jEdit – a professional Java-based editor
PERFECTLY
EDITED

The jEdit application is not just a simple text editor, but an editor with many additional functions, which can considerably lighten the load in your daily work. Since jEdit is a very wide-ranging program, we will limit ourselves in this article to looking at the basic functions.

To give you a simple overview of the possibilities of jEdit, here is a rundown of the existing features: jEdit offers you, in addition to an unlimited Undo/Redo function, any number of buffers. These buffers are referred to by jEdit as registers. In addition the editor enables so-called markers to be set, which make it especially easy to find text positions once they are marked up.

jEdit enables you to open as many files as you like at the same time in separate editor windows. Each window can then be subdivided again as often as you like.

Syntax highlighting inclusive

The built-in syntax highlighting is of particular importance: a total of 60 different highlight modes are supported. These include all the main programming languages, including C++, HTML, Java, Javascript, JSP, Pascal, Perl, PHP, PL-SQL and XSL.

By far the most important feature, though, is the fact that jEdit can be expanded by means of plug-ins. Managing the addition and removal of plug-ins is made easy by the built-in plug-in manager and this means no great expense. Even the downloading of plug-ins is integrated into the plug-in manager, as the result of which manual downloads are no longer required. To get a list of all the plug-ins available there is a central starting point at *http://plugins.jedit. org*.

Installation

Before we go deeper into the abilities of the editor we'll need to install it. Thankfully this is really easy: the program files can be found at *http://www.jedit.org* under the heading of "Download". There are two packages on offer for the Linux user, the first being an rpm archive and the second a package with integrated installation program.

Let's now take a look at the installation with the aid of the installation program. After downloading the file jedit322install.jar, start the graphically supported installation by means of

```
java –Djava.compiler=none –jar ↱
jedit322install.jar
```

Installation consists essentially of three partial steps, in which you select the installation directories and the components to be installed. Since these steps are self-explanatory, we will not go into them in detail here. The installation should be performed by the administrator, root. Once successfully completed, jEdit should now start when you enter *jedit*. On some distributions there is already an editor of the same name (part of the jstools package) – so it may be necessary to enter the full path for our Java version.

Where once high-powered, but hard-to-learn, editors such as Emacs or Vi used to be the order of the day, there are now numerous alternatives. jEdit is a graphical editor, which sets great store by user-friendliness. Sebastian Eschweiler puts its feature range through its paces

Figure 1: Installation in two steps
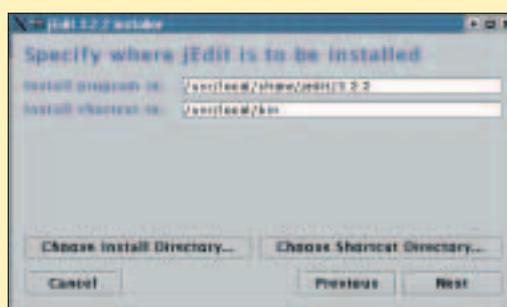
Using the program

Now that the installation has been successfully completed, after first start you should see a window similar to Figure 2.
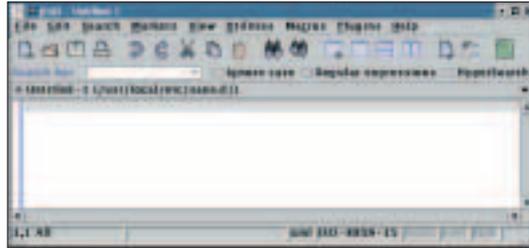

Figure 2: jEdit after starting

The first input area, called buffer under jEdit, is already open and you can start entering text immediately. The input area can now be altered, as you like: the menu items *Utilities*/*Buffer Option* and *Utilities*/*Global Options* offer all conceivable options. The palette ranges from simple colour adjustment via the settings for the printer options to changing the drop-down menus. You thus have the option of adapting practically every single element of jEdit to your own requirements and wishes.

The standard functions of an editor, such as opening and closing files, searching within files and cutting/pasting text elements are obviously all here, but we will not go into these in any more detail, since the application is self-explanatory. The extended functions of jEdit are more interesting.

Macros

jEdit includes full **macro** support. Under the menu item *Macros* you will find a macro recorder, which allows you to record and save your own macros simply, so you can play them back as required. jEdit comes with a range of ready-made macros, which cover many useful functions. The macros which come with it can also be found in the *Macros menu, divided into five sub-menus: Files*, *Java*, *Misc*, *Search* and *Text*.

If you want to record your own macro, select the menu item *Macros*/*Record Macro.…* Now you will be asked for a name, under which the macro will be stored. When you have finished the recording, simply select the menu item *Macros*/*Stop Recording*.

Macros: automated tasks within a program. Often, you will be offered a function for recording a macro. This means that keyboard inputs and mouse clicks are saved by the program and repeated identically when the stored macro is called up later.

Plug-ins

As already mentioned, one of the most important features of jEdit is that it supports plug-ins. Since there are a great many plug-ins available, this means that jEdit can thus be expanded by many useful functions. The editor thus turns into a multi-functional application.

As already mentioned, plug-ins can be installed directly into the editor via the integral plug-in manager, which first ascertains the list of plug-ins available via the specified Web site and then provides the user with a clear selection dialog. The marked plug-ins are then automatically downloaded and installed, without the need for further intervention by the user. After that all you need do is restart jEdit, and the added plug-ins will then be at your disposal.
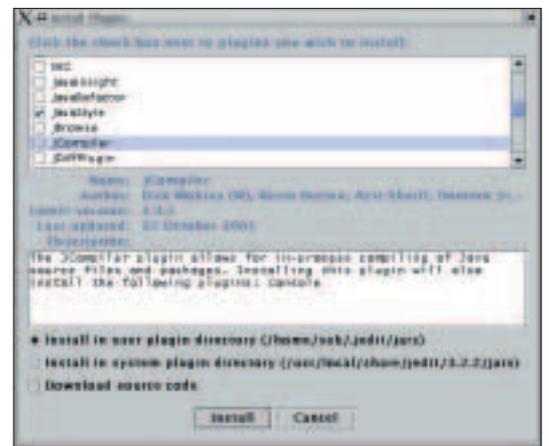

Figure 3: The selection list of the plug-in manager

Figure 4: The plug-in manager during installation

The plug-in manager is reached via the *Plugins*/*Plugin Manager...* menu. In the *Plugins* menu you will also find menu items for plug-ins already installed. Here there are lots of options for installing and adapting the various expansions.

In conclusion

The purpose of this article was to give a brief insight into the wide-ranging features of jEdit. Whether you are now seeking an editor for programming or want to adapt configuration files simply – jEdit offers ideal support in either case and is especially easy to use. If you now add the extended functions, which can be reached via plug-in installations, jEdit evolves into a multi-talented application. So it's well worth having a look at this program.