Those of you on the advertising list will know that Danté Ashton and I have been trying to research easy entry into Ubuntu with the mindset of the average Windows user. Please consider helping with this research. The aim is to pick a particular 'need' and to follow through whether this need can be met under Ubuntu, how easily and how successfully. This use should ideally be one that your Windows friend would have, and preferably a need that you know little about.

First take a look at:
https://help.ubuntu.com/10.04/switching/C/applications-equivalents.html

This page needs substantial revision, and certainly needs extending.

Rules for research: any necessary packages to be easily and quickly installed without using the commandline. The preference would be to use the Ubuntu Software Centre. If you have a way of meeting the need, but this requires commandline or other methods, please submit this anyway - Ubuntu could incorporate a simple workaround. Any scripts or code you write to make things work could be posted. Stuff like that could easily be part of a package and run on installation without the user being in any way aware of the complexity.

When you have done the research, please report on how easy it was to access the information and provide links if a good method is suggested online somewhere.

So far, I have researched iPod and iTunes. I have also explored Logos/Libronix as a colleague has over £1000 worth of books in that format. I have to report that Ubuntu is not for him. I have e-mailed Logos and received a reply stating that at present they do not have plans to support our platform. The same was true of Mac until many many Mac users complained to Logos! A niche area, but maybe you'd like to aid that cause?

I also did a webcam exercise with my sister. The task was dead easy for me - but incredibly daunting for my sister and it need not have been! That one hardly wants any tweaking but it does need tweaking and properly documenting.

Researching iTunes, I found an official Ubuntu document that said iTunes would install under PlayOnLinux. I tested this. Only iTunes 10.6 can be made to work, and it installs crippled. The CD rip and burn facilities don't work. It is official policy that we do not include methods based on Wine or any of its derivatives as these, however good, are not for the Ubuntu newbie.

The result of the above is that iTunes can be perfectly replaced and iPods work just fine under Ubuntu with several apps BUT the Apple download store cannot be accessed. Most of you knew that already – I was working in the dark and discovered how hard it was to get information that a newbie could follow.

So - lay aside your geekiness for a time, imagine you're a newbie and volunteer to research a particular need. Please state the one you are thinking of pursuing so we don't duplicate the effort. If there's a good response, maybe someone who has admin access to the Canonical or Ubuntu website can set up a Wiki for us to report back on?

And more often than not there is an excellent alternative. Today, my son-in-law brought his shiny new iPod Shuffle around. We plugged it into my PC and it 'just worked'. He was very impressed with Banshee - took to it better than iTunes. Now, iTunes is marketed as the ONLY software to work the iPod range. We need to have all the information out there. But I think I've said all of this before.

I totally agree! Educating the target audience is really important. Way too often the target audience's view has already been manipulated by what they have already seen, heard, or experienced. Granted I think Banshee is a great alternative to iTunes and personally I even use it since it's hooks up to Amazon MP3. However, there aren't very many programs that you can say they are a real alternative. Using Shotwell or F-Spot instead of Lightroom is a great example. Shotwell is a great application, but it's are nowhere near a real alternative to Lightroom from a photographers perspective. So I think we have to be careful about which programs we consider to be alternatives.

DigiKam and Bibble are supposed to be good. Bibble is a for pay professional alternative to Lightroom. I have heard that some professionals think its even better than lightroom. I'm not in touch with an photo pros so it's hard to research this one. Anyone out there with photo-expertise?

Just installed DigiKam (using the Software Centre) .... and from my perspective it looks very able ... BUT the installation doesn't place a launcher anywhere! It creates one which I had to find the good old fashioned way, but a desktop or menu launcher? Had to make that myself! Sometimes I can understand folk saying 'Ubuntu sucks'.

You've just installed an application and it isn't there! That's how the Windows user perceives the situation.

I just tried re-booting not expecting anything to happen .... and there was DigiKam in the graphics menu. The install never said anything about that! Really annoying. Great application though!

I promised a report from a Windows user who is highly IT literate – but Windows only. I'm going to meet her at my sister's next time she is there so she can show me what she is doing with the USB and CD's. My pendrive worked 'out-of-the-box' as did CD's and DVD's.

Pleas take particular note about her googling for answers. We HAVE to look carefully at that. I've had the same comment from everybody who has done that. She always knew that Linux is only for geeks. This seems to have proved it! Here tiz:

"Firstly with regards to Ubuntu, having only ever worked off Microsoft systems I have found Ubuntu less 'user friendly' - this I imagine is due to the fact that I (like many others) have never used anything other than Microsoft. However I have found the word processing, and spreadsheet programmes like for like with Word and Excel - it just takes some time to navigate around and get to grips - but they are accessible.

My main frustration is around using CD's, USB's etc - I find Microsoft very easy to use when pulling data off USB's but with Ubuntu nothing I have found seems to 'plug and play' - no guidance appears - so I resort to 'googling' only to find forums with technical speak which I don't always understand.

The manuals to support Ubuntu need to be written in a more accessible way - screen shots would be useful - they need to be more accessible. Generally Ubuntu appears to run a lot faster than Microsoft – the 'office' programmes are comparable, but I feel you do need to be technically savvy to use Ubuntu above and beyond emails and word processing. My main recommendation would be that Ubuntu needs to be more user friendly and I feel on-line integrated guidance would be most helpful! Alex"

Exactly for those kinds of reasons we have the ubuntu-manual and are we developing stuff like ubuntu-tour.

Linux can be not so user friendly, but ubuntu is certainly changing that. I must agree on the usb stick and the (deliberate) lack of auto-run. but that is something people can get used to.