



OTTAWA

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PRODUCT REVIEW

Ubuntu Kung Fu *by Alan German*

So, I'm scanning across the library shelves of computer manuals - you know the ones full of books like "Computers for Dummies" by Idiots (or was that "Computers for Idiots" by Dummies?) - when a cute kitten waves at me from the front cover of "Ubuntu Kung Fu". Now, with Ubuntu in the title, and "Tips, Tricks, Hints and Hacks" as the sub-title, this is an eminently more promising tome than any of the computers-for-morons series. So, haul this one home and leaf through the pages...

You may recognize the author - Keir Thomas - as a Linux blogger for PC World's Linux Line. His book is an unstructured list of 315 tips for Ubuntu Linux (using Version 8.04) although, for those requiring some semblance of order, there is a version of the table of contents with the tips loosely categorized by topic.

Some of the items are very promising, like Tip No.8 - Optimise Startup for Faster Boot Times. This offered to shave 20 seconds off a one minute bootup sequence by a simple edit on the init.d/rc file. Unfortunately, the change made absolutely no difference to the bootup time for my Ubuntu 9.04 setup. But, to be fair to the author, Canonical were supposed to have tweaked the new version of Ubuntu in order to improve bootup times, so perhaps the suggested change is now redundant. I didn't go any further but, if you want to explore your system's boot sequence in detail, the next offering, Tip No. 9 - Graph the System Bootup Performance - suggests using the Bootchart utility to provide a graphical dis-

play of the boot process with time. Playing videos in Linux has historically been fraught with difficulties, not the least of which have been the need to use multiple, proprietary codecs. Tip No. 65 - Install all the Multimedia Playback Codecs You'll Ever Need - promises to solve this problem once and for all! Although, there is a link to information on some of the "issues" involved with certain software! Along the same lines, music (MP3) aficionados may find Tip No. 279 - Use a "Legal" MP3 Codec - to be of interest.

Legal issues also seem as though they might be a concern for Tip No. 170 - Steal the Windows (or Mac OS) fonts. One option is to use the freely-available msttcorefonts package; however, there are also instructions for "Importing Fonts from Microsoft Windows" that don't sound too Redmond-friendly! But, as usual, the open-source movement can provide viable alternatives, such as Tip No. 101 - Install 465 Open Source Fonts, and Tip No. 280 - Use Look-a-Likes of the Microsoft Fonts.

Not all of the tips are serious. How about Tip No. 245 - Have a Cow Talk to You, or Tip No. 304 - Turn Your Computer into a Egg Timer? And, Tip No. 114 - Play Emacs Games - must have been specially written for Don Chiasson. (It must be so - he's the only user of Emacs that I know!)

But, there are also many very useful items in the book's pages. For example, have you ever wanted to rename a whole

set of digital photographs with file names like IMG_1048.JPG, IMG_1049.JPG, etc.? If your directory contains tens - or hundreds - of files, this can be quite a chore to complete manually. And, who knows the complex sequence of terminal commands to automate the process? So, Tip No. 230 - Rename Many Files at Once (aka Bulk Rename) - to the rescue! The Purrr (yup, that's three r's) utility will allow you to specify a name template, and include a sequential counter, so that your file names can be rather more descriptive of their actual content than what is provided by your camera's naming process.

Some other intriguing options are Tip No. 194 - Do Math at the Command Line, Tip No. 220 - Use a Macintosh OS X-like Dock, and Tip. No. 256 - See the Size of Files/Folders on the Desktop.

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Next Meeting: **WEDNESDAY, October 14th, 2009**

Coming Up this Fall...

► October 14th

Speaker: Rick Claus, IT Pro Advisor, Microsoft Canada

Topic: Microsoft Xbox 360

Did you know that the Microsoft Xbox 360 is more than just a great gaming console? Rick Claus, Senior It Pro Advisor with Microsoft Canada, will come and show some of the many tricks in the Xbox 360's arsenal.

November 11

Speaker: TBA

Topic: Music Software (tentative)

December 9th

Speaker: Harley Bloom of Bloom MicroTech (tentative)

Topic: Christmas Goodies

Coming Up in 2010...

January 13th: TBA

February 10th:

Microsoft Hack and Defend, Bruce Cowper

March 10th: TBA

April 14th:

Colossus and early computing, Bletchley Park

May 12th:

PhotoShop editing, Bert Schopf (Blackbird PCD)

June 9th:

Pizza Night and speaker (TBA)

October Raffle

The raffle prize will be announced at the October meeting.

Or check our website (<http://opcug.ca>) under Meetings for an update.

September Prize Winners

At the September meeting, member **Harry Gross** ended up the big winner taking home both the evening's raffle prize of a coupon for a copy of Windows 7 (once it is released) as well as a door prize of a Windows 7 ball cap.

Michael Benson also won a door prize and took home an OPCUG clock/calendar.

Thanks to Microsoft for the prizes.

2009 CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and Venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Wednesday, October 14 th	7:30 p.m. Auditorium of the Canada Museum of Science and Technology , 1867 St. Laurent Blvd. http://www.science-tech.nmstc.ca/english/index.cfm
Beginners' SIG	Wednesday, October 14 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
PIG SIG (Wing SIG West)	Wednesday, October 14 th	10:00 p.m. (after all other SIGs) at Chances "R" restaurant, Baseline Rd. at Woodroffe Ave. (College Square Shopping Centre)
Beer BOF (Wing SIG East)	Wednesday, October 14 th	10:00 p.m. (after all other SIGs) at Liam Maguire's, St. Laurent Blvd. at Innes Rd.

Please note that unless otherwise noted, SIGs meet at 9:00 p.m. (immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting).

ELECTIONS

Once a year, the OPCUG holds elections for the 9-member Board of Directors. We are once again coming up to this annual event. We encourage all members to consider running for a board position or getting involved in some other manner in the operations of the OPCUG.

If you want more information about what is involved, please talk to any current or past Board member. Names are listed on the back page of this newsletter and on the web site.

Nominations can be submitted to Bob Herres, 2010 Election Chair, in person at the October, November, and December club meetings or by sending an email to nominations2010@opcug.ca.

Nominations must be received by midnight, December 31, 2009.

Please get involved. Please help the OPCUG continue in its role of *Users Helping Users!*

*Bob Herres
2010 Election Chair*

Member's Favourite Night by Chris Taylor

Always popular, we are planning a "member's favourite" night for the January 13th general meeting.

But we need your help!

Do you have a program you are enthusiastic about? How about a piece of hardware that works better for you than anything else you know of? Have you found a little-known web site that has made your day? If you answered yes to any of these questions, don't you think other members of the OPCUG might be interested in learning about it?

We need some people willing to give a 5 or 10 minute talk on their favourite computer thing, whatever that "thing" might be. Help keep the motto of the Ottawa PC Users' Group - *Users Helping Users* - alive.

If you can give a short presentation, please let me know at chris.taylor@opcug.ca.

PRODUCT REVIEW

Exploring Linux—Part 13 *by Alan German*

It's perhaps appropriate as we reach number thirteen (unlucky for some!) in this series of articles that we take a retrospective look at the "evil empire". Yes, our current exploration will take us back, once more, into the world of Windows and, in particular, we will consider the process of running Windows' applications in Linux.

Now, why you ask, would anyone want to run a Windows' app in Linux? Well, there can be several reasons. It may be that a suitable alternative isn't available in the operating system of our choice. I hardly ever use Microsoft Office programs any more since I find that the OpenOffice suite fills all of my needs but, as far as I know, there is no Linux equivalent for Garmin's (GPS) MapSource program that runs under Windows. This is also mostly true for avid gamers since Windows-based games are typically not available in Linux versions.

On the other hand, there may be lots of possible alternatives to a given software package, but you just want to continue running a tried and true favourite Windows' program in Linux. For example, I have tried a number of Linux-based HTML editors - such as Bluefish and Quanta Plus - but, I am so used to the inner workings of Homesite, an old Windows' program, that I would really like to be able to run this package under Windows. So, let's take a look at how we might be able to run Windows' software in Linux.

It turns out that we need to do a little Wine tasting. So, crack open a bottle of your favourite wine, pour a little into a glass, sip... No, not that kind of wine tasting (although it may well make a good accompaniment to reading, and savouring, your personal copy of Ottawa PC News!)

This "Wine" is one of those special things in Linux - a recursive acronym - standing for WINE is Not an Emulator). Well, it may not be an emulator in someone's mind but, to me, it pretty well does

the same thing. Wine is a software package that runs in Linux, and has the job of translating calls, from a Windows' program, to the Windows' Application Program Interface (API), into the equivalent system calls in POSIX, which is the basis of how Linux runs programs. Now, that's a really brief description of what Wine does. However, the important thing is that its job is to run Windows' programs in Linux. And, that is just what we need!

You will find lots of information about this software at Wine HQ (<http://www.winehq.org/>), including a very interesting historical perspective on its development, how to download and install the package for various Linux distros, and how to run Windows' applications with Wine.

A really useful resource provided by Wine HQ is AppDB, the Wine Application Database. You can search the database for a Windows' program and receive information on how likely it will be that the program will run using Wine. In particular, you will find ratings running from platinum, for applications which install and run flawlessly, through gold, silver and bronze for programs with various levels of "issues", to a garbage rating for apps that can't be installed, don't start, or start but have so many errors that they are nearly impossible to use.

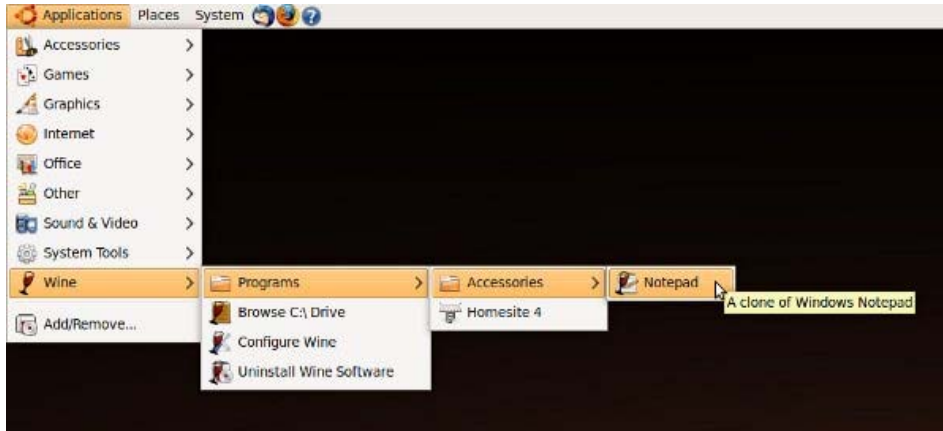


For my favourite Ubuntu distro, the installation process for Wine couldn't be simpler. A purpose-built version of the package is available for downloading and installation directly from an Ubuntu repository. So, all that's necessary is to call up the Synaptic Package Manager (System - Administration - Synaptic Package Manager), search for Wine, check the box (which will highlight both wine and wine-gecko, to include the Gecko rendering engine for displaying web pages in Wine's fake Internet Explorer), and hit the Apply button.

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Linux—Part 13 (Continued from page 4)

The end result is an addition to Ubuntu's Applications' menu. The Wine menu gives you options to run installed programs (a special version of "Notepad" that runs in Wine is installed by default), browse the "C:" drive (actually a Linux folder), configure Wine, and uninstall Wine applications.



Note that on the Wine menu there is no option to install Wine apps, so the first thing we need to do is find out about this process. Wine HQ's FAQ provides the information that we need in the topic "I have lots of applications already installed in Windows. How do I run them in Wine?" The answer is you can't! Well, at least, you can't run an already-installed Windows' app. You need to install the same application in Wine. But, the process is (usually) very simple.

The first option is just to double click on the Windows' installation file. Unfortunately, my experience is that, since these are generally EXE files, Ubuntu thinks that they are self-extracting ZIP files that it can't unpack because they are not in ZIP format. So, onto our second option - right click on the installation file and select - Open with "Wine Windows Program Loader". Now the magic happens! Incredibly (to me at least) the program installs just like it does under Windows. The same prompts and dialogue boxes appear, including the option to install the program in C:\Program Files\ (remember our "C: drive"?), and the program is installed under Wine!

If I install Homesite in this manner, the end result is new entry in the Applications - Wine - Programs menu that opens and runs my favourite Windows-based HTML editor. Now this is not without its little problems. One thing that doesn't work is Homesite's ability to display, within the program's window, the current HTML page as if it were being shown in Internet Explorer (IE). This is no doubt because the program thinks it is running under Windows, and expects to find IE installed as part of the operating system which, of course, is not the case under Linux. Furthermore, Homesite doesn't know about the fake version of IE that comes as part of Wine, and doesn't allow a specific location for the browser to be specified.

Now this is a minor inconvenience, but not a show stopper. One workaround is to open the HTML file in both Homesite and Firefox, save any changes made in Homesite, and refresh the Firefox browser window to see how the new page is going to appear. An alternative approach is to change the browser setting in Homesite's options, selecting the browser that is built into the program to display a web page that is being edited. Either way, you get to see the result in a browser - just not in IE.

The good news is that all of the other functions that I normally use in Homesite seem to work perfectly normally when running this program in Wine with Linux. So, Wine can be a valid option for running that Windows' software that you just can't live without.

Once again, this is not always the case. One Windows' game that I tried, installed without incident, rolled the opening credits, and played normally for the first couple of minutes. Then I noticed that the rain didn't display in one of the scenes. This must have unnerved the main character who insisted that the drizzle was going to get worse, but soon afterwards became tongue-tied and kept repeating lines of dialogue in an endless loop! At the same point, the mouse cursor disappeared and I lost the ability to control any further aspect of the game. Big red switch time!

But, this negative experience gave me the opportunity to try a couple of the other items on Wine's menu. Firstly, I selected "Uninstall Wine Software" and was presented with a list of installed applications. Click on my game, click Uninstall, and - bingo - the program was more-or-less uninstalled automatically. One little glitch. The uninstaller couldn't deal with a directory of saved games that had been created.

No problem. Select "Browse C:\ Drive" on the Wine menu and find that the "C" drive is really a hidden directory (/home/toaster/.wine/dosdevices/c:) in the Linux file system. Navigate to the game program directory (under Program Files on the Linux "C" drive), right click on the folder, and "Move to Trash". Uninstallation is now complete!

Another potential glitch is that uninstalling a program may not remove the listing from Wine's Programs' menu. This is easily (but not intuitively) fixed using System - Preferences - Main Menu - Wine - Programs, right-clicking on the redundant program entry, and selecting Delete.

Our final option on the Wine menu is labeled "Configure Wine". This has multiple tabs and settings for applications, libraries, graphics, desktop integration, drives, and audio. Quite complex - but, the good news is that Wine seems to work just fine without tinkering with any of this stuff.

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OTTAWA PC NEWS

Ottawa PC News is the newsletter of the Ottawa PC Users' Group (OPCUG), and is published monthly except in July and August. The opinions expressed in this newsletter may not necessarily represent the views of the club or its members.

Member participation is encouraged. If you would like to contribute an article to Ottawa PC News, please submit it to the newsletter editor (contact info below). Deadline for submissions is three Sundays before the next General Meeting.

Group Meetings

OPCUG meets on the second Wednesday in the month, except July and August, at the Canada Museum of Science and Technology, 1867 St. Laurent Blvd, Ottawa. Meetings are 7:30–9:00 p.m. and Special Interest Groups go until 10 p.m.

Fees: OPCUG membership: \$25 per year

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Ubuntu (Continued from page 1)

So, even though my initial foray into the book's goodies failed to provide an increase in boot speed, perhaps one (or more) of the other 314 tips will pay dividends.

Bottom Line

Ubuntu Kung Fu - Tips, Tricks, Hints and Hacks (US \$43.75)

Keir Thomas

The Pragmatic Programmers, 2008

ISBN-10: 1-934356-22-0

<http://www.pragprog.com/titles/ktuk/ubuntu-kung-fu>



Ubuntu Kung Fu
Tips, Tricks, Hints,
and Hacks



Linux—Part 13 (Continued from page 5)

So, our foray into the world of Wine appreciation shows mixed results. Some Windows' programs run just fine; some do not. This parallels the experience of others as exemplified by the reviews and rankings in AppDB for a wide variety of software packages. But, take heart. Whether a specific program runs or not seems to be a function of the versions of the program, of Wine and of the Linux distro. So, as times goes on, and Wine matures (as good wine should), that favourite Windows' program may yet run perfectly in Linux!

Bottom Line

Wine Version 1.0.1 (Open source)

<http://www.winehq.org>

