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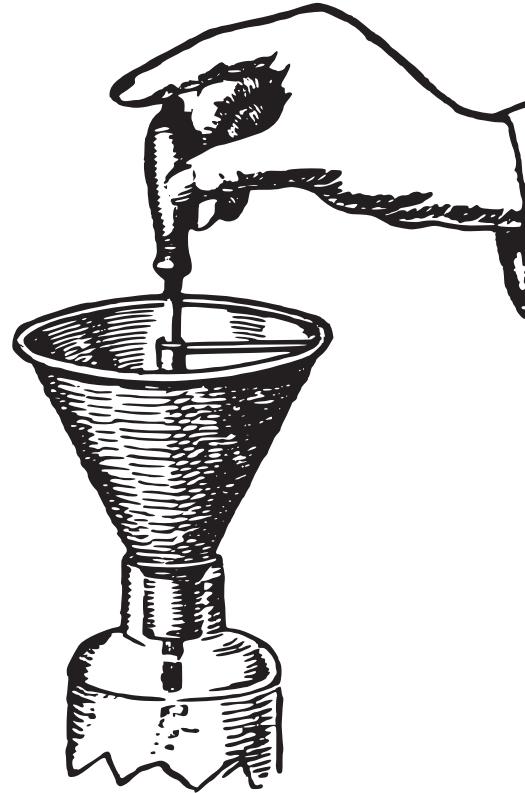


USE CASES AND AFFORDANCES



Index

- 4 Masthead
- 6 Editor's Letter
- 7 Production Colophon
- 9 New Releases
- 10 Upcoming Events
- 12 Copyleft Business Dave Crossland
- 14 The heritage of our pixels Eric Schrijver
- 18 Coding Pictures Ricardo Lafuente
- 22 Setting a book with Scribus Pierre Marchand
- 24 Best of svg
- 26 Desktop Pierros Papadeas
- 28 Interview with Oxygen's Nuno Pinheiro
- 35 Showcase
- 36 Allison Moore Papercut
- 38 Antonio Roberts What Revolution?
- 40 Making your workflow work for you Seth Kenlon
- 43 On being a Unicorn: the case for user-involvement in Free/Libre Open Source Software Libre Graphics Meeting Special
- 44 Talking about our tools Libre Graphics Meeting Special
- 46 AdaptableGIMP: user interfaces for users ginger coons
- 51 Resource List
- 55 Glossary 1.2



Masthead

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A Reader's Guide to Libre Graphics Magazine

In this magazine, you may find concepts, words, ideas and things which are new to you. Good. That means your horizons are expanding. The problem with that, of course, is that sometimes, things with steep learning curves are less fun than those without.

That's why we're trying to flatten the learning curve. If, while reading *Libre Graphics* magazine, you encounter an unfamiliar word, project name, whatever it may be, chances are good there's an explanation.

At the back of this magazine, you'll find a glossary and resource list. The glossary aims to define words that are unique to the world of Libre Graphics. The resource list provides valuable information about tools, licenses, whatever items we may be mentioning.

Practically, this means that if, for example, you're reading an article about Scribus (see pages 22 to 23), you can always flip to the back of the magazine, look up Scribus in the resource list and become quickly informed about it. This provides some instant gratification, giving you the resources you need to understand, in a moment, just what we're talking about.

We hope you like our system.

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April

11, 12

Your wonderful event.

22-26

Relevant conference we
haven't heard of.

May

8-10

Amazing conference
you're attending.

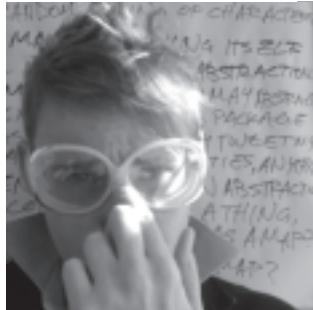
June

**What,
there's more?**

Why didn't you tell us?
Please drop us a line at

events@libregraphicsmag.com

We would love to help
spread the word.



Getting used to misuse

ginger coons

Use cases, at their core, are about the way users proceed through a system in order to achieve an outcome. Normally, there are lots of diagrams and small details involved in creating a use case. But we're not here to go over technical detail. Instead, we're here to talk about that core, the idea of looking at paths of use and interaction.

Then there are affordances, the features of a thing, its possibilities, the ways in which it might come to be used.

Clearly, then, we're talking about the way things are used and, more specifically, the way things are designed to be used.

As designers, artists, makers, builders, we make things that are of use, in one way or another. At the same time, we make use of the productions of others. We do both of those things on an almost constant basis, in our lives, our vocations, our work.

A graphic designer may design a poster which serves the use of informing viewers about that which it promotes. That same designer uses a set of tools, however diverse, to fashion the poster. Thus, the builder is built for. Both the poster and the tools of the designer have affordances and potential use cases. What, after all, is the proper use of a poster? Is it to be read? Is it to be attractive? Is it to be taken off the wall and folded into a paper airplane? To be stolen, only to be hung on another, more private wall?

Our software tools, in their affordances and potential use cases, define for us, to a certain extent, what we may and may not do. Those decisions are put in place by the people who design the tools. Together, as users, developers and all areas between the

two extremes, we boil in a constantly reconfiguring sea of use possibilities, material and mental affordances.

Which is why, in issue 1.2 of *Libre Graphics magazine*, we're looking at the interconnecting topics of use cases and affordances. We can look at it from a technical perspective but, perhaps more productively, we can also look at it philosophically. It's about the idea of the affordances of the work, who it's for, what it can do.

That applies both to the work designers do for others and also to the work of others, as it is employed by designers.

Use, misuse and happy accidents are all areas we're keen to discuss and explore in this issue. We look, this time around, at glitch art, smart workflows, the history of the pixel and its adoption, user interfaces designed to work for instead of against you and any number of other exciting topics.

We hope you'll stick with us as we wander through the diverse meanings of what it is to use and be used.

ginger coons is a member of the Libre Graphics Magazine editorial team.

Versions under control

Ana Carvalho & Ricardo Lafuente



When working on a project, it helps to have a proper workflow set up, one which can help us do away with boring and repetitive tasks through as much automation as possible. One of the crucial parts in such a workflow is version control.

The most popular proprietary design software tools haven't yet incorporated the latest improvements in version control — in many cases it's totally absent from software suites and is usually provided by third-party commercial plug-ins. The consequence of this is that regular users are forced to adopt very crude ways of managing the versions of their work, usually with awkward numbering and notes on the filenames themselves. Things like "illustration7-final_version3-PRINT-FINAL-SRSLY_THIS_IS_IT-final2.jpg" should be familiar to more than a few designers.

On the other hand, the Free/Libre and Open Source software (F/LOSS) world is very much in touch with version control and other project management strategies. These strategies quite often come from the domain of software development. Thus, the thought of using a version control system (vcs) for the production of this magazine came up early. There is a wide array of choice for this purpose. The most popular options are Subversion, Git, Darcs, Bazaar and Mercurial. It should be said that there's some heavy argument about which vcs is the best and this discussion is nearing the status of a holy war. We decided not to waste too much time weighing choices and instead run with one and see how it fared — and Git was what we stuck with.

Cliché as it might sound, version control is one of the things that once you pick up, you can't figure out how you ever managed to do without. Not only do we get a full log of every

change that has been made, using version control makes collaborative work much more straightforward, giving us the ability to always know what the status of our project is and, if necessary, revert to older versions of any file without hassle.

Nevertheless, version control systems require some learning and hand-holding to get comfortable with. Among all the technical jargon — learning the meanings and effects of committing, reverting, staging, branching, merging, rebasing, pruning, annotating — we are slowly becoming familiar with this way of working, and are definitely seeing the advantages.

PROPCOURIER 1.2

The ever-evolving typeface for this magazine, PropCourier Sans, benefitted from some tweaks for issue 1.2. Most of the work dealt with punctuation, softening the weight of the most used punctuation glyphs. We also began working on kerning, the headache of choice for type designers. In order to preserve our neurons, we decided to kern as we go: after typesetting 1.2, we looked at printed proofs for the most glaring kerning problems (as in "F/LOSS") and fixed them. Each issue, we'll be adding more kerning pairs as we find the need for them.