

Gnome programs for the office

Office Equipment

Gnome users don't need to resort to external office packages such as OpenOffice or KOffice just to write a letter, or a few invoices. Gnome Office is a collection of office programs specially adapted to suit the Gnome desktop. **BY FRANK WIEDUWILT**



Bobbie Osborne

Good news for users who have Gnome on their office desktops. There is a collection of office programs specially adapted for the Gnome desktop. On the downside, if you are looking for an integrated office suite, you are in for a disappointment.

In contrast to KOffice and OpenOffice, the software that makes up the Gnome Office collection was not created by a single project team, or even multiple teams, but by various teams of developers without any real collaboration. This not only led to the excusable weakness of individual programs being at different stages of development, but also (and less

excusably) means a lack of uniform program controls.

All for One

The **GTK** library is the common building block that gives the GUIs a uniform look. The differences immediately become apparent when you start to integrate the individual programs with your Gnome desktop. The Gnumeric spreadsheet is definitely the most advanced application in the collection. The word processor, AbiWord, can hold its own, although it can't quite match the pace set by OpenOffice Writer. The other programs try hard to keep up, with the Sodipodi drawing application lagging behind due to an unfortunate tendency to crash.

The "other programs" I just referred to include no less than 15 applications, according to the Gnome Office project page [1]. Some of them are fairly unspectacular, such as the Gfax fax program, and the Eye Of Gnome [2] image viewer. The Gnome Office homepage lists two applications for some tasks such as vector graphics – again this just goes to prove that the meta-project does not think of itself as a competitor for integrated office packages. Instead it lets users decide for them-

selves which tool they prefer to use for a specific job.

The project is definitely not xenophobic, as is evidenced by the fact that Gnome Office not only claims the Sodipodi vector graphics package as one of its own, but also roots for Sketch, although the XForms GUI that Sketch uses is hard to reconcile with an office package for Gnome. In fact, the project goes so far as to lay claims to the Impress presentation program from the OpenOffice camp, although Impress does not integrate well with the Gnome desktop.

Gnome Office also feels responsible for personal information management (PIM). This claim is justified with Evolution stepping in to handle contact management and email. If you prefer a simple email program, why not try Balsa [3] as an alternative. MrProject [4] is available for less complex project management tasks, and Galeon provides a compact Web browser. Development work continues to progress on all of these programs, with new versions appearing at short intervals in some cases.

In this article we will be focusing on what is commonly considered to be the standard equipment of any Office package; bread and butter applications like word processing and spreadsheets. Unfortunately, there is no central Inter-

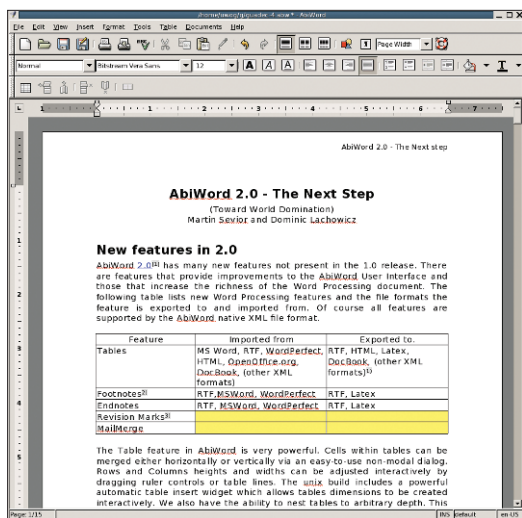


Figure 1: Solid and compact, but restricted to basic functionality – the AbiWord word processor.