Linux Meta-FAQ

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This is the Meta-FAQ for Linux. It is mainly a list of valuable sources of information. Check these sources out if you want to learn more about Linux, or have problems and need help. Lars Wirzenius (wirzeniu@cc.helsinki.fi) wrote the first version of this document, and it is now maintained by Michael K. Johnson (johnsonm@nigel.vnet.net). Mail me if you have any questions about this document.

1 Introduction

What is Linux?

Linux is an independent implementation of the POSIX operating system specification, with SYSV and BSD extensions, that has been written entirely from scratch. It has no proprietary code in it. Linux is freely distributable under the GNU Public License. It only works on IBM PC compatibles with an ISA or EISA bus (including local bus variants VLB and PCI) and a 386 or higher processor.

In addition, it also runs on some Amiga and Atari computers with MMU's. This means 68020 with an external MMU, 68030, or 68040. An FPU is also required, and will be until someone writes an FPU emulator. See the /pub/linux/680x0 directory at tsx-11.mit.edu.

Support for Alpha/AXP, PowerPC, and MIPS is in the works, but don't hold your breath. Read comp.os.linux.announce instead.

See the FAQ for more exact hardware requirements. The Linux kernel is written by Linus Torvalds (torvalds@kruuna.helsinki.fi) from Finland, and by other volunteers. Most of the programs running under Linux are generic Unix freeware, many of them from the GNU project.

The Linux FAQ

A collection of common problems and their solutions. Answers many questions faster than the net. Stored on many Linux ftp sites (including /pub/linux/docs on tsx-11.mit.edu) and rtfm.mit.edu, the general archive site for all FAQs.

The Linux HOWTO's

These are somewhat like FAQ's, but instead of answering common questions, they explain how to do common tasks, like ordering a release of Linux, setting up print services under Linux, setting up a basic UUCP feed, etc. See sunsite.unc.edu, directory /pub/Linux/docs/HOWTO/ for the definitive versions of all the HOWTO's.

Linux newsgroups

There are several Usenet newsgroups for Linux. It is a good idea to follow at least comp.os.linux.announce if you use Linux. Comp.os.linux.announce is moderated by Matt Welsh and Lars Wirzenius. To make submissions to the newsgroup, send mail to linux-announce@tc.cornell.edu. You may direct questions about comp.os.linux.announce to Matt Welsh, mdw@sunsite.unc.edu

The newsgroup comp.os.linux.admin is an unmoderated newsgroup for discussion of administration of Linux systems.

The newsgroup comp.os.linux.development is an unmoderated newsgroup specifically for discussion of Linux **kernel** development. The only application development questions that should be discussed here are those that are intimately associated with the kernel.

The newsgroup comp.os.linux.help is an unmoderated newsgroup for any Linux questions that don't belong anywhere else.

The newsgroup comp.os.linux.misc is the replacement for comp.os.linux, and is meant for any discussion that doesn't belong elsewhere.

In general, **do not** crosspost between the Linux newsgroups. The **only** crossposting that is appropriate is an occasional posting between one unmoderated group and comp.os.linux.announce. The whole point of splitting comp.os.linux into many groups is to reduce traffic in each. Those that do not follow this rule will be flamed without mercy...

Other newsgroups

Do not assume that all your questions are appropriate for a Linux newsgroup just because you are running Linux. Is your question really about shell programming under any unix or unix clone? Then ask in comp.unix.shell. Is it about GNU Emacs? Then try asking in gnu.emacs. Also, if you don't know another group to ask in, but think there might be, politely ask in your post if there is another group that would be more appropriate for your question. At least the groups comp.unix.{questions,shell,programming,bsd,admin}, and comp.windows.x.i386unix should be useful for a Linux user.

The World-Wide Web

Matt Welsh, mdw@sunsite.unc.edu, maintains the home WWW page for the Linux project. The URL is http://sunsite.unc.edu/mdw/linux.html

Linux Journal

A new magazine called Linux Journal was recently launched. It includes articles intended for almost all skill levels, and is intended to be helpful to all Linux users. Subscriptions are $19 in the U.S., $24 in Canada and Mexico, and $29 elsewhere around the world, all payable in U.S. funds. Subscription inquiries can be sent via email to subs@ssc.com or faxed to (U.S.) 1-206-527-2806 or mailed to Linux Journal, PO Box 85867, Seattle, WA 98145-1867 USA. **Please do not send credit card numbers via email; the internet is not secure, and it is entirely possible that a technologically adept thief may steal your credit card number and cost you a large sum of money if you do.**

The Maps

Information on free software available for Linux can be found in the Linux Software Map, which can be found on sunsite.unc.edu in /pub/Linux/docs/LSM.gz

Information on non-commercial projects can be found in the Projects Map, which is posted occasionally to comp.os.linux.announce and is stored at sunsite.unc.edu in /pub/Linux/docs/Projects-Map/Projects-Map.gz.

Information on commercial products can be found in the Linux Commercial Products Map, which is posted occasionally to comp.os.linux.announce

2 Getting Linux

3 Linux FTP sites

A more complete list of Linux FTP sites is in the Linux INFO-SHEET, which can always be found at tsx-11.mit.edu in the directory /pub/linux/docs/. A DVI version is in INFO-SHEET.dvi, and a PostScript version is in INFO-SHEET.ps. The most important sites are listed here; please see the INFO-SHEET for a site nearer to you (there are many mirrors).

```
textual name            numeric addr    Linux directory
======================= ==============  ===============
tsx-11.mit.edu          18.172.1.2      /pub/linux
sunsite.unc.edu         152.2.22.81     /pub/Linux
nic.funet.fi            128.214.6.100   /pub/OS/Linux
```

These sites are the main "home" sites for Linux where most uploads take place. There are many mirror sites; please use the closest (network-wise) site to you.

3.1 Linux on BBS's

Occasionally, someone posts a list of BBS's that have Linux available for download. Try them if you can't FTP. This list is available by ftp from tsx-11.mit.edu as /pub/linux/docs/bbs.list. You may use ftpmail (described elsewhere in this document) to get this list if you have mail access, or ask a friend with internet access to get it for you.

3.2 Linux on physical media

Linux is distributed on physical media, including floppies, CD-ROM, and tape, by several commercial vendors. Please read the distribution HOWTO, posted regularly to comp.os.linux.announce, and available for ftp at sunsite.unc.edu as /pub/Linux/docs/HOWTO/distribution-HOWTO.

Also check advertisements/* at tsx-11.mit.edu for advertisements of other ways to get linux, including a list of people that will make copies for you at low prices. Also available there are advertisements for other commercial services related to Linux.

3.3 AFS

Linux is available over AFS by mounting the volume project.linux from sipb.mit.edu

3.4 Commercial networks

GEnie mirrors most of tsx-11.mit.edu and sunsite.unc.edu. Compu$erve has only very limited very old Linux archives.

3.5 Mailservers and such

Sunsite offers ftp-mail service — mail ftpmail@sunsite.unc.edu.

4 Linux distributions (aka "releases")

Linux is distributed by its author only as a kernel. Other people have put together "distributions" that can be used. These distributions pair the kernel as released by the author with software, to make a complete working package. Most releases include application programs as well as system software, providing "one stop shopping" for Linux.

There are several distributions of Linux, which are available at various sites. Sunsite mirrors almost all the distributions in /pub/Linux/distributions. The recommended distributions are Slackware, MCC, and soon, Debian. These are all available for free over the internet, and some are also sold on floppies and CD-ROM's.

5 Linux mailing-lists

Used mostly for discussion between developers of new features and testers of pre-release versions. See addresses in the FAQ. Many lists are based in the Mail-net system at Helsinki University of Technology. Send mail to linux-activists-request@niksula.hut.fi, and you will get mail explaining how to get any of the many "channels" available. Save this mail, as it tells you how to unsubscribe to the channels, and if you post annoying messages to the rest of the list complaining about not being able to get off the list (because you didn't follow instructions and save the mail telling you how to unsubscribe), you will likely be flamed for wasting international bandwidth and money.

6 Documentation for various programs

Many programs come with some sort of documentation, often in a file called README or something similar. It is a VERY good idea to read them with care. It is boring to see (and answer) questions that are answered in the documentation.

7 More Documentation

The Linux Documentation Project is working on a lot of documentation. Already, over 800 pages of book-style documentation has been released to the general public, and a large set of man pages has also been released, with more to follow. Check sunsite.unc.edu:/pub/Linux/docs/LDP for documents written by the LDP. The LDP also provides the HOWTO's, described above.

8 Keeping track of current releases

New releases, programs, and ports are usually announced in comp.os.linux.announce. `finger torvalds@klaava.helsinki.fi` to get some information about the current kernel.

9 This Document

The latest version of this document should always be available from tsx-11.mit.edu in /pub/linux/docs in the file META-FAQ. A DVI version should be available in the same directory as META-FAQ.dvi, and a PostScript version as META-FAQ.ps.

10 Legalese

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