

# TALUG Meeting Notes

February 24, 2007

## Plain Text Solutions: Presented by Steve Daley

Steve Daley is a full time pastor who got started with Linux because he had of a lot of old computers that he was looking to make use of. Since getting started with Linux, Steve's main projects involve networking, setting up a web-server, and producing documents.

In a presentation titled *Plain Text Solutions*, Steve showed how he uses the pain text format to make his job easier and more productive.

### Why Plain Text?

A plain text solution involves utilizing the plain text format to make tasks easier, including printing, generating web pages, PDF's, and more. Plain text in this situation refers to the means used to accomplish a task, not necessarily the final output. Sometimes this involves writing a file in plain text and then converting it to the format desired.

### What advantages does plain text offer?

- Platform independent: Linux, BSD, OSX, and even Windows
- Environment independent: CLI, GUI
- Program independent: Vim, Gedit, Nano, OpenOffice, and even Microsoft Word
- No need to worry about vendor lock-in
- Linux already has excellent plain text tools built in
- Festival will read (out loud) any plain text file

### Who would want to use a plain text format?

- Programmers
- System administrators
- Website
- Writers

Please stand by: Technical difficulties caused Windows XP to crash, reboot required

### Why Steve uses plain text

Steve produces a lot of writings for sermons, and uses plain text because it is fast to load, portable, and independent. Openoffice is an alternative that is platform independent, but OpenOffice has its own set of problems:

- Requires 300 MB Ram
- Not available for old hardware
- Can't use in text only ssh session
- Can't use OpenOffice on pocket PC

If needed, other programs can be used for “beautification” such as OpenOffice, Abiword, or Scribus.<sup>1</sup>

## Linux Tools

Linux comes with a powerful set of plain text programs, including:

- Vim (CLI text editor)
- Nano (CLI text editor)
- Aspell (Command line text editor spell check, highly recommended, easy, intuitive)
- Wc (CLI word count)
- Screen (Multiplexing terminal environment, highly recommended)
- SciTE, GVIM, and Gedit for GUI

## Problems Encountered Using Plain Text

### Printing From CLI

How do you print from CLI? Options include:

- Using lpr, but it is difficult to set up and ignores paper size
- Using a2ps, but it failed to wrap lines at word breaks
- Enscript (perfect solution)

Enscript gives you a lot of power from the command line. You can actually have lot of fun in this program. Enscript can print in specific fonts (Fonts available depend on printer) columns, headers, and much more. Examples of callouts you would used include:

- `enscript --word-wrap --media=letter $file.txt`
- `enscript --word-wrap --media=letter --font=Times-Roman10 -Gr2 $file.txt`

## How to Easily Convert Plain Text to HTML or PDF

AsciiDoc is the solution. AsciiDoc is a plain text processor with readable markup, not a lot of code, and can export to html, pdf, docbook, xhtml, linuxdoc, and more.

More AsciiDoc features include:

- Extensive table support
- Capable of including other plain text files

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<sup>1</sup>Scribus is a powerful desktop publishing program

- Special graphic accented blocks of text
- Table of contents<sup>2</sup>
- Glossary, Indexes, and Bibliography
- Callouts

### What is AsciiDoc Used for on a Daily Basis?

- Documenting Linux hints and tricks
- Publishing simple static html
- Producing quick handouts
- General note taking

### Questions

- Question: Is AsciiDoc difficult to learn?  
AsciiDoc is easy to learn (compared to latex)
- Question: Does AsciiDoc produce readable html code?  
CSS is put in the header, and html is very readable
- Question: Can you change the default styles?  
CSS configuration file is editable, however the AsciiDoc defaults are quite good
- Question: Does AsciiDoc support mathematical formulae?  
Yes, it also supports other formats such as musical notes

## Constitution

The vote to adopt the constitution was unanimous, with 18 votes. Special thanks to those who helped write the constitution, we spent quite a few hours making sure the language was right, and trying to get rid of any loopholes etc... Thanks to all involved in drafting process.

The constitution was then reviewed to clear up any questions that had been posed.

- All meetings are all open to the public. Membership is *not* required
- We now will have official officers
- Elections occur on the first meeting after March 21<sup>st</sup> which will be held April 21<sup>st</sup>
- Voting will be accomplished via email

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<sup>2</sup>Table of contents with hyperlinks can be generated in java by AsciiDoc

## Elections Planning

What this means is that we need to think about elections:

- Start thinking about it if you want to run or nominate someone
- Nominations are due March 24<sup>st</sup>

And that's the story of the constitution getting off the ground.

## Shooting the Breeze

### Kalzium: Periodic Table

- Kalzium is an application which will show you information about the periodic table of elements
- Gives history of elements
- Can sort periodic table by discovery date
- Can view information such as visual spectrum, pictures of elements, etc...

A long discussion on the history of sodium ensues...

## Showing Off Live CD's

### Elive

- Graphical selection of language and boot options at boot prompt
- Visual look of Elive is quite sharp
- Elive is still in beta testing
- Elive has a cool terminal transparency

### Kororaa

- Kororaa is essentially a binary install method for Gentoo Linux
- Runs [beryl](#) by default
- Allows a screen saver to run as a wallpaper, which was cool with the matrix screen saver until it caused problems on Jason's laptop
- Kororaa is an alternate spelling for a type of penguin

## Meeting Adjourned