PRODUCT REVIEW

Exploring Linux—Part 14 *by Alan German*

Ubuntu Version 9.10 – Karmic Koala – was released at the end of October, 2009 and in this article we will take a look at some of its features.

When installing the system, a mini-slide show now gives an overview of the software and some of its applications. However, on my system, the show ran out of slides before the installation was complete. But, as always, the installation process ran very smoothly. The disk partitioning options have changed (there is no longer any guided partitioning), but it was very easy to establish the root and swap partitions in manual-partitioning mode.

Another new feature, the use of GNU GRUB version 1.97~Beta 4, became apparent when booting the newly-installed operating system. The menu uses a different font than that used previously, but the menu itself functions exactly as before.

However, there was no missing the new logon screen. No longer is there just a simple box asking for your userid. The screen now sports a Windows-like icon and user identity, requiring just a click of the mouse, or a press on the Enter key, to bring up the next screen requesting your password.

Once into the system proper, the first thing that struck me was that the default wallpaper hasn't changed much. In my view, it's now a bland yellow, instead of being a bland orange. The good news is that if you go to change

the wallpaper there are now a bunch of very colourful images to choose from. Or, if you prefer something a little more subdued, you can download your own wallpaper image off the Internet.

Some old friends are back with us, notably OpenOffice 3.1 and The Gimp, Version 2.6. A new mini-icon of an envelope, on the right side of the task bar, when clicked, offers access to Evolution as the default E-mail client, and a new instant messenger program, Empathy (if anyone cares).

The games menu is organized a little differently, with a new sub-folder offering a group of programs in a "logic" category. For avid gamers, there is one less game to choose from, as Freecell seems to have been dropped from the list. The old add/remove programs menu item is now the Ubuntu Software Centre, sporting a slightly more colourful interface, but not offering to install Freecell. However, if you look carefully at AisleRiot Solitaire in the games menu, you will find that, within this program, you can navigate to Game – Select Game – Freecell, and then you

can still play your favourite card game.

Ubuntu One is a new addition to the Internet menu that will provide you with a little cloud computing power. In particular, you can obtain 2 GB of on-line storage space at no charge by simply registering with Ubuntu One. Even more remote disk space is available – but at a cost!

Some of the other changes are "under the hood" and not particularly evident. For example, you may notice, when installing 9.10, that the default file system is now ext4 rather than ext3. The differences seem to be very technical, with ext4 basically being touted as new and improved.

Another change I read about was an emphasis on shorter boot times. I must say that I don't notice much difference in this department. On my system, boot time is almost identical between

Inside this issue:

Next Meeting: WEDNESDAY, February 10th, 2010

February Raffle

Thanks to the generosity of EASEUS, we have a pair of utility programs to deal with partitioning your hard drives.

EASEUS Partition Master Professional Edition allows you to resize and move partitions without losing your data. You can convert FAT partitions to NTFS and even extend system partitions without a reboot.

EASEUS Partition Table Doctor allows you to recover partitions which have been deleted, damaged or corrupted on hard drive (both internal and external), backup/restore, repair partitions, MBR, boot sectors, etc.

Both programs are bundled as a single prize.

As always, tickets are $1 for one, $2 for three or $5 for ten.

Coming Up…

February 10th, 2010

The evening will start with the Annual General Meeting after which the following topic will be presented:

Hack and Defend; a re-awakening?

Have you ever wondered how hackers gain access to your computer? Are you interested in learning about some of the most threatening vulnerabilities online? Did you know that 90% of the application attacks use input fields? Do you want to learn how to protect yourself?
All of these questions and more...

Join **Bruce Cowper** from Microsoft Canada for Hack and Defend to get a hands-on demonstration of the most current hacking methods and practical ways to protect yourself against them.

2010 CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and Venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Wednesday, February 10th	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, February 10th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
Linux / Open Source SIG	Wednesday, February 10th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
Beer BOF (Wing SIG East)	Wednesday, February 10th	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).		

YEAR IN REVIEW

I t has been a pleasure and a privilege to serve as the President of the OPCUG for another year. I really do have a lot of fun with the OPCUG and I hope you do too.

This year saw a great line-up of speakers, thanks to the enthusiasm of Don Chiasson, as Program Chair for most of the year. We kicked things of in January with a "member's favourites" night which is always a big hit. We ended in December with Harley Bloom and his 11th annual Christmas Gift Show. Harley deserves a huge vote of thanks for the support he shows the Group – year after year.

In between these two evenings, we had Rick Claus from Microsoft come out no less than three times. He showed us the magic of Photosynth, the power of Windows 7 and the fun in the xBox 360. We had Liz Paveck from Natural Resources Canada show us what tools are available to help those with disabilities use computers. Steve Tortolo showed us the latest whiz things in home auto-mation. Roger Wambolt from Corel put on a great show of what their video editing tools can do. And I gave a couple of presenta-tions – on how computers communicate over the Internet and some tips on how to buy a digital camera.

Alan German and I continued giving presentations at the Ottawa Public Library. This is a win-win situation, with the OPL gaining access to some interesting presentations and the OPCUG gaining greater exposure.

Our Pizza-que was a big hit again in June. We will be sure to have it again this year.

The early fall saw Bell unceremoniously kill off the legacy ADSL we had enjoyed for over 11 years. But we had contingency plans in place and The PUB was quickly moved to an alternate site and service returned in less than 24 hours. Alas - no amount of pleading would return the service. Due to complications that stemmed from the legacy ADSL and what Bell had done with my lines to support that, it was a challenge to switch to the standard ADSL service now available. Eventually service was obtained through the National Capital Freenet, and The PUB moved home. I now know more about ADSL than I ever wanted to know.

Don Chiasson has experienced some health issues and had to step down from the Board as well as Leader for the Linux/Open Source SIG. I want to extend my thanks to Don for the huge contributions he made to the smooth running of the Group. Get well, Don! We miss you at meetings.

Late in the year Andrew MacLeod was appointed to the Board to fill the vacant spot. You all should know Andrew from his re-views of the Group finances the last few years.

I would like to extend a special thanks to Alan German. Not only did he take good care of the finances this year (as in previous years!), but he also contributed to the running of the Linux/Open Source SIG. And as if that wasn't enough, he wrote an incredible 20 articles for the newsletter. How about if you think of giving Alan a break and write something for the newsletter.

And a big thanks to the others who make sure the OPCUG is there for you. Brigitte continued to pull double-duty as Newsletter Editor and Webmaster. Mark cheerfully and tirelessly looked after memberships. Gail, as Secretary, accepted our jokes over her (very occasional) typos with her usual good humour. Morris ensured word about our meetings got out to the public. Bob Walker made sure the meeting facilities were available and the AV equipment ready for use. Bob Gowan began the year as Program Chair, but later handed those reins over to Don. Wayne kept us out of trouble with the Privacy Commissioner. Jocelyn took care of the electronic distribution of the newsletter. Bert Schopf kindly made his office available for Board meetings. The next time you see these people, give them a big thanks. The OPCUG is what it is because of them!

Chris Taylor
President, OPCUG

Treasurer's Report 2009

Ottawa PC Users' Group, Inc.
3 Thatcher Street
Ottawa, ON K2G 1S6
Web Site: http://opcug.ca

Balance Sheet, 2009

Assets

Current Assets

1000	Cash Account (TDCT)	1,341.18
1100	Investment Account (ING)	20,346.54
1200	Membership float	40.00

Total Assets   **21,727.72**

Equity

Owner Equity

OPCUG, Capital December 31, 2008	21,024.92
Total revenue	4,575.48
Total expenses	3,872.68
Net income	**702.80**
OPCUG, Capital December 31, 2009	21,727.72
Total Equity	**21,727.72**

Treasurer's Report 2009

Ottawa PC Users' Group, Inc.
3 Thatcher Street
Ottawa, ON K2G 1S6
Web Site: http://opcug.ca

Income Statement, 2009

Revenue		2009 ($)	2008 ($)
2100	Bank Interest (ING)	307.53	615.40
2200	Membership Income	2,925.00	2,975.00
2300	Raffle Income	1,342.95	979.00
2400	Merchandise Income	0.00	90.00
2500	Workshop Income	0.00	0.00
2900	Miscellaneous Income	0.00	0.00
	Total revenue	**4,575.48**	**4,659.40**

Expenses			
3100	PUB II Expense	1,246.72	1,473.89
3200	Newsletter Expense	1,923.09	2,029.50
3300	Office Supplies Expense	34.30	194.76
3400	Bank Charges	59.40	60.88
3500	Barbecue Expense	409.17	418.07
3600	Facility Rental	200.00	200.00
3700	Workshop Expense	0.00	0.00
3800	Merchandise Expense	0.00	654.72
3900	Miscellaneous Expense	0.00	72.32
	Total operating expenses	**3,872.68**	**5,104.14**
	Net income	702.80	-444.74

Linux—Part 14 *(Continued from page 1)*

Version 9.04 and the current 9.10, while shut-down is a little quicker. (See the timing test results in the following table.) The good news is that Ubuntu still loads considerably faster than Vista. But, for really fast boot-up, it looks like I will have to wait for the 10.04 release (Lucid Lynx) where one of the stated goals is a 10-second boot time.

	Start-up	Shut-down
Ubuntu 9.04	45 s	12 s
Ubuntu 9.10	46 s	7 s
Windows Vista	1 min 32 s	40 s

A fix for the ear-splitting beep that accompanied a system restart or shut-down in the last two versions of Ubuntu has finally been implemented, and my system now shuts down mercifully quietly. However, now there is a new annoyance – actually, a reported bug in Karmic Koala – in the way that Ubuntu requires authorization to access non-Linux disks.

My practice is to use an NTFS partition for all my data files so that I can access the very same files in both Linux and Vista on a dual-boot system. Previous versions of Ubuntu also required me to authorize access to the non-Linux drive; however, a check box enabled me to indicate that this access was to be authorized permanently. This check box has disappeared and it is now necessary to provide authorization for Linux to access my NTFS data disk each time I logon.

Now, this was going to have to change and – given the time taken to remove the shutdown beep – without waiting for a bug fix! Thinking that I would have to modify the file system table (/etc/fstab), I commenced a Google search for information on how to do this, but then I found an easier solution. On the Swiss Ubuntu User Forum (http://swiss.ubuntuforums.org/ showthread.php?t=1307383), the fix looks quite complex (lots of lines of code), but it really only involves editing one line of a file that sets disk policies, using the following Terminal command:

gksudo gedit /usr/share/polkit-1/actions/ org.freedesktop.devicekit.disks.policy

In the section headed <action id="org.freedesktop.devicekit.disks.filesystem-mount-system-internal">, the line <allow_active>**auth_admin_keep**</allow_active> needs to be replaced with <allow_active>**yes**</allow_active> where the bold-faced text indicates the change. Once I saved the edited file, my data disk would be instantly mounted, without the need for any password. Cool fix!

There don't seem to be any earth-shattering changes in the new release of Ubuntu, but the update process is relatively painless so, if you wish to stay on the leading edge of the curve, give Karmic Koala a try.

Bottom Line

Ubuntu 9.10, Karmic Koala
(Open-source)
Canonical Ltd.
http://www.ubuntu.com/

Wing SIG Stays East

For many years, some members got together informally after the general meeting at the Chances "R" restaurant. The facetious name of this Special Interest Group originated from the great volumes of chicken wings that always seemed to be consumed there.

A few years back, some members decided that travelling all the way to the west end (College Square at Baseline and Woodroffe) didn't make sense for those living in the East end of the city. So they decided to start a second informal post-meeting SIG at Liam Maguire's on St. Laurent Blvd, just south of Innes Rd.

Not too long ago, Chances "R" started closing at 10:00, making it impossible to attend for those who went out to the regular SIG meetings and even making for a very short time for those who went right after the main meeting.

The end result is that there is only one remaining Wing SIG - at Liam Maguire's. Please keep in mind that this is not an official OPCUG event, and the OPCUG accepts no responsibility for what happens there. Some months may see lots of people there. Other months there may be few. But we usually have a good time and Liam seems to always have room for more.

All flights to Wing SIG West (a.k.a. PIG SIG) canceled

OPCUG Free Software Guide—Part 12 *Compiled by Alan German*

This guide features an annotated list of free computer programs. The software mentioned has not been reviewed (except where noted) nor have any tests necessarily been conducted. Consequently, no guarantees are provided that the individual programs will perform as described. Rather the list of available software is provided for the information of our members who may find one or more of the programs useful. If you try one of the listed items, you are encouraged to share your experience, good or bad, by providing a brief review of the program for a future issue of the newsletter.

Fences

Fences, from Stardock, will allow you to draw labelled, shaded areas on your desktop, which become movable and resizable containers for your desktop icons. These groups can help bring organization and consistency to your computer's desktop, and help you appreciate the wallpaper that you have hiding behind all that clutter.

Current Release: Version 1.0
Web Site: http://www.stardock.com/products/fences/

Comodo EasyVPN

The program allows multiple computers to be grouped into a secure, peer-to-peer network over the Internet. It requires no expert configuration, is fast and easy to set up, and uses 128 bit encryption. Access your PC securely over the web from anywhere in the world, or initiate a "remote desktop" to troubleshoot someone else's computer. Comodo EasyVPN is available in 32 bit and 64 bit versions.

Web Site: http://easy-vpn.comodo.com/

Duplicate Music Files Finder

This program uses advanced search techniques to detect duplicate music files and delete them. Check the duplicate file names and press the right mouse button. You can also play the selected files in your favourite media player to see if they really are duplicates.

Current Release: Version 1.6
Web Site: http://www.lcibrossolutions.com/dmff

Kludgets

Klumsy, Lame, Ugly, Dumb, but Good Enough - Kludgets by another name! This program will run Mac OS X widgets, arguably the prettiest in the industry, on your Windows' desktop.

Current Release: Version 0.9.7
Web Site: http://kludgets.com/

RIOT (Radical Image Optimization Tool)

Saving images with the best compression ratio and quality for posting on the web, or sending by E-mail, is a difficult task if you don't have the right tools. RIOT will let you save and optimize jpg, gif and png files. The program can be set to work in dual view with an automatic preview of the optimized image.

Current Release: Version 0.3.4
Web Site: http://luci.criosweb.ro/riot/

Registry Repair

Problems with the Windows registry are a common cause of crashes and error messages. This cleaner tool, from Glarysoft, allows you to fix your registry and optimize your PC's performance. With a few easy steps, you are able to find problems caused by invalid entries, references, and links in the Windows registry, and obtain a list of the errors found. You can then choose to selectively repair each item or automatically repair them all.

Current Release: Version 3.2.0.828
Web Site: http://www.glarysoft.com/rr.html

iTunes Sync

In just a few easy steps iTunes Sync will let you synchronize an iTunes playlist with any MP3 player that shows up as a drive letter in Windows. You can use standard playlists or dynamically-updating smart playlists to synchronize your MP3 Player.

Current Release: Version 1.5.1
Web Site: http://www.binaryfortress.com/itunes-sync/

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 (SIGs) go until 10 p.m.

OPCUG Membership Fees:	$25 per year	
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Web address:	**http://opcug.ca**	
Bulletin board — The PUB (BBS)	**http://opcug.ca/default.htm**	

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Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

Bring your old computer books, software, hardware, and paraphernalia you want to GIVE AWAY to the General Meetings, and leave them at the table near the auditorium's entrance. Please limit magazines to publication dates of less than two years old.

You may TAKE AWAY any items of use to you.

Any items left over at the end of the meeting have to be taken back home by those who brought them in.