Four Download Managers
SURFING
ASSISTANTS

The Internet offers an inexhaustible pool of software for Linux enthusiasts. Hundreds of programs are available to be downloaded free of charge. A download manager helps you organise your downloads and make the most of your online time. We look at four download managers for Linux.

Have you ever stayed online an extra half hour so that you could finish downloading a huge file, only to end up frustrated because the connection failed at 99% complete? Or do you get annoyed by the many windows that your browser produces during downloads that stop you from seeing how much of the file you've got so far? If you would like to make your downloads easier, better organised and more efficient, one of the download managers discussed below may be for you. They include two programs – KWebGet and WebDownloader – that are suitable for what is sometimes called "recursive downloading" – the mirroring or duplicating of a whole or partial website on your PC.

[left]
Caitoo with full-screen display and minimised "Drop Target" icon

[right]
KDE online help and Caitoo docked in the KDE control panel

Caitoo

Caitoo is being developed as part of the KDE project. The current version, 0.6.6, is already proving very useful and the most important functions that any download manager should provide have been implemented. The program can be integrated into the KDE panel as a "Docked Widget" (in the shape of an extended hand) which lets other KDE applications or Netscape download files using drag and drop. Alternatively, users can download files via URLs that have been copied to the temporary clipboard using the shortcut [Ctrl+V] – simply use the menu option *File, Transfer open (retrieve URL from the temporary folder)*.
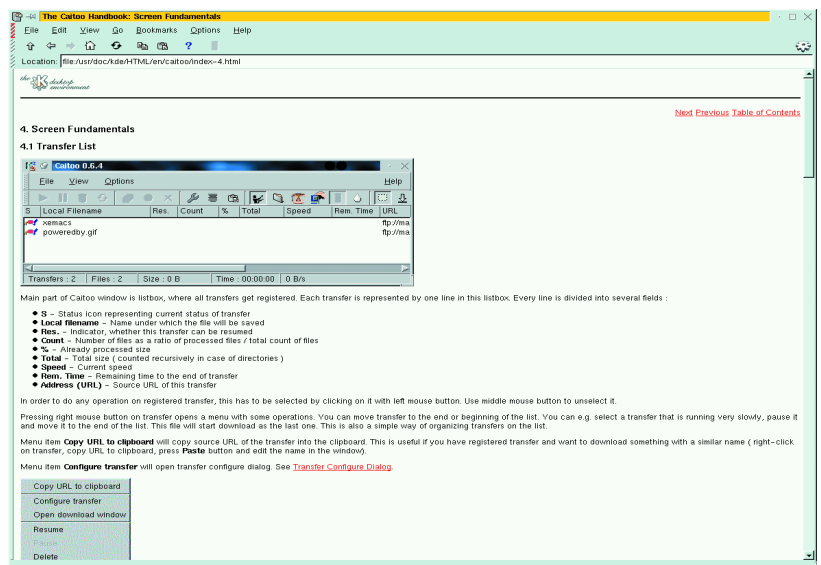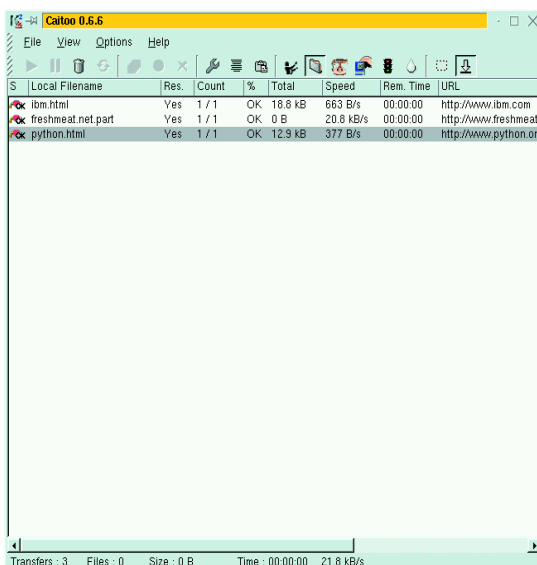
Caitoo recognises three different transfer modes: *in order*, *according to schedule* and *delayed*. If *in order* is selected, Caitoo first checks whether the maximum number of transfers has been exceeded. The transfer begins as soon as an opportunity becomes available. The *schedule* option allows the user to determine the date and time of the download.

There's an option to close the connection (and, if required, Caitoo itself) once the download has been completed which is also very useful. The *automation* index tab in the *Settings* dialog box contains a range of options for closing the connection after particular events. In later versions, the authors are planning, among other things, to implement features that are currently lacking such as the ability to search FTP sites and a bandwidth limit for downloads.

Ignoring a few minor errors in the settings menu, Caitoo has already proved itself useful thanks mainly to its intuitive usability and the smooth integration of the most important functions. But the development team are still working on it – it could be worth taking an occasional look at the project's homepage.
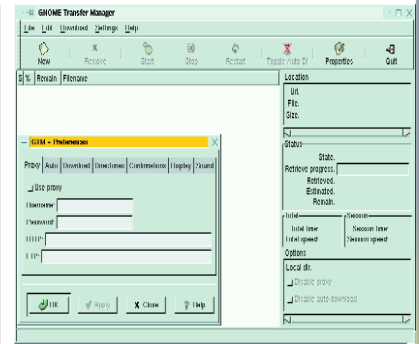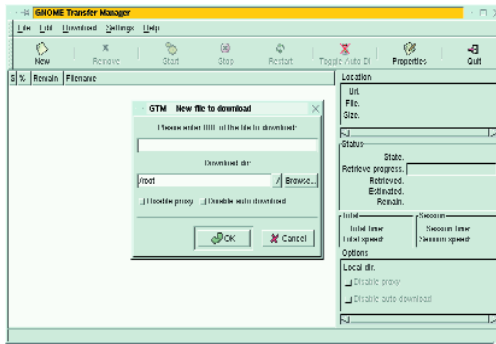
GTransferManager

For updates, GTransferManager banks on GNOME's fine gtk library and attracts many with its name alone. Unfortunately – compared to the other download managers here – it's lacking much functionality. As the project currently stands, it lacks both important download options such as Resume, and expected management functions such as scheduling or logging. The only interesting feature is the CORBA interface, which it may be difficult for ordinary users to get much out of.

In its current stage of development GTransfer-Manager is only partly useful as a download manager. We'll have to wait and see how the project develops over time.

KWebGet

In KWebGet, KDE developer Frank von Daak has essentially created a graphical front-end for the powerful Unix command line program *wget*. Rather than being just a download manager in the strict sense of the word, KWebGet is a program with which users can mirror whole websites on their hard disk (a process called "recursive downloading") so that they can read them offline at their leisure. In principle however, KWebGet can also be used to download individual files.

The author has gone to great lengths to give users a clear overview of the available options. In addition to the ergonomic structure of the program, von Daak has written a wizard which uses dialogs to take users through the most important steps prior to the download. The *options*, *file types* and *domains* boxes in particular are worth

noting. These allow users to pre-select precisely which file types they wish to download from which domains under which conditions. In addition to HTTP and FTP registration forms and the usual proxy settings, a powerful scheduler has been built-in so that users can set to the second the time when downloading is to start.

All in all KWebGet seems to be very well thought out and implemented. It is ideal for mirroring local websites. However, as a conventional download manager it is only partly useful.
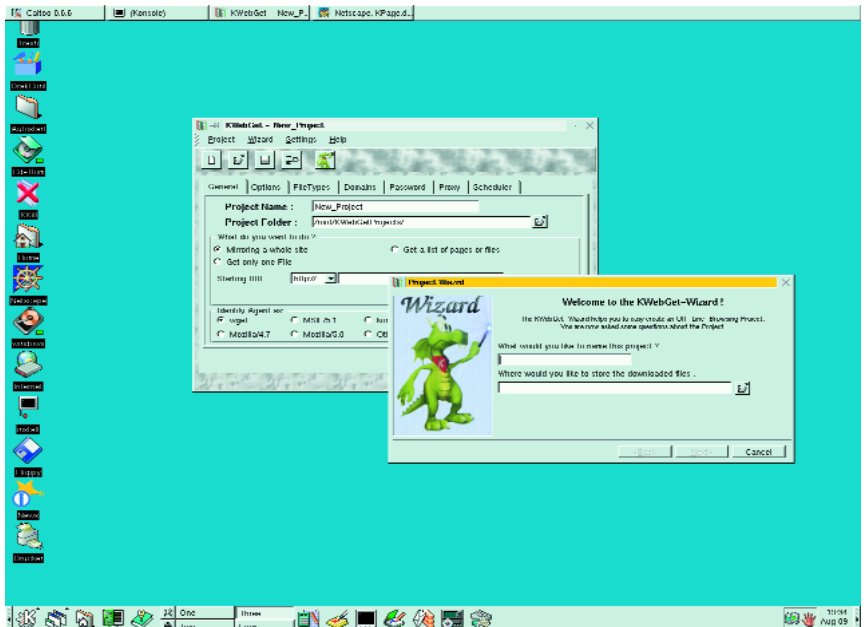
WebDownloader for X

This project by the Russian developer Koshelev Maxim has been under way for some time. At first glance, it doesn't appear to be too spectacular. However, it's when you click on the unprepossessing *settings, general* menu that you realise what the program is about – we were amazed by the enormous range of functions on offer. WebDownloader has probably every function you can imagine in the context of downloading. In terms of transfer limits – maximum number of simultaneous transfers, maximum bandwidth/speed, host limits – this download manager offers considerably more than the other Internet tools here. In addition, WebDownloader is similar to KWebGet in that it caters for recursive

[left]
Direct URL insert in GTransferManager

[right]
**A lack of functions relegates GTransferManager to the sidelines**
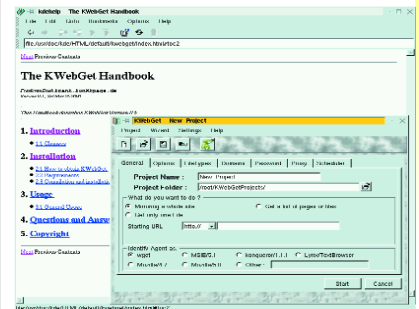
KWebGet – A skimpy online guide but clear and largely self-explanatory program functions

KWebGet opens with a nice wizard that allows you to easily fill in the settings required for the download.

[left]
WebDownloader offers an overwhelming range of functions and an attractive appearance

[right]
URL transfer to the drag-and-drop recycle bin (blue circle, top left-hand corner) and host limits on WebDownloader
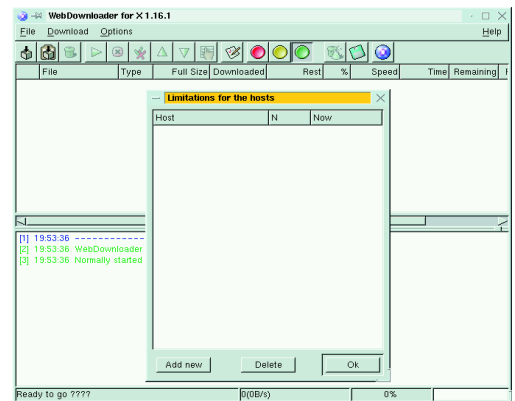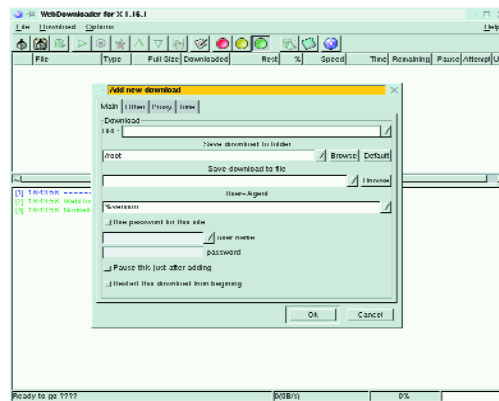
downloads (you can set parameters for the desired recursion depth) and you can give it a schedule for each individual download request.

WebDownloader combines the wealth of functions of Caitoo and KWebGet. It's just a pity that it can't be integrated as easily as Caitoo into the KDE control panel. But fortunately you get a *drag-and-drop recycle bin*, to which you can transfer URLs using drag and drop. Of course, there is also an option to transfer Download URLs to the tool using the temporary folder.

Although WebDownloader lacks extras such as FTP search it is certainly the best under Linux in terms of functions – at least as far as Open Source goes. Although it is slightly inferior to the KDE project Caitoo in terms of usability, the wide vari-

ety of functions makes up for this shortcoming. After all, don't forget that not all users work with KDE.

Conclusion

Under Linux, WebDownloader for X and Caitoo are two free graphical download managers offering almost the same variety of functions as commercial Windows programs such as Getright or GoZilla! Therefore, there's no reason not to hold download orgies under Linux in future. Indeed, in view of the fact that Linux is far more secure than Windows, not to mention the immense range of software available on the Web at any time, Linux is ideal as a download platform. ∎

Table: Overview				
Name	Caitoo 0.6.6	GTransferManager 0.4.4	KWebGet 0.5	WebDownloader for X 1.16.1
Author	Matej Koss	Bruno Pires Marinho	Frank von Daak	Koshelev Maxim
Licence	GPL	GPL	GPL	Open Source
Homepage	devel-home.kde.org/~caitoo	camoes.rnl.ist.utl.pt/~bapm/gtm/	www.kpage.de	www.krasu.ru/soft/chuchelo
General				
Manual	KDE manual	in production	Short overview	FAQ
Requirement	KDE 1.1	GNOME	KDE 1.x	gtk > 1.2.0
	QT 1.42	gtk 1.2.x	QT 1.4.x	
			wget	wget
Download behaviour				
Direct insert URL	x	x	x	x
Dock Widget	x	-	-	-
Drop Target	x	-	-	x
Drag and drop from KD applications	x	-	x	x
Drag and drop from Netscape	x	x	-	x
automatically inserted in temporary folder	x	-	-	x
Transfer options				
Resume/Reget function	x	-	-	x
Limit maxim. open connection	x	x	-	x
Limit DL speed	-	-	-	x
Partial Download	-	-	-	x
Time planer	x	-	x	x
Automatically separates after download	x	-	-	-
Automatically closes after download	x	-	-	x
Other Features				
Recursive Download	-	-	x	x
FTP Search	-	-	-	-
Proxy settings	x	x	x	x
Logging	x	-	x	x
Special features				
	Dock Widget in KDE	CORBA support	Frontend to wget	Buttons for different
	control panel		Mirrors whole sites	speed limits
			Domain limit	Domain limit
			Details of recursion depth	Details of recursion depth
			Wizard	Mirrors whole sites
			Selection of file types	
Evaluation				
Suitability in practice	Very good – Good	Satisfactory	Good – Satisfactory	Very good – good