No matter how happy they are with their current window managers, most Linux users will be missing one small feature, a sidepanel with a clock and a menu. One-stop shopping packages like the GNOME and KDE desktop environments provide a panel as a matter of course, but the individualists in the Linux community have to find the right panel first.

Panelizer [1], a program by Fabien Coutant, may mean an end to that search. It runs on most window managers and provides a few neat extras like a mail monitor and applets for mounting drives or monitoring network traffic in addition to the usual basic features. Amazingly the application has a tiny 64KBytes footprint, and weighs in at a mere 236KBytes if you enable the whole range of applets.

Complex Installation

There are no pre-compiled packages for the lightweight panel, so this means firing up your compiler. In addition to the GTK library version 1.2.0 or later (but not *gtk-2.x*), and *libxml*, you will need the Panelizer devel packages, and of course a compiler.

As the Panelizer GUI was developed using *glade*, you will need the *glade* package before you can compile the panel itself. The package management front-ends will tend to install a whole bunch of GNOME libraries in addition to the *glade* package, which is typically located on your distribution CDs. Fortunately, none of these packages are really essential just to run a compiled Panelizer, so you can delete the software after successfully compiling Panelizer. You might like to make a note of all the packages that are added when you install *glade*, to prevent you losing track.

After your package manager has successfully negotiated the numerous dependencies, you can now compile Panelizer. Unpack the *panelizer-0.5.tar.gz* from [1], by typing *tar -xzf panelizer-0.5.tar.gz*, and then change into the new *panelizer* directory that this step has created. As the program does not provide a *configure* script, you will need to use an editor to add your individual preferences to the *Config.mak* file. However, the useful

Figure 1: Panelizer initial launch

Panelizer

On the Fringe

Simple window managers offer a number of advantages in comparison with a desktop environment: they have a small footprint, are quick and highly configurable. Unfortunately, most of them lack a panel to add additionally functionality to the environment. **BY ANDREA MÜLLER**

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default settings (such as installation in */usr/local*) mean that customization is not really necessary.

Now call *make* to launch the compiler, and then enter *su -c "make install"* to install.

Instead of using *make install*, you can also install the Panelizer as a ROX applet [2] using the *make roxinstall* command. Although this is a nice option in theory, one does wonder why ROX users, who already have a panel after all, would need a second one.

Simple, Neat and Functional

After completing the installation steps, you can type *panelizer &* to launch the panel. Figure 1 shows the default configuration, although – admittedly – there is not a lot to see, thus far.

You can click on the left arrow to collapse the panel, leaving only one button on display. Clicking on the black X will close the

panel. Although this is an amazing space saver, you might need a little more functionality than just a calendar button and a clock. The notepad symbol points the way to the configuration editor (see Figure 2).

The first thing to decide is what to display in the panel. Clicking on *Add* will open the applet selection dialog box. This useful collection includes a tool that monitors your mailbox for incoming messages (referred to as the *Mail Counter* in the documentation), an applet for mounting drives (*Mount Applet*), a mute switch for your soundcard, a start menu for programs, and monitoring tools for CPU, memory and network activity. Figure 3 shows a panel with a bunch of useful tools incorporated.
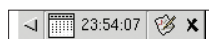
GLOSSARY
Mountpoint: *The directory where the filesystem of a volume is attached to the local filesystem tree.*

Be wary of the pager application, which is referred to as *deskswitch*. Just like most pagers, it will not work with all window managers, but instead of simply refusing to co-operate with unsuitable candidates, Panelizer simply crashes when you call the applet. You can run the Pager without any danger of crashing on Window Maker, Enlightenment or IceWM desktops. You should steer clear if you use waimea, PWM or Blackbox.

Configuration Blues

Some Panelizer tools work quite well in the default configuration, but others need a helping hand. To change the settings for an applet, select the applet in the configuration dialog box and click the *Configure…* button. To allow the mail counter applet, *biff*, to keep an eye on your mailbox, tell the applet where your mailbox is stored, and specify what the applet should do when you click on the mail button in the panel – such as starting your favorite mail program, for example.

The mute function also needs some assistance. The default configuration issues a call to *esd* ("*E*nlightenment *S*ound *D*aemon"). If you use another sound server, the applet will need to know the correct syntax for manipulating the volume. The correct entries for the *aumix* mixer application are *aumix -v0* and *aumix -v75*, for example; insert these entries into the *When pushed on:* and *When pushed off:* boxes, respectively. This will turn the sound off when you click on the speaker symbol, and toggle the sound back on, when you click again – an additional click "pumps up the volume" to 75 percent.

Figure 2: A practical editor helps out with configuration tasks

Figure 3: Lot's of activity on the panel

Figure 4: Panelizer displaying the GNOME2 menu

The network applet needs to know which network interface to monitor, and will display the connection speed when configured. Modem and DSL users can use the *ppp0* device to monitor their Internet connection, and *eth0* will typically monitor local network traffic.

If you would like to monitor both interfaces, simply launch two instances of the network applet. Panelizer provides a selection of symbols in the configuration dialog box to help you distinguish between instances. You can use similar steps to bind multiple mount applets for the various drives and partitions on your system. Don't forget to enter the right **mountpoint** for *Mount directory* in the *Paths & Commands* tab.

By default the menu applet parses the *apps* folder of a GNOME 1.4 installation (which may, or may not, exist) for information. You can customize the pathname to allow Panelizer to access the *.desktop* files of a GNOME 2.2 installation, although the applications are unfortunately not grouped in categories, but displayed individually (see Figure 4). The location of your GNOME installation depends on your distribution. Red Hat users should specify */usr/share/applications* to find the GNOME 2 menu.

Unfortunately, Panelizer cannot display your KDE 3.1.x menu. Although the panel displays the individual applications, if you specify */usr/share/applnk* as your menu folder, you cannot launch any programs, as Panelizer supplies the wrong parameters when calling them.

To launch the panel as your default GUI when you type the *startx* command, you will need to add the command */usr/local/bin/panelizer &* to your *.xinitrc* file – before the window manager is called. ■

INFO

[1] *http://www.fcoutant.freesurf.fr/panelizer.html*

[2] Jo Moskalewski: "RISC rocks", Linux Magazine Issue 24, October 2002, Page 73

THE AUTHOR

Andrea Müller is a law student who keeps herself busy with Linux whenever she gets tired of legal theory.

When time permits she additionally likes to take a peek at other operating systems, such as QNX, BeOS and NetBSD, or even tries to polish her Python skills. Apart from Linux and her university career Andrea is interested in literature, European history and cycling.