

Apple Mac: Applications for PPC/Linux

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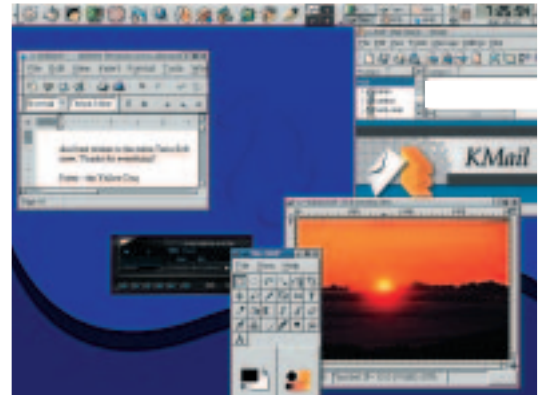
FRUIT



Okay, so you are using Linux on a Macintosh. The chances are that it's not a server, so what do you do with it?

Jason Walsh investigates

Last month we took a close look at GIMP, the GNU Image Manipulation Program, and suggested using it instead of Photoshop. This is fine, but unless you're in a design studio with many computers, you probably use your Mac for a whole lot else besides Photoshop. After you're finished tinkering with your photos in GIMP, what next? You could reboot into the MacOS, but this begs the question why use Linux at all? Why not just stick with Photoshop on the Mac OS? Well, what else can you do in Linux on a PPC machine? This month we'll be taking a very quick look at some great PPC/Linux applications.



There's more to PPC/Linux than just GIMP

Web browsing

For all intents and purposes, UNIX is the Internet. Okay, so the majority of professional Web sites are still designed on Macs, but it's UNIX that does most of the serving thanks to its rock-solid networking capabilities. You'd therefore expect that UNIX variants such as Linux would have plenty of Internet applications and you'd be right – even on a minority platform such as PPC/Linux. Here we'll look at just one of the most popular Internet activities, Web browsing. After all, no matter what version of Linux you have installed on your Mac, it has come with plenty of email applications.

Opera

Opera Software have released its popular and light Opera Web browser version 5.0 final for the PowerPC in free adware or \$25 shareware versions. Like its x86/Linux, Mac OS and Windows counterparts it's stable, quick and has a decent interface. <http://www.opera.com/linux>

Netscape Communicator 4.x

Netscape is the obvious choice of Web browser, and was doubtless included with your distribution. Netscape does have its downsides though. It crashes frequently and is rapidly dating, but that's not where it ends. The PPC version of Netscape cannot use Netscape plug-ins. Bizarre, but true. Nevertheless, Netscape

Communicator remains a safe choice as it's familiar, differs little from the Mac and Windows versions and interprets HTML well. http://home.netscape.com/download/0709101/10000-en——_qual.html

Mozilla

Mozilla is the open source follow up to Netscape. Abandoning the majority of the old code, Mozilla is a rewrite from the ground up and includes the famous Gecko display engine. It is a very serviceable browser, though the package size is enormous and you'll need a fairly hefty Mac if you want to see good results. Unlike its predecessor, it can thankfully use Netscape plug-ins. GNOME office uses a version of Mozilla named Gaelon as its standard Web browser.

<http://www.linuxppc.org/software/index/developers/mats/RPMS/ppc/mozilla/nightly/mozilla-pre0.9.3/mozilla-pre0.9.3-0.ppc.html>

Konqueror

Part of the KDE environment, Konqueror is an excellent little browser and unlike Netscape it can use Netscape plug-ins. Hmm. This application is installed by default by most distributions so why not give it a try? If nothing else it's a cut above the previous KDE effort.

<http://www.kde.org>

Productivity

The Mac is famed for kick-starting the desktop publishing boom in the 1980s, and rightly so. The intuitive GUI and applications such as MacPaint, Pagemaker and even ClarisWorks allowed a whole new set of uses for desktop computers. So what if you're switching your Mac over to Linux, even part time? Do you have to sacrifice your productivity to play with this new operating system? Of course not. While there are no direct replacements here for the behemoths of publishing such as Quark XPress or Adobe InDesign, there are plenty of alternatives to AppleWorks and Microsoft Office, and if you take care you can get excellent results.

Most Linux users on the Intel platform use either Sun StarOffice or Corel WordPerfect Office, unfortunately neither is available for PPC/Linux. Both are dependent on x86 specific code and Corel's effort even uses WINE emulation so it is unlikely to ever make it to PPC/Linux.

Open Office.org

Progress. Open Office.org is the open source version of StarOffice and thankfully there is a build for the PPC chipset. It is easily comparable to Microsoft Office in terms of usability, features, and also, sadly, bloat. However, if you need a professional office

suite for no cost, this is your best bet. However, it is still under heavy development. Open Office.org consists of a word processor (Open Writer), a spreadsheet application (Open Calc), a vector illustration program (Open Draw) and a presentation application (Impress). The plan for this suite of applications is to integrate it with GNOME Office.

http://www.openoffice.org/dev_docs/source/build_638c/build638c.html

AbiWord

This standalone word processor is the single application I use most regularly under Linux, and it will most likely remain so unless Nisus Software release a Linux version of their excellent Nisus Writer. It looks and feels a lot like the Windows version of Microsoft Word (though not at all like Word 2001 for the Macintosh) and though it has less features and virtually no documentation, it is perfectly useable and most importantly, stable. AbiWord is the main word processing component of the GNOME Office suite, which is included with most distributions.

<http://www.abisource.org>

Gnumeric

Gnumeric is another GNOME Office application built using the GTK toolkit. This

Excel-like spreadsheet is a fairly robust program and has the vast majority of the features that normal users would ever want. Accountants may have to look elsewhere for the time being as, like many open source efforts, it's not quite finished. Small businesses and home users will be right at home though.

<http://www.gnome.org/gnumeric>

KOffice

Part of the KDE desktop, KOffice is most directly comparable to AppleWorks. That is to say, whilst very useable it doesn't have all of the functionality of Microsoft Office. This is less of a mixed blessing than it sounds: MS Office is, frankly, overpowered for everyday use. KOffice, usually installed by default, isn't a resource pig and this is a good enough reason to consider it. It offers word processing, vector illustration and spreadsheet facilities among many other features, all suitable for SOHO use.

<http://www.koffice.org>

Applixware

Applixware is a commercial office suite and as such is well supported and easy to use, but if you're using Linux for budgetary reasons, forget it. This isn't free in any sense of the word.

<http://www.applixware.com>

Other picks

BOCHS BOCHS is an x86 emulator which enables you to run DOS, Windows and x86/Linux, should you feel so inclined.

<http://bochs.sourceforge.net/> <http://www.bochs.org>

xchat A graphical IRC client, which has reached version 1.8.1.

<http://www.xchat.org/files/source/1.8/>

Knapster2 for KDE2 Knapster2 is a clone of the Windows Napster client and requires KDE. A pre-built RPM is available online.

<http://prdownloads.sourceforge.net/knapster/knapster2-0.3-1.ppc.rpm>

QCAD This excellent 2D computer-aided design software can be recompiled to run on PPC/Linux. Instructions are available online.

http://www.resexcellence.com/linux_icebox/08-01-01.shtml

HotJava Sun's Java-based browser runs just fine on PPC/Linux, though it does require a working installation of Java (obviously).

<http://java.sun.com/products/hotjava/3.0/>

Anti-productivity software

There are more than a few ways to waste your time on PPC/Linux. The SNES9x Super Nintendo emulator is available in pre-built form for PPC/Linux (<http://www.snes9x.com/downloads.asp>), as is Civilisation: Call to Power (<http://www.lokigames.com/products/civctp/>), which isn't even available on the MacOS. Loki have also ported the excellent war game Myth 2: Soulbinder (<http://www.lokigames.com/products/myth2/>). Bungie's classic Marathon (<http://www.uni-mainz.de/~bauec002/A1Main.html;http://source.bungie.org/>) is also now open source and runs on PPC/Linux.

A little bit more

This short article has really only scratched the surface of PPC/Linux software, but hopefully it's given you a taste of what's available. You may have to do a bit more digging than x86 users, but the software is available. ■