

THE COMPUTER CORNER

No. 235: A Few Reasons Why Linux is Better than Windows

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Firefox, Flash, Java, Skype, Thunderbird, Pidgin, Hexchat, Steam, Dropbox, Blender, Minecraft. **Audio:** Spotify, Rythembbox, audio codecs. **Video:** VLC Media Player, video codecs. **Video Editing/Drawing Software:** Pix, Gimp, Inkscape. **Libre Office:** Writer, Calc, Impress, Draw.

Recognize any of the above? I bet you do. They are all programs you must download and install after you install Windows, to gain their intended use. However, they are all automatically installed with "Serena", Linux Mint 18.2 Cinnamon. That is one big positive check mark in favor of the latest Linux (Linux is always **free**). By the way, you can open or save files that are completely compatible with Microsoft Word (*.doc or *.docx), using Libre Writer. Same compatibility for Libre Impress and Powerpoint. Also by the way, the latest Linux installations also include software that will let you run Windows programs (Wine, Virtual Box).

Here is another reason. Typically, an update from Microsoft includes the installation of one or more files, followed by a request for immediate reboot. Sometimes, after the reboot, another set of updates is suggested, based upon the new set that you just installed. So, download and install again is your option, followed by yet another reboot. Sometimes this cycle of install and reboot takes several hours. Furthermore, it is not unheard of for an update to screw up some other program or function, because the dependencies between programs are not always worked out properly by Microsoft.

In Linux, steps have been taken to prevent such glitches. Linux contains an "Update Manager" that you can easily find and activate to check for needed updates. If it finds any, clicking its query will download and install the updates, plus any updates upon which the updates are dependent. All automatically. In Linux, dependencies between programs are sought out and quickly corrected or adjusted for. You are virtually guaranteed that everything will continue to work after the update. It is just plain slick!

Moreover, when you have installed the updates (and installation is commonly very quick), there is NO NEED TO REBOOT. The installation automatically writes the new software to its assigned slot, stops and erases the old software, and starts the new version. They seem have broken the old install/reboot/ install/reboot sequence that takes so much of your time in Windows.

There is also an Update Manager icon in the tray, should you want it. Sliding your pointer over it will reveal something like an "Updates Needed" or "Your Computer is Up-To-Date message. Indeed, if you look at the icon closely, a checkmark in its middle means you are all up-to-date. If the sliding the pointer over the icon shows Updates Needed, a double-click of the icon will start the update process. Almost always just a couple of minutes. And, no reboot needed. That really impresses me!

The word is that Microsoft wants to reorganize your computer, with your personal files off in the cloud somewhere, and not on your hard drive. Then it will charge you a yearly fee to access your files, and a fee for the software (Office) to modify or update them. This is just what I have heard; it is not verified. But if true, why would anyone want Microsoft anymore? The new versions of Linux can do anything Microsoft can do, and Linux plus its programs are all free. Moreover, Linux respects your privacy, and the ownership of your machine by you! And your files stay on your machine.

What will you be using next year?

Happy Computing!