

This is a **low resolution, black and white** version of the article you downloaded. To download the whole of Free Software Magazine in *high* resolution and color, please subscribe!

Subscriptions are free, and every subscriber receives our fantastic weekly newsletters — which are in fact fully edited articles about free software.

Please click here to subscribe:

<http://www.freesoftwaremagazine.com/subscribe>

Degunking Linux *by Roderick W Smith*

Martin C Brown



Over the course of a typical computer's lifetime you will probably create all sorts of files, temporarily install software and generate lots of information and data that you don't really want to keep. Unfortunately, computers tend to have a terrible habit of keeping these files and information about. In Degunking Linux by Roderick W Smith

you'll find hints on how to clean and, as the title suggests, degunk your Linux installation to help free up disk space, CPU time and help optimize your machine. You'd be amazed how much of a difference degunking your machine can make. Not only do you get more disk space but you also have the potential to speed up your machine and make it more stable.

There's a 12-step program of degunking
as well as a list of degunking methods
that you can perform in 15 minutes

The contents

Degunking Linux is split into four main sections and is spread over 12 chapters. The first section looks at basic degunking techniques such as sorting your files, settings and other information. There are lots of good tips in this section, including theories behind some of the techniques such as deleting unused accounts, identifying unused files and sorting out your hardware and drivers. This is mostly an overview section covering the fundamental techniques and pointers to other parts of the book for more information.

The second section gets into the basics of sorting user data; your old files, desktop environments and settings for applications that you no longer use. The aim here is to help identify and then delete settings, options and files you don't use. It includes ".dot" files from your home directory, removing old desktop patterns and pictures and so on. The guide covers both Gnome and KDE environments and goes as deep as configuring browser settings like caches and JavaScript/Java files and settings.

Removing system components—including managing software and packages, deleting accounts, software performance and process management—feature in the third section. This is best of the

sections as it provides an overall guide that will help improve performance for all users. Package management, for example, will help to remove drivers and applications that you have installed on your machine but which you don't use. Even with a "minimal" installation of most Linux distributions you'll often end up with tools and utilities you don't want. Others might have been superseded by other applications; for example Gentoo installs nano as the default text editor, but some will prefer vim or emacs and will no longer need nano.

The final section goes much deeper into your system and network to not only degunk existing systems but also to try and prevent your system getting gunked up with information you don't need. For example, there are step by step guides on how to set up, identify and configure the drivers required by your system and to keep it up-to-date, removing the older drivers when they are no longer required. There are also many tips on protecting yourself through the use of virus checking, web proxies (to help remove web sites you don't need) and filtering your email for SPAM.

Who's this book for?

I think it is fair to say that the book was targeted at desktop users and those who use Linux regularly as their main OS. The book approaches many of the tasks from the perspective of someone who probably isn't that aware of what goes on behind the scenes and what sort of an effect this could have their machine.

However, even with this approach there's lots that can be used by administrators to help degunk their servers and there's no reason why the information and tips given can't be employed by administrators to be applied to their user desktops and systems, or even to form the basis of a guide for users.

Pros

The best feature of the book is actually a little section at the start of the title, beginning from the inside front cover, which provides some quick, time-based tips for degunking. There's a 12-step program of degunking as well as a list of degunking methods that you can perform in increments of 15 minutes, 30 minutes, one hour, three hours and half a day. Even following the tips in the 15-minute section will provide some benefit. So if you've got "free" time, there's a section with steps you can take to help degunk your machine. In each case you get a simple description and the page number where the relevant details are covered.

It's nice to see that it's not just cleaning and deleting being covered by the book, but also complete techniques for managing your machine, such as backing up critical files and how leaving some of the elements (user accounts, unknown software) on your computer can be a security risk.

There are many places where Roderick covers a particular element that doesn't strike you as an obvious source of problems, but when given a little thought highlight a potential area of issue. For example, he covers the organization of mailboxes and aliases that might be enabled—or in some cases required—on your machine. This is just one example of how detailed and exhaustive Roderick has covered the material.

Overall there's good coverage here for both repairing and cleaning your system and for all the preventative maintenance required to keep your machine comparatively gunk free.

Cons

There are a couple of places where I would have liked a little bit depth. For example, although viruses are mentioned there isn't any coverage of a virus tool, like ClamAV, which I would have considered a required tool. I would also like to have seen coverage of a CD distribution like Knoppix that can make some of the procedures covered (like the Virus checking) much easier.

However, these are only minor niggles and don't detract from the excellent coverage and material in the rest of the book.

In short

Title	Degunking Linux
Author	Roderick W Smith
Publisher	Paraglyph Press
ISBN	1-933097-04-3
Year	2005
Pages	332
CD included	No
Mark	9

Copyright information

© 2005 Martin C Brown

This article is made available under the “Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs” Creative Commons License 2.0 available from <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/>.