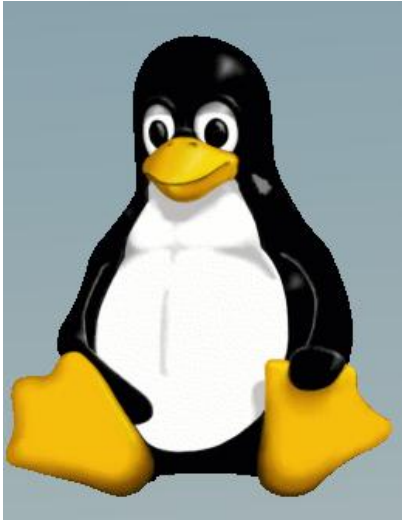


Bowie Seniors Computer Club Minutes for March 17, 2011



Carl Bulger presided.

Two new members:

Walt Dennison just got a new computer and wants to learn Windows 7 tips and tricks.

Dick Kaiser is now retired after 30 years' experience with computers and software. He maintains a couple of websites.

Presentation by Bob Blum:

LINUX

Bob asked for a show of hands of those who are using Linux. A few hands went up. He pointed out that a large percentage of internet servers use Linux as their operating system. So, indirectly, we're all using Linux, too.

One advantage of a Linux OS is that most versions are free and can be downloaded from the internet. There are a few that are proprietary distributions, e.g., Red Hat's Fedora, which is designed for corporate use, not for beginners.

Linux is based on UNIX. Bell Labs developed UNIX in 1975. It could be used securely on proprietary systems by many users simultaneously. Bell Lab's formulation was tweaked by Berkeley Labs who developed BSD. The kernel was still UNIX. In 1991 Linus Torvald developed the first version of what is now called Linux = "Linus UNIX".

There are now many "distributions" and variations of Linux. Most versions now have transitioned from the original text base to a Graphical User Interface (GUI). Microsoft's Windows can be incorporated into a virtual desktop within Linux if one chooses. Similarly, Apple's MAC OS, which is based on a UNIX kernel, can run Windows in its virtual desktop called "Boot Camp."

Bob concentrated on a Linux version that can be used by both beginning and advanced users called PCLinuxOS which is based on the KDE (K Desktop Environment). Gnome is the other primary desktop environment of Linux.

Aspects of Linux that are most familiar to Windows users:

Start Button
Start Menu
Applications
Task Bar ("Panel")
Calculator
Text Editor

Copy multiple items using "Clipper" comparable to Clipboard in Windows, but in Linux it is easier to select which item you want to paste.

Dolphin = Linux version of Windows Explorer

Linux can access files in the Windows 7 partition.

Open office.org is supported
Libre Office is gaining more support by the Linux community.
You can enable a Quick Starter in the system tray for either Open Office or Libre Office.

E-mail applications work with Linux. Bob prefers Mozilla's Thunderbird, a POP-mail (machine resident) application, as opposed to a cloud-based application like Google's Gmail, Verizon or Comcast mail, AOL, MSN, or Windows Live Mail.

Linux is compatible with Mozilla's Firefox and Google's Chrome browser, called "Chromium" in Linux. Also available are Java and Flash. (Steve Jobs forbids Flash applications in Apple products because he has no control over them.)

Bob uses Dropbox to store files in the cloud (up to 2 GB free) for access from any other computer.

Linux handles multimedia. Photographs or pictures, for example, can be viewed in Picasa in Linux.

When downloading files, you don't have to select the save site and you don't have to instruct it to install; it installs automatically.

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You can organize the Task Bar by clicking the so-called “cashew” allowing you to move icons on the “panel”, as it is called in Linux. When done organizing, click the cashew again.

If you right-click on a blank area of the desktop, you’ll have a menu of folder view settings, backgrounds, choice of opaque or translucent taskbar, etc.

The PCLinuxOS Control Center offers, among other things, a Compositing, or “compiz” setting. Bob demonstrated several 3D effects and ways to present multiple applications similar to Windows 7.

Flaky or potentially malware-laden applications can be run in a Virtual Box as can applications with sensitive data, but not at the same time or in the same box.

Bob commented on several other Linux distributions (He’s tried them all.):

He likes and recommends Linux MINT. It has all of the hardware drivers built-in. Red Hat’s proprietary Fedora is “too complicated” for beginners. Mandiva is “going out”. MEPIS is rapidly developing. OpenSUSE is a “pain in the neck” Ubuntu is “not what it is cracked up to be”. And he has just thoroughly demonstrated PCLinuxOS, so we assume that it is currently his favorite. Check it out:

http://www.pclinuxos.com/?page_id=2

Start with at least 10GB of free space on your hard drive. Eventually you may need up to 40GB.

Bob partitions that space into three partitions: Home folder, Kernel partition, and Slot partition (for virtual platform or box).

Download the distribution you want to install in the form of an .iso file which you can burn to a CD. You can boot up Linux from the CD to try it out without having to create partitions.

Besides the Web for information on Linux, Bob recommended a couple of magazines devoted to Linux available on large magazine racks such as Barnes & Noble’s or the public library’s.

Eric Hein mentioned that about a third of the applications on his freeware page home.comcast.net/~BSCCclub/freeware.htm on the Club’s website are compatible with Linux or have Linux versions. They are highlighted by the presence of Tux, Linux’s mascot Penguin, pictured at the top of this article.