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PC NEWS

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PRODUCT REVIEW

Exploring Linux – Part 2 *by Alan German*

In the Part 1 of this article we took a look at using a couple of versions of a Linux-Live CD. This proved to be so easy that now we are fearless Linux explorers and are ready to take on the task of installing a full version of Linux onto our computer's hard drive. We are ready for this, aren't we?

Actually, this is a big step, and a little preparation wouldn't go amiss. We will be installing Linux from the second of the two Ubuntu CD's but, before we dive into the process, we will take some time out to do a little research.

What we need is a text book. Some time ago, from OPCUG's recycling table, I had rescued a boxed set of "The Complete Red Hat Linux Operating System 5.2". I actually did perform an installation of this software, struggling with things like Disk Druid to format a bunch of Linux partitions. Fortunately, modern installation routines seem to automate this process so we (probably) won't encounter any such difficulties. The good news is that Red Hat's box contained an installation manual that explains quite a bit about drive names, disk partitions – both required and desirable - and dual boot systems. However, since you are unlikely to possess (or even obtain) this book, an alternate source of Linux information might be a good idea.

I would suggest borrowing a copy of "Linux for Dummies" from the local library. This suggestion has a dual purpose. Firstly, the text is a good

introduction to Linux, the process of installing the operating system, and how to use various applications. Secondly, the book includes a bootable DVD containing Fedora Core 1 (the free version of the Red Hat Linux distro.)

Assuming that you want to set up a dual-boot, Windows/Linux system (rather than overwriting your Windows' partition with Linux), the sage advice from the text is that you should have a free partition on the main drive of around 3 GB. Linux will run in much smaller space, but a disk of this size gives lots of expansion capability. I happened to have a copy of Partition Magic, so I could easily establish such a free partition. I opted for a 4 GB partition, just to be sure that I had lots of available space. Partition Magic also includes Boot Magic, a dual-boot utility, so I also set this up to be ready, as I initially thought, to handle booting to either the existing Windows' partition or the Linux partition once this was established. It turns out that the Linux installer provides its own dual-boot manager, called GRUB, so my preparation efforts initially seemed futile. But, later – much later - when everything went wrong, Boot Magic came to the rescue!

At this point, let me say that I am no expert on Linux installations, or on dual boot systems, or on booting systems period! Furthermore, please note that, in playing around with various installations of Linux, I managed to

overwrite the master boot record on my main hard drive so that it would only boot into Linux. Then, I managed to corrupt the Linux boot loader so my machine wouldn't boot into anything! So, you follow my lead at your peril!

You should ensure that you have a usable rescue disk!

One thing I would note is that, before you do anything, you should ensure that you have a rescue disk from which you can boot your machine should anything untoward transpire. And, don't just assume that the rescue disk will work when things go south. Put the disk in the drive and boot from it! If it works when you don't really need it, chances are it will save your hide when you do.

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Next Meeting: **Annual BBQ**, WEDNESDAY, June 14th, 2006



June Raffle

At the June meeting, thanks to the generosity of Microsoft Canada, we have a copy off Microsoft Office 2003 for the raffle. This most popular of office suites will help you get through your tasks swiftly and smoothly.

Visit <http://www.microsoft.com/office/editions/prodinfo/default.mspc>

Tickets for the raffle are \$1 for one, \$2 for three, or \$5 for ten.

Coming Up...

June 14, 2006

Annual BBQ (6-7 pm). Free for OPCUG members and their guest(s). Order your food today! Contact Brigitte at brigitte.lord@opcug.ca (subject: BBQ). Indicate how many hamburgers and/or hotdogs you (and your guests) want ([see announcement next page](#)).

7:30 pm: **Speaker:** Rick Claus **Topic:** Collaboration and information sharing with Microsoft Office 2007 (product preview: <http://www.microsoft.com/office/preview/default.mspc>)

The applications most used by IT professionals and end users alike are typically components of the Office suite - Outlook, Word, Excel and PowerPoint. Microsoft Office 2007 has introduced many enhancements that directly address the everyday user experience and promote collaboration and information sharing at all levels. This session provides a technical overview the new features of Microsoft Office 2007, SharePoint, and Exchange 2007 designed to make your life more productive.

9:00 pm: SIGs will meet after the general meeting.

CALENDAR

Meetings	Date	Time and Venue
OPCUG General Meeting	Wednesday, June 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, June 14 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
IT-Pro SIG	Wednesday, June 14 th	Immediately following the OPCUG General Meeting.
PIG SIG (Wing SIG West)	Wednesday, June 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, June 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).

CLUB LIFE

The OPCUG annual BBQ is June 14, 2006. It's FREE!

June is our wrap-up meeting before we break for the summer. Continuing with tradition, we will be having our 5th annual barbeque. It will take place under the big tent near the main doors to the museum. There will be cold drinks, hamburgers, hot dogs and dessert. Make sure you let Brigitte know at brigitte.lord@opcug.ca (subject: BBQ) how many people will be in your party and how many hamburgers and/or hotdogs you will need. If you can help out at the BBQ (bringing a grill or flipping burs and dogs) please let her know. Those providing a grill (and fuel) for the occasion can take home a share of the leftover food.

The barbeque will start at 6:00 and run until about 7:00. After that we will head into the museum for our regular meeting, which will start at 7:30.

See you there!



Contest for Best Newsletter Article - Vote Today!

The contest winner will get a Microsoft *Notebook Optical Mouse* and Microsoft's *Age of Empires III*. The winner will be announced at the June 14th general meeting and be presented with the prize.

Final list of 2005/2006 contestants and articles:

Doug Poulter: *Firefox Extensions*, October 2005
 Doug Poulter: *FoxReader vs. Adobe Reader*, October 2005
 Don Chiasson: *Mind Hacks*, November 2005
 Lionel Wagner: *Are you ready for Linux? Linux is ready for you*, December 2005
 Dunc Petrie: *Beyond Making MP3's*, December 2005
 Dunc Petrie: *To (US)B or not to (US)B, That is the Question*, Part 1:January 2006, Part 2:February 2006
 Gary Byron: *Internet Annoyances*, April 2006
 Sarah Gelfand: *Windows XP Personal Trainer*, May 2006

Find links to all the articles at <http://opcug.ca/public/Articles/contest2005.htm>.

Please show your support and vote. **Voting will remain open until June 12th, 11:00PM.** The winner will be announced at the June 14th general meeting and be presented with the prize.

Voting Page: <http://opcug.ca/ques?BestArticle>.

See the April 2006 newsletter or visit <http://opcug.ca/public/Articles/contest2005.htm> on how to register and vote.

SIG TALK

At the Beginners' SIG by Chris Taylor

Recently, on The PUB, Alan German mentioned that his 4GB boot partition (where Windows is installed) was down to 140MB free space. While trying to clean up things, he came across a bunch of files in *C:\Documents and Settings\Administrator\Local Settings\Temp* and was wondering if it was safe to delete them.

I presented some options in a reply and, at the May Beginners' SIG, we discussed the general issue of cleaning up hard drives to make more space for new stuff. What follows here is my original reply to Alan on The PUB (edited for coherence) with some expansion that came from the Beginners' SIG discussion.

Note that the instructions below apply to Windows 2000 and Windows XP. Most will also work with earlier versions of Windows, but to try to be all-encompassing would make for too long an article. We can discuss this more at future Beginners' SIG meetings.

Emptying the temp folder

There are really only two categories of files that I think you will find in your *temp* folder that you can't or don't want to remove. The first is files currently being used by some programs. Generally you can't remove them because they are locked for exclusive use. But if you can delete them, sometimes the program using them will crash. Not a good thing. The other is *recovery* files created by some applications. In the event of a crash, the application can use the information in these files to recover after you restart.

Unfortunately, many programs will create files in the *temp* folder and never remove them. They just sit there, using up valuable disk real estate.

To find where your *temp* folder is, click on *Start | Run* and type in *cmd*. Windows 9x users should type in *command*.

This will open a console window. Type *set* and hit enter. It will report the contents of all *environment variables* on your computer. Look for the variable *temp*. It will probably be set to something like

```
C:\Docume~1\CTaylor\Locals~1\Temp
```

To find this folder, right-click *My Computer* on the desktop and choose *Explore* from the pop-up menu. Make sure Windows is configured to show hidden files. Click on *Tools | Folder Options* and click the *View* tab. Make sure the option *Show hidden files and folders* is selected and click *OK*.

Browse using the left pane in Explorer to find your *Temp* folder as reported by the *temp* environment variable. If part of the location shows *~1*, look for a folder that begins with the part of the name before the *~1*. The long name for the above example is *c:\Documents and Settings\CTaylor\Local Settings\Temp*.

Once you get to that location, right-click on the *temp* folder and choose *Properties* from the pop-up menu. Windows will report the amount of disk space being used by temporary files and folders. If that number amounts to something significant like over 10 or 20 MB, it may be worth cleaning it out.

My general recommendation is to reboot to ensure all open files are closed. Then delete anything in the *temp* folder with a date stamp older than the reboot. I have never had a problem doing this.

If you have multiple directories under *Documents and Settings*, each corresponds to a local user profile. Each may have junk in their *local settings\temp* folder. If nobody is currently logged in under these additional account names, it is safe to delete the contents of each *local settings\temp* folder.

Run the Disk Cleanup Wizard

Click on *Start | Programs | Accessories | System Tools | Disk Cleanup*. Windows will present a wizard that will step you

through the process of cleaning up a drive. You will be presented with a number of optional elements that can be cleaned up. There is a brief description for each element to help you decide if you want to clean them up or not.

Eliminate unneeded accounts

If you have extra user accounts on the computer that you don't need, you can save space by eliminating those accounts and their associated profiles, which can consume considerable disk space. To delete user accounts, right-click on *My Computer*, choose *Manage* from the pop-up menu, and then drill down to *Users* under *Local Users and Groups*. Unless you really know what you are doing, leave any account you didn't create, as some may be required by special processes. But you can delete any accounts you created that are no longer needed.

Right-click on *My Computer* and choose *Properties*. Then click the *User Profiles* tab. In some cases, *User Profiles* is found on the *Advanced* tab. You can see the size of different profiles that are there and you can delete any profiles not required.

Remove backup files for service packs and patches

If you have installed a service pack and have no intention of uninstalling the service pack, you can remove the folder *\$NtServicePackUninstall\$* which is under the Windows folder. That is generally good for over 150MB alone. After deleting the folder, if you want to clean up Control Panel's *Add/Remove Programs* list, you can follow Microsoft's directions at <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/290402/> or you can just go to *Add/Remove Programs* and try to uninstall the service pack. You will get an error indicating the uninstall folder is not available and

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Beginners' SIG *(Continued from previous page)*

Windows will offer to remove the line from the *Add/Remove* list.

You can do likewise with other Windows patches listed in *Add/Remove Programs*. Each has their own hidden folder under the Windows folder. The folder is named \$NtUninstall followed by the Microsoft Knowledge Base article of the patch. The corresponding entries in *Add/Remove Programs* include the KB article number.

On my Windows 2000 computer, backup files for service packs and patches are taking up 530MB. On my XP machine, they are taking an astounding 847MB.

Uninstall programs you don't need

Use *Add/Remove Programs* to uninstall any programs you don't need. If you have more than one drive or partition on your computer, you could also consider uninstalling programs installed in the default location (which is the partition where Windows is installed, A.K.A the *boot* partition) and re-installing them to a different drive or partition with more room.

Consider removing Windows components you never use. In *Add/Remove Programs*, click *Add/Remove Windows Components* and you can removed things you never use.

You can also remove components of other programs you have installed but never use. Any entry in *Add/Remove Programs* that includes a *Change* button is a candidate. Click the *Change* button and see what your options are.

Slim down the browser cache

Empty your browser cache and set it a maximum of 10MB if you are on a high-speed Internet connection or a maximum of 50MB if on dial-up. Some versions of Windows defaulted Internet Explorer's cache to 10% of the drive, which is way too large. The cache settings in Internet Explorer are found at *Tools | Internet Options | General* tab | *Temporary Internet files* section. In Firefox – *Tools | Options | Privacy* section | *Cache* tab.

Utility programs to the rescue

There are utility programs designed to help you route out bloat. If you Google for something like *free disk cleanup*, you will find tons of them.

Reduce bloated mail files

Mail programs are notorious for bloat. As you delete emails, and even remove them from your *Deleted Items* folder, they still exist within the mail files. Look for an option in your mail program to compress your mail files. In Outlook Express, click *File | Folder | Compact All Folders*. In Thunderbird, click *File | Compact Folders*.

Slim down the recycle bin

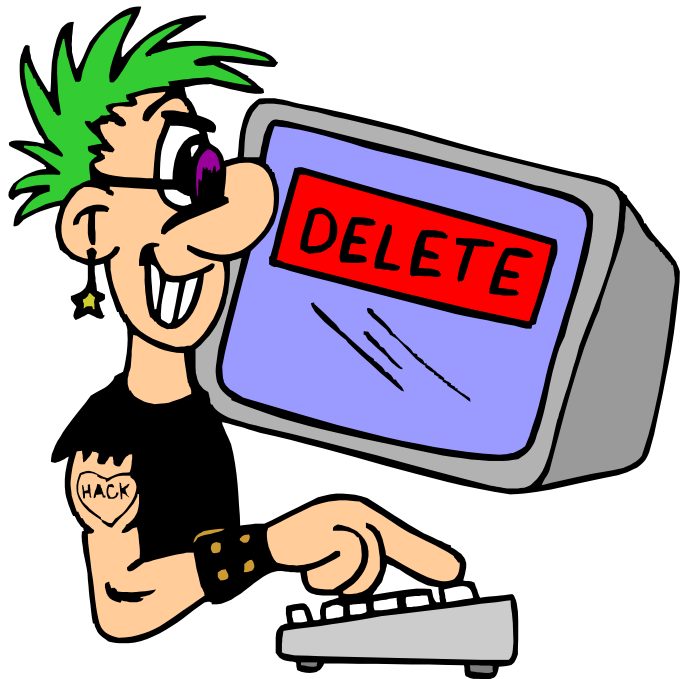
If you don't need any of the files in the recycle bin, right-click it and choose *Empty Recycle Bin*. Consider setting the Recycle Bin so it only uses 1% of the drive. Right-click the *Recycle Bin* and choose *Properties*. Set the slider to whatever you want for the maximum amount of space the recycle bin should use.

Search for large files

You can search for large files using up disk space. Click on *Start | Search*. Choose *All files and folders* and then in the *What size is it* section choose specify size and set it to *at least* and enter in KB a reasonably large number, such as 10,000. Then click on *Search*.

Lots of large files will show up. You need to be careful about what large files you delete. Many are needed by the operating system and applications. But you may recognize some as being safe to delete.

Hopefully, these tips will help you recover lots of disk space to make room for new programs, digital pictures, and more.



Linux - Part 2 *(Continued from page 1)*

My problem actually occurred on my very first attempt at installing Linux using the Red Hat Linux Version 5.2 distro. obtained from the club's recycling table. I was a little too anxious to follow the "helpful" default responses to the screen prompts, and agreed to have the Linux boot loader installed in the master boot record, instead of selecting a dual-boot option. This, of course, completely prevented my booting into the Windows' partition. My fix for this was to boot from a Windows 95 startup disk and run Boot Magic's configuration utility to re-enable Boot Magic to load on startup and hence return the option of starting Windows. There might well have been a more elegant solution to the problem but the moral is that, like all boy scouts, you should be prepared, with rescue disks in hand.

Anyway, I'm sure that you already have a number of rescue disks that have been thoroughly tested, and multiple backups of your entire system from which you have recovered both the operating system and all your data. Venturing into the great unknown holds no perils for you, so here we go...

The process of installing Linux started simply enough. I put the Ubuntu install CD into the tray and booted the machine. The initial screen provided an F1 help key that lead to a menu with a series of function keys that, in turn, gave information on the different ways that the installation can proceed. The simple-minded approach (which, as noted above, I invariably take) was to press the Enter key and let things rip. As with the Linux-Live CD that we used previously, the first few prompts in the installation routine set the language, country, and keyboard to which I responded English, Canada, and American-English. This is followed by a series of messages indicating that the installation routine is detecting hardware components and so forth.

The first hurdle that you will probably encounter is a message to the effect that the network configuration failed. Pressing the Continue button took me

to the next screen that allowed me to select "Do not configure the network at this time". Since I wasn't sure what network we were talking about, this seemed like a safe bet. Now, I had to select a host name for my Linux system – the default "ubuntu" seemed as good as any.

Erase entire disk – IDE1 master (hda) - I don't think so!!!

Now things got interesting. The next prompt asked me to partition disks – with the default being - "Erase entire disk – IDE1 master (hda)". I don't think so!!! At this point you have to recall the warning on the inside cover of the two-CD envelope that "...the default installation will erase all existing software and data..." But, also recall that there is an expert installation mode that will avoid this. The "expert" mode is to choose another option from the menu – "Use the largest continuous free space". Now, the reason for creating that empty 3 (or 4) GB partition becomes apparent. A table was now displayed showing that the installation routine was going to set up a main Linux (ext 3) partition and a Linux swap partition. Since these looked OK to me (what do I know?), I was reasonably happy to say yes to the final "Write changes to disk" query.

Completing the remaining installation prompts was a piece of cake. I set the time to Eastern, gave my full name, established a username and an associated password (for logging onto Linux later). Next, the

GRUB boot loader detected I had Windows 2000 on another disk partition and asked if I wished to install GRUB as the master boot record. Simple-minded me took the default option of Yes, and the installer said it was now time to reboot.

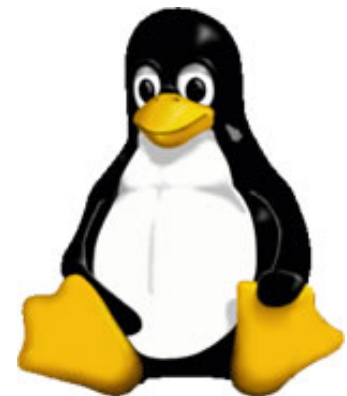
Having rebooted the machine, GRUB indeed loaded and provided a boot menu that included options to load the Ubuntu kernel (default), a recovery

mode, a memory test and, finally, Windows 2000. And, yes, the first thing I did was to check that Windows would still load! This was successful and so, second time through GRUB, I selected Ubuntu kernel and sat back to watch Linux in action.

Actually booting into Linux took forever – with lots of stuff – such as Firefox, various fonts, a game control centre, and OpenOffice being set up. One of the messages indicated that 57,707 files and directories had been processed so it's no wonder that it took a while! The good news is that this is an initial set up process. Booting into Linux a second time proved to be much faster.

No username - no password - no entry!

I have heard it said that Linux is a much more secure operating system than Windows. This seems to be the case right off the bat since the first order of business is to enter the username and password (that were set up during the installation process) in order to gain access to the Linux desktop. Yes, I know that you can do this in Windows but, be honest, have you ever used this facility? In Linux, there is no choice - no username, no password - no entry! Fortunately, I had written my username and password down (on a very secure piece of paper) and so was able to logon to my brand new Linux system without difficulty.



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Linux - Part 2

(Continued from previous page)

If you tried the Ubuntu-Live CD described in Part 1, you will know exactly what my Linux desktop looked like, and will have a feel for the range of applications that were instantly available. The major difference is now that I have a real (4 GB) hard disk to work with instead of being limited to temporary space, or having to resort to removable media such as floppies or USB keys. Now, all I have to do is figure out how the Linux file system really works. Oh yes, and you remember that little problem with a network configuration. I'm not sure if this means I can't use a local area network (that I don't have), or if it means I won't be able to access the Internet. Time, and a lot more exploring Linux, will tell!

In the interim, you may also recall that "*Linux for Dummies*" included a DVD-ROM with Fedora Core 1, a free Linux distro from Red Hat. It seems a pity to waste the opportunity to give this version of Linux a whirl. But, this will have to wait for Part 3...

Bottom Line

Ubuntu – Linux for human beings (Open-source software)

Version 5.04 for Intel x86 <http://www.ubuntu.com>

To request free Ubuntu CD's, visit <https://shipit.ubuntu.com/>

Current Version: Ubuntu 5.10

Linux for Dummies

Dee-Ann LeBlanc

5th Edition, Wiley, 2004

ISBN 0-7645-4310-5

(Ottawa Public Library Call No. 005.546 L445)



“101 Fabulous Freebies”

(from the May 2006 issue of PC World magazine)

You may want to check out the May 2006 issue of PC World magazine to see this long list of freebies. The following is just a glimpse at what is available.

Utilities and System tools

Foxit Reader ([OPCUG review](#))
PDF Creator
CC Cleaner

Online Search and Reference Services

Google Desktop
Copernic Desktop Search
WordWeb (dictionary and thesaurus for any application)

Roam Free: Collaboration and Remote-Access Tools

LogMeIn
WriteBoard
FreeConference.com

Business and productivity tools

OpenOffice.org ([OPCUG review](#))
Pegasus Mail
Thunderbird

Communications tools and services

eFax Messenger
QNext
SightSpeed

Calendars and organizers

Yahoo Calendar
Ta-Da List
Palm Desktop (for those who don't have a PDA)

File sharing and storage services

FolderSync
BeInSync
FolderShare

Security/antispam tools, system-stabilizing utilities

Spybot Search & Destroy
Lavasoft Ad-Aware SE Personal
Microsoft Windows Defender
ZoneAlarm

Entertainment software and services

Irfanview
The GIMP (GNU Image Manipulation)
Google Earth

Web-based e-mail

Gmail
Yahoo Mail

Blogging tools

Blogger
WordPress.com
LiveJournal

RSS readers

Abilon
RssReader
Feedreader

Video sharing services

Revver
Putfile
Vimeo

The complete list with product links and descriptions can be seen at PC World magazine online at (copy link only) <http://www.pcworld.com/reviews/article/0,aid,124883,pg,17,00.asp>

Thanks to Wayne Houston for bringing this to our attention.

Brigitte Lord, Editor, Ottawa PC News

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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May Prize Winners

The winners of our door prizes on May 10th were **Keith Martinsen** who won a copy of CorelDRAW X3 and **Ian Reid** who got a copy of the book "Mind Hacks".

Thanks to Corel.

And thanks to Don Chiasson for donating "Mind Hacks" following his [review](#) in the November 2005 newsletter.

Reduce, Re-use, 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. Stuff left over at the end of the meeting will be sent to... the recycle bin.

