

Gnome and the new KDE 3.2

Customized Desktops

Do you enjoy computing, or does it drive you to distraction? The answer to this question will be greatly influenced by the user interface, which is typically graphical on today's computers. Linux has a big advantage in the desktop environment stakes as competition tends to keep people on their toes. **BY PATRICIA JUNG**

Would KDE 3.2 make it before close of press? The Linux Magazine editorial office could hardly stand the suspense.

Unfortunately, the final version of KDE 3.2 had not been released when we went to press and this explains the prevalence of the Gnome footprint in this issue. You can look forward to configuration tips and options for continuing to use your personal data from KDE programs.

While the world is waiting for the new KDE version, ever since version 2.4 the GTK desktop has been progressing in a direction that augers well for Linux in desktop computing. Away from the geeky image and with a firm focus on a user-friendly desktop environment that even newbies will find enjoyable.

Usability is the buzzword, and the "Gnome Human Interface Guidelines" [1] have taken Gnome a step in a direction that KDE has not even thought about: mandatory policies for user and application-centric software. That makes the Gnome desktop worth investigating

for users who have found it too chaotic, obscure, or challenging in the past. If only things were that simple. If your distribution does not include a current Gnome version, the installation will typically be too challenging for "Joe User" – this is one area where KDE is winning.

What to Look for

Ease of installation and user-friendliness are not the only stakes in the battle to attract a wider user base. Users often take a pragmatic approach, looking at the applications the desktop provides. Of course you can run KDE programs on Gnome, and Gnome tools on KDE nowadays. And projects such as [Freedesktop.org](http://freedesktop.org) [2] should certainly improve the interoperability and collaboration between the major Linux desktop projects, including OpenOffice and Mozilla in future. However, the decisive issue for many people is that of the availability of applications such as Office packages, personal information management systems, and Web browsers on their choice desktop.

The Gnome project is aware of this, and this is what prompted the powers that be at the project to collect a number of Gnome-compatible office applications under the Gnome Office umbrella. It is safe to say that Gnome Office has a long

way to go, if it wants to take on quality Office packages such as the new KOffice, which is also discussed.

Even though the new KDE version is not part of this month's cover story, we will still be looking at version 3.2. Based on past experience, we assume that the final release candidate will be more or less the same as the stable version, give or take a few bugs. We expect the final version to be available by the time you get to read these lines. ■



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[1] Gnome Human Interface Guidelines:
<http://developer.gnome.org/projects/gup/hig/>

[2] [Freedesktop.org:](http://www.freedesktop.org/)
<http://www.freedesktop.org/>