Modifying filenames and attributes with KRename

Move and Rename

"The batch renamer for KDE 3.x", this is how the KRename KDE tool describes itself. However, it can do more than the name suggests: from simple file renaming, to permission modifications for as many files as you like – all at one fell swoop. **BY STEFANIE TEUFEL**

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Renaming files is a common task and easily done, assuming you just need to rename a couple of files. Renaming a large number of files and directories is more time-consuming. Thanks to KRename, users can leverage the power of a **batch** renamer with the typical KDE look & feel to modify a list of filenames by reference to a user-definable template.

There is more to come: KRename can also copy or move files to another directory, renaming either the target or source files. A single mouse click allows you to change filename capitalization, add numbers, and search and replace strings
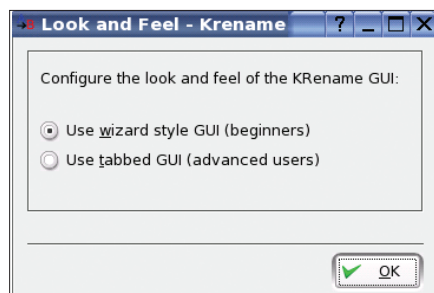
within filenames. Finally, KRename also supports changes to the last accessed, or last modified timestamps, file permissions and ownership.

You can download the latest version of this useful tool from the project home-page at *http://www.krename.net/3.0.html*. As the program is under active development, you will also find the current developer version at the same place. This article is based on the current stable version 2.8.5.

In addition to the sources, the developers also have RPM packages for most major distributions, so installing the tool should not pose any problems. If the download section does not have a package for your system, follow the normal steps, *configure; make; make install*, to build KRename from source code. You will need to point the program in the direction of your KDE directories by setting the *KDEDIRS* environment variable, for example:

```
export KDEDIRS=/opt/kde3:/usr↗
/local/kde
```

After completing the install, you can either launch KRename via the *Tools | Krename* entry in the K menu, or by typing *krename* in your favorite terminal emulation. When you launch KRename for the first time, the program asks you

to select a user interface (see Figure 1). Keep the default, *Use wizard style GUI (beginners)*, if you want KRename to display a whole bunch of dialogs to guide you through the rename process.

After getting used to the program, you can switch to *Use tabbed GUI (advanced users)* in *Settings | Configure KRename… | Look and Feel* to group the dialogs described in the following sections as tabs in a single window.

Take a quick look at the *KRename* function in the preferences dialog. If you check the *Add KRename to konquerors context menu* checkbox, you will not need to launch the program in future. Instead, you can simply select the *Rename with krename* context menu entry in KDE file dialogs, and in Konqueror. This menu appears when you right click a file that you want to rename.

Adding Files for Renaming

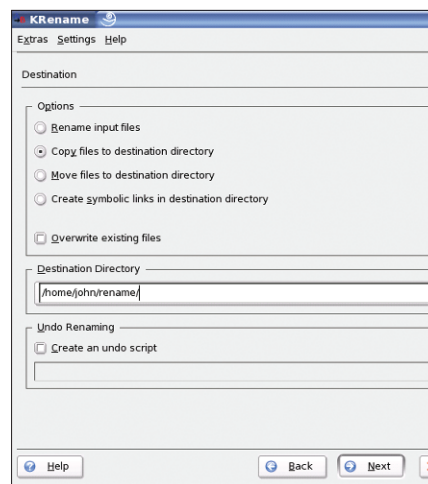Before you can rename files, you need to add them to the list in the dialog box.

Figure 1: Beginners should opt for the Wizard.

KTools

In this column we present tools, month by month, which have proven to be especially useful when working under KDE, solve a problem which otherwise is deliberately ignored, or are just some of the nicer things in life, which – once discovered – you would not want to do without.
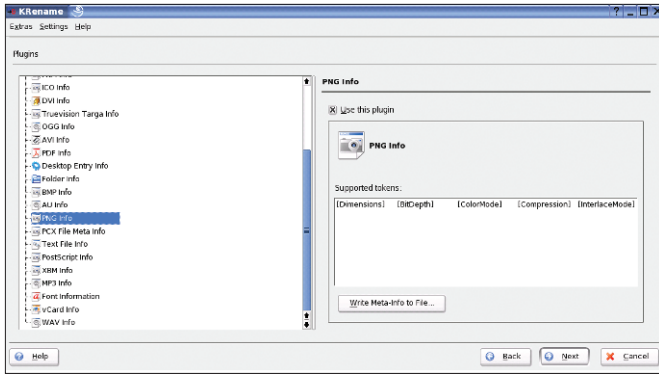

Figure 2: Use this dialog to specify what to do with the original files.

Figure 3: KRename's functionality is extensible thanks to a huge selection of plug-ins.

Figure 6: After renaming, the PNG image filenames include bit depth information.

There are various approaches to doing this. You can click the *Add files…* button to fill the empty list using the file section dialog. You can select one file or multiple files. Clicking *Add directory…* will add the total content of the directory to your list. If you prefer, you can simply drag & drop files into the list. After completing your selection, the next step, after clicking the Next button, is to specify a target location for the renamed files. Again there are a number of options (see Figure 2): *Rename input files* renames the original files in the list, *Copy files to destination directory* keeps the original names, but moves the files to the target directory and renames the copies.

If you opt for *Move files to destination directory*, the original files are moved to the target directory and then renamed. The fourth option *Create symbolic links in destination directory* keeps the original files in their original location, as KRename simply sets up **symbolic links** for the files in the target directory.

If you click on the *Finish* button after selecting a target, you are in for a surprise (see Figure 3). KRename uses KDE plug-in technology. Depending on your KDE version, you should have a selection of various plug-ins at this stage. *PNG-Info* or the *Picture Plugin* can be extremely useful when renaming files, as you will see shortly. To load a plug-in, select the plug-in from the list on the left, and check the *Use this plugin* checkbox. Then go on to click *Finish*.

Templates

This finally takes you to the screen where you can rename your files in a single batch process. KRename uses templates, that is text strings with control characters that tell the program how to rename the files. You can click on *Functions* to view an explanation of the wildcard characters (see Figure 4).

Entering a number sign # in the *Template* text box tells the KRename to add a serial number to the selected files. The more number signs you add, the more digits the serial number will have. The program pads out the remaining digits with zeros.

Be careful when renaming files: you can not change the file extension by default, as KRename will reapply the original extension after renaming. There is a workaround for this: simply uncheck the *Use extension of the input file checkbox*. You can now add your new template for the file extension in the *Template* text box.
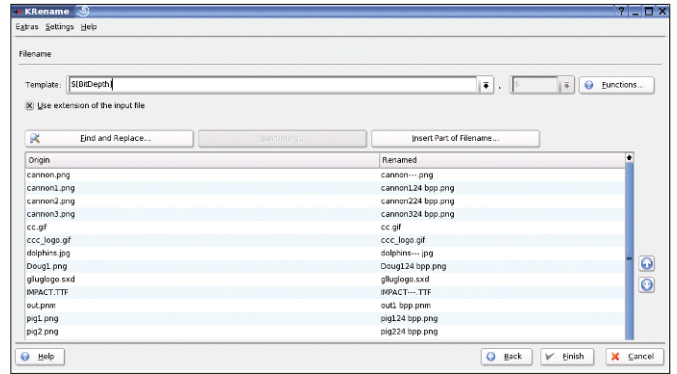
An Alternative Approach to Plug-ins

After selecting a plug-in, you can select *Functions* in this dialog box to inspect the functions provided by the plug-in. KRename allows you to view the functionality of any plug-in that you have loaded. Figure 5 shows *PNG-Info* as an example. You can select *[BitDepth]*, for example, and then click on *Add*, KRename will add the bit depth to the name of any PNG image files you have selected (see Figure 6). ◼
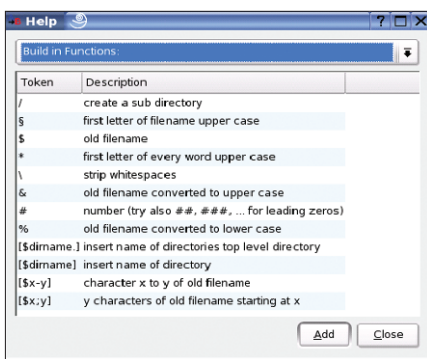

Figure 4: Using wildcards to define a template for renaming files.
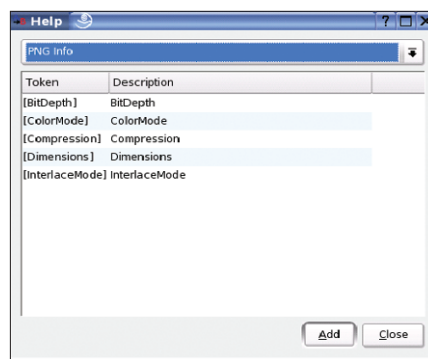
Figure 5: KRename can add this characteristic of a PNG file to the filename.

GLOSSARY

Symbolic link: *If you need the same file at two different locations in the filesystem tree (where the files can have different names), you do not need to create a copy. Instead, you can enter the "ln -s" command at the desired location to create a link to the file. If you* delete the original file later, the symbolic link becomes orphaned.

Batch: *This is a term from the early days of data processing where punch cards were used to control commands running on computers. Operators used to feed a "batch" of cards to* the card reader, which would process them sequentially. Today, the term "batch" refers to a collection of commands and functions processed sequentially (and typically automatically) by a program.