

THE COMPUTER CORNER

No. 298: LINUX: EXPLORE AND ORGANIZE

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OK, you have a fired up Linux machine and you are looking at the desktop. The first thing is to organize the desktop itself. You might say, there is nothing to organize. A fresh copy of Vanessa's desktop shows one thing only ... a Computer icon. So perhaps the first thing is to put a couple of working icons on the desktop. Easy as pie! Move the cursor to the tray, click the Linux icon (yep, just where the Windows icon was in a Windows tray) and you see a list of applications, much like in Windows. Pull the slider bar down to Desktop and click it (or just type desktop in the editing space where the vertical bar was flashing) and you will have a menu of Desktop Icons. Select all 5 (Computer, Home, Trash, Mounted Drives and Network). As you select them or deselect them, they will appear and disappear from the desktop, except maybe Mounted Drives if you don't have any. Cool! Leave them all selected for now. You should feel quite at home now, with a trash can on your desktop. Close the list of applications.

Click the Linux icon in the tray again and note the list of application groups on the left – Accessories, Graphics, and so on. Roll your pointer over Preferences and click on Date and Time. Note your region on the map which should include America and Chicago. You might want to deselect Use 24h clock so that time is shown as usual (9:32 PM instead of 2132 PM) in the tray. Select Display the Date if you like (see how it looks in the tray) but not Display seconds, unless you really want to do that. Anything you change is reversible, so play until it looks the way you like. Then close Date and Time.

That should give you a good start on getting the feel of things, and you can now explore to your heart's content. But you also need to prepare for doing some work. For example, where do you start to compose letters or articles or just notes of things to do? How about a folder of Documents? Well, there is one of those already, but make it your own – call it MyDocs. Right click an empty spot on the desktop and select Create New Folder. There it is, a new folder named Untitled Folder. It should be highlighted already, so type MyDocs, hit the Enter key and it becomes the new folder's title. Double click it and you are looking at its contents, which do not yet exist. Right click in the folder's empty space and select Create New Document. Click Empty Document and Untitled Document appears with a plain text icon above. Double click it and you are ready to edit Untitled Document which might be a reminder note to yourself to order that turkey for next weekend. Type the note and click File, then Save, then click the x in the upper left corner to close the file. Right click the file and select Rename. Type in Turkey Reminder, or better TURKEY REMINDER! and press the Enter key. You now have a perfectly good reminder note in MyDocs, written in plain

text. On the other hand, while this reminder note is hot right now, you will probably want to erase it when you have placed the order. Furthermore, you probably don't want it buried in MyDocs, but rather want it "in your face" on the desktop, so that it bugs you until you do it. So put the arrow on the TURKEY REMINDER! icon in MyDocs, press the left mouse button, hold it down, then move the mouse to drag the icon out of MyDocs and on to the desktop where you will more easily see it. Release the mouse button and you are done.

How about a nicely formatted letter, using Libre Office? Left click the Start button (the Linux Logo in the tray) and put the arrow on Office in the first column of applications. Roll down to LibreOffice Writer in the right column and click it. The Writer will start a new document, Untitled 1, and you can compose away and learn about a good, flexible editor, fully equal in scope and compatibility with Microsoft's Word. It even looks like Microsoft Word! Compose a few lines, and when done, click on the bar attached to the right of the Save icon (looks like a 3½ inch floppy, third icon in from the leftmost). Select **Save As** and it will suggest Untitled 1 as a title, to be saved in Desktop, MyDocs. Change that name (Untitled 1) to **Letter to Aunt Sue.docx**, click Save, and now it can be read by anyone using MS Word (the .odt format versus the .docx format are beyond the scope of this article ... read about them on your own). Select Use Word 2007-365 Format. Close LibreOffice Writer down and double click MyDocs on the Desktop. In it should appear **Letter to Aunt Sue.docx** if you followed the above instructions. Clicking the .docx file will bring up the file in LibreOffice Writer for reading or additional editing. Not Thanksgiving Reminder, though, on the desktop. That was created in **xed**, a small and lightweight plain vanilla text editor that comes with Vanessa and **xed** will be called up to read or further edit the file if you click on it out on the desktop. However, you can import it into Writer for reading or additional editing, if you like, or changing it to .docx or .doc file format. That is another story, though.

You are well into getting started at this point. A few tips. You can create a folder inside a folder. Thus, you can create a folder named Newsletter Articles inside MyDocs. Further, you can create folders named 2020, 2021, 2022 inside Newsletter Articles. So organize to your heart's content. And, by the way, folders used to be called directories before Microsoft decided to change the terminology (to muddy up the waters of clarity?). Folders and directories are identical.

Keep in mind that however you organize, you should remember to make it easy to back up your stuff. Aside from whatever backup Linux itself does, what happens if three capacitors on the motherboard explode, instantly rendering your computer completely useless? Therefore, you will want to back up your creations on some other media that will allow you to transfer them to some other computer if your main one is destroyed. I suggest you learn how to transfer MyDocs and any other creations such as pictures you might have taken, databases you have created) to CDs (650 MB) or DVDs (4.7 GB), or even double layer DVDs (8.5 GB). In other words, you need to learn how to burn CD/DVDs with the contents of folders MyDocs, MyPics, PaidBills or whatever, so that you can do it quickly and easily as part of your backup routine. Don't worry about

Linux or programs and such, you can always get new copies of those. But not your creations. It takes me a single DVD and less than 30 minutes to do a 3-month routine backup of all my creations, plus all my wife's creations from her computer, which I can then port to new machines if needed. **All** our creations. And we are pretty old, so we have a lot of stuff! Peace of mind is worth a little effort.