17 – Package Management, for real this time

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Package Management

Package Management Overview

- If I had to give *only one reason* why Unix systems are superior to Windows: Package Management.
- Can install almost anything with ease of from your terminal.
- Update to the latest version with one command.
    - No more download the latest installer nonsense!
- Various tools can be installed by installing a *package*.
    - A package contains the files and other instructions to setup a piece of software.
    - Many packages depend on each other.
    - High-level package managers download packages, figure out the dependencies for you, and deal with groups of packages.
    - Low-level managers unpack individual packages, run scripts, and get the software installed correctly.

Many different philosophies

- Monolithic binary packages: one big “app” with everything bundled together
  - docker containers, most windows programs
- Small binary packages: separate common code into independently-installed “libraries”
  - MSI files, Ubuntu, most of linux
- Source-based packages: no installers at all! Compile all your programs
  - language-based package managers, brew, portage
- Benefits to all approaches
  - monolithic binary: fastish install, very independent programs
  - small binary: very fast install, less wasted space
  - source-based: fastest code, smallest install, easy to use open-source

Package Managers in the Wild

- GNU/Linux:
  - Low-level: two general families of *binary packages* exist: `deb`, and `rpm`.
  - High-level package managers you are likely to encounter:
    - Debian/Ubuntu: `apt-get`, `apt`, `aptitude`.
    - SUSE/OpenSUSE: `zypper`.
    - Fedora: `dnf` (Fedora 22+) / `yum`.
    - RHEL/CentOS: `yum` (until they adopt `dnf`).
    - Arch: `pacman`
    - Gentoo: `Portage`, `emerge` (my favorite)
- Mac OSX:
  - Others exist, but the only one you should ever use is `brew`.
  - Don't user others (e.g. `port`), they are outdated / EOSL.

Using Package Managers

- Though the syntax for each package manager is different, the concepts are all the same.
  - This lecture will focus on `apt`, `dnf`, `emerge`, and `brew`.
  - The `dnf` commands are almost entirely interchangeable with `yum`, by design.
  - Note that `brew` is a “special snowflake”, more on this later.
- What does your package manager give you? The ability to
  - `install` new packages you do not have.
  - `remove` packages you have installed.
  - `update` installed packages.
  - update the lists to search for files / updates from.
  - view `dependencies` of a given package.
  - a whole lot more!!!

A Note on `update`

- These “subcommands” are by category, not name: `update` is not always called `update`
- The `update` command has importantly different meanings in different package managers.
- Most do **not** default to system (read linux kernel) updates.
  - Fedora does; most others do not.
- It depends on your operating system, and package manager.
  - Know your operating system, and look up what the default behavior is.
- If your program needs a specific version of the linux kernel, you need to be very careful!
  - very, **very** few programs care about your kernel version.

A Note on Names and their Meanings

- Package names sometimes specify architecture:
  - `[3456x]86` (e.g. `.i386` or `.i686` or `x86`):
    - These are the `32-bit` packages.
  - `x86_64` or `amd64`: these are the `64-bit` packages.
  - `noarch`: these are independent of the architecture.
- Ubuntu / fedora often splits packages into smaller pieces:
  - The header files are usually called something like:
    - `deb`: usually `<package>-dev`
    - `rpm`: usually `<package>-devel`
  - The library you will need to link against:
    - If applicable, `lib<package>` or something similar.
  - The binaries (executables), often provided by just `<package>`.
  - Most relevant for `C` and `C++`, but also `Python` and others.
  - Use the `search` functionality of your package manager.

Example Development Tool Installation

- If I needed to compile and link against `Xrandr` (X.Org X11 libXrandr runtime library) on ubuntu, I would have to install
  - `libxrandr2`: the library.
  - `libxrandr-dev`: the header files.
  - Usually don't explicitly include the architecture (e.g. `.x86_64`), it's inferred
  - If you're getting link errors, try installing explicit 32/64-bit version.
    - just google your error
- Splitting devel files more common for *binary* package managers, less for source-based ones.

System Specific Package Managers

Debian / Ubuntu Package Management (`apt`)

- Installing and uninstalling:
  - Install a package:
    `apt install <pkg1> <pkg2> ... <pkgN>`
  - Remove a package:
    `apt remove <pkg1> <pkg2> ... <pkgN>`
  - Only one `pkg` required, but can specify many.
  - "Group" packages are available, but still the same command.
- Updating components:
  - Update lists of packages available: `apt update`.
    - No arguments, it updates the whole list (even if you give args).
  - Updating currently installed packages: `apt upgrade`.
    - Specify a `package` name to only update / upgrade that package.
  - Update core (incl. kernel): `apt dist-upgrade`.
- Searching for packages:
  - Different command: `apt-cache search <pkg>`

RHEL / Fedora Package Managers (**yum** and **dnf**)

- Installing and uninstalling:
  - Install a package:
    `dnf install <pkg1> <pkg2> ... <pkgN>`
  - Remove a package:
    `dnf remove <pkg1> <pkg2> ... <pkgN>`
  - Only one **pkg** required, but can specify many.
  - "Group" packages are available, but different command:
    - `dnf groupinstall 'Package Group Name'`
- Updating components:
  - Update EVERYTHING: `dnf upgrade`.
  - **update** exists, but is essentially **upgrade**.
    - Specify a **package** name to only upgrade that package.
  - Updating repository lists: `dnf check-update`
- Searching for packages:
  - Same command: `dnf search <pkg>`
- **yum** and **dnf** (**Dandified Yum**) nearly interchangeable: [2].

Gentoo package manager (**`portage`** with **`emerge`**)

- *source-based* package manager: compiles your packages
  - just runs a special `bash` script to compile
  - very, very fine-grained control over dependencies and features
  - use the latest software specialized to your hardware!
- `USE` flags control special “optional” features
  - would be separate packages on ubuntu
  - Want `java` or `emacs` integration? USE=“java emacs...”
- Installing, uninstalling, and updating
  - `emerge` package to install
  - `emerge -v --depclean` to remove
    - explicitly checks to ensure other packages don’t need it first
  - `emerge -uND @world` to upgrade everything
    - flags are “update”, “newuse” (if you turned on a feature), “deep” (also check dependencies for this stuff)

Cautionary Tales

- **WARNING**: if you install package `Y`, which installs `X` as a dependency, and later `remove Y`
  - Sometimes `X` will be removed immediately!
  - Sometimes `X` will be removed during a cleanup operation later
- Solution?
  - Basically, **pay attention to your package manager**.
  - Install packages explicitly that you need
  - Check lists of packages when removing things
- Why does this happen at all?
  - Linux splits things into dependencies: avoids lots of extra copies
  - Side effect: dependencies are *visible* to you; you can use directly
  - In windows: dependencies are *hidden*

Package Management is a core Philosophy

- Most of what makes a Linux *distribution* is its package manager
- Reflects Distribution's philosophy
  - Ubuntu: "just work" and don't think too hard
  - Fedora: "latest everything" but keep it stable+not too hard
  - Arch: I want to understand how my distro works.
  - Gentoo: I *do* understand how my distro works.

If you're thinking of installing Linux, by the way...

- Ubuntu
  - Benefits: easy install, out-of-the-box setup, common things "just work"
  - Drawbacks: too much magic; system "just work" scripts break if you need to do too many uncommon things and aren't really careful
- Fedora
  - Benefits: still pretty easy to install, lots of good "get started quick" stuff. Good in a VM too
  - Drawbacks: a little less stable; can change deep system things but also not hard to break your system that way.

If you're thinking of installing Linux, by the way...

- Arch
  - Benefits: wealth of knowledge, really helps you understand *why* your system works and what makes it work
  - Drawbacks: limited automagic. Takes real time to set things up, or change important things.
- Gentoo
  - Benefits: similar to Arch, plus the source-based Portage package manager is pure gold. Great if you're doing serious programming/systems work, or if you really need a thing from github that was released last week, or you have a limited environment. Great way to really learn Linux.
  - Drawbacks: absolutely no automagic. Takes real time to set things up, compiling is time-consuming, all the docs think you know what you're doing.

References

[1] Stephen McDowell, Bruno Abrahao, Hussam Abu-Libdeh, Nicolas Savva, David Slater, and others over the years. “Previous Cornell CS 2043 Course Slides”.

[2] Jack Wallen. *What You Need to Know About Fedora’s Switch From Yum to DNF*. 2015. URL: https://www.linux.com/learn/tutorials/838176-what-you-need-to-know-about-fedoras-switch-from-yum-to-dnf.