Question and Answer

In February 2012 we discussed a number of minor points in answer to questions that were raised at the meeting. This document is the summary.

Printing on an HP printer

Question: Printing labels did not match up wit the size of the sheet of labels.

Answer: This turned out not to be either a printer or label issue, but probably a problem with the software provided by the supplier of the labels as they admitted they could not achieve proper alignment on the model of HP printer that our member was using. However, the ensuing discussion did raise a couple of interesting points.

When printing from a PDF viewer, almost all of them will provide the ability in the print dialog to reduce the size of the output to match the printable area on a page. Not all printers can print to the edge of the paper, although to printers for photographs should allow this.

Unity desktop minimised window

Question: Where does the window go when minimised using Ubuntu's Unity desktop?

Answer: After minimising a window, a small white triangle appears to the left of the icon for the application. If the application uses more than one window, one triangle will appear for each window.

Icons on the top panel under the Gnome desktop (Linux Mint)

Question: I can put icons in the panel easily by drag and drop. How can I delete them again?

Answer: Only those that have been added by you, can you delete again, reverting to the default situation. The icons are represented by files in

```
~/.config/gnome-panel/launchers
```

as .desktop files, one for each of the icons you have put there, or have edited. Deleting the files corresponding to the ones you do not want will remove them.

To edit or move an icon, right click on it for the menu.

Microsoft .docx format files

Question: Some recent files of type .docx were not readable by OpenOffice.

Answer: Try using LibreOffice, which has incorporated several more filters for importing and exporting different file types. They have also improved others. LO is becoming the successor to OOo. The latest version from the Document Foundation was announced on 24 February 2012, and can be downloaded from https://www.libreoffice.org/download

Keeping LibreOffice up to date

Question: If I take LO from their own site, can I keep it up to date (Ubuntu and Mint).

Answer: So long as LO have updated their own repositories, then adding their PPA to the list of repositories from which to accept updates can do it. However, the latest versions are slow to get into the PPA's, and not all Ubuntu releases are supported by a PPA. recent information on this is at: http://askubuntu.com/questions/105637/what-is-the-best-way-to-get-an-updated-version-of-libreoffice

The best method appears to be to follow the release announcements and get each one separately.

Booting on older machines

Question: I have an old machine that will not boot from USB or DVD. How can I get the more recent versions of Linux that need a DVD or USB memory stick?

Answer: Use a marvellous small program called PLOP from http://www.plop.at/en/home.html

For non-commercial use, there is a self-contained .iso file that can be burned onto a CD. When you boot from that CD, it will show a list of what devices it can find. You do not have to insert the device containing the system you want to boot from until this point. By selecting the appropriate device it will boot from it for you. To find the CD image file, go to the Download portion of the site, and select Bootmanagers. Then get the zip file, unzip it, look for the .iso and burn it.

Linux versions

Question: How can I tell what version I have of the Linux distro?

Answer: Almost all Linux distros, and some other Unix related systems, will place information about the distro and the version in the text file at /etc/issue which you can find in the file browser and open in a text editor.

If you want to know a bit more about the kernel in use, and other technical details, one starting point is the command:

```
uname -a
```

executed from any terminal command line.

Command Line

Question: I want to know the basics about the command line.

Answer: Really, this is a subject for a week long course, but to get you started, open a terminal from the Applications → Accessories menu. Not all distros put the terminal in the same place in the menus, so you may need to look for something with the name of Terminal, XTerminal, Term, XTerm, and something along those lines, among the Accessories, Others, System, or such menu list.

A command line consists of a command (the first set of characters before a blank, tab, or other white space), followed by options (one or more) and finally a list of parameters.

All options start with the minus character (-). There are almost no exceptions to this rule; I wish I could say no exception, but alas that is not the case. Options modify the action of the command, for instance by changing the format of the output.

Parameters are the names of the objects (usually files or directories) on which the command operates. In Unix terminology, a directory is what you may know as a folder.

There is the idea of the working directory. Terminals start with the working directory being your home directory. The command

```
ls
```

will list all the files in the working directory. Names of Unix commands are all cryptic, and there is little that can be done except to learn the useful ones as you need them. As an example of an option the command line

```
ls -a
```

will list all files, including hidden files, in the working directory. The option -a implies that.

An example of a parameter, would be in the line:

```
ls Documents
```

which will list all files in the directory Documents. Combining these:

```
ls -l Documents
```

will give a long list (-l the letter ell) of all files in Documents.

One of the most important commands is the man command, which is the very basic documentation common to all Unix like systems. So the command:

```
man ls
```

will show the options and how to use the ls command. When looking at the output from the man command, use the space bar to step onto the next page of information, and the 'b' key to go back a page. To stop the output and go back to the command line use the 'q' key.

To list all commands associated with a particular idea or keyword, then the command

```
man -k file
```

will show all the documentation for things to do with the keyword 'file'. In this output, there are numbers in brackets. Those showing (1) are commands that you can use. To restrict the output just to those in section 1, you can add the option -s1, like this

```
man -ks1 file
```

Note that this is the number 1.

To discover what a good command is for a particular task, and you do not know what to use, the best solution is to ask someone who does. The documentation is terse and will need some knowledge to appreciate initially, but practice will improve understanding.

Finally, to get out of the terminal, the command

```
exit
```

will do it.

Cutting and pasting into the Terminal window

Question: How do I paste into the terminal window.

Answer: The obvious thing does not work. There are three ways to do it, after first cutting or copying the text.

One way is to use the middle (scroll) button on the mouse to put the text into the current position on

the command line.

The second method is to use the combination CTRL+SHIFT+V to do the same thing.

And the third is to use the Edit menu at the top of the window.