice.org 2.0 is available. I try to find out how to install it and the Web site takes me to a page that tells me how to add a software repository. It says I should copy text from the Web pages and paste it at a command line as root. It assumes I know that I must change the text to put in my password instead of the word PASSWORD. For \$132, it should not tell me to paste a command at a root prompt. It should do everything automatically and serve me oolong tea while it is busy. I am sure I can find out how to install OpenOffice.org 2.0, but for \$132 I should not have to search for the answer. I want my \$132 back.

You also have to pay for SUSE. I will try the new SUSE and tell you what I think next month. Right now I do not like SUSE. I can tell you why I do not like it but it is better to try the new SUSE and see if I like the new one first.

Now I will tell you what I think about the other distributions I am using and I like. Suppose you do not know much about Linux and do not care that you do not know Linux. Suppose you just want to boot Linux and use appli-

cations. Use Linspire. You must pay for Linspire, but it does not cost as much as Mandriva. If you want the easiest Linux, then Linspire is worth much more than the price. It is \$59.95 US for the box or \$49.95 US to download it. Linspire does not ask me to paste anything to a root command prompt if I want to install software. All I have to do is click a button. Maybe Linspire should cost \$132 and Mandriva should pay me \$59.95 to use Mandriva 2006.

If you do not want to pay for Linux, then download and install Kubuntu 5.10. This is the Breezy Badger version. The next version will be Pickled Platypus if the developers listen to me. The next version is not ready so it does not matter what they call it. Get the Breezy Badger version. I think it is the best free Linux distribution.

That is all you need to know, but I am going to tell you more because I am in a typative mood. I used to use Gentoo all the time because it is fun, challenging and it teaches me a lot about Linux. I do not use Gentoo now. You have to compile all the software yourself when you use Gentoo. Lately I find that many things do not compile. I am not complaining. I use the most unstable version of Gentoo so I do not expect everything to compile. But I am tired of looking for the answers

when things do not compile. So I do not use Gentoo anymore. I can use the stable version of Gentoo if I want everything to compile right, but I do not think this makes sense. If I must compile everything, then I want the latest software and the stable version of Gentoo does not have the latest software.

Now I use Kubuntu most of the time. Debian is not as easy as many other distributions, but I like it too. When I do not use Kubuntu, I use Debian. Kubuntu is based on Debian, but the Ubuntu and Kubuntu people have changed Debian so much that Kubuntu is not really Debian-compatible. Sometimes you can make packages designed for the original Debian work on Kubuntu, but it is not always easy. So when I need to run a program that I cannot find for Kubuntu, I boot Debian instead.

Kubuntu and Ubuntu are almost the same. I think there are more differences now with Breezy Badger than when they were both Hoary Hedgehog. But they are still mostly the same. Kubuntu uses KDE and Ubuntu uses GNOME, but this is only the default. Neither forces you to stay with the default. You can install Ubuntu and then install and use KDE. You can install Kubuntu and then install and use GNOME. I think you already know that I do not like GNOME, so I do not recom-

mend Ubuntu. But do not be afraid to tell me you like GNOME more than KDE. It is good to tell me that. I hear there is a saying that the first step to recovery is to admit you have a problem.

Fedora Core 4 is very nice but I do not like it as much as Debian and Kubuntu. Right now the Fedora people are like the GNOME people. The Fedora and GNOME attitude is "We do not make it easy to do anything your way because our way is better." The good thing is I do not think this smelly attitude will last much longer. Read the Fedora mailing lists. I think the Fedora people see this smelly attitude problem and want to fix it. Maybe Fedora Core 5 will not try to be your boss like Fedora Core 4 and earlier versions.

There are many other Linux distributions you can try. Go to <http://www.distrowatch.com> with your browser. It is a good place to find out more about distributions. You might find one you like that I do not like. That is okay. You do not need to care what I think. You are entitled to your own opinion, even if it is wrong.

Q Dear Mango, I love your column in *TUX* magazine, although I have read only a single issue. I hate the way some are reacting to what and how you write. Those people are closed to other

cultures. It seems to me that you're Japanese, judging by the way you write, but I cannot be certain.

I am using both Ubuntu and Windows XP. I use a PocketPC PDA that keeps me going back to XP to keep my device synched (contacts, files and so on) and whenever I need to install new applications. This is more like why people with iPods start thinking to switch to Mac OS X (a great OS, BTW). The question is: is there any way I can synchronize my PocketPC's information and install applications in Ubuntu?—Khalid

A You read only one issue? You need to go back and read all of them. Twice.

I understand why you are not sure if I am Japanese. You see my picture and think, "Japanese manga girls have brown hair, black hair, pink hair, blue hair, purple hair, green hair, but they do not usually have yellow hair. Some do but not many. Maybe Mango Parfait is not Japanese." Maybe I can reassure you by reminding you that my natural hair color is blue. I dyed it yellow. Well, to be honest, I did not dye it yellow. The artist at TUX did. But do not wonder if I am not Japanese because my hair is yellow.

I like Mac OS X too. Do you know it is based on BSD? BSD and Linux are similar.

Why do you use a PocketPC? I have a

friend who uses Windows and writes about Windows all the time. I remember when he first got his PocketPC. He tried to convince me it was the best. Guess what happened when he showed me how cool it worked? Windows CE crashed and he had to restart it. Maybe your PocketPC does not crash and you like it. Maybe it crashes and you like it anyway. I do not know because you do not tell me.

You can synchronize your PocketPC with Linux with Ubuntu. I assume you want to synchronize your information

with Evolution because you are using Ubuntu, not Kubuntu. So I will give you those instructions. If I am wrong, remember what they say about people who assume. "They might be wrong."

Here is how to install the software you need on Ubuntu 5.04 (Hoary Hedgehog). If you have the latest Ubuntu, the instructions may be a little different but I am certain you can adapt these instructions.

Select System→Administration→Synaptic Package Manager from the GNOME menu to start the Synaptic package manager. Click the search button on the

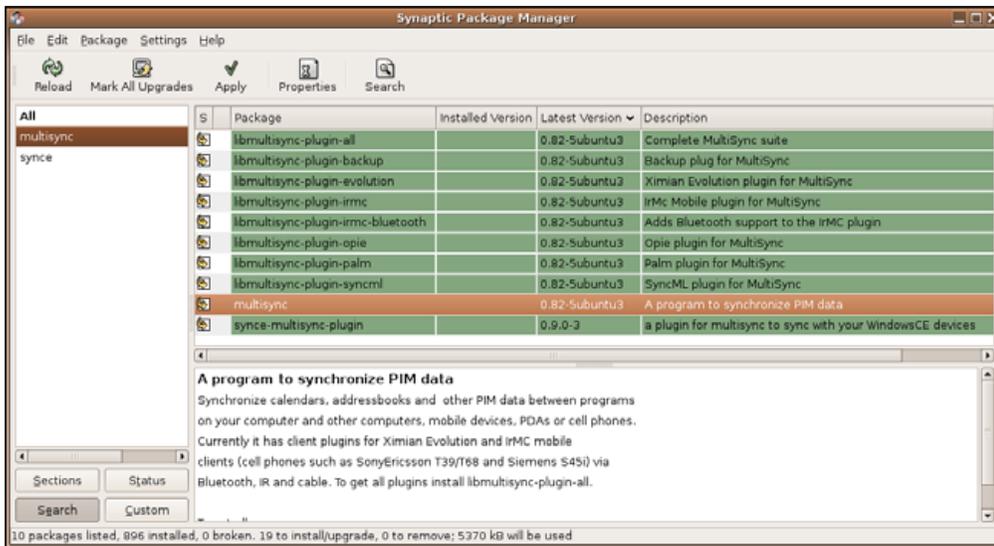


Figure 6. Installing Packages to Synchronize with PocketPC

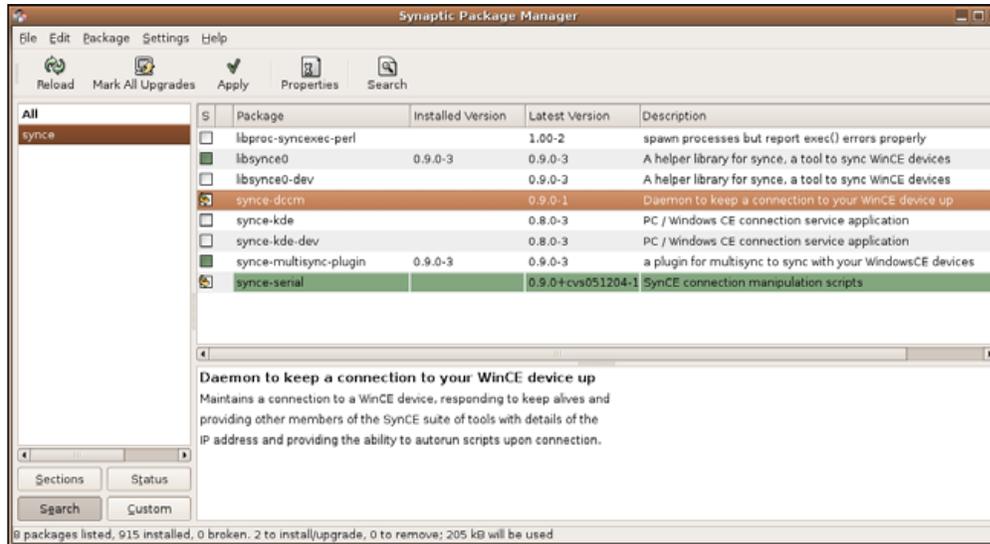


Figure 7. Install More SynCE Software

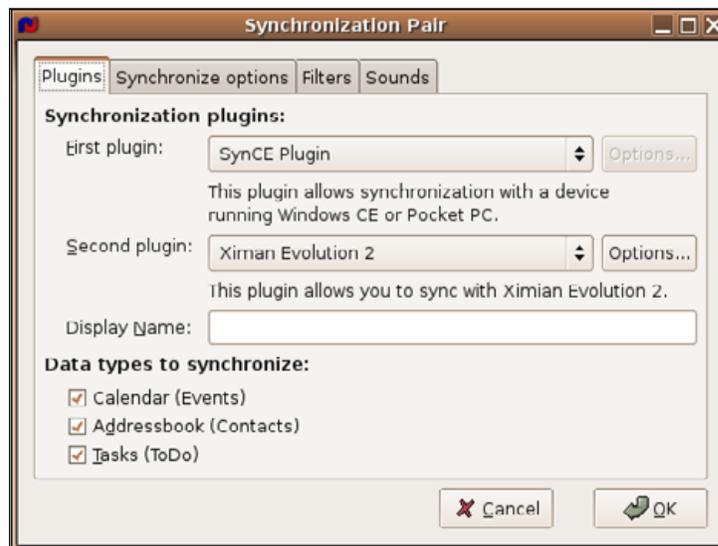


Figure 8. Set Up Multisync to Sync PocketPC with Evolution

toolbar and search for the word “multi-sync”. Click on the install boxes for the packages multisync, libmultisync-plugin-all and syncce-multisync-plugin. Synaptic should look something like Figure 6 when you are finished.

Click the Apply button on the Synaptic toolbar. Now search again, this time for syncce. Click on the install boxes for syncce-serial and syncce-dccm, like I show you in Figure 7. Click the Apply button. Synaptic will ask you about the connection to your PocketPC when it installs syncce-serial. If you connect your PocketPC using USB, you can keep the default values. Exit Synaptic

when everything is installed.

Now select Applications→Accessories→Multisync from the GNOME menu to start Multisync. Click the New button on the toolbar. Select SynCE Plugin for the first plugin. Select Ximian Evolution 2 for the second plugin. You should see something like what you see in Figure 8.

Click the OK button. I hope you are ready to synchronize your PocketPC with Evolution now. Try it. I do not have a PocketPC so I cannot test it for you.

There is a better project called OpenSync, but the last time I looked it used Multisync and is not easy to configure or easy to use, especially if you want to synchronize with KDE. So I hope I am right that you are using Evolution, and I hope this works for you.■

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.

Sneak Preview: KDE 3.5

With recent beta releases of the upcoming KDE 3.5, we took the time to catch up with one of KDE's leading developers, Daniel Molkentin.

JOHN KNIGHT

TUX: What's your name, age, location, occupation and role in KDE development?

My name is Daniel Molkentin, I live in Bonn, the former capital of Germany, situated in the lovely Rhine area. My primary involvement with KDE is Kontact, the KDE groupware application. I am also involved with the port of KDE to Qt 4, which eventually will result in KDE 4.

TUX: What is the driving force behind 3.5, features, speed or usability?

All of the above. There have been a lot of usability improvements lately, especially in the KDE panel, called Kicker, and in most parts of Kontact. The opensability.org guys are doing an awesome job in constantly creating new reports that we can base improvements on.

And features—well, they always add up during a release cycle. There are so many, I can name only the most prominent: Konqueror has not only greatly advanced in rendering, but it also features multiple search engines, a pop-up blocker and an ad blocker. Moreover, the KDE instant-messenger Kopete comes with several new features and improvements, among them MSN Webcam support and support for the Yahoo! address

book. KControl got the last face lift—searching for keywords is now more intuitive. This is the last overhaul before it will be retired in KDE 4 and replaced by something new.

As for speed—due to the natural way library code gets optimized and some selective analysis with high-class open-source memory and runtime analyzers, we were able to push for speed here and there.

TUX: Everyone keeps talking about 4.0. Are any planned 4.0 features in 3.5, or is it more of a clean and final release for the 3.x series?

The latter really. The panel has received some eye-candy for the 3.5 release, but that's still not close to what we are working on for KDE 4. I think there are enough features in KDE 3.5 for now. If you want KDE 4 features, well, hold your breath for KDE 4.

TUX: There were claims about the large speed benefits that will come from Qt 4, have you guys had much of a chance to play with it and verify this?

Yes, it is true. So far we have mostly worked on a Qt 4 port of the KDE libraries, which already feels much faster, although I don't have concrete numbers right now.



Even the humble old backdrop gets an overhaul in the new KDE!



The new-look opening screen for Konqueror.

“First and foremost, KDE has succeeded as a desktop environment, and that is probably the most important thing to note.”

Also, there are a lot of optimization opportunities in the KDE libraries, which we will certainly seize. This should allow for further speed ups. A third point includes speed improvements if you'll be using the upcoming X.org 7.0, which allows you to make sure that almost all graphics effects are performed on the graphics card rather than on the processor. Current X.org releases are not capable of accelerating complex 2-D operations. Because KDE uses those complex operations a lot, it will use less CPU with new versions of X.org and therefore feel snappier.

TUX: Where do you feel KDE has to improve to gain more users?

KDE for sure is already a very powerful and versatile product. Not only do people use KDE but they regularly tell us how much they like it. Still, we recognize that there is a lot of room for improvement, as KDE still suffers from the complexity that has grown with the amount of features it has.

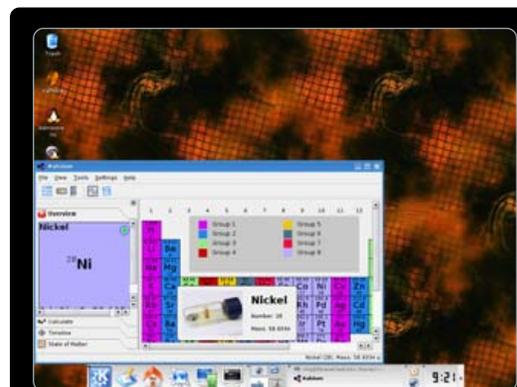
We will try to make sure users can enjoy the desktop environment and the applications for what they are, tools—daily tools. For KDE 4, we plan to optimize work flow and make sure users can still adapt KDE to their needs, without getting lost in a jungle of options. We are currently developing new concepts together with our usability experts.

TUX: Where do you think KDE has particular strengths? Are there any areas that you're particularly proud of?

First and foremost, KDE has succeeded as a desktop environment, and that is probably the most important thing to note. But we also have a lot of shiny pearls in our stack of applications. Contact and the KDE PIM applications certainly belong among them, allowing for interaction with a lot of professional groupware servers. At the same time, Kopete has grown to be a great multiprotocol IM application.

The edutainment project also contains some very valuable applications—from entertaining applications for children, like blinKen, to applications that astonish even professionals. Kalzium, our chemistry application got feedback from renowned universities, and KStars, the KDE desktop planetarium, can control your telescope.

Finally, there are a lot of fine external KDE-based applications that are not released with the KDE core packages, but still shouldn't be missed on any desktop. There is amaroK, the flexible multimedia player, and there is digiKam, the most flexible tool for digital cameras available on Linux today, to name only two of them.



Science nerds rejoice! Chemistry made easy with Kalzium.



KDE is becoming a child's intuitive learning environment with blinKen.

“I'd like to have it be seen as the desktop that made people love migrating to Linux, in the first big wave of Linux migrations.”

TUX: During the last few years, there has been a lot of emphasis on cooperation with GNOME. Are there any more parts of shared work in 3.5?

The accessibilities teams of both projects have declared a close cooperation. There are already approaches in 3.5, but the fruits of cooperation will be earned in 4.0. You will likely see more cooperation via freedesktop.org wherever we feel there that it would make sense to cooperate.

TUX: Around 3.3, Apple was making many improvements to Konqueror for its Safari browser. Is there still a lot of Apple involvement with Konqueror?

Since the time they opened up their repository, it got quite a bit easier to merge patches back and forth. Although we still don't have a grand unified repository, it's still a good move for us. That said, such a unified repository is technically impossible at this point.

Furthermore, we had two people from Nokia at our developer meeting "aKademy" in Spain. They presented

their porting work on KHTML/WebCore to the Series60 platform and announced to cooperate with our developers, so there is hope for further contribution.

As kind of a "neutral zone" for all parties involved, khtml.info (<http://khtml.info>) has been founded.

"There have been a lot of usability improvements lately, especially in the KDE panel, called Kicker, and in most parts of Kontact."

TUX: What do you feel are KDE's strong advantages over Windows and Mac OS?

KDE is its own platform, that's what makes us so flexible in most parts. The only weak points are where we need to interact with other projects like X.org or the kernel, and we are trying to resolve that. In the case of X.org, we have already made quite significant

progress. It is also more flexible when it comes to fulfilling users' demands for desktops that suit them. Neither Windows nor Mac OS X make it easier to make the shoe fit most users' feet.

TUX: What would you most like the 3.x series to be remembered for?

I'd like to have it be seen as the desktop that made people love migrating to Linux, in the first big wave of Linux migrations.

I think we also owe a great share to the community here, because it was the community that created lots of nice applications and artwork for KDE.

TUX: Thanks for you time, Daniel.
Thank you for your interest.■



John Knight is a 21-year-old, rock-climbing, Japan-loving megalomaniac, trying to take over the world from his bedroom via his keyboard. He spends most of his time tinkering with MPlayer and head-banging to his MP3s.

klik and Run

It's a bird, it's a plane, it's Linspire's Click and Run! No, it's klik, a different approach to click-and-run applications.

JES HALL

klik is a system that provides an easy way to download and run software for KDE (<http://klik.atekon.de>). It's a simple way to try out the latest applications, and when you're finished with them, uninstalling is as easy as dragging them to your trash can. klik programs are distributed as a single image that contains all of the application's libraries and other components. This is rather like the way most software is distributed on Apple's OS X. klik introduces a new URL schema, `klik://myapp`. These simple URLs are understood by klik to mean "Fetch me the latest version of my app from the klik servers." Once you have the klik client installed, you could type `klik://skype` into the Konqueror address bar to grab the latest Skype package.

HOW DOES KLIK WORK?

klik focuses on application bundles that contain all the basic libraries needed to execute the program. Assuming you're using a recent Linux distribution, there should never be any need to track down and install dependencies for klik packages. These bundles are usually created "on the fly" when you click on a klik URL. Effectively, you're requesting the server for a recipe to make an application bundle for your particular Linux system. klik then downloads all the files it needs, which are combined into a single image file on your desktop with the file extension `.cmg`. When you install the klik client, it also installs the necessary support for Konqueror to

recognise these `.cmg` files and to know to pass them onto klik when you click on them.

ADVANTAGES OF KLIK:

- Once the klik client is installed, installing applications is a point-and-click process that doesn't require root privileges.
- klik is separate from system packages, so it allows users to test out applications without overwriting their stable versions.
- Uninstalling applications is as simple as dragging the `cmg` image file to the trash can.
- By packaging dependencies with the application in a bundle, users are saved from "dependency hell".
- Applications can be relocated easily. Copy the `.cmg` file to a USB key, CD or any other place on your computer.

DISADVANTAGES OF KLIK:

- There is no signing implemented yet, so the packages come from an untrusted source and could possibly contain malicious code.
- klik packages, at this stage, don't undergo

much of a quality-control process.

- Portability—Linux distributions can vary wildly, making it difficult to package applications that will work on all systems. This means in the early stages of klik you'll probably encounter packages that won't work on your system.

WHICH DISTRIBUTIONS SUPPORT KLIK?

- Kanotix BH 8 and newer (<http://www.kanotix.net>).
- Knoppix 3.7 2004-12-08, 3.8 CEBIT and newer (<http://www.knoppix.de>).
- Ubuntu 5.10 Breezy Badger Live CD, beta (<http://www.ubuntu.com>).
- Linspire Five-0 (<http://www.linspire.com>).
- Kanotix CPX-MINI (<http://debian.tu-bs.de/project/cpx-mini/index.html>).
- Debian sarge, sid (some `.cmg` files might fail to run).
- OpenSUSE 10 (currently in preparation, some `.cmg` files might fail to run).
- Fedora Core 4 (currently in preparation, some

cmg files might fail to run).

Testing on distributions other than those mentioned seems to indicate that many of the most popular packages will work on other modern distributions. I've tested some packages on SUSE 10.0, SUSE 9.3 and Slackware 10. Although not all packages work on all distributions, support is growing daily. Please note that the klik scripts don't handle path or filenames that have spaces. What does this mean? If you create a folder for your klik programs, you must make sure the name of the folder doesn't have any spaces in it. So, rather than calling it klik Apps, call it klik_Apps.

HOW DO I INSTALL KLIK?

Installing klik is quite simple. Open the Run Command... box that you'll find in your KDE menu, and type:

```
wget klik.atekon.de/client/install -O - |sh
```

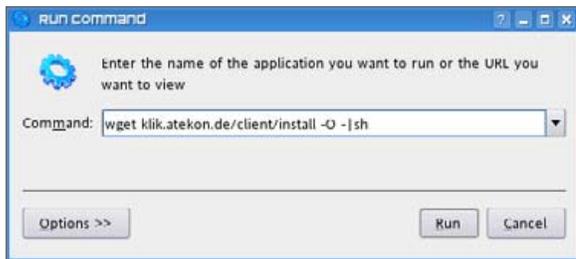


Figure 1. The KDE Run Command Box

This requires that you have the wget program installed. If you get an error message saying, "Could not run the specified command", try installing wget using your distribution's usual method for installing software from your install

media or the Internet. If for some reason this still does not work for you, open a terminal window and try typing the same command at the command-line prompt. For example, one person did not get it to work at the Run prompt on Kubuntu Breezy Badger, but it worked fine at a command prompt on the same system. In this case, it prompts you for your password to perform the next step.

Here's the next step. You may get a dialog like that shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. This dialog may appear on installing klik.

You need to run the mentioned script to add some entries to your fstab. What does this mean? fstab is a file that lists various filesystems and who is allowed to have access to them. klik needs to be able to put some entries into this file to let you have the access to "mount" these klik images. They're a little bit like a CD ISO image, and to get at the files inside them, they have to be mounted to a directory just like you mount a CD-ROM to access it through a directory on your computer. To run the script, you can use the Run Command... box again. You should see the script sitting in your home directory, on your desktop or in your desktop directory. Drag the script over to the Run Command... text entry box where you would normally type a command. When you see the mouse cursor change to signify that you can

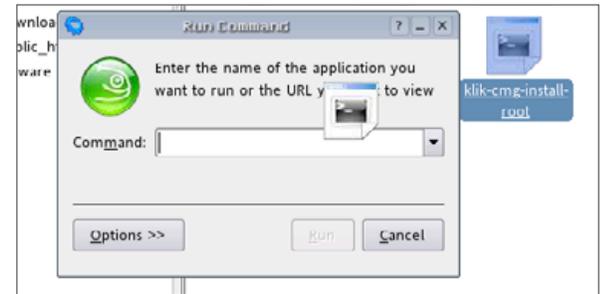


Figure 3. Dragging a Shell Script to the Run Command Box

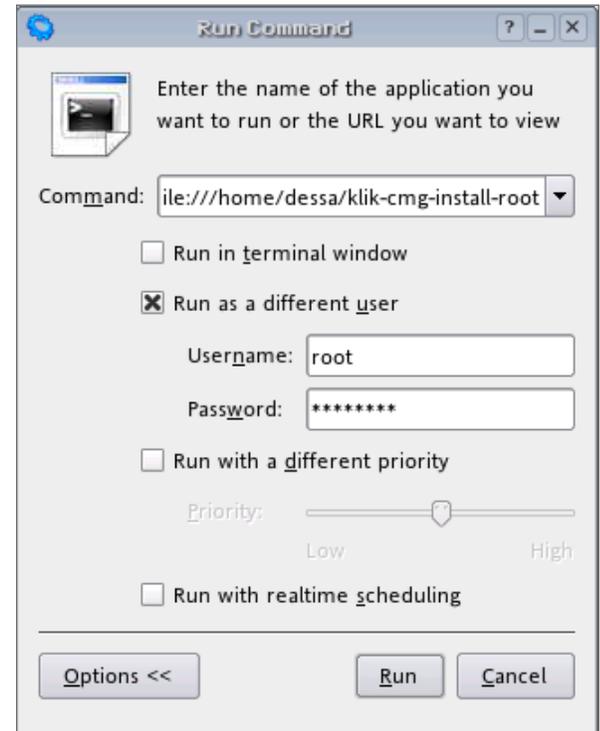


Figure 4. Executing the Script as a Different User

drop the object, release the mouse button. You should now see text in the Command box.

Now, click on the Options button. Check Run as a different user, and put your root password into the Password box. If you're using Kubuntu or Ubuntu, you may have to put your own password in there. This command takes only a second to run.

INSTALLING KLIK APPLICATIONS

While you've been doing this, klik should have launched Konqueror for you and taken you to the klik store. Here I'm going to walk through installing and running the latest version of Opera. It's a pretty neat browser I'd like to try, but my distribution doesn't package it. That's okay though—with klik, I can be up and running within minutes.

You can find Opera under the Contributed klicks section. Simply click on the Opera image. A security warning may appear telling you this page links to `klik://opera`. That's not a problem though—that's exactly what we want!



Figure 5. A Security Dialog

A dialog appears asking you if it's okay to download a list of files. These are the separate ingredients

of the klik recipe that's going to make up your `Opera.cm9` file. Click Yes, and a dialog appears showing you the download and install progress.

Once it's finished, if the install was successful, klik automatically launches Opera.



Figure 6. The Opera Web Browser, Installed via klik

Well, that was pretty easy! The image has been saved to your desktop, and whenever you want to run Opera again, simply click on that image file. Although installing the klik client can be a little complex, some distributions are now coming with the klik client pre-installed. If you're a little more Linux-savvy than your family or friends, why not install the klik client if they're running a supported Linux version? They can

try out all kinds of software in a way that's easy, safe and fun.

One of the more interesting ways to use klik is to try out the bleeding-edge pre-release software that your distribution doesn't usually package for you. If they do, it sometimes means overwriting stable versions of software and that's not very pleasant if the pre-release version is unstable.

Enter klik. Because klik application bundles are separate from your system software, you don't need to worry about overwriting your stable versions. Because they're self-contained, removing or updating them is very simple. Figure 7 shows Enlightenment DR17 running in a window on a KDE desktop. This is the bleeding-edge development version of Enlightenment, a window manager with a lot of bells and whistles. Interested in checking out the new eye-candy? Don't want to go through the hassle of learning how to get the source code and compiling it?

KLIK://ENLIGHTENMENT

Once the klik bundle is downloaded to your desktop, simply click it to run. A lovely feature of this particular bundle is that it has been designed to run in a modified Xnest. In short, it runs in a second, smaller X server within your own. This lets you play with all the latest E17 features while still being within the safety of your familiar desktop environment. The particular X window it's running in can be resized, or you can even run it full screen by pressing `Ctrl-Shift-F`.

A few other top picks:

- `klik://realplayer10gold`: the latest version of Real Network's versatile multimedia player for Linux.

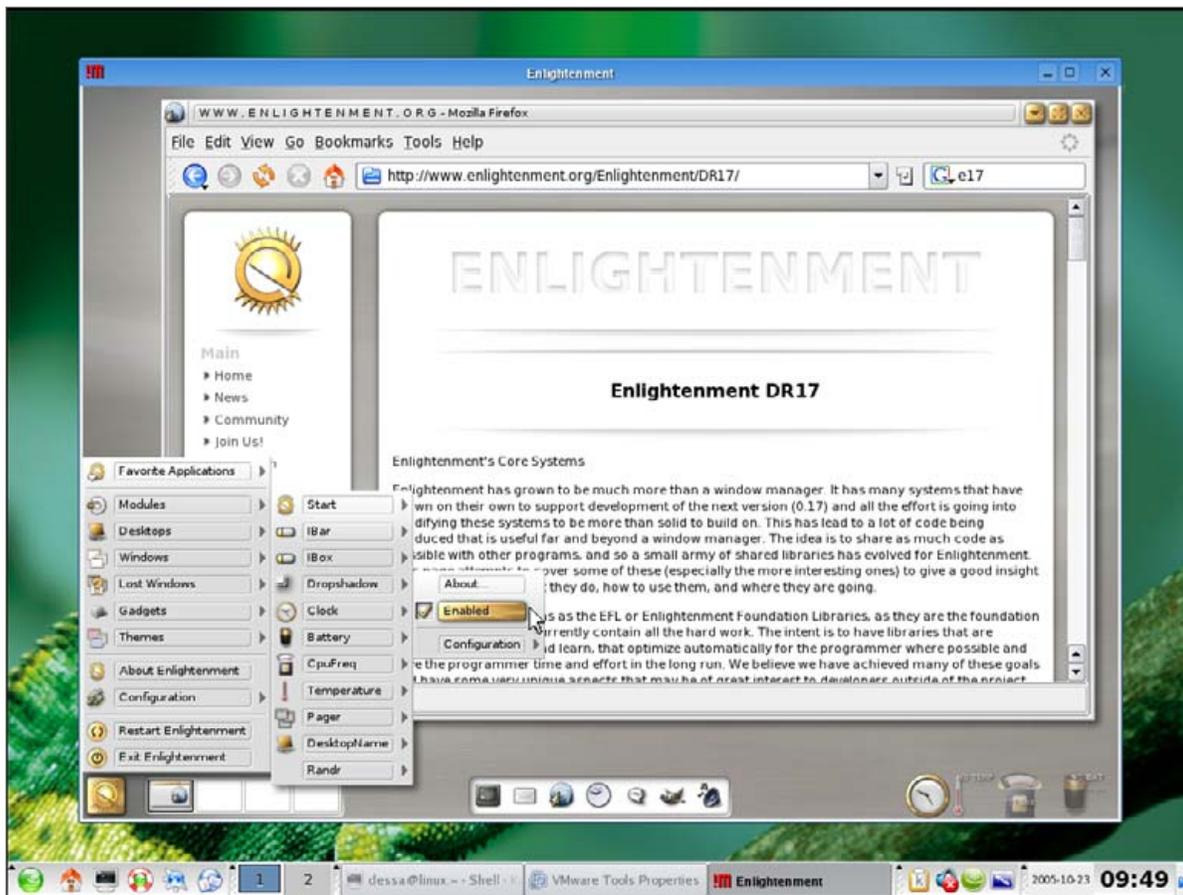


Figure 7. Enlightenment Running in a Window within KDE

- **klik://apollon:** Apollon is a p2p file-sharing application for Linux that can connect to the Gnutella network (used by LimeWire and BearShare) and FastTrack (Kazaa) as well as others.
- **klik://nvu:** Nvu is a cross-platform Web-

authoring system designed to rival FrontPage and Dreamweaver.

- **klik://ar7l:** Adobe's official Acrobat Reader 7 client for Linux.

- **klik://opera9:** the latest unstable version of the Opera Web browser.
- **klik://skype:** Skype is an excellent cross-platform peer-to-peer voice service, letting you talk to your friends on Windows, Macintosh and Linux.
- **klik://flock:** the developer preview of the new Mozilla-based Web browser, Flock. Flock focuses on community and sharing, with integrated support for del.icio.us, a shared bookmarks service that lets you share your favourite links with your friends, and Flickr, one of the most popular on-line services for posting photographs. It also has integration with many major blogging Web sites.

klik is a relatively new technology, but it looks very promising. There is preliminary support for GNOME- and Mozilla-based browsers in the works, so GNOME users can get in on the action too. If you have trouble getting klik running, don't despair! Kanotix (<http://www.kanotix.com/index.php?&newlang=eng>) is a live CD distribution that comes with the klik client pre-installed, and CPX-MINI (<http://www.informatik.hu-berlin.de/~bading/cpx-mini>) is designed to run from a USB key, also with klik pre-installed. To learn more, visit the klik Web site (<http://klik.atekon.de>), or if you're IRC-savvy, you can find the developers hanging out in #klik on freenode. ■



Jes Hall is a UNIX systems consultant and KDE developer from New Zealand. She's passionate about helping open-source software bring life-changing information and tools to those who would otherwise not have them.

Window Maker Is a Powerful Desktop Lite

Lightweight Window Manager Window Maker has unusual but powerful features that might woo you away from GNOME or KDE.

JOHN KNIGHT

This month, we look at Window Maker, a desktop that's been around for years, but has lots of cool features and a unique interface that still wins quite an audience. If you're accustomed only to environments like KDE, GNOME and Windows, Window Maker (WM) will seem quite strange, but don't let that put you off, the low level of clutter and the high level of customization makes for a very likable environment. WM also tends to be a fairly keyboard-oriented desktop, so if you're into keyboard shortcuts, WM might be right up your alley.

LOOKING AROUND

In the top-left corner is the Clip, which is as close as you'll get to a Start Bar/Kicker. The Clip switches between desktops (or workspaces as they're called here) and organizes icons. In the top-right, are three icons, from top to bottom: WMDock, xterm and Window Maker Preferences. See Figure 1 for an example of a default desktop for Window Maker.

WMDock docks applications into manageable boxes along the screen, and it is always running by default. The xterm button runs a terminal, and the Window Maker Preferences runs an application to customize WM. We show you how to use

all of these, but only the basic functions, as we don't have space for every feature.

MENUS

To use the menu, right-click on the desktop and hold down the button, the menu now appears, and you can browse through it to your heart's content. See Figure 2 for an example of a customized menu and desktop. To run a program, simply highlight a menu entry with your mouse pointer and let go of the mouse button; you'll also notice that when you open a program, a new box appears, either in the top or bottom left-hand corner.

Middle-click on the desktop, and a list of all the open applications appears, including programs running on other workspaces. The menus in WM have some nifty features too, like hanging around for multiple uses and breaking into parts. To make a menu stay, hold the mouse button down and release it while it's over the menu's title bar. To make the menu disappear, either run an application or left-click on the title bar. A cross now appears on the right of the title bar, and clicking on the cross makes the menu close.

You can do this with multiple menus, which can be broken up too. Try going into one menu—



Figure 1. A Default Configuration of the Window Maker Desktop



Figure 2. The Cascading Menus of Window Maker

let's use Games for this example—and apply the previous steps to Games' title bar. You now will have both the original menu and the Games menu open. If you left-click and drag Games' title bar, you'll find that they're now separated and

you have two menus that are snapping to each other. If you're going through a menu and decide you want to get out of it without running any of the programs that are listed, simply move your mouse away from the menu and let go of the mouse over the desktop.

WINDOWS

To maximize a window, right-click on the title bar and choose Maximize. Minimize is called Miniaturize in WM, and is a lot easier than Maximizing; simply click the box icon on the left of the window's title bar, and the window now shrinks into a box in the corner. To restore the window, double-click on the new icon, and Bob's your uncle.

There are a number of options available when you click on the title bar, and some have strange names for functions that you are already used to.

Shade hides the window's contents and displays only the title bar—double-clicking the title bar has the same effect. Select, well, it selects the window (I'm sure that would be useful somewhere down the line). The submenu Move To moves the current window to another workspace. Close speaks for itself, and Kill allows you to destroy the window if it has stopped responding. Attributes allows many advanced options, like disabling the title bar, full-screen maximization and so on. There is a drop-down menu at the top that lets you change options relating to different areas, but the options are too many to be listed here and aren't needed for a beginner; however, feel free to play with them at your leisure.

Under the Options menu are three options: Keep on top, Keep on bottom and Omnipresent. Keep on top means that no matter how many windows you open, the current window always is

at the front. Conversely, Keep on bottom means the current window always is underneath. Omnipresent is handy—usually called sticky under other window managers, Omnipresent makes the window visible on all workspaces. This can be useful in situations such as having a music player running while you have lots of other windows spread across multiple workspaces. Omnipresent means you can access the player no matter which workspace you are in.

CLIP

WM's Clip is the most integral part of the desktop; it allows you to switch between workspaces, determine icon behavior and so on. You'll notice arrows in two of the corners; click on these to switch between workspaces. At the top is the workspace number, with 1 being the main workspace. At the bottom is the name of the workspace, with 1's name being Main.

If you right-click on the Clip, a menu appears with all of the Clip's options.

The first is Rename Workspace, which does exactly what it says. This is handy for assigning a task name to a particular workspace, like Audio, Business and so forth. Next on the list is Selected; this is not used for the Clip, but is for the icons that have gathered around it. When you right-click on the icons and choose Selected, it lets you choose multiple icons and perform a single action on all of these icons simultaneously (like move to another workspace). Select All Icons is the blanket version of Selected, automatically selecting all of the icons at once.

Keep Icon, Attract Icons and Remove Icon all relate to one another. Remove Icon detaches it from the Clip and sends it to the bottom of the screen, Attract Icons brings them back and any

other icons that are on screen, and Keep Icon tells them to stay where they are. Launch is interesting—use it on an icon, and a second instance of the program runs. Hide minimizes the window represented by the application, and the now-presented Unhide option restores the window.

Moving on to the two submenus—Move Icon To simply allows you to move whichever icons are selected at the time to a workspace of your choice. Clip Options is more complicated, as it determines a number of behavior areas. Keep on Top decides whether the Clip is always visible. Do you want it there when you have a maximized window? Or would you prefer to keep in the background, out of the way? Collapsed simply sucks all of the icons into the Clip so that they're not visible. Autocollapse makes it do this automatically in the future, and Autoraise does the opposite.

WINDOW MAKER PREFERENCES

We don't really have room to go into the whole operation of the Preferences utility; therefore, we cover only the coolest and most important parts of it—you can explore the rest for yourself. Open it by clicking on the Window Maker Preferences icon (the one with the screwdriver) in the top-right of the screen.

The first good thing to do is turn on balloon help; simply click in the box on the bottom left of the new window to turn it on. Now, when you hover your mouse pointer over a feature, a small dialog balloon appears, telling you what it does. Try the Icon Preferences section, which is the fourth box from the left, at the top. Here, in the icon positioning section on the left, you can designate where new icons will be created automatically (normally at the left). On the bottom right is the

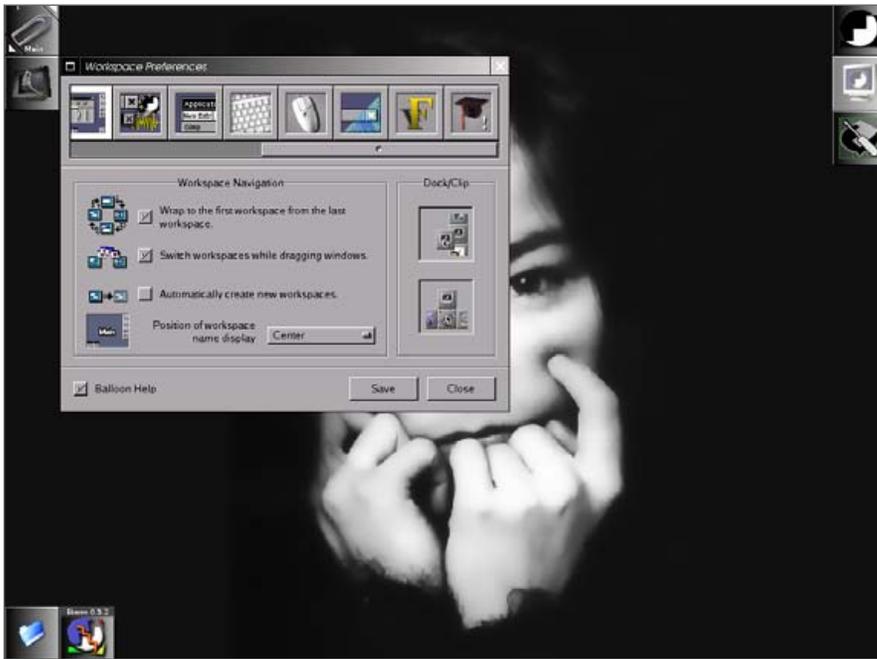


Figure 3. Window Maker Preferences

icon size option: normally each icon is 64x64 pixels; if they're too large, feel free to turn them down. I like 48x48, but this probably won't work until the next time you start WM. The Iconification Animation part is cool too—try changing it to 3D-flipping and notice the difference when you minimize a window!

My favorite section is the Workspace Preferences section, which is the seventh box from the left. On the right are two options, the top is for disabling/enabling the Dock, and the bottom is for disabling/enabling the Clip. On the left is the neat part, with three options. The first is the

new workspace is created. This can be good, but it also can be annoying when you accidentally make four new workspaces that you didn't want, so be careful (you can destroy these later by choosing Destroy Last from the main menu under Workspace→Workspaces).

If you scroll the bar below the boxes to the right, the icon with the picture of the keyboard has the shortcut key options—definitely worth examining. The icon with the mouse picture allows you to change which mouse button does what, and the icon with the big F lets you change the main font used.

option wrap workspaces. This means that when you're scrolling between workspaces and you come to the last one, if you keep scrolling, you'll go back to the first—and vice-versa. The second option is my favorite, when you drag a window off the side of the screen, it scrolls through to the next workspace and drags your window there too. Turn it on, click Save and try it out!

Automatically create new workspaces, is the last option. If you scroll past your last workspace on the Clip, a

THEMES AND DESKTOP CUSTOMIZATION

WM is easily themeable, and there are a lot of options available, my favorite being the Bjork theme (shown in Figure 4). If you download a



Figure 4. Bjork. My Favorite Theme for Window Maker

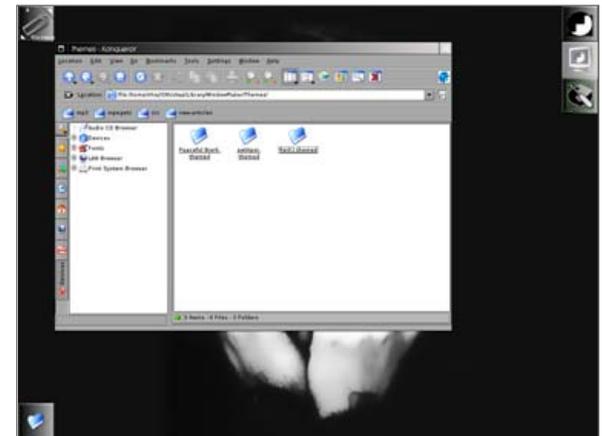


Figure 5. Using Konqueror to Browse Themes

theme and are not sure how to install it, extract the file with your favorite archiving program (perhaps `ark`) and copy the new directory and its contents to `<your home directory>/GNUstep/Library/WindowMaker/Themes`.

To change to your theme, simply browse through the desktop menu under `Workspace→Appearance→Themes`. The desktop background can be changed too, simply copy your favorite pictures to `<your home directory>/GNUstep/Library/WindowMaker/Backgrounds`. To use your new background, access it under `Workspace→Appearance→Background→Images` with the desktop menu.

DESKTOP ICONS

When it comes to a desktop file manager and icons, most choices are unsuitable, due to WM's reliance on the right- and middle-mouse click, but Rox is a good choice, and the combination with WM feels good. To use Rox, you first have to make a new file called `autostart` under this directory: `<your home directory>/GNUstep/Library/WindowMaker/`.

In the new file, enter the following text:

```
rox --pinboard=Default &
```

The `autostart` file now has to be made executable. If you're using Konqueror, right-click and choose `Properties`. Click on the `Permissions` tab, and check the `Is executable` box. Under Nautilus, do the same, but in the `Permissions` tab, check the `Execute` box in the `Owner` section.

The next time you start WM, Rox will be running its Pinboard over the desktop. See

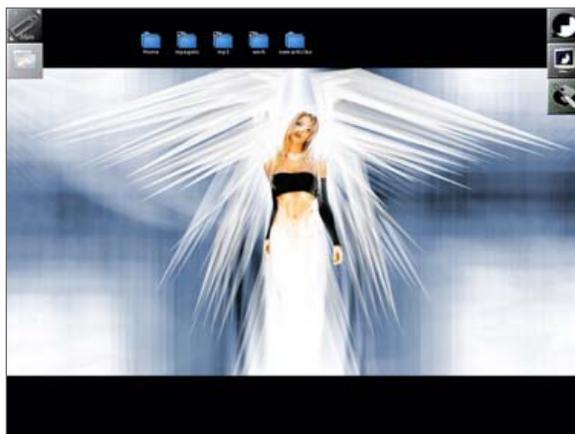


Figure 6. Window Maker Rox

Figure 6 for an example of Window Maker running with Rox.

You will notice a side effect or two if you use Rox. See how you can't use WM's desktop menus anymore? To combat this, right-click on the Rox Pinboard and choose `Rox-Filer→Options`. Choose `Compatibility` from the menu on the left, and check the box for `Pass all backdrop mouse clicks to window manager` under `Window manager problems`. This enables you to access WM's right-click desktop menus again, but with two more side effects:

1. The menu always disappears when you release the mouse button. This means that you can't do some of the cool things like breaking up menus and leaving a menu lingering on the desktop, but for many users these features may be superfluous anyway.

2. You can't access the Pinboard's right-click menu anymore. This is most useful for quick access to the Rox Options menu, but it still can be accessed by right-clicking under the Rox File Manager. If you want the Pinboard's menu back temporarily (perhaps for changing the backdrop), make your way back to the Window manager problems section, turn off the option you checked and click `OK` while you perform whichever task you want to perform. (See the Rox documentation for more info.)

All in all, WM is a unique desktop that has many dedicated users. The boxy feel will either turn you on or put you off, and many people love the way all of the features of this desktop are contained in a few simple components, making this a deceptively feature-laden desktop. ■

RESOURCES

Central Web Site: <http://windowmaker.org>

Themes: <http://themes.freshmeat.net/browse/1091>



John Knight is a 21-year-old, rock-climbing, Japan-loving megalomaniac, trying to take over the world from his bedroom via his keyboard. He spends most of his time tinkering with MPlayer and headbanging to his MP3s.

Add Custom Actions to Your KDE Konqueror Pop-up Menus

How to set up Konqueror so that you can right-click on an icon for a Word Document and view that document as HTML.

MANGO PARFAIT

In the August 2005 issue of *TUX*, I said, “You can customize KDE so that you can right-click on a .vbs file and choose Actions→Compile, which launches a compiler specifically for Visual Basic Script. This option will not show up for other types of files. You cannot do the same thing in GNOME. I can explain how to do all this in KDE. Maybe I will explain in a future issue.”

This is the future issue. I am not going to show you how to compile scripts. I am going to show you how to customize KDE so you can right-click on a Microsoft Word document and view the document in a browser as HTML.

I am going to tell you that, but this article is not really about how to view Microsoft Word documents as HTML Web pages. This article is about how to make your own custom actions for KDE Konqueror. Maybe you do something many times a day. Maybe you do something like move documents to the same place or convert one file into another type of file. You can use this trick to make it easy in KDE.

I use this ability to view Word documents as HTML as an example of what you can do. I hope you will learn from the example so you can create your own custom menu actions. Most of what I will tell you is easy. The hard part is learning how to make commands like the one we will use to change Microsoft Word documents to HTML. If you decide to use this trick but do not know how to create the command for what you want to do, maybe you can get a geek friend to help you.

ONCE UPON A TIME

Here, maybe this makes more sense if I make up a story. You have many Word documents in your folders. You tell your geek friend that you want to look at these documents many times, but you do not want to open them in a word processor. You don’t want to make changes. You don’t want to wait for a word processor to load. She says, “First download this package. It is

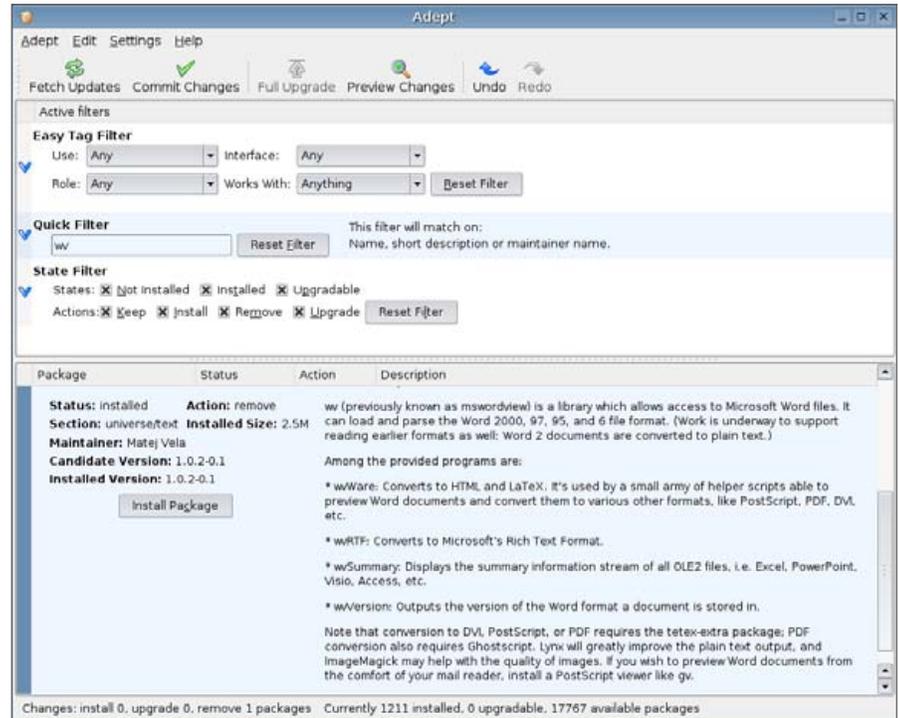


Figure 1. Install wv using the Kubuntu Adept package manager.

called wv or wvWare. It may be called something else for your distribution. Here is what it looks like in the Kubuntu 5.10 Breezy Badger Adept package manager.” (See Figure 1.)

So you start the Adept package manager. You search for `wv`. You find the package. You click the Install button. You click the Commit Changes button in the toolbar. Now you have the `wv` package installed.

Then your geeky friend tells you, “Type this command to create a temporary directory in your home directory. You need this because sometimes when you convert Word documents to HTML you create a lot of files. You do not want to clutter up your directory with these files”:

```
$ mkdir ~/tmp
```

She says, “Now, here is the command to convert the Word document to HTML”:

```
$ wvHtml --targetdir=$HOME/tmp <the document name> temp.html
```

She continues, “Now open up the `tmp` folder in Konqueror, and then click on the file `temp.html`. This is how you can view the Word document as HTML.”

You say, “This is too much trouble. I do this many times a day. I do not want to type commands. I want to open the folder, click on the icon for the Word document and tell Konqueror to show me the document as HTML. I do not know how to make the command work. You tell me the command and I will put it in the right place and use it. I know how to do this because I read the article by Mango Parfait.”

THE EASY WAY

Okay, so here is how to do all the work one time and then get what you want, which is a point-and-click way to view the Microsoft Word document in your browser as HTML.

First, you need to install the `wv` package (or whatever it is called for your distribution). See the above example for how to install this with Kubuntu Breezy Badger. If you are not using Kubuntu Breezy Badger, you need to figure out how to find this package and install it. If I tell you the steps for every distribution, this article will be too many pages long.

You should create a temporary directory like your geeky friend says. You can do this without typing a command. Open up your home folder. Right-click on an empty space and select Create New→Folder from the pop-up

menu. Name this new folder `tmp`.

Now we are going to teach KDE how to show you the Word document in HTML just by pointing and clicking.

Start your favorite text editor. My favorite text editor is Kate. I will tell you what to do in Kate, and you can figure out how to do the same thing with your editor if you do not like Kate.

Type the following text in your editor. Be very careful to type it exactly this way. This is the most important part of the trick:

```
[Desktop Entry]
ServiceTypes=application/msword
Actions=ViewDocAsHTML
```

```
[Desktop Action ViewDocAsHTML]
Name=View Word Doc as HTML
Exec=wvHtml --targetdir=$HOME/tmp %f temp.html; konqueror ~/tmp/tmp.html
```

If you have a little knowledge, you will wonder why I use `$HOME` in one place and `~` in another place. They both mean the same thing, right? If you do not know this, I can tell you that this is right. They both mean the same thing. Both of these point to your home folder. But `wvHtml` does not understand the `~` symbol. So I have to use `$HOME` instead. I can use `$HOME` later, too, but I am lazy. The symbol `~` is one character. The name `$HOME` is more than one character. I take the easy way when it works and use `~`.

Are you sure you typed everything right? Good. Now you must save this text file. It is important to save it in the right place. So select File→Save As from the editor menu. You will see a file save dialog. You are going to save this file in a folder that probably does not yet exist on your computer. Here is the folder you need to use (change `mangoparfait` to your user name):

```
/home/mangoparfait/.kde/share/apps/konqueror/servicemenus
```

But the `servicemenus` folder is probably not there. So here is how you can make this folder exist. Type this as the file save location (be sure to change `mangoparfait` to the name of your home directory):

```
/home/mangoparfait/.kde/share/apps/konqueror/
```

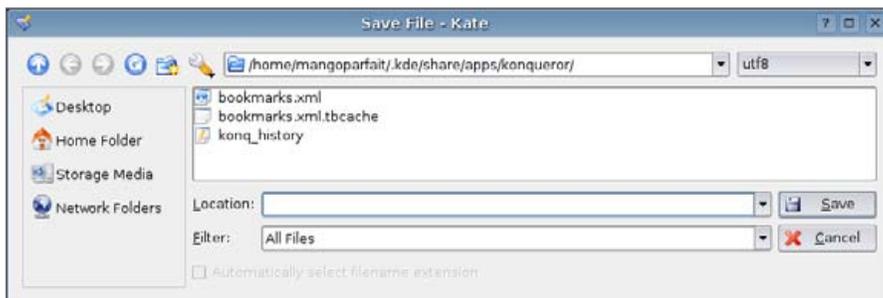


Figure 2. Where to Navigate First with Save As

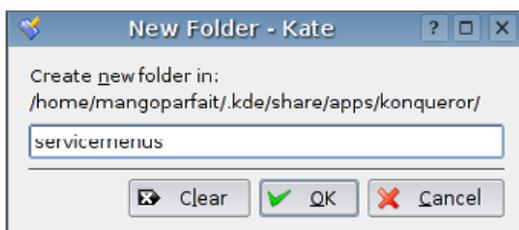


Figure 3. Name the new folder servicemenus.

dialog. Type the name servicemenus in the dialog like you see in Figure 3 and click the OK button.

This creates the folder and changes to that folder when you use Kate. So now you are ready to save the file. Save this file with the name view-doc-as-html.desktop. See Figure 4 for an example.

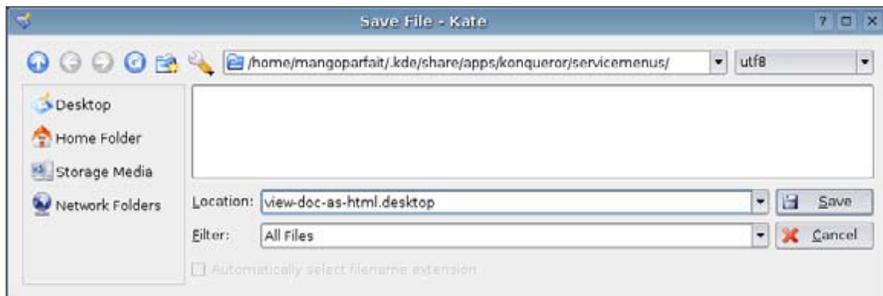


Figure 4. Save this file as view-doc-as-html.desktop.

Type the right name and then click the Save button.

You are done! Open up a folder where you have Microsoft Word documents. Right-click on the icon for a document. Now select Actions from the pop-up menu. You should see a menu selection called View Word Doc as HTML. So select Actions→View Word Doc as HTML from the pop-up menu. You should see a new Konqueror window open, and it will display the Word doc as an HTML file.

HOW IT WORKS

The servicemenus folder you made earlier is a special folder. If you put the right kind of files in this folder, it will add actions to the pop-up menu for Konqueror when you right-click on an icon. The file we put there is view-doc-as-html.desktop. Do you see that it contains these lines?

```
[Desktop Entry]
ServiceTypes=application/msword
```

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The first line tells Konqueror what this file is for. Do not worry about it, just make sure you start with this line [Desktop Entry] when you make your own custom actions.

The second line tells Konqueror that this action is for Microsoft Word documents. Right-click on an icon for some other kind of file. Try a text file or a graphics image. Then select Actions from the pop-up menu. Do you see View Word Doc as HTML there? No you do not. Why? Because we told Konqueror that this action is only for Microsoft Word documents. If you read my words above that I said in the August 2005 issue of *TUX*, you will see that this is the difference between GNOME and KDE. You can create custom menu actions in GNOME, but they will pop up no matter what file you pick. GNOME is not smart enough to know that one action is for one file and another action is for another file.

Now look at the next line:

```
Actions=ViewDocAsHTML
```

This tells Konqueror where to look in this file for the custom action. You can have more than one action here, but I try to keep this simple for you. This points to the heading that comes next:

```
[Desktop Action ViewDocAsHTML]
Name=View Word Doc as HTML
```

Konqueror will look here for the action. It will also see that the name is View Word Doc as HTML. This name is what you see in the menu.

Now here is the hard part. This is the action or command. It is actually two commands separated by a semi-colon:

```
Exec=wwHtml --targetdir=$HOME/tmp %f temp.html; konqueror ~/tmp/temp.html
```

The `wwHtml` command converts a Microsoft Word document into an HTML document. It is not a very smart program, so we need to tell it some things. We need to tell it what directory to

use. That is why we have the `targetdir` part of the command.

Konqueror will replace the symbol `%f` with the name of the file you have selected. This is the input file for `wwHtml`. Then `wwHtml` will create the output file `temp.html` in the directory we told `wwHtml` to use.

There are other symbols you can use. One example is `%F`. Konqueror will let you select many icons in a folder and it will send all the filenames to the place where you put `%F`. Be careful if you try this. Many programs do not know what to do with many filenames at once and your trick will not work. Here is a list of some of the symbols for you:

- `%f`—the file you have selected.
- `%F`—multiple files you have selected.
- `%u`—a URL (like `http://www.tuxmagazine.com`).
- `%U`—more than one URL.
- `%d`—this is the directory for the file you have selected (`%f`).

Now look at the command line again. Next we have a semi-colon. This tells Konqueror that we are done with the first command and we want to start another command. This new command opens up Konqueror and tells it to load the temporary HTML file. This is the easiest way I know how to make it show you the file in HTML. I know harder ways. I know how to make the file show up in the folder window where you have the Word document. But that is too much to learn for one day, so I keep it simple.

Like I say above, most of this is easy. The hard part is the command. If you can do the rest by yourself, ask a geeky friend to tell you what command you can put on the line that starts with `Exec=`. Now you know how to make custom actions for Konqueror and I told you in this future issue, just like I said. ■



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.

From the Trench

Ricky gets Kubuntu and leverages the experience to share some tips about customizing the KDE desktop.

RICKY FREEDLANDER

I got my hands on the latest version of Kubuntu, 5.10, dubbed Breezy Badger, and I'm extremely impressed. If this were a review of Kubuntu, I'd give it a hearty thumbs-up for just about anyone, from newbie desktop users to power users. I'm a fan of most distributions, but I've been using Debian unstable simply because it's so easy to keep Debian up to date. Don't be misled by the term unstable. There's no guarantee that packages from the unstable branch of Debian will work properly, but the unstable branch of Debian behaves remarkably contrary to its name. I've rarely had a problem with this branch, and when I do experience problems, they are often resolved the next time I update the system (usually a matter of days).

Kubuntu won me over, however, and has displaced Debian as my standard desktop. This shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone who knows about Kubuntu's roots. Kubuntu is based on the unstable branch of Debian. The Kubuntu/Ubuntu folks have polished, enhanced and customized Debian unstable to make it easier for the masses without dumbing it down so much that power users can't appreciate it.

I tend to go through the same basic steps to customize a new KDE desktop, and as I was stepping through them, it occurred to me that *TUX* readers might benefit from the processes I go through. I ran this by the editor in chief, and we decided to launch a regular series of experiences "from the trench". Within time, *TUX* hopes to

make this a monthly feature written by various contributors who would like to share their experiences.

MOVING THE KDE PANEL

Okay, exposition done—on to the story. The first thing I do after getting everything running is completely rearrange the KDE panels. The default setup for Kubuntu is similar enough to the default used by most modern distributions with a recent version of KDE that most of what I change here will be things I would change if I were using another distribution.

It wouldn't do much good to show you a whole screen shot, because there isn't much to see. My system simply has a panel, a blank desktop and perhaps an icon for a CD inserted into the DVD drive. The primary issue for me is the panel. Figure 1 shows a compressed version of what the default panel looks like in Kubuntu 5.10.

There isn't a whole lot I don't like about the default panel—yet. One thing I don't like is that it appears at the bottom of the screen. I like to select programs from a drop-down menu that appears at the top of the screen. I don't like GNOME itself, but this is the default panel arrangement for GNOME,

and that much I like. I also like having the taskbar at the bottom of the screen. I prefer having the desktop pager near the left on the top panel. GNOME puts it on the bottom panel at the right by default. But it's easy to change that about GNOME, and it's easy to configure the KDE panel the way I like it too.

Anyway, the first thing I want to do is move the panel to the top. I click on a blank area of the panel and drag it to the top of the screen. Problem solved.

TASKS CRUSHED AND MUTILATED

I like to add icons to the panel for those applications I launch most frequently. In my case, I most often use Mozilla Firefox, Mozilla Thunderbird, the Kate editor, the KJots note taker, the Psi Jabber client, the Baskit free-for-all information manager and the Konsole (a command-line terminal program). I also like to have an icon that lets me choose between different Konqueror profiles so that I can open up a Konqueror window for various tasks. I want to add icons for each of these. Some months ago, Mango Parfait mentioned a trick where you can add drawers of icons to the panel. This saves space because you can click on a drawer that opens up into a menu of the applications you use most. I don't like drawers, though. I want all the icons right there on the panel.

I also like eight virtual desktops instead of the default four, so I'm going to want to expand the virtual desktop switcher you see on the example panel in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Default Panel for Kubuntu KDE

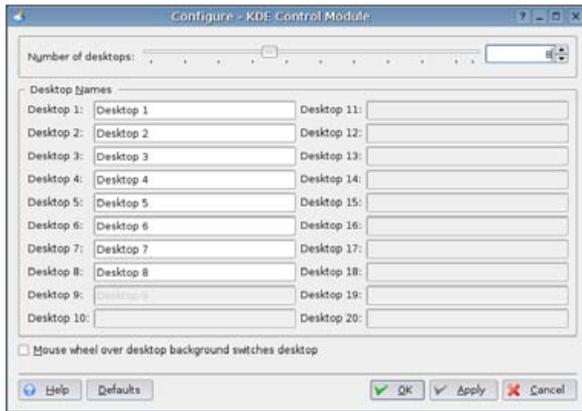


Figure 2. Set the Desktops to Eight

Why am I telling you all this? Some of the middle of the panel is chopped out in the image in Figure 1 so that you can see everything more clearly. But there really isn't much space chopped out. My point is that if I start adding all these icons to the panel and expand the desktop pager, it will reduce the size of the taskbar too much.

KDE has a solution for this problem, but I don't like the usual default workaround. It's a given that the taskbar isn't really big enough, so most KDE default desktops will group similar tasks into a single entry when the taskbar gets full. This means that if you have several Firefox windows open, you will see only one entry in the taskbar for Firefox. This single entry in the taskbar will have an up arrow, which tells you that it represents more than one window. You click on the entry, and a menu of all the associated (similar) windows appears. You can select from the list of open windows that pops up.



Figure 3. The Reconfigured Top Panel

I don't like this behavior for a variety of reasons, none of which are necessary to list here. Suffice it to say I want a taskbar that doesn't have to compensate for being narrow and unable to list the many programs I have open.

So I delete the taskbar altogether. Don't worry, it's going to a better place in a moment. Do you see that little dotted vertical bar to the left of the taskbar? I right-click on it and select Remove Taskbar from the pop-up menu. Gone. Now I have plenty of room for the icons I want to add to the panel.

I right-click on the empty space where the taskbar used to be and select Add To Panel→Application→Internet→Web Browser (Firefox Web Browser). This adds an icon for Firefox to the panel. I repeat this sort of thing to add icons for the rest of my favorite applications to the panel.

One tricky addition to the panel is the Konqueror profiles icon. In this case, I right-click on the panel and select Add To Panel→Special Button→Konqueror Profiles.

The one icon I deliberately do not add to the taskbar is the one for the BasKet information manager. I'll explain why not, later.

Then I right-click on the desktop pager/switcher and select Configure Desktops from the pop-up menu. I move the slider to give me eight desktops (see Figure 2).

At this point, my top panel looks like what you see in Figure 3. You might notice that I've moved a few things around. I slid the Trash icon next to the System icon and placed the pager after that. It's just the way I like things. The main thing to notice is that I have all the icons I want, and room to spare in

case I want to add more. I actually have more room than what is shown here. Once again, I cut out some of the middle to make it easier to view.

A TISKIT A TASKET

Now, I want my taskbar back. I right-click on an empty space on the panel and select Add To Panel→Panel→External Taskbar. Voilà. A taskbar appears at the bottom of the screen. It doesn't have to compete with icons or desktop pagers or anything else for space. There's plenty of room to list all the tasks I have running.

Just in case, I right-click on the taskbar and select Configure External Taskbar from the pop-up menu. A window appears like the one you see in Figure 4.

Notice that it says Group similar tasks: When Taskbar Full. I click on the drop-down control and it gives me two other options, Always and Never. I pick Never. I click the Apply and OK buttons, and that's that.

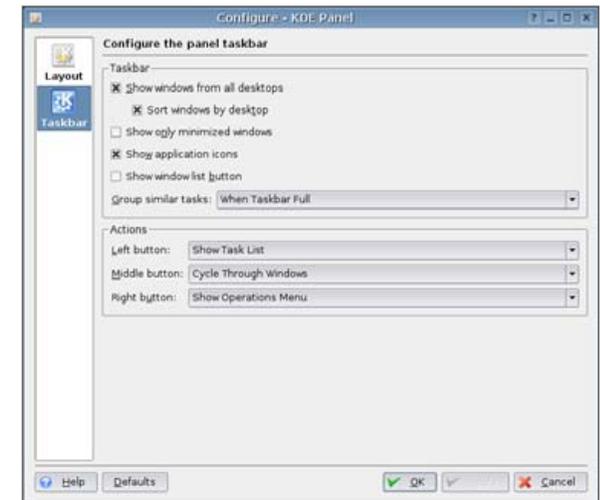


Figure 4. Configure the Taskbar Behavior

VIRTUAL ESTATE

There's one more thing I'm picky about when it comes to desktops. I don't want the panels to take up too much desktop space, commonly referred to as real estate. So I right-click on the top panel and select Configure Panel from the pop-up menu. There's a size setting near the bottom of the dialog box. I set the size to Small.

The only problem with this setting is that it forces the virtual desktop pager to slip into single-row mode. Instead of listing four desktops on top and four on bottom, it lists a row of eight desktops. This takes up too much space on the panel for my tastes.

I right-click on the pager and select Show→Rows→2. This turns it back into a pager with two rows of four desktops. This configuration is nice and small, so it takes up very little space on the panel.

At this point, I'm happy with the results. Everything is where I want it to be. The menu is on top. The pager is on top. The icons for my favorite applications are on top. The clock is on top. And all the sizes are just right. I might want to shrink the size of the taskbar at the bottom of the screen, but I might not. Right now it doesn't matter.

SENSITIVITY SESSIONS

Now, what about BasKet? I'll get to BasKet like I promised, but first I need to change the way KDE handles sessions. I click on the System icon and select Settings from the menu. I click on the KDE Components icon, and then click on the Session Manager icon. This brings up a dialog box like the one in Figure 5.

I see that Kubuntu uses the common default.

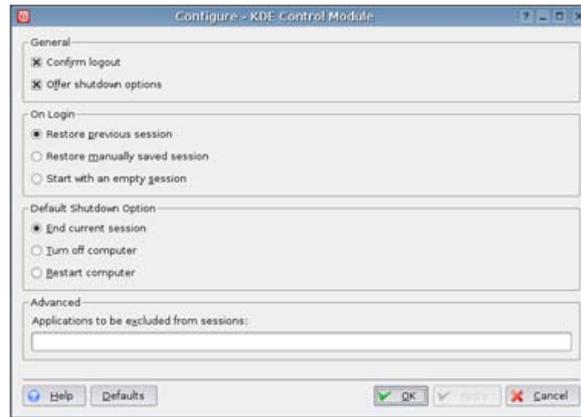


Figure 5. Configuring KDE Sessions

Whenever I log in, KDE restores the previous session. If I had a Konqueror window opened when I logged out, it will open a Konqueror window when I log in. Each to his own, but I don't like this. So I change the setting by clicking on the radio button for Restore manually saved session. I click the OK button and I'm done with that step.

Now, what about BasKet again? BasKet is one of those programs that inserts itself into the KDE system tray on the panel even after you close the BasKet window. This way it's always instantly available at the click of a mouse. Once BasKet takes its place in the system tray, it becomes part of the current KDE session. Other programs work this way too. Some instant messengers work this way, as do some music players.

Here's the trick. I start BasKet and then close the BasKet window. Figure 6 shows what the system tray looks like afterward.



Figure 6. BasKet is still running in the system tray.

Now I close all my applications—every one of them. I select the first virtual desktop in the pager. Then I click on the KDE start menu and select Save Session from the main menu.

From now on, when I log in to KDE, it starts with no windows open, and it remembers that I was using the first virtual desktop. It will also have BasKet running in the system tray on the panel. Why? Because it was there when I saved the session. I can do the same thing with programs that work in a similar fashion, like amaroK (a music player). If I save a session with amaroK in the system tray, it will be there when I log in again.

At this point, I may select a different desktop theme, customize some colors, choose my favorite desktop wallpaper and set up the screensaver. But I've made all of the changes that are most important to me. I've maximized my screen "virtual real estate", and I have my KDE panels and desktop looking and working exactly the way I like it.

Maybe your tastes differ vastly from mine. Maybe you even like whatever default configuration your distribution uses for KDE. But I hope that this little story showed you some of the things you can do to customize your KDE desktop, and I especially hope you benefit from knowing you can save system tray applications as part of your sessions so that they will reappear in the system tray when you log in again. ■

Ricky Freedlander is a consultant and freelancer and has been using Linux since 1995.

Inkscape, Part III: Composing for the Open Clip Art Library

Create this or your own composition with Inkscape and upload it to the Open Clip Art Library.

JON PHILLIPS

In this last part of the Inkscape “Elements and Principles of Design” trilogy, a composition is created and submitted to the Open Clip Art Library, an archive of user-contributed clip art that can be used freely.

To construct this composition, Inkscape, an open-source scalable vector graphics drawing tool, is used to demonstrate both design concepts and features of the application. This article also features the newly released Inkscape version 0.43, but the newest version is not required explicitly in order to follow this article.

To recap, the elements of design are the basic graphical components—point, line, shape (form), texture and color—used to create a larger design. The principles of design are basic guidelines—balance, rhythm, proportion, dominance and unity—for making a larger arrangement of elements. Thus, composition is the intersection of the elements and principles.

COMPOSITION

The combining of distinct elements to form a whole is composition. This confluence of elements and principles is closely associated with the psychological idea of gestalt, which originated in Germany in the 1920s, and which considers the

“relationship between the parts and the whole of a composition” (see Resources). What follows from understanding the gestalt of something are ideas such as closure and continuance, discussed in the November 2005 issue, as one’s mind filling in the missing pieces of a composition and perspective, respectively.

THE PROJECT: LOGO AND LETTERHEAD

Rather than create a typical landscape or portrait painting, the focus of this article is to make a generic letterhead with a generic logo for a generic business, using the elements and principles to make a composition.

In graphic design it is helpful to have some goal. For this project, the goal is to create a soft representation for the client (who we are doing this work for) of a human resources company that appeals to the common person. The client needs a nice letterhead that can be re-used throughout a thousand-person company.

Start Inkscape on your computer and select the Document Preferences Palette under File→Document Preferences... (Shift-Ctrl-D). Make sure that the page size is set to A4 (or US letter depending on where you live). If you are more familiar with Imperial units, select “in”, for Inches

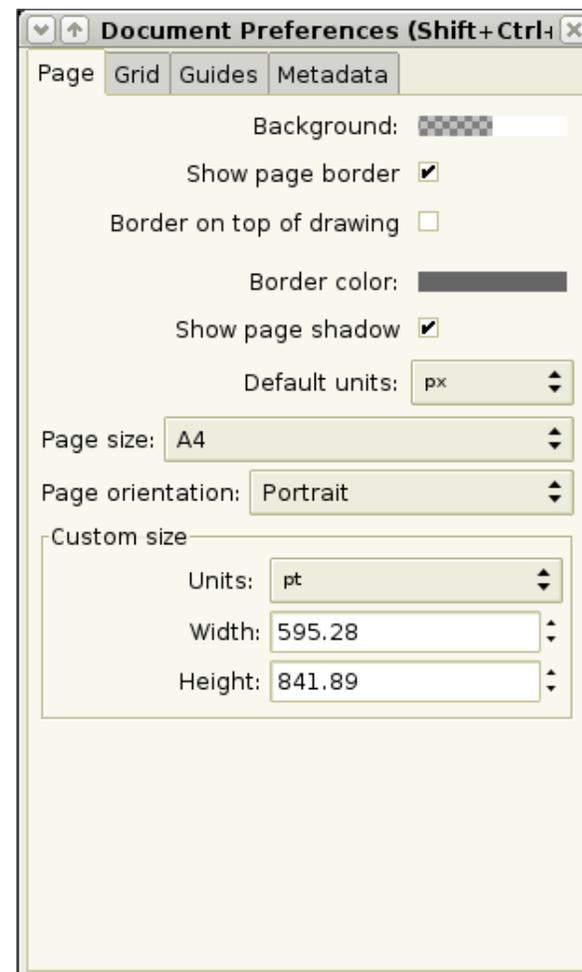


Figure 1. Document Preferences Dialog

in the Default units option (see Figure 1).

Next, click the Metadata tab in that dialog. Now enter data into the fields. This metadata, or data about data, will be used when we submit

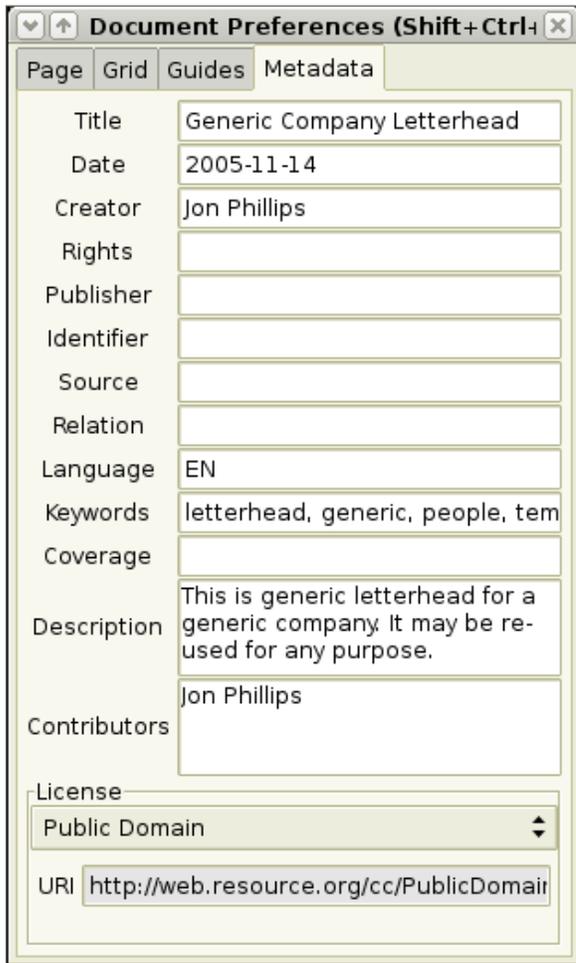


Figure 2. Document Preferences Dialog's Metadata Tab

this file to the Open Clip Art Library. It is used to describe the document we are creating, which helps with organizing and searching files created with Inkscape. Also, because this is to be submit-

ted to the Open Clip Art Library, make sure to select under the Licenses pop-up menu, public domain. The Open Clip Art Library accepts only imagery that is put into the public domain. An example of the types of data entered is shown in Figure 2.

THE LOGO

To create the logo, let's create a generic person. First, use the ellipse tool (F5 key, Figure 3) to create a head. Hold the Ctrl key down while dragging on the drawing area (canvas) to constrain the shape to a circle. Next, change to the rectangle tool (F4 key, Figure 4) and draw a body for this head including arms (Figure 5). Use the auxiliary controls for the rectangle tool to make the rectangle have rounded edges (Figure 6).

Next, create a smaller slice that represents the gap between the person's arm and body, as exemplified in step 3 in Figure 5. Duplicate this shape while it is selected with the selection tool (Figure

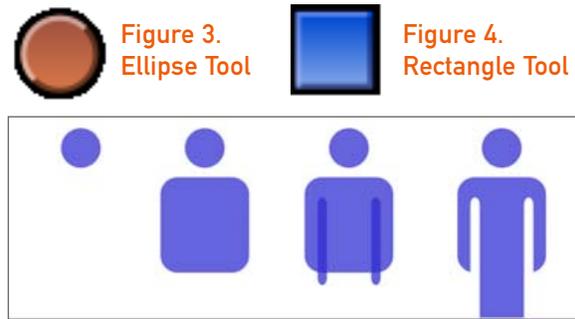


Figure 5. Steps to Creating Logo



Figure 6. Rectangle Auxiliary Toolbar

7) and by choosing in the menu, Edit→Duplicate (Ctrl-D). Drag this duplicate over to represent the secondary arm gap.



Figure 7. Selection Tool

Now, to remove these gaps from the rectangle, select the first gap, and then Shift-click the body part. Then, in the menu, choose Path→Difference (or press the Ctrl and - keys at the same time). Then, repeat this step on the second arm gap. If the proportions are not correct, undo the last few steps, reposition the forms and continue.

Finally, using the edit/node selection tool (Figure 8) select the bottom two points of the person's body and drag downward while holding the Shift key as shown in the fourth step of Figure 5.



Figure 8. Edit/Node Selection Tool

The next steps involve duplicating this figure in 90 degree increments, demonstrated in Figure 9. First, duplicate the newly constructed person figure. Then, under the Object menu, Object→Flip Vertical (V key). In Inkscape, the shape should still be selected. Now, hold the Shift key down and use your keyboard's down-arrow key to move this duplicate person downward until it looks as if it is one mirrored person like in Figure 9, step 2. Select both of the shapes with the selection tool and use the menu item, Path→Union (Ctrl+), to join the shapes.

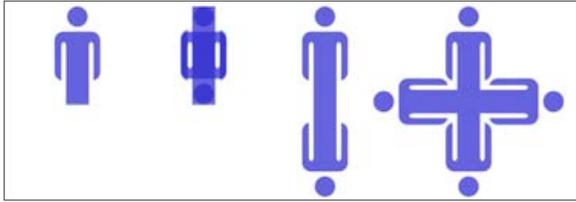


Figure 9. Rotating the Logo

To create the other parts of the logo, first duplicate the last creation. While the duplicate is selected, go to the menu and choose Path→Rotate 90 degrees CW (clockwise). Then, select both pieces and union them together to have a complete generic person logo.

PAGE LAYOUT

Now, we will combine the logo, generic text and a simple design for the page to create the layout as finally displayed in Figure 17. To start this, move your newly designed logo into the upper left-hand corner of the document. Change its color to be a nice purple/pinkish (hex: 3e3bd8). Rather than rotating in large 90-degree increments, after selecting the logo, use the [and] keys to rotate in default 15-degree increments until the logo is offset as shown in Figure 17. Select the logo and move it off the page so that we can focus on the background image.

Creating the final background is quite simple (Figure 10). In order to create these split planes, we must use the Path menu commands once more. Create one rectangle that is the same size as the letterhead page. Then, duplicate this shape and use the selection tool to shrink the size of the duplicate upwards (see Figure 11, step 2). Select both the original and duplicate. Go the menu and select Path→Division. The result is similar to Figure

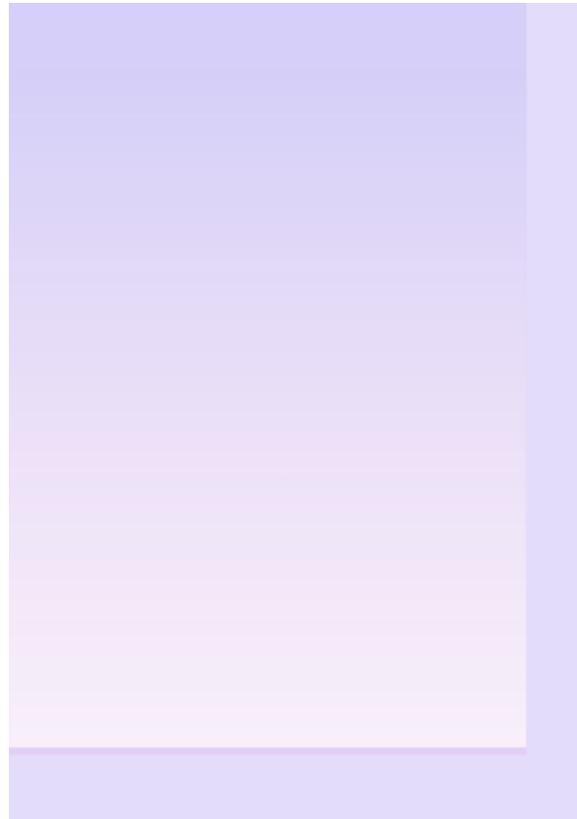


Figure 10. Letterhead Background

11, step 3, except the pieces are still together.

Now, set the outer piece of Figure 11 to a lighter color. The inner piece then is slightly more complicated in that it uses a gradient. To create the gradient, first select the inner rectangle with the selection tool, and then select the gradient tool (Figure 12). Click the top part of the inner rectangle, and while holding the Shift key down, drag downward, attempting to achieve the look

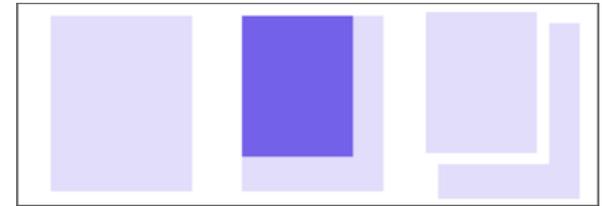


Figure 11. Letterhead Background HOWTO

that is shown in Figure 10. To change the colors of the gradient, while the gradient tool and your target shape are selected, click on the white box at one of the end of the line representing the gradient. This allows you to change the starting and ending color of the gradient.



Figure 12. Gradient Tool

Next, we need to make a faded logo on the bottom part of the image (see Figure 13). To do this, duplicate the logo we created, pick it with the selection tool, and drag (while holding the Ctrl key) to scale the logo as shown in Figure 17. Next, change the color of the shape with the Fill and Stroke Dialog (Figure 14), primarily changing the alpha so that other parts of the image show through the faded logo.

Hiding the parts we don't want to see requires converting the object into a pattern. Select the large faded logo and in the menu, select Edit→Object to Pattern. This is usually used to create a large repeating pattern, as we did in the previous articles in the series. However, in this instance, we are using it to create a mask, also called a clipping path. Drag the bottom-most control point to the bottom-most right corner of the



Figure 13. Logo Faded

letterhead page, thus hiding the rest of the faded logo. Please note, this is really an unnecessary step, as what is printed is only on the canvas, yet it helps to visualize how the letterhead will look once printed. Continue to tweak the faded logo until it looks like Figure 13.

Now, reposition the logo on the page in the upper left-hand portion of the letterhead, leaving space to the right for text. To create text, select the text tool (Figure 15) and drag it to about the height

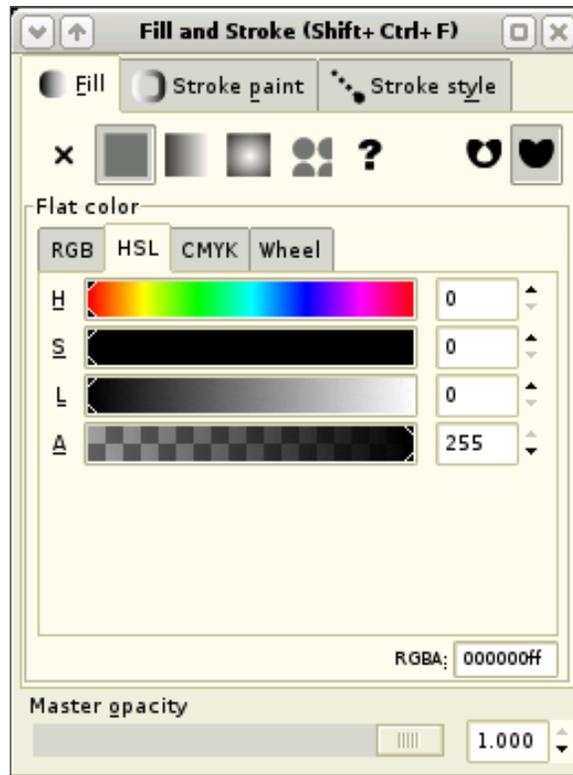


Figure 14. Fill and Stroke Dialog

of the logo and to where the inner rectangle ends for the text area's width. Type into this area the information presented in Figure 17. Next, use the text tool to select the title of the company, "Generic People". Open the Text and Font Dialog... (Shift-Ctrl-T). Make the font size of this selection 32 points and Trebuchet. Select the other text and make it 20 points. Also, change the color of this text to something fun, like a nice purplish-pink.

Use what you just learned to create the Web address at the bottom of the page, right where



Figure 15. Text Tool

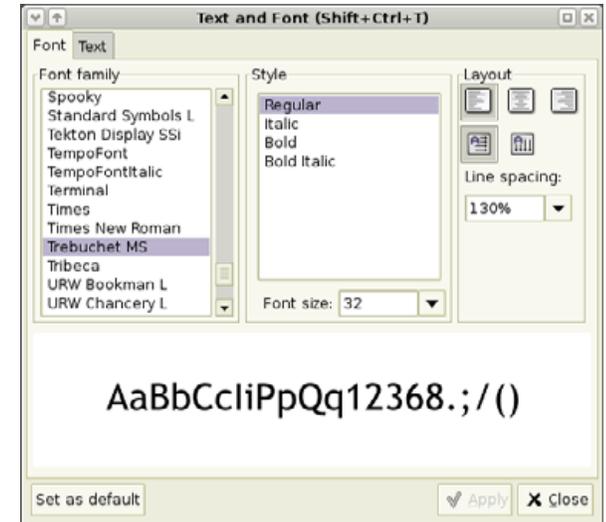


Figure 16. Text and Font Dialog

the faded logo crosses the bottom transition between the inner rectangle and the outer one. Compare what you have created with Figure 17.

This completes the creation of a generic letterhead for the generic company, Generic People. This exercise uses many of the elements and principles to construct a harmonious design between simple geometrical elements like rectangles and ellipses in order to create complex objects.

Notice how the eye moves from left to right in this composition and a balancing of space feels complete. The upper-left logo and text feel quite heavy. In order to balance this out, we created the faded logo and the Web address in the bottom



Figure 17. Final Letterhead

right of the screen to counter-balance the design.

OPEN CLIP ART LIBRARY

The *Open Clip Art Library*, <http://www.openclipart.org>, is a massive clip art repository that consists of thousands of clip art images submitted by normal users like yourself. All of the work in the project is released as public domain so that it can be used for any purpose, both commercial and noncommercial.

Now that we have set up our letterhead prop-



Figure 18. The Open Clip Art Library Web Page as of 2005/08/01

erly, it is quite easy to submit this file to the Open Clip Art Library (see Figure 18). First, make sure your letterhead is saved as something like `letterhead.svg`. Navigate with your Web browser to <http://www.openclipart.org>. Find the box that states: Read the Guidelines. Submit A File. Click on the browse button in that box and select your letterhead file. Then, click the Send File button. Because we already filled out the Metadata fields properly, our file automatically is saved to the Open Clip Art Library. Congratulations! You have contributed to an open-source project!

CONCLUSION

You have successfully learned the elements and principles of design, made a complete composition and contributed to an open-source project. In future months, look for expansions on these concepts with other specific projects geared toward becoming a better designer, user of Inkscape and contributor to the Open Clip Art Library. ■

RESOURCES

Inkscape: <http://www.inkscape.org>

Open Clip Art Library:
<http://www.openclipart.org>

“Graphic Design” (Wikipedia):
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graphic_design

“The Elements of Design” by Joshua David McClurg-Genevise (*Digital Web Magazine*):
http://digital-web.com/articles/elements_of_design

“The Principles of Design” by Joshua David McClurg-Genevise (*Digital Web Magazine*):
http://digital-web.com/articles/principles_of_design

“Composition” (Wikipedia):
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Composition_%28visual_arts%29

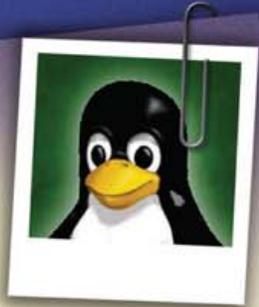
Gestalt (2D Design Notes):
<http://daphne.palomar.edu/design/gestalt.html>

Society for Gestalt Theory and Its Applications:
<http://gestalttheory.net>



Jon Phillips (<http://www.rejon.org>) is an open-source developer, artist and scholar with more than 12 years of experience building communities and working within computing culture. He is currently developing Inkscape, the Open Source Project, and the Open Clip Art Library (<http://www.openclipart.org>). He teaches at San Francisco Art Institute (<http://www.sfai.edu>) and now works for Creative Commons (<http://www.creativecommons.org>).

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Dear Bill,

*It's over between us.
I've found someone new.
Someone I can depend on.
Someone who is fun for
a change. Thought you might
like to see his picture.*

-Sandy

TUX

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Gadget Guy: Merry Linuxmas!

Portable storage, camera and robots, oh my! SEAN CARRUTHERS

It's that time of year again—when tech fans of all stripes look forward to the geeky gifts they'll find under the tree. Why should Windows users get all of the tech treats, though? Here are a few platform-agnostic technologies to appeal to the Linux lover in your life.

MEMOREX 2GB TRAVELDRIVE

<http://www.memorex.com>
\$180 US

One of best stocking stuffers out there for anyone who uses a computer on a regular basis is a USB Flash memory drive. They're compact, and they're plug-and-play on almost any recent computer system. That, in fact, is one of the best recommendations for the USB Flash drive as a gift for Linux users—they work well with most recent versions of Linux, but they make it easy to move files around between Windows, Mac and Linux. Anyone who has to use multiple operating systems during the course of the day will find one useful.

Memorex's TravelDrive series uses USB 2.0 for speedy transfer of files, which means you won't have to sit around for minutes on end waiting for files to copy over to the drive. The TravelDrive is also available in capacities of up to two full gigabytes, which gives you plenty of space for data:



hundreds of songs or digital photos, thousands of text documents or up to half an hour of digital video. No matter how you slice it, that's a lot of data in your pocket.

Despite its high capacity, this little drive is just a bit larger than a typical house key. As with many other drives, this one is designed so that you can put it onto a key ring if you want, and it even has a reinforced aluminum loop on the end. It also comes with a lanyard for those that prefer to sling it around their necks.

PANASONIC LUMIX FZ-30

<http://www.panasonic.com>
\$700 US

Consumer-friendly digital cameras are better than ever, featuring higher resolution and a raft of advanced features that puts semi-pro capabilities into the hands of regular users. Now that most cameras have adopted the PictBridge standard, they tend to be seen by computers as removable drives, allowing drag-and-drop downloading of photos and videos, which is a definite boon to Linux users—no more driver hacking in order to get photos from a digital camera to a Linux machine!

Panasonic's Lumix line may not be one of the better-known brands, but it has been responsible for bringing a number of technologies into the mainstream of digital photography. The new eight megapixel FZ-30 definitely makes good use of



those technologies.

One of those technologies is optical image stabilization, known on the Lumix line as Mega O.I.S. Optical image stabilization features a lens that automatically adjusts to compensate for erratic and unwanted hand motion, redirecting incoming images to the proper place on the imaging sensor to avoid streaked and blurred images. The technology was originally brought in from Panasonic's digital video camera lineup, used to cut down on that swaying picture that tends to make people seasick while watching; on a digital still camera, it helps with longer-exposure shots, which means better pictures in lower light.

Previous models in Panasonic's Lumix FZ lineup have featured ultra-zoom capabilities—12x optical magnification, in fact—but the Lumix FZ-30 does those previous models better in two key ways. First of all, the zoom is controlled by a mechanical ring around the lens, which means the zoom kicks in as

fast as you can crank the lens—no more waiting around for the zoom motor to get to where you want it to be. Secondly, because of the way the lens is designed, that 12x optical zoom actually increases to 15x optical zoom when the camera is dropped into five megapixel resolution, and to 19.1x optical zoom when the camera is in three megapixel resolution. You can extend these zoom ranges even further, but typically that degrades quality, and consequently, it's not recommended. (In most cases, 12x optical zoom is plenty, anyhow!)

Another nice feature on the lens is the ability to focus manually. This isn't new to this model, but with the focus ring tucked neatly behind the zoom ring, it puts both of these controls within easy reach. The switch for manual and auto-focus mode sits a bit further back on the lens, and it also features an option for macro auto-focus, for those times you need to get right close up. I'm still impressed by the manual focus capabilities on the FZ series. When you're in manual mode and you move the focus ring, a magnified window appears in the centre of the LCD viewfinder (either the articulated one on the back of the camera or the smaller one in the eyepiece) to allow you to focus better. Despite the relative graininess of these LCD viewfinders when compared to an optical eyepiece, you can still focus properly.

The biggest disappointment here is the same thing that continues to disappoint with most digital cameras: the small memory card. The Lumix FZ-30 comes with a 32MB SecureDigital card. Although it's nice that there's a card included at all (in an era when many manufacturers are starting to skip including a card altogether), the 32MB card will hold only about ten shots in high-quality mode, and it will hold only one shot in either TIFF or RAW mode—not much storage at all, really. In other words, you may want to consider picking up a

high-capacity SD memory card when you pick up the FZ-30. Considering the kind of quality you can get out of the camera, whoever's using it almost certainly will want to take more than ten pictures before having to offload them to the computer.

ROBOSAPIEN V2

<http://www.robosapien.com>
\$249 US

It doesn't matter what kind of computer system you call home—everybody loves robots! The first version of the Robosapien was one of last year's hottest gifts, and this year Robo is back, and bigger than ever!

Robosapien v2 is larger than the last model—he stands 24 inches tall, in fact—but despite the added heft, this new version is more nimble than ever, with a more-natural gait and a lot more joints that result in added mobility. In fact, although the first Robosapien tended to walk across the room like a lurching behemoth, Robo v2 can walk not only more naturally, but he also can sit down, get back up again, lay down completely, perform martial arts more accurately and other such tasks. And instead of the three pincher-style fingers found on the last version, Robo v2 actually has a thumb and four jointed fingers, allowing it to pick up and hold things in a more natural manner. All movement is accomplished using a new gaming console-style controller with thumb sticks that allow more natural, fluid movement.

The little guy also has more sense than before. Robo v2 can “hear” in stereo, allowing him to localize sounds and react to them. He also can “see” different colors, including the ability to recognize skin tones. He even can follow a laser trail



provided by the controller unit. (For the record, the controller uses three AAA cells; Robo himself is greedier, requiring six D cells.)

If that wasn't enough, Robo is now more of a family man—well, kinda. In addition to the new Robosapien v2, WowWee released two other robotic toys earlier in the year, and Robo v2 actually has the ability to control them as if they were his pets. The first is a small dog-like robot known as the Robopet (\$100 US); this little guy skitters around your house autonomously, rolls over, pretends to pee on your floor, and “good pet” and “bad pet” commands from its remote control allow you to mold its behaviour. Even weirder is the Roboraptor (\$120 US), a dinosaur that stands upright on two feet, bites your finger and reacts in a very primitive way (naturally) to its environment.

On a more serious note, it may be worth noting that with the growing intelligence built in to even these “toy” robots, it's only a matter of time before robots rise up and try to take control of the world. This may be a good time to invest in Daniel H. Wilson's new book *How to Survive a Robot Uprising: Tips on Defending Yourself Against the Coming Rebellion*, available now in a book store near you—before it's too late.■



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.