

MUUGLines

The Manitoba UNIX User Group Newsletter

November 2008 Volume 21 No. 03

Next Meeting: November 11th, 2008

What's new in OpenSUSE 11

Presented by John Lange.



This month, John Lange will be presenting on openSUSE 11.0, the latest Linux offering from Novell. He will be covering the highlights of the new release focusing on its rich desktop features, especially things that go "whizz-bang!" such as the 3D Desktop Effects. Here is what

came from the press:

The New Installer

openSUSE 11.0 includes a brand-new installer.

Software Management

There have been many improvements and changes to ZYpp, openSUSE's package management system, including the major improvement: it's lightning fast!

Desktop Effects

openSUSE's Desktop Effects (Compiz) have been improved, and include many new effects and new features which make running and managing them better!

KDE

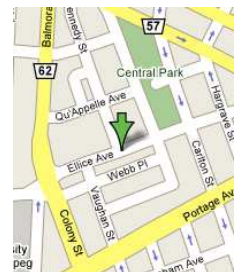
In openSUSE 11.0, you get two KDEs for the price of one. Take a look at the new KDE!

GNOME

There are many improvements in the new version of GNOME.

Where to Find the Meeting

Meetings are held at 7:30pm at the IBM offices, at 400 Ellice Ave. (between Edmonton and Kennedy). For more information, please visit the MUUG web site (www.muug.mb.ca/meetings/).



Upcoming Meetings: December 9th, 2008: TBA

MUUG Meetings on Google Calendar

MUUG meetings are now listed on Google Calendar! If you're using Google Calendar, you can have these events added to your own calendar. Here's how:

- Log into your Google Calendar/Gmail account
- In a new tab (or window), go to this URL:
<http://www.google.com/calendar/gallery>
- Search for the word: **MUUG**
- It should be the first one on the list, so just click the "Add to Calendar" button.

MUUG Board Election Results, Hello Sean... Goodbye Shawn

The following nominees have been elected by acclamation, at the October 2008 MUUG general meeting, as directors to the MUUG Board:

Sean Cody, Senior System Administrator, Prime Focus VFX Services

Gilbert Detillieux, Systems Analyst, University of Manitoba

Michael Doob, Professor, University of Manitoba

Kevin McGregor, Network Analyst, City of Winnipeg

Montana Quiring, Systems Administrator, University of Manitoba

Doug Shewfelt, Systems Specialist, City of Winnipeg

Adam Thompson

Letter to the Editor

“A question I have about linux is why they don't have a line for customer support? Ubuntu is such a good operating system, but I think it deserves a 1-800 number for customer assistance, and inquiries, don't you think? This is something that could certainly help people that are less computer illiterate like me.”

-Darcy

Thanks for the email Darcy. The short answer to your question is, yes, I believe that new Linux users should be able to call a 1-800 number to get support. But most likely because of the costs involved and because Linux is free (to you), it would probably be quite hard to find the money to offer this service. Many of the Linux distributions (like Ubuntu) do offer paid support: <http://www.ubuntu.com/support/paid>

For a bit more than the cost of a copy of Vista you can get one year of Ubuntu tech support. Also, most (if not all) distributions have mailing lists, and forums where you can post questions and receive mixed results. Most people new to Linux will probably have a tough time using a forum/ mailing list and may receive impolite responses, but they are usually worth the effort, if you can gain the knowledge to use them properly. Ubuntu users also have the Tech Answers System to get help at:

<https://answers.launchpad.net/ubuntu> Hope that helps you out.

-Montana Quiring

Build your own Visualization Wall!

By Darren Boss



It's getting easier and easier to build your own computing clusters these days. The group from the University of California San Diego that puts together the excellent cluster distribution Rocks (<http://www.rocksclusters.org/>) has extended their cluster distribution to quickly build visualization walls. I'm not going to cover the process of installing Rocks as they provide very good documentation on their site but I will explain a little about what kind of hardware you will need and what you can do with a visualization wall.

First you need some really large high resolution LCD monitors. For these I would recommend the Dell 3007-WFP-HC

(<http://accessories.us.dell.com/sna/productdetail.aspx?c=us&l=en&s=dhs&cs=19&sku=222-7175>).

They have a very small bezel and are one of the few displays that another group at UCSD has provided a handy spreadsheet for ordering mounting parts for. To mount the displays, see the following wiki at http://wiki.optiputer.net/optiportal/index.php/Main_Page. There are some spreadsheets linked on that page that will help you order the frame to mount your displays on. Next you will need a minimum of one computer for every two displays and a Nvidia based video card. You can run more than two displays per machine but currently the Rocks distribution only supports two per system and Nvidia based graphics cards only.

Now it's time to configure your frontend computer. This machine will also need a display but only a single monitor and it doesn't need to big a huge display. This computer also needs two network cards, one which will be connected to a switch that all the other machines in your wall will be connected to and the other to the Internet. This is the machine you will install Rocks to. Follow the instructions for installing the viz roll from the Rocks website at <http://www.rocksclusters.org/roll-documentation/viz/5.0/>. Once this machine is installed and you configure the other machine to PXE boot, they will install the distribution provided by the frontend computer. This has been an incredibly condensed and simplified instructions on how to build a visualization wall but by following the links provided and with a background in setting up Linux servers, you shouldn't have too much problem.

So now that you have a visualization wall, what can you do with it. The easiest thing you can do is use Xdmx to bring up a X display on the wall. On the frontend you would simply type "rocks start dmx". This will bring up a multihead X display running the fvwm window manager on the display wall. From here you can open up an xterm and launch any application you desire on the wall. If you plan on running any OpenGL applications, you should first run "rocks enable chromium" which will distribute the rendering of OpenGL applications when they are launched. Now you can run applications like Google Earth and OpenGL based games that run under Linux on the

wall. With Google Earth you will have to install a slightly older version to get it too work. Version 4.2 is the last version that works with chromium.

Another piece of visualization software included with Rocks is Sage. The Sage home page is at <http://www.evl.uic.edu/cavern/sage/index.php>. Sage will allow you to efficiently load images and playback movies on the wall. You can even connect to remote computers running VNC and have the desktop appear on the wall.

Check out our deployment and usage photos at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/netscruff/tags/visualization/>. If you have any questions, feel free to email me at darren.boss@arizona.edu.

Darren did his undergrad at the U of M in the CS department and worked for CNS for a stint.

Review: Ampache, for the love of music *By Montana Quiring*

I'm not sure if you have ever been in the same boat that I was in, but there is probably a good chance you were. Lets rewind a bit. I used to have a lot of 8-tracks and cassettes that were neatly organized on a rack. I could find the music I wanted without much effort. Now lets Fast-forward to the modern world. I now have MP3 files scattered across 5 computers with 5 different operating systems plus MP3's backed up on another 20 CDR's. I don't know where anything is or what I even have anymore.

So what will be my savior? Rythmbox? iTunes? Songbird? MPD? A portable hard drive? None of those. I need an OS independent solution, because in one single day I'll typically use Unix, Linux, Windows, Mac and embedded Linux. I decided to test drive some web based media player/catalogue apps. There were a lot of choices but the one that I found worked best for me was Ampache.

Here is the about info from their website.... "Ampache is a Web-based Audio file manager. It is implemented with MySQL, and PHP. It allows you to view, edit, and play your audio files via the web. It has support for playlists, artist and album views, album art, random play, playback via Http/On the Fly Transcoding and Downsampling, Vote based play-

back, Mpd and Icecast, Integrated Flash Player, as well as per user themes and song play tracking. You can also link multiple Ampache servers together using XML-RPC. Ampache supports GETTEXT translations and has a full translation of many languages”

Sounds too good to be true? Well... it's true.

Here are some things that I like about it. It was easy to set up and get going. It did a great job at grabbing the album art for all my albums and generally put songs in the right albums. The “Albums of the Moment” box on the home page is nice if you aren't sure what you want to listen to. You can “scrobble” to your **last.fm** account. The catalog statistics are quite useful. I like having the option to stream or use a flash player. Searching is fast and pulls up useful results. It's easy and quick to queue up an album or every song from a particular artist/group. Updating the catalog is quite quick. It has built in authentication. It works well on lighter browsers.

Here are some things that could use some improvement. You can't drag songs to rearrange their order in a playlist. I would like an easy way to export X number of random songs or X number of Megs of random music to put on a portable media player for when I go to the gym.

Here's a sample screenshot from my production system:

I've chosen to use a hosting company to store the application and media, but there's no reason you couldn't run it on your own server or even on a LAMP install on your desktop.

It may not be the most flashy web app, and the interface may not be the easiest to use, but when it comes to doing what it's supposed to do, it does it very well. I would recommend it for those among us that have lost track of their music and don't want to be tied to a desktop client. Now I just have to figure out what to do with all my digital pictures.

Ampache's site is found here: <http://ampache.org>

If you want to give Ampache a spin, you can try out the demo page here: <http://ampache.org/demo/>

Share Your Thoughts

E-mail us with your comments on the newsletter, and continue to send in articles or ideas for the same. Specifically, what sort of material you would rather see: Announcements, technical articles, new products, or...? Send it to editor@muug.mb.ca.

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