

LINUX VOICE YOUR LETTERS



Got something to say? An idea for a new magazine feature? Or a great discovery? Email us: letters@linuxvoice.com

LINUX VOICE STAR LETTER

MANY SUGGESTIONS

I'm a volunteer at a mental health charity (www.contactmorpeth.org.uk) and I have been encouraging people there to use *LibreOffice* and *Gimp*. One particular boon was the End-Of-Lifeing of Microsoft Windows XP and Office 2003. I've been putting Ubuntu onto unwanted laptops or desktops to give away instead of sending them off to landfill. Your decision to relicense your content as Creative Commons is particularly helpful, because not everyone can justify buying a magazine.

There is one more thing I'd like you to do with your content, though. Every year or so, look back at your content and group related articles together as a PDF – for

example, a PDF of the “core technologies” articles would be good – and put them on your DVD and website.

Because resources are always a bit stretched, it would be helpful if the “Gaming On Linux” page included things like cost and hardware requirements.

Bling would be good too. Stuff like stickers (to be put on computers being given away) or posters (to advertise this stuff in the activity room). Or maybe a booklet specific to a particular topic, similar to the O'Reilly pocket references or Addison-Wesley phrasebooks.

Ian Bruntlett

Andrew says: Wow, that's a lot to go at! Well done on



We'll add prices and hardware requirements for games from next issue.

spreading the Free Software gospel – every pound that doesn't go to Microsoft is a pound that can be spent doing something better, as you know. It's always great to see when organisations realise this, especially charities that should be spending it doing important work in the communities they serve. We

know that eventually we'll have a load of content that we're not doing much with, and that's why we took the decision to relicense it as Creative Commons when the time comes. But yes, I do like what you've suggested, and we'll look into bundling collections of related articles for the web.

GROUP TESTS+

Thanks for the great magazine, I love the programming tutorials, the computer science history, the geeky Group Tests (window managers! Awesome!), and pretty much everything (also the CC-BY-SA licensing, and the DRM-free download). If it was up to me the Raspberry Pi stuff would be out the window, I really don't care, but I understand that many people want it so I can live with it.

Anyway, a suggestion for your wonderful Group Tests. At the moment they are sorted first by

feature (accessibility, installation, whatever), and then each package is assessed on that criterion. It would be easier to read if they were sorted by package (*Emacs*, *Vim*, etc) and then each package were rated on those criteria.

At present to pick the package that suits you it is necessary to read across all the sections and remember what does what and what they're all called, rather than reading about each piece of software in one section and coming to an overall judgement.

Other than that keep up the brilliant work, thanks again and I look forward to the next 6 issues and beyond.

Chris Beeley, Nottingham

Graham says: A quick defence of the Pi; if you replace Pi with Debian, almost everything Pi-ish works on other Linuxes too. Raspberry Pi has just become a great standard. Also, in a twist of wonderful serendipity, we've changed the format of Group Test exactly as you suggest. Thanks!

NOM DE MINT PART DEUX

I see that issue six of your magazine comes with a DVD; so as a digital subscriber I looked on your website for a link to download the corresponding .iso file, but saw only a message that a link will be added later. I wondered whether you might be able to send an email when this link is available in the same way that you let me know when the magazine is available? I'm particularly interested in your Raspbian remix.

I had a look at your 'Intro to Linux' videos; it left me wondering who you saw as your target audience. I have been reading Linux magazines since 2009, so most of the terms you used I was familiar with, but that wouldn't be the case if, say, my sisters had a go, as they wouldn't know the jargon. Having recently set up a laptop to dual boot Ubuntu 14.04 and Fedora 20, I couldn't work out how to set up the installation such that *Grub 2* would be installed on a */boot* partition, while I had a separate *"/"* root, */home* (one for each distro) and swap partition. So is there any chance of a video tutorial on advanced dual booting?

Galen (AKA YorkshireTyke)

Andrew says: We had some pretty banal technical problems around



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Digital subscribers who want to take our custom version of Raspbian for a spin: go to www.linuxvoice.com/torrents/lv006.iso.torrent to download last issue's cover DVD.

the time issue 6 went on sale, but these should be fixed in time for the next issue to have a DVD on the cover(planned for issue 8). Sorry about that.

As for the videos, as long as they are useful to someone out there, they're doing their job. Keep your eyes peeled for a dual-booting guide soon.

ODF FOR UK

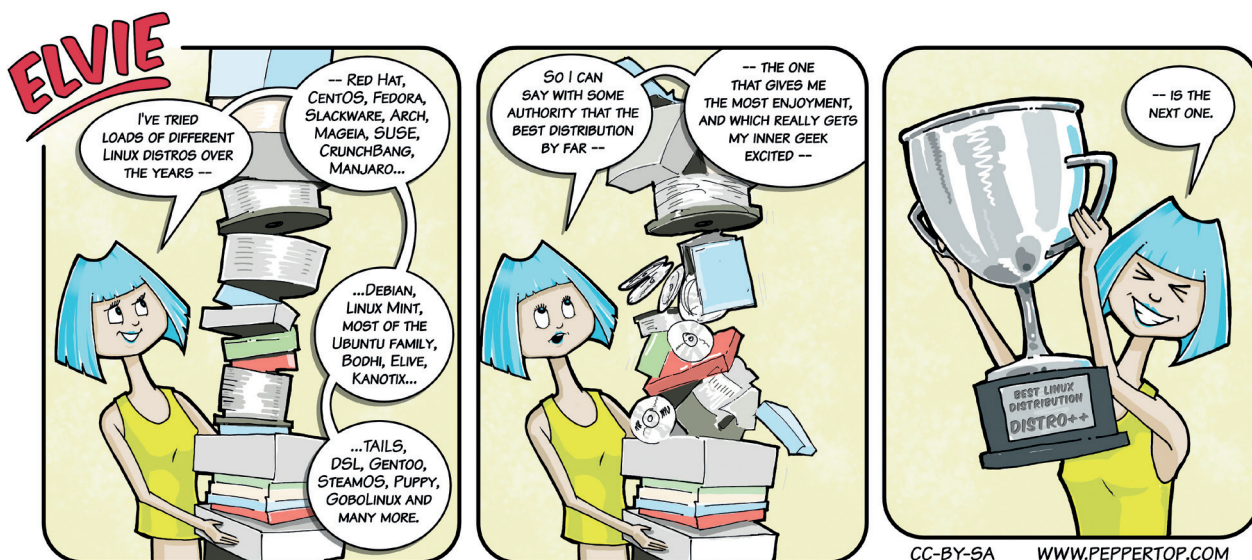
I'd like to send out a hearty message of congratulations to The Document Foundation for pushing open formats for the UK Government, and the UK Government for accepting that we shouldn't have to spend money licensing a file format in order to read data that belongs to us as taxpayers.

Unlike a lot of commenters, don't have a problem with taxpayers' money going to a big US company. If that offends you so much, then follow it to its conclusion and you end up paying British firms whether they do good work or not, just to keep spending local. That's silly. We need the best, and the best value for money, and that's why ODF is the best choice.

Here's hoping that other governments go the same way, and more organisations stop spending money on a product that only makes it more difficult for their customers to interact with them. Again, well played UK!

Remy Barrett, Worcester

Graham says: In any organisation as big as Her Majesty's Government, there are bound to be at least some sensible people who know what's going on. We too are immensely chuffed that the wise heads have prevailed in this issue.



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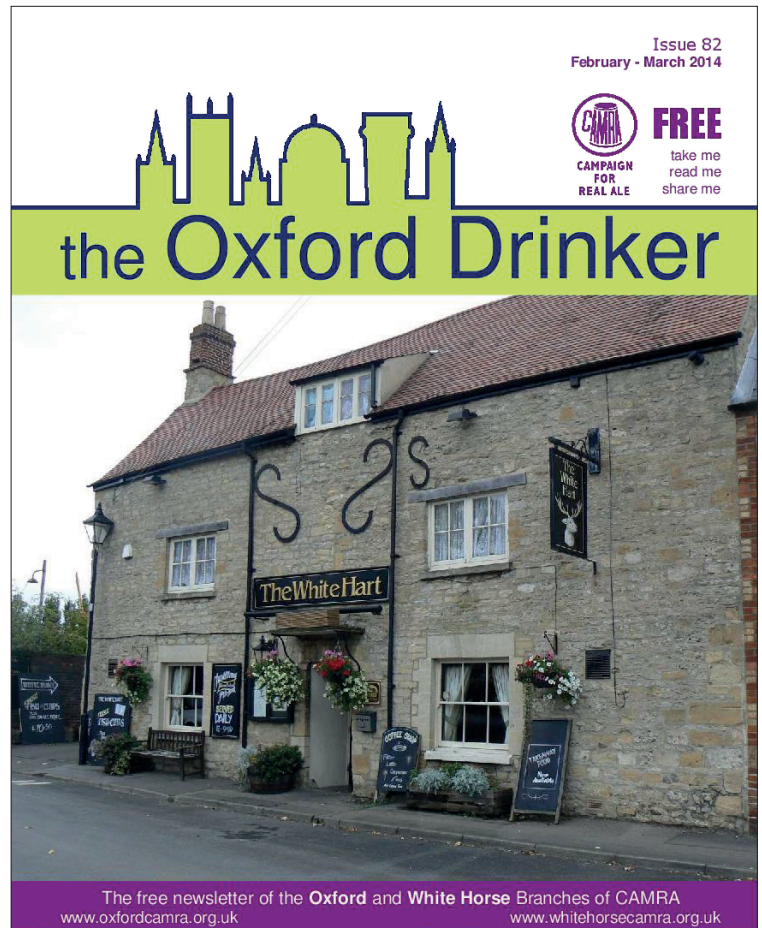
SCRIBUS

Why does Linux Voice use InDesign instead of *Scribus*? Has LV tried *Scribus* and found it lacking?

PR

Andrew says: A recent *InDesign* update followed by half a day lost due to a corrupt file crashing a machine has made us ask this same question. But the answer is still the same: the number of freelance designers in and around Bristol who know how to use *InDesign* is far greater than the number of designers who know how to use *Scribus*, so if our art boss Stacey ever wanted to go on holiday (perish the thought) we'd have an extremely small pool from which to find some cover for her (NB this is another argument in favour of open file formats).

However, we do want to keep our options open in future, and as such we've chosen open fonts that will enable us to move to *Scribus* when the situation changes. We're planning ahead.



Scribus is excellent software, used by a growing number of quality publications – including *The Oxford Drinker*, newsletter of Oxford & White Horse CAMRA.

Open Source technologists support enterprise grade, mission critical systems

Get some for your team

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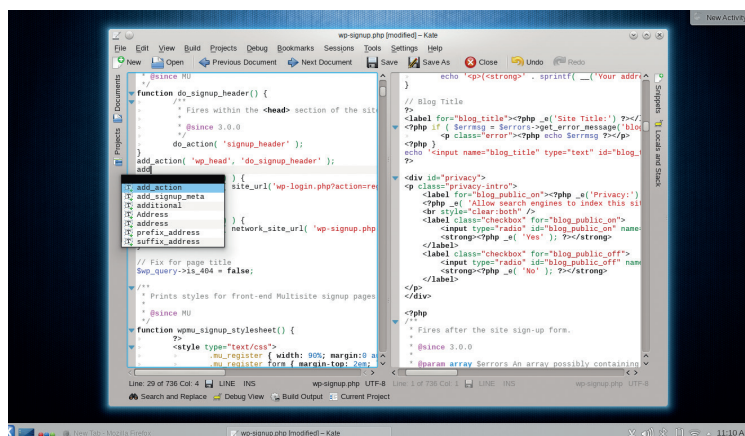
BORED WITH THE KEYBOARD

I'm enjoying the new mag, but I feel that you need a counterpoint to your chant of, "Keyboard, Keyboard, Keyboard!"

I've been an IT pro for 15 years, and regular computer user for 10 before that, resulting in about a year of RSI. Note that I've done everything I could in terms of seating position, quality ergonomic keyboards, regular stretches and screen breaks etc, and it hasn't been enough.

The biggest culprit is the long list of Ctrl key chord commands, which results in your weakest finger pressing against a spring with your hand stretched wide. Ouch. All this to actually slow you down. (See Bruce Tognazzini, www.asktog.com/TOI/toi06KeyboardVMouse1.html)

So here's some advice I've learned since. Remap your keyboard. The X.org keyboard extension has a large set of options to fine-tune your layout. The desktop environments – *Enlightenment* for me – often put a GUI in front of them. Otherwise, put your choices in a file named `/etc/X11/xorg.conf.d/10-keyboard.conf`. Some people set the Caps Lock to act as Ctrl, but that is still little finger territory and not really good enough. I use `altwin:ctrl_alt_win` to make Alt and Alt-Gr act as Ctrl keys, and the MS Windows key function as Alt. That puts the most-used modifier key under my thumb or strongest



finger. (Minor bonus: Win-Tab now tabs between windows.) Then I use **compose:menu** to turn the MS menu key into Alt-Gr, since I want to use accented characters correctly. It only took a short time to retrain my muscle memory.

Move your hands, both from keyboard to mouse and around the keyboard. Only copy typists are judged by words per minute – move off the home keys, and use a stronger finger for the extreme end keys.

Repeatedly double clicking the mouse will also hurt eventually. Many file manglers have a setting to use a single click to open and hover to select, which is much gentler. Sadly the *GTK* file dialogs don't have the option, despite repeated requests for it in their bug tracker. (Ever hear about the origin of the double click? It was a workaround for The Steve's decree that Macs must have just one

mouse button.) Finally, strengthen your forearms. I know some programmers who actually lift weights, and I use grip squeezers on days when my arms aren't too sore.

I hope you can publish this, and perhaps keep some of your readers away from the anti-inflammatory pills. Those are really hard on your stomach lining.

Dylan

Mike says: Damn right. Remapping your keyboard so the most often used modifier key is under your thumb rather than your little finger is the number 1 best thing you can do for your long-term finger happiness. I've had terrible RSI in the past, which is largely why I'm such a fan of tiling window managers now – it saves you from having to cripple yourself using a mouse. Thanks for the tips – everyone, heed Dylan's words!

Kate won the Group Test of text editors in LV002 (now online at www.linuxvoice.com/text-editors), but like all other apps that take text input, it can be injurious to your health.

THE VIRUS QUESTION

I can accept that there are no computer viruses on Linux, but I'm baffled as to why. The internet is full of theories, but the most persuasive seems to be that there are so many fewer Linux machines than there are Windows, that it's too much effort for the virus writer to even bother targetting Linux. But I've also read that Linux is just inherently safer. So which is it? **Davey McGregor, Perth**

Ben says: People who write malware probably want to do so to get the widest exposure for their little scripts and botnets, so it makes much better sense to target Windows. It still runs on the majority of desktops and we'd guess the average user is less able to defend themselves against malware than the average Linux user. Combine this with some huge (and undisclosed) security holes, and cracking Linux is just not worth the comparative effort.



Antivirus vendors do sell software to stop Linux servers spreading viruses to Windows boxes, but for desktop users this unnecessary.