

THE COMPUTER CORNER

No. 301: LINUX: THE BEST BOOK

de Stan Kaplan, WB9RQR, 715 N. Dries Street, Saukville, WI 53080-1664

wb9rqr@gmail.com

There are lots of books and pamphlets on Linux Mint out there, but here is one that is probably the best bang for your buck.

Linux Mint Essentials, LaCroix, J., Packt Publishing, Birmingham, UK, 2014.
ISBN 978-1-78216-815-7

Let me mention negatives first. 1. It is fairly expensive (\$48 – 52 range, on Amazon, paperback). 2. It is 9 years old (2014). 3. About half is devoted to the Linux Mint equivalent of DOS (the next paragraph defines what I mean by that).

If you are old enough, you will remember the early days of Microsoft Windows, when Windows was not an Operating System. Rather, it was a Graphical User Interface (GUI) built on top of a Disk Operating System known as Microsoft DOS. Back then you could work in Windows, or shell out into DOS where control was higher and less full of errors than the then new Microsoft Windows. Right now, Linux Mint's Graphical User Interface has gone well beyond that point in that it is error-free and a pleasure to use, but you can still shell out of the GUI (Linux Mint) into the equivalent of DOS by pressing the Terminal icon which is always present in the tray. That press opens a window on the desktop that is a text input point, also known as the Command Line Interface (in Microsoft Windows it is just called the Command Line). Fancy words ... they just mean that it is a place where you can type words that the computer will interpret as commands for it to do when you finish typing and press the Enter key!

So I sort of count that as a negative, the fact that probably half the book is devoted to Command Line stuff, because most beginners need to focus on getting over the little hump of switching from Microsoft Windows to Linux Mint, and command line stuff is something you can develop into later if you really want to. On the other hand it is a positive because it is a very good introduction to the Linux Mint Command Line. Well, your dollars have to go for something! Here is the chapter lineup:

1. Meet Linux Mint
2. Creating Boot Media and Installing Linux Mint
3. Getting Acquainted with Cinnamon
4. An Introduction to the Terminal
5. Utilizing Storage and Media
6. Installing and Removing Software
7. Enjoying Multimedia on Mint

- 8. Managing Users and Permissions
- 9. Connecting to Networks
- 10. Securing Linux Mint
- 11. Advanced Administrative Techniques
- 12. Troubleshooting Linux Mint
- Appendix A: Reinstalling Mint while Retaining Data
- Appendix B: Using the MATE Edition of Linux Mint
- Appendix C: Using the KDE Edition of Linux Mint
- Index

That is a pretty good spread of information. Appendix A itself is quite valuable, because it shows you how to do what I have long been advocating in Windows ... isolating your data from all the other stuff so it is easy to back up, and in this case, so that when you update to a newer version of Linux, your data is not overwritten. That sorta makes the book worth the price.

It is my hope that the author will come out with a new edition soon. On the other hand, the book as it stands is still quite useful and seems error-free. Get a copy if you wish to divest yourself of Microsoft Windows, or at least, give yourself some leeway with the operating system you use. It will probably be the only Linux book you ever need. Happy Computing!