

DB/C Newsletter

January 2005

News and Comment

The DB/C Newsletter is now available from the www.dbcsoftware.com web site in two formats: PDF and text. The text format is unchanged from the way it has always been. The PDF format has the same content but with a few cosmetic enhancements. The newsletter will continue to be published via the dbcnews email list in text format, but in the next month or two we'll make it optionally available via an email list in PDF format. We plan to eventually move to primarily PDF distribution using graphics, tables, etc. in the body of the newsletter. Stay tuned.

This month's article is a synopsis of two books and one news magazine article that are great sources of information about Linux. I found all three to be invaluable in understanding the history and workings of Linux. I highly recommend them.

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Two Books and a Magazine Article

The economics and dynamics of Linux are fascinating. One's first reaction to the Linux phenomenon is typically that it can't be any good because no one has an economic incentive to make it better. But that's not the case. Many companies have an incentive to make it better. Sure the ownership is different (no one owns it), but the fact that many parties want it to succeed (instead of one) actually provides Linux with an advantage when compared with, for example, Solaris or Windows.

The history of Linux is also fascinating. BusinessWeek has written a comprehensive article about the history and current status of Linux. As of the publishing date of this newsletter, you can read the article at

http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/05_05/b3918001_mz001.htm

If this link is unavailable in the future, try searching for it in the Google cache using these search keywords:

"Linux, Inc." "BusinessWeek"

The "Linux, Inc." article paints a picture of the creators of Linux as having matured into an organization that can be trusted to produce great software, and that is not overly dependent on Linus Torvalds' involvement. HP, IBM, Intel, CA and NEC founded the Open Source Development Labs (OSDL) which is the center point for Linux development; Torvalds is an employee of OSDL. There are currently 62 companies that are members of OSDL. By being a member, each company is contributing resources to the success of Linux, and more importantly, is expecting a financial return on its contribution.

A search on Amazon.com for the keyword Linux turns up 1327 books. Two good ones are: "How Linux Works: What Every Superuser Should Know" by Brian Ward, and "Knoppix Hacks" by Kyle Rankin.

The "How Linux Works" book fills the specific need for knowing how the internals of Linux are organized and how Linux is configured. Many other books attempt to provide the information about configuring Linux, but this book succeeds particularly well because it explains what's going on behind the scenes for each particular step in setting up and maintaining Linux. Of particular interest is the information about how Linux boots - all the way from the LILO or GRUB boot loader through kernel loading and to the "init" processing which ultimately starts the X11 graphical interface. Chapters on Network Services and Shell Scripts are particularly useful because they offer a lot of information in a condensed form. This book is a must-read if you are interested in understanding Linux setup and maintenance.

The "Knoppix Hacks" book is also quite interesting. Knoppix is a Linux distribution that fits onto a CD. This is a bootable CD that contains a fully functional Linux, including support for very many hardware devices, complete networking support, support for many different filesystems, X11 support with KDE or Gnome, and all sorts of development and deployment tools including language support for C, Java, Perl and others. A complete set of man pages is also squeezed onto the CD.

The author describes Knoppix as a system administrator's Swiss Army Knife. That's an apt description. And it's not just for Linux system administrators. Windows systems administrators will also appreciate the utility of a Knoppix CD.

The format of the "Knoppix Hacks" book is 100 "hacks" that are actually short recipes for how to do very specific things. Here are some:

Hack # 1 Boot Knoppix on the Desktop
Hack #24 Make a Kiosk

- Hack #37 Run Remote Desktops
- Hack #40 Create an Emergency Router
- Hack #42 Create an Emergency Web Server
- Hack #54 Kill and Resurrect the Master Boot Record
- Hack #57 Repair Damaged Filesystems
- Hack #75 Reset Lost [Windows] NT Passwords
- Hack #77 Download Windows Patches Securely
- Hack #94 Create a Customized Knoppix

As an added bonus, a Knoppix CD is included with the book!

Another book about Knoppix, "Knoppix Komplete", is scheduled to be published in March. We'll review that book and report on it in a future newsletter.



DB/C DX Class Schedule

Class: DB/C DX Fundamentals
Date: May, 2005
Location: to be determined

For information, send email to admin@dbcsoftware.com.



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