Introduction to Gnucash

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This paper is an introduction to the Gnucash application, a simple accounting application suitable for individuals or small businesses. It keeps accounts using double entry bookkeeping and can link to some bank accounts.

It is available for Windows, OS X, and Linux.

For individual use, another application worth looking at is KMyMoney for Linux.

Installation

Gnucash is in the Linux repositories, and when installing from there, you may like to consider also installing the package gnucash-docs to provide some information about the product.

In Linux Mint, it appears in the Office applications menu.

Initialising

When first started, the application takes some time locating and loading all its parts, but then provides you with n empty window. To create your first account to manage your assets, go to File → New File and follow the dialog. By default it will suggest using the set of criteria (or as they call them accounts) for typical individual use. This is a good starting point. You will also be given an opportunity to edit the names in the list, as well as to define any opening balances.

Once they are all created, right clicking on a selected account will allow a number of things to be done. Among those is to delete an account, if you are sure you will not need such a thing at the moment. You can also create a new account from the right click menu, which would be useful if you want to create more bank accounts and establish their opening balances.

Making entries

To record a transaction, you need to make an entry in some account. The right click menu (or from Edit → Open Account) brings up the ledger for that account in a new tab.

After selecting the date for the transaction, you can tab across the fields filling in as necessary. Clicking in the transfer column will show a list of the available accounts you can record this transaction for. The balance will be computed automatically.

Reconciling

When you get a statement from your bank, you can then check off all the entries against what you have recorded by going to Actions → Reconcile. This will enable you to mark off the transactions one after the other in a fairly obvious fashion. The column headed R will change as the entries are reconciled.

Because you may not know the exact amounts for direct debits, during reconciliation you can edit these as you need to. In addition, you can add more that you had not recorded that appear in the statement.

Reports

Some simple reports are available from the Reports menu. For example, Reports → Income & Expenses → Expense Piechart will show you how your expenses are distributed.

References

The Help menu has good quick documentation, but should you wish further detail and examples, then the official site is at: https://www.gnucash.org/docs.phtml

The documentation is also available in some other languages, and as either browsable from the site, or downloaded as a pdf or mobile formats.