

Question and Answer

In October 2011 we considered a few particular issues that some members had, and we all learnt something from the exchange. In addition, some ideas came out for monthly sessions for 2012.

Thunderbird

Question: Can I save the mail for Thunderbird elsewhere than on the local machine?

Answer: Yes.

There are two possible methods depending on what you wish to do. First, if the idea is to maintain your e-mail on the server, then by going to Edit → Account Settings, under Server Settings for each account, you can establish the way mail messages are handled. For IMAP accounts, which are preferred these days, the default is to keep messages in folders on the servers, and so you have to specify how junk and trash mail are managed, as well as what deleting a message means. For POP servers, you can define how long to keep messages on the server, whether to download them onto the local machine, and how to delete them.

Alternatively, you can keep all your mail on a memory stick and carry that around between systems. To do this, under Edit → Account Settings → Server Settings, and the bottom of the dialog, there is a place to specify where the mail messages are to be kept. By putting the name of the path to the memory stick after it has been mounted in this field, Thunderbird will always look there for it. However, there are some caveats to this. Not all systems will mount a memory stick in the same place in the file system, so you may need to set up links from your home directory on each system you use to the appropriate place where it is mounted. The link can then have the same name for every system you use, even though the mounted locations differ.

Types of file

Question: Can I find out what sort of file I have when I receive it from someone else?

Answer: Yes, use the file command.

The command line is useful in this case. The command named “file” will tell you, if possible, what the type of file its argument is, regardless of the name of the file. It examines the content of the file to make this determination, and not the name. So when you receive an apparent .pdf file, you can check it really is one and not something else in disguise.

For example:

```
andy@laptop:~/$ file OpSys.pdf
OpSys.pdf: PDF document, version 1.4
```

The command relies on various heuristics to determine the file type, and very occasionally gets it wrong, but in my experience this has been a **very** rare occurrence. It is good enough to rely on when writing automated scripts.

Booting process

Question: How can I recover if the machine fails to boot?

Answer: Use a Live CD to recover the boot partition.

Related to this was the issue of the order of installation when managing dual-boot machine with Windows on them. The general order of events should be:

1. Backup all your data
2. Partition the hard disk as you need it
3. Use ntfs partitions for those areas where data is to be shared between systems
4. Make sure you have a swap partition of the same size as the RAM in the machine
5. A boot partition is advisable but not essential
6. Install Windows first into the space you've decreed for it
7. Install you other OS, e.g. Linux of some flavour

Next year we'll have a lengthy session on this.

Writer

Question: How can I change the margins on a page in LibreOffice / OpenOffice?

Answer: Through the Page format / style dialog

There are at least three ways to access this dialog:

1. Right click in the page and select Page ...
2. Format → Page ...
3. Hit F11, or bring up the style list via Format → Styles and Formatting, then select Page Styles (fourth icon at the top), followed by selecting the appropriate style in the same way as for paragraphs or characters, etc.

Question: Sometime documents received from MS Word fail to format properly

Answer: The translation between .doc and .odt is imperfect, especially in the area of tables.

Fonts may not match exactly, or table descriptions are not properly reported and translated. There is little we can do about this except ensure we are using the most up to date version of our own office suite, since they are always slowly improving compatibility. If it is possible, reporting any issues may bring the problems to the attention of the developers. They rely on their users to say what does not work.