

No. 277: Linux Has a Lot of Updates!

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Well, that is sort of what you'd expect. I am talking about Linux Mint Cinnamon 20.1 ("Ulyssa"), which is a vibrant, adapting, living Operating System (OS) with many thousands of users around the world, many of whom are finding small bugs and places where updates would markedly improve the system, and they are constantly reporting these to a central gathering site that farms them out to gals and guys who are competent programmers. What is amazing is that these competent guys and gals then write updates to the system at no charge to anyone – just for the satisfaction of improving things to make a great OS even better! Clearly their willingness to do this makes the effort a truly world-wide, cooperative undertaking. The ultimate result is an OS that is initially free of charge and free of any subsequent charges, and much better than the one you have to pay for – Microsoft Windows. I submit to you that at this time, this particular version of Linux¹ has now evolved to the point where it can easily take over the general role of Microsoft Windows. Translation: you don't have to lay out dollars for a Microsoft OS anymore!

Just put the latest copy of Linux Mint Cinnamon, specifically 20.1, on a machine and start learning to use it. The learning curve is not at all difficult if you are migrating from Windows. And, there is this offer: ORC, WiARC or Le Frog members can let me know you want a copy and when, and I will put a disc out for you by my front door for you to pick up (free). You'll get a DVD that you can boot with and play with to your heart's content. It will not change a thing on your machine during your exploratory play, and you can see what it is all about. If you decide it is good, you can tell the DVD it to install Linux by selecting an "Install Linux Mint" icon on the desktop. If you decide not to, just remove the DVD at any time and reboot. Your unchanged computer will be exactly as it was before. And you can always boot with it in the future and click the Install Linux Mint icon to install, if you make that decision. That is called a "live copy", and it is a handy way to explore the OS. No danger, I assure you, to whatever OS was on the machine before you started to play.

So, what can you expect with updates? During January 2021, I installed 9 updates on my Windows 10 machine, including HiBit Uninstaller, K-Lite Codec Pack, Burn Aware Free, VLC Media Player, Thunderbird, Firefox and the major Windows Features 20H2 update which took a really long time to install including several reboots of the machine. You probably know the patter with those reboots – "UPDATING – DO NOT TURN OFF YOUR MACHINE". Windows finishes about 30% of the update, then turns the machine off, then restarts and finishes the other 70% of the update, and THEN REQUESTS ANOTHER REBOOT! I really don't understand what they are doing with those multiple reboots, except maybe breaking up the update procedure so the customers will tolerate it better. Anyway, the procedure is a pain and ties up your machine for a really long time.

So that was Windows updates. How about Linux? During the same month, I installed exactly the same number of Linux updates – 9. One included a new release of Firefox, which is part and parcel of the OS package. One of those updates was major, an upgrade from version 20.0 to 20.1, and it did require a (single) reboot. But, all of these updates were relatively painless. A small shield found in the tray (taskbar, at the bottom of the screen) lets you know that one or more updates are available by showing a numeral in the center of the shield. If nothing is in the shield or just a check mark, your machine is up to date. If updates are available, you can choose to ignore them, or click the shield to show them. You can tell it to update, which it will do in usually only a few seconds to download and install whatever is needed, followed by the message that your machine is up to date. If it was a (rare) major update, it will ask you to reboot to finish the

installation. Clean and simple. And, you do the updates when YOU want to. There is no nagging as there is with Windows. More important, it is almost always very quick and almost always does not require a reboot.

So there you have it. A no-risk, no-cost offer. It could very well be worth your time. Happy computing!

¹There are dozens of other versions of Linux, many with specialized attributes capable of attracting folks with special needs or interests. You can follow other versions easily on <http://www.majorgeeks.com>. Look for Linux Distros in the left opening column headed: Files.