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WRITE ACCESS

Write to Linux Magazine

Your views and opinions are important to us, so we do want to hear from you, about Linux-related subjects or anything else that you think would interest Linux users.

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Word from the front line

With the ever-increasing capabilities of the Linux platforms and the ability to run selected windows applications using either VMware or Wine, Linux has become a very real alternative to Windows.

I currently am using the download version of Mandrake 8.2 and before that I owned a copy of Mandrake 8.0, which was my first proper look at Linux. Before that I had briefly seen Mandrake 7.0 but the rate of change between these three has been exceptional. The main reason I chose to try Linux was that as a computer student at University I was going to have to install a version at home and so I dived in head first to see what Linux was really like. I have to admit that from what I saw I liked it a lot. The sheer range of software and how configurable the system is was a pleasure to see.
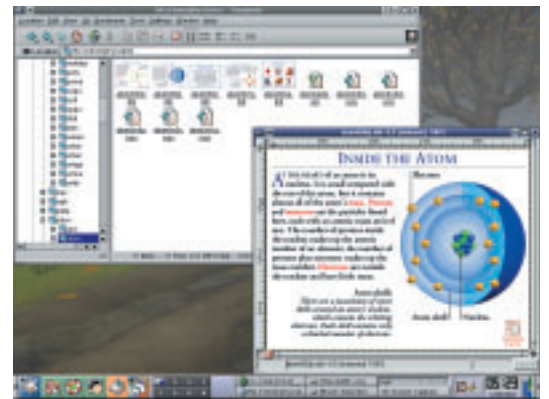
I say all these things about Linux as if it was the greatest thing since sliced bread but there is another side to my comments. I have found that the driver availability is still something that needs some work and the help files themselves are a bit confusing, requiring a bit of knowledge of the system being required before you start.

In many cases when I have installed software from a magazine in tar format (on the full version of Mandrake 8.0) the information provided isn't always complete. The requirements of some software were matched by my system but it still failed to get past the *./configure* stage and just listing a file like conf.h. Would it not be better for a more detailed installation help file to have that bit more on what library files need to be installed and where to find them instead of having to hunt through the Internet using a search engine.

My final point is to do with something I have not seen yet for Linux and that is Encyclopaedias such as Compton's or Encarta, are there any available and do you know where I can obtain them?
Neil Davidson

LM *I wonder how much solace you gained by having a boxed set for your first install. Yes, Linux is available to download, or you can buy the discs on their own, but people who are just about to set out on the road to Linux discovery normally need some hand holding*

Browsing the DK encyclopaedia disc with nothing more than Konqueror

and the documentation that comes with boxed sets must surely be their first comfort stop, hopefully changing what can be the fretful uphill struggle of a first time install into something more akin to a cruise.

Trying to answer the last part of the letter led us on a trail, with a pleasant discovery at the end. First of all, an online search brought up the Free Encyclopaedias project. This is an online project, which allows you to view its catalogue of research articles for free. It even allows you to help and you can submit articles you have written for peer review before they are finally placed into the encyclopaedia.

We realise though that this isn't quite what you were after, so we took the plunge and popped into the drive a "DK Eyewitness Encyclopaedia of Science" CD that just happened to be on the shelf. Much to our surprise, we were able to mount this CD and take a look at the encyclopaedia files held there using Konqueror. Expecting to find some tightly locked database we were pleasantly surprised to find that we could browse each of the pages. Konqueror managed to present us with thumbnail images and Gimp and Kview had no problem in displaying the pages perfectly. Obviously, the front-end didn't work, but, if you are prepared to do some digging around, much of the information does seem to be available.

Alas, our research didn't stretch any further than the DK disc, but it would be interesting to hear from any users with success stories on viewing other CD encyclopaedia or from any developers that might be working on applications capable of fully unlocking this information so that the maximum use can be made of it.

In development

I would like to get started with digital photography. My main use will be getting images onto my Web pages. I don't want to sell myself short though, by going as low as using a webcam. I have my eye on the FujiFilm FinePix 1400 zoom. Is it going to work with Linux though? It doesn't seem to be listed on the gphoto Web site *http://www.gphoto.org*. What alternatives do I have to Gphoto?
Hugh Ficeon

LM Buying hardware that you want to use on a Linux system is still a bit of a minefield. Support from hardware manufacturers is nowhere near wide ranging and it is always a good idea to try and buy products from people that, at least, acknowledge the existence of other operating systems.

If you have your heart set on the Finepix 1400 zoom then you will be in for a smooth ride, as the Finepix range are USB mass-storage devices. Support for these are good under Linux so you will have no problem getting hold of the images from the camera. You will have less luck if you were hoping to do anything a little more advanced, like taking photographs by remote control via the USB.

If you have a fairly recent Linux distribution, with a kernel greater than 2.4.x then you should find support for the USB mass-storage device built right in. The only thing that you might need to add is the usb-storage module with:

```
insmod usb-storage
```

If you are running a Mandrake system, you may also find linux-hotplug useful, for which see http://linux-hotplug.sourceforge.net/.

Windows now second choice

Hello there. I am a Red Hat Linux user and I have just installed version 7.3. However, I use it next to Windows for games and I have made my partitions with Partition Magic 6.0. When I start my computer the boot manager loads and then LILO loads. My question is, how do I set LILO to default the boot image of Linux rather than Windows?
Chris Nash

LM Do this by editing your /etc/lilo.conf file, and change the default line to that of your Linux Label. I expect your config file looks a bit like this:

```
default=dos
boot=/dev/hda1
root=/dev/hda1
install=/boot/boot.b
map=/boot/map
```
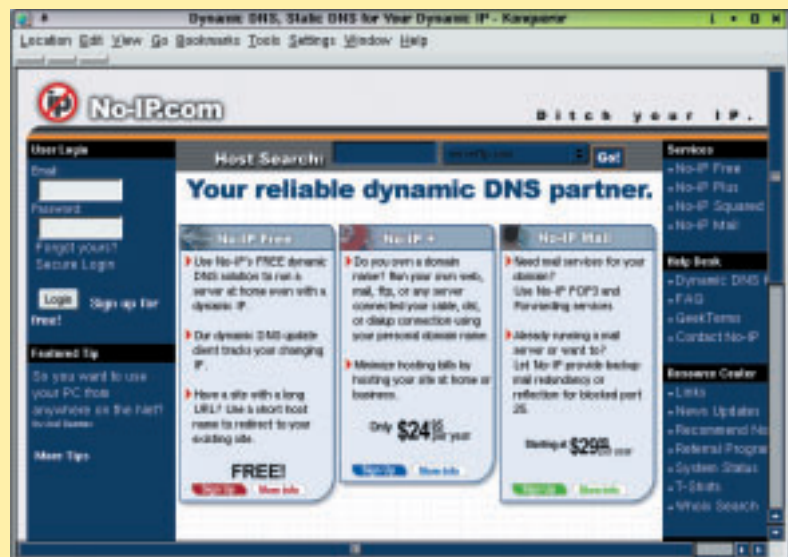
Dynamic IP address blues

I have registered an Internet domain name and am hosting my Web site on my own machine. My ISP, Blueyonder use dynamic IP allocation. Every time I reset the machine my IP address changes, so no-one can find my Web site. I know of a 'remote DNS management' company, DNS Wizard, who seem to have the solution to my problem, except I want to host the Web site on a machine running Linux and they don't support Linux. Can you think of a solution?
Martin Atisford

LM Because the IP address for your Internet connection is dynamic, it is prone to change. Should this happen, the route to your Web site is lost, making your pages become inaccessible.

When you register with a 'remote DNS management' company like DNS Wizard, you are given a static IP address from their pool. This static address is then redirected to your own address, so that the data can be requested from the right server – in this case, your Web pages. You run a client on your machine that constantly monitors your IP address. If it changes, the client passes this new address onto the remote management server, which then knows the new address to redirect the traffic to your Web page.

The sticking point comes if the remote management company doesn't offer a client for Linux. DNS Wizard doesn't, though there may be some third party software that could help. However, there are other DNS management companies that do offer you support for Linux, http://www.no-ip.com/ *is just one of many.*


```
vga=normal
delay=20
image=/vmlinuz
        label=Linux
        read-only
other=/dev/hda1
        label=dos
```

Change the top line to read:

```
default=Linux
```

All you need to do now, and it really is the most important step, is to run the /sbin/lilo command to update your boot record and maps in order for your changes to take effect.