

Rich's Ramblings for February 2008 (finally)

Ok, you Linux people, get your cannons locked and loaded. <GG> or ☺☺



I did it again, I downloaded Ubuntu <http://ubuntu.com> version 7.1 named Gutsy Gibbon and created the bootable CD-ROM. This went well and I thought that this time I would give it a shot on an older system that I had lying around.

The machine was an Intel Celeron 1.0 with 512Megs of RAM and a brand new 80Gigabyte hard disk. The video was integrated into the motherboard, but I thought because it was so old, it would probably work well with Ubuntu.

It took over 2 hours to install from the CD-ROM and then retrieve the updates of over 250 Megabytes, once on-line. All the system devices were discovered by the Ubuntu install routine, such as Ethernet card, video board and a DVD drive.

I understand the need to update as the source file (.ISO) on the Ubuntu.com web site was dated back in October 2007. Microsoft Windows XP is just as bad, as most new installs of OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturers) versions require between 50-80 Megabytes of update downloads to bring it up to speed. (OEM versions are much cheaper but Microsoft won't support you)

I was presented with the screens to setup a Userid and Password which worked. The video kept trying to use 1600x1200 resolution and that was just too much for my on-board video board. I was finally able to figure out how to change the screen resolution to 1024x768 which then showed up fine.

The desktop is pretty vacant so I needed to make shortcuts for the installed Open Office word processor and such. Ubuntu ships Firefox with the operating system and that works great. The mail and such is about standard for most Linux versions which works fine.

I will say that this time the install seemed to go smooth and after some tweaking, the screen was acceptable. I set it up to automatically log my userid into the system and that worked. Setting up my network printer was pretty straight forward because I knew the IP address for the printer. It was a HP Laser Jet 4000 and worked great. I assume that if I had an attached printer, it would have found that also...

I still do not recommend Ubuntu for the unskilled user which is about 90% of the population who uses computer.

As, I had written a couple of times before, Until the Linux distributors come up with a GOOD graphics install program that puts all the necessary icons on the users desktop, It will never be mainstream. That is one thing that Microsoft is good at, creating an operating system that an unsophisticated user can get up and running without knowing much about operating systems.

Remember:

BACKUP, BACKUP & BACKUP!!!

Vista and Rich...

I have been using Vista Ultimate on my Toshiba laptop for almost 1 year and it has worked very well. I had gotten used to the security prompts after a month or so and now am using my computer without a lot of aggravation. I really like the feature in Vista Business and Ultimate that allows you to create an image of your hard disk. You can store it on one of those USB external drives or a second internal hard disk. It just works and works well. I am fortunate that I have two 160 Gigabyte hard disks in my Toshiba so the second one works fine for backups and images. It sure is a warm fuzzy when installing new updates and programs that you might want to try but then decide that they don't work properly. A complete image restore on my 160Gigabyte drive takes less than 20 minutes.

The only major problem that I had was not reading the information on Adobe Acrobat professional which complains when you try to use it after an image restore. It seems to think you're a pirate and you have to call adobe and explain to them. But they are agreeable and gave me the information to get it authorized once I told them what I had done. They explained to me of the option under the Help menu called "transfer activation" which allows you to transfer the activation, which means de-activate it on this computer. This then allows you to re-activate Adobe when you restore your image. It works...

A friends daughter bought one of those \$399 Toshiba laptops on sale at Best Buy which comes with Vista Home Basic. They really crapify these cheap computers to make more money when the buyers activate the products. Lots of Symantec, Microsoft Office and a multitude of other "trial" programs are pre-installed. Thanks to that wonderful program Start up inspector, I was able to stop all of them from starting so that I could remove them with the control panel add/remove programs. It was a presentable and usable computer once it was cleaned up. I installed the FREE AVG anti-virus and FREE Open Office so she had all the necessary programs to protect her from the bad guys and get some work done.

My favorite programs/utilities are available in links on my web page <http://schinnell.org>

Rich Schinnell is an OF who is still excited about computers and helping people. He volunteers for CHI centers <http://chicenters.org> , they support people with disabilities. He retired from the USN way back in 1975 and a second career at Vitro Corporation, he now spends his time supporting a few small business clients and their networks. Besides his volunteer work at CHI centers. He was a grunt for Capital PC User Group for over 20 years, having help found the organization. He can be reached via e-mail at schinnell@cpcug.org and as a last resort via the old fashioned telephone at (301) 949-9292. © 2008

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(This is my supervisor telling me to stop typing)

Added later after a message from the Linspire people.

What I received via email:

"Have you been waiting for the right time to give Linspire 6 a try? This Saturday, February 23rd, Linspire 6.0 will be available for a limited time at a "Saturday Special" price of only \$38.45 exclusively to subscribers of our newsletter. A savings of 23%. The Saturday Special starts at 12:01am (PST) Pacific Time on February 23rd and will end at 11:01 pm that same day. This price is good for 23 hours only!

Linspire 6.0 is the world's easiest desktop Linux operating system.



" (Copied from the Linspire message and web site)

I bit, and it was less than \$40 so I said what the heck. I remember a few years ago, the president of Linspire Inc, gave copies of their latest version to everyone at the annual APCUG <http://apcug.net> meeting in Las Vegas, Nevada. I was not too kind to Linspire when I last reviewed it.. But I digress and also, I am glutton for punishment. ☺

I paid the price and downloaded the CD-ROM image and created the boot CD-ROM for installing Linspire. It went well. (The CD-ROM creation part)

I have always been told that Linux (which Linspire is based on) would run on a piece of string or the older PC's and such.

Wrong, I had an older Celeron 1gig with 512Megabytes of Random Access Memory. A clean 40 gigabyte hard disk that was lying around but, I forgot that the Celeron mother board was a 1997 version and the video was shared on the motherboard. (this is the same computer I installed Ubuntu on earlier in this article)

Linspire 6.0.17 was the version which I received.

Booted into the CD-ROM

The screen resolution was something out of the old horizontal hold days of 50's TV. Very erratic but I was able to read the screen prompts and the install took less than 20 minutes. I selected all the defaults and was finally able to set the screen resolution to 1024x768 which I prefer. I rebooted to the desktop in less than 25 minutes. And unlike the Ubuntu, it had a few things on the desktop, like a browser and the CNR program which makes it very simple to add new programs via the linspire (Click aNd Receive) <http://cnr.com> web site. It also had a menu bar with Mail and other icons. Similar to Windows XP. There was an icon like the START button where familiar options were selectable, like Open Office programs and such.

It did lock up a couple of times when it first got to the desktop and I had to power off, but I feel that was the real old bios that was doing something strange. During the re-boot, I selected the Linspire diagnostics and that did not seem to solve anything. I kept getting the message about ACPI fails cutoff but never figured that out. Linspire's install program did tell me that the bios failed something as it was pre 1997 but it kept installing anyway.

I was able to finally get the system up and figure out how to install my LaserJet 4000 which is on a network device and I did know the IP. It printed the test page fine and Open office was able to print to the printer. Never figured out how to install my color LaserJet. But I was satisfied to be able to print to at least one printer.

Via the CNR program, I was able to install Adobe acrobat and Skype the communicator. Both seemed to work fine and the included E-Mail was able to be setup without any pain. I liked the

Firefox browser. They provide an IM package called Pidgin which I have used on my vista computer and it works fine.

So, I said that now that I have it all setup, I would like to see how it installs on a more up to date and powerful computer. I have a Pentium D with 2Gigs of RAM and a spare 160Gig SATA hard disk. I also have a 512Meg Nvidia graphics board. 2 Ethernet adapters and good sound. I of course setup the hard disk as the only hard disk in the computer so that I did not take any chances with my regularly installed operating systems.

The install went pretty fast, only took about 12 minutes to get to the desktop. Registered for the CNR program to update. Unlike Microsoft's XP and Vista, it did not have to be updated with 50 megabytes of updates before it was ready for uOf course, I had just downloaded the latest version of Linspire 6.0 so they probably keep making changes to it to keep it up to date.

If you think that Vista has Administrator prompts, Welcome to the real world. Linspire has to be elevated to Administrator level for most everything from screen resolution changes to installing a printer. I was able to install my HP LaserJet 2840 without any problems and it printed a color test page properly. I never could get this install to print to the LaserJet 4000. Probably my advanced age and something I failed to figure out..

Bottom line for Linspire, *close but no cigar*. I wanted to be fair in this comparison between Ubuntu and Linspire and for the two, Linspire gets you to a desktop faster with much less aggravation. There are very few questions that you have to answer so the install program at least is smarter than Ubuntu in that regard.

The regular price of Linspire is \$49.00 for electronic retrieval and an extra \$10 for the CD-ROM that they will mail you. I opted out of the CD-ROM as my ISP (Verizon Fios) took the 698 megabyte download in just a few minutes.

I have complained about Linux for many many years and their lack of a good install interface. Linspire is so much closer than anything else. Of course it is not free like Ubuntu and many other flavors of Linux. There are more flavors of Linux than there are icons on the receptionists desktop. Getting you to the desktop with some usable icons is a necessity if the penguin evangelists' ever expect the commoners to adopt Linux.

Microsoft has their Operating System installs down pretty good as they have to install on a plethora of really weird system configurations. (plethora's a big word for me, it really means a heck of a lot)

My Recommendations: If you are cash strapped and just want to try out Linux, then the free Ubuntu <http://ubuntu.com> is your best bet, They will even send you a free CD-ROM if you wish. If you have never installed Linux and you have a few dollars to spare, then Linspire <http://linspire.com> is your choice.

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CNR supports several other versions of Linux outside of Linspire, so you can use <http://cnr.com> if you Want to update Debian, Fedora, OpenSUSE and Ubuntu 7.04