Find Documentation on the Internet

Information

These notes were originally written in the year 2000 as part of a set of LPI Exam 101 training materials. The LPI training course at Bromley College was subsequently discontinued and some of the sections of the notes modified and incorporated into our one-day System Administration Courses. The remainder of the notes have now been made publicly available on the linuxtraining.org.uk website.

If you are a beginner please do not be put off of training courses by these notes, as they are rather technical. On the other hand if you are a more experienced Linux user we hope you find the coverage of this topic refreshingly clear.

For full details of our current Linux training please visit the site:
http://ce.bromley.ac.uk/linux

If you have reached this page from a search engine and wish to see the full contents list for the published notes please visit the site:
http://www.linuxtraining.org.uk

We hope you find these notes useful, but please remember that they apply to the 2.2 kernel. I will update them when I have the time.

Clive Gould - 21st December 2004

Find Documentation on the Internet

Objective 2

Find Linux documentation on the Internet: Find and use Linux documentation at sources such as the Linux Documentation Project, vendor and third-party websites, newsgroups, newsgroup archives, mailing lists.

The Linux Documentation Project

The following is an excerpt from the overview on the LDP home page:

"The Linux Documentation Project is working on developing free, high quality documentation for the GNU/Linux operating system. The overall goal of the LDP is to collaborate in all of the issues of Linux documentation. This includes the creation of "HOWTOs" and "Guides". We hope to establish a system of documentation for Linux that will be easy to use and search. This includes the integration of the manual pages, info docs, HOWTOs, and other documents.

Here are the conventions that are currently used for LDP documents:-

All HOWTO documents must be in one of the two SGML formats: LinuxDoc or DocBook. LinuxDoc is the simplest while DocBook is more complex with more features.

The guides -- full books produced by the LDP -- have historically been done in LaTeX, as their primary goal has been to be printed documentation. However, guide authors have been moving towards SGML with the DocBook DTD, because it allows them to create more different kinds of output, both printed and on-line. If you use LaTeX, we have a style file you can use to keep your printed look consistent with other LDP documents.

The man pages -- the Unix standard for online manuals -- are created with the Unix standard nroff man (or BSD mdoc) macros."

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Below is a selection of the guides available from the LDP web site as of August 2000:

Securing and Optimizing Linux: Red Hat Edition
Gerhard Mourani,

LDP Author Guide
Mark F. Komarinski and Jorge Godoy

Linux Administrator's Security Guide
Kurt Seifried

Linux System Administration Made Easy
Steve Frampton

Linux + Windows HOWTO
Jonathan Katz and Dr. Robert J. Meier)

The Linux System Administrators' Guide
Lars Wirzenius and Joanna Oja

The Linux Kernel Module Programming Guide
Ori Pomerantz

Installation and Getting Started Guide
Matt Welsh and others

The Linux Kernel
David A. Rusling

The Linux Kernel Hackers' Guide
Michael K. Johnson

The Linux Network Administrators' Guide
Olaf Kirch

The Linux Programmer's Guide
B. Scott Burkett, Sven Goldt, John D. Harper, Sven van der Meer and Matt Welsh

The Linux Users' Guide
Larry Greenfield

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Vendor and Third Party Websites

Each of the Linux distributions has its own vendor website, and these can be useful sources of information. The table below gives the website address for a number of the most popular distributions:

Distribution	Address
Debian	www.debian.org
Mandrake	www.linux-mandrake.com/en
RedHat	www.redhat.com
Slackware	www.slackware.com
SuSE	www.suse.com

In addition to these websites many of the Linux applications also have their own websites. Examples of just a few of these are given below:

Application	Address
Apache	www.apache.org
Gnome Project	www.gnome.org
KDE Desktop	www.kde.org
Samba	www.samba.org
Sendmail	www.sendmail.org

There are also a number of online magazines/services specialising in Linux. Examples of a few of these are given below:

Service	Address
Slashdot	www.slashdot.org
Linux Weekly News	www.lwn.net
Linux World	www.linuxworld.com

Using a good metasearch tool, such as webferret, the information you require can often be found quickly and easily on the web.

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Newsgroup and Newsgroup Archives

Newsgroups are a means of public discussion. Newsgroup articles (messages) look like email, but they can potentially be read by millions of people all over the world. Newsgroup articles are distributed via "news servers", which contain databases of articles, and are operated by Internet service providers, schools, universities, and companies.

A selection of useful Linux newsgroups is given in the table below:

Newsgroup	*Description*
`comp.os.linux.announce`	A moderated newsgroup that contains information about software updates, LUG meetings and commercial products. It can take at least three days before submissions to this newsgroup are actually posted.
`comp.os.linux.answers`	Contains all the FAQ's, HOWTOs and other important documentation. HOWTOs are normally posted at the beginning of the month.
`uk.comp.linux`	Postings by UK Linux users. Usually very helpful, friendly people. Nearly all postings receive replies.
`comp.protocols.dns.bind`	Answers to questions regarding DNS usage
`comp.protocols.smb`	Answers to questions regarding Samba
`comp.mail.sendmail`	Answers to questions regarding Sendmail

Additional linux newsgroups are listed below:
comp.os.linux.x; comp.os.linux.setup; comp.os.linux.security; comp.os.linux.portable; comp.os.linux.networking; comp.os.linux.misc; comp.os.linux.hardware; comp.os.linux.development.system; comp.os.linux.development.apps

Most newsgroups are archived at www.deja.com/usenet and www.altavista.com and you can search postings specific to a particular topic.

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Mailing Lists

Along with Usenet, the main way that Linux users around the world keep in touch is through mailing lists. Thousands of users trade email messages back and forth on these lists, asking and answering questions about Linux. Much of the actual work of the development of Linux is carried out via discussions on these lists.

Since mailing list messages are not distributed to the world, like Usenet posts are, but only to interested users who have subscribed to the list, mailing lists have grown up around topics too specialised or obscure for there to be enough interest for a Usenet newsgroup. Whatever interest you may have in Linux, there's probably a mailing list uniquely suited to your specific needs.

Some mailing lists have FAQs, or hypermail archives, or other web pages available. In addition to the general mailing there are also some distribution specific mailing lists.

Information on many of the mailing lists available can be obtained from the web site:

www.liszt.com

Bear in mind that if you subscribe to a mailing list you may get a continual deluge of email, a lot of which may not interest you. Consequently, it can be a good idea to direct this mail into another location or account other than your main email account.

Etiquette
It is important to follow the rules of net etiquette and not to post a question on a newsgroup, or a mailing list, until you have researched the topic. Before you post, first try to find the answer in the online documentation, any books you might have to hand, the web and newsgroup archives. Think out the contents of any posting very carefully beforehand and be clear and concise.