Radio Days – 2012-09-22

Tip of the Week – What's The Date?

During the week I had a call from a client who, like many people, uses his digital camera to record details of his trips. One "feature" of his camera is that the date is usually wrong. For this reason he is unable to use the EXIF (exchangeable image file format) data to place his photos into date order.

It is not only the EXIF data which stores the date that a photo is taken: this information is also held in the file itself. If you use Windows Explorer to check the files on a disc you will see items like *Date Created* and *Date Modified*. These dates are held in the index entry for each file and are copied when the file is copied. If the date in your camera is wrong then the date that your photo is taken is also wrong.

If you use a program like Picasa to copy your files from your camera's card to your computer it will put each photo in a folder whose name is the date that that photo was taken. If you are a prolific photographer you can easily have hundreds of photos in one folder, all taken on the same day.

I thought about suggesting that he used Picasa to organise his photos but he stated that his camera seemed to lose its date every time he changed the batteries. The loss of the date information from the camera would soon mean that all his photos would end up in the same folder: not such a good idea!

Also, because he makes a lot of panorama scenes from a series of photos, I did not suggest Picasa. Picasa is an excellent program, and does it what it does well, but stitching a panorama together from a number of photos is not one of its abilities.

I remember another client who, every time he turned his camera on, reset everything to the camera's base state. This also made for difficulties when copying photos to his computer.

Please remember that camera manufacturers make their cameras so that they will give you as much information about each photo as they can. If you do your best to remove all this useful information you will lose much information about where and when you were at a place.

Getting Online With Linux

I was speaking to a listener to this show during the week and he asked if he could use Linux with his USB wireless internet device. I stated that I was not sure if that was possible, but that I would check to see if it could be done.

He stated that he only wanted to surf the internet. He used eBay to buy and sell and he had a webmail address with Google's Gmail. He also did internet banking and needed various other internet services: all of these could easily be provided by any version of Linux.

I have spoken to two wireless internet providers and they state that they only support Mac and Windows. This leaves you with only one option: install Linux on your computer and see if you can use your wireless device.

There is a large number of providers of Linux: these various versions are called *distros* which is short for *distributions*. Because Linux is an open source product everybody can download the source code and create their own version. Perhaps the most widely-used version of Linux for non-Linux people is *Ubuntu*. This is the version which I will use for this article, but there are more versions of Linux available than I can count. Much of what I write will work with other versions of Linux but this article is all about working with Ubuntu Linux.

The word *ubuntu* is difficult to explain in English. It is a Bantu word which has no equivalent in English, but here are some explanations from the internet:

- Ubuntu is a concept in the Bantu Language. It is about the essence of Humanness. Simply put: 'people are people through other people'. I am human because I belong.

This concept acknowledges both the rights and the responsibilities of each citizen in promoting individual and societal wellbeing.

- **Bishop Desmond Tutu**: A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed.
- **Nelson Mandela**: A traveller through a country would stop at a village and he didn't have to ask for food or for water. Once he stops, the people give him food, entertain him. That is one aspect of Ubuntu but it will have various aspects. Ubuntu does not mean that people should not enrich themselves. The question therefore is: Are you going to do so in order to enable the community around you to be able to improve?

There are several ways to run Ubuntu on your computer so that you can see if your wireless internet connection will run under Ubuntu.

Run Ubuntu From a CD

If you download the Ubuntu iso (an *iso* is a file which is the image of a CD. You then burn the iso to a CD: this creates a CD which you can then use just as you use a CD which you bought in a shop.) you can then use a free program like Ashampoo Burning Studio to create a CD which you can then use to run Ubuntu. The Ubuntu iso file is 700 MB in size so will take some time to download. On my computer with a 1.5 MBps internet connection it takes about 90 minutes to download.

Once you have created your CD from the downloaded iso file you then start your computer with the CD in the CD or DVD drive. If your computer is configured to allow it to boot from your optical (CD or DVD) drive then you will see a screen giving you two options:

- Try Ubuntu
- Install Ubuntu

Take the first option: this starts Ubuntu from the CD and will give you the normal Ubuntu desktop. Please note that, because you are running Ubuntu from your optical drive, it will run far more slowly than if you were running it from a hard disc. It will, however, help you see how another operating system works. In so many ways it is just like Windows (just as Apple computers are like Windows) but it has its own flavour.

See what you can do to make it work and you will have some idea of the different flavours of operating system there are in the outside world. Ubuntu is sufficiently like Windows that you will be able to use it straight away, but it is also sufficiently different that you will be confused on occasion.

Install Ubuntu Beside Windows

A faster way to run Ubuntu is to install it on your hard disc. Installing an operating system on your hard disc makes your computer much faster. You can install Ubuntu so that, when you start your computer, you are asked whether you want to run Windows or Ubuntu. You make the choice when you start your computer and you have to restart your computer to run the other operating system.

To install Ubuntu beside Windows you must first download the *wubi* installer from the Ubuntu website. This is a small program which then downloads the full version of Ubuntu. As this full version is 500 MB it will take some time to download and install.

This way of installing Ubuntu gives you full access to everything at your computer's hard disc speed. For this reason it's a much faster way to try Ubuntu than running from an optical disc. It needs spare hard disc space, but most modern computers have so much spare hard disc space that you will not notice the amount that Ubuntu uses. If you like the way the optical disc version works, but want a faster experience, then this is an excellent way to try Ubuntu.

Install Ubuntu Within VirtualBox

Another way to try any operating system is to use a *virtual machine*. The best free virtual machine is VirtualBox: this is a free download and can be installed onto any computer with enough hard disc space, enough RAM and a modern processor. VirtualBox does not use much disc space but the virtual machines which you create within VirtualBox will want about 20 GB of hard disc space. This is readily available on most modern computers because a new computer will have at least 500 GB of hard disc space.

Download and install VirtualBox: you can then run it and install an operating system of your choice within VirtualBox. This means that you can install Ubuntu or any recent version of Windows. You can use these virtual machines to try new programs without destroying your current version of Windows: when you have destroyed your virtual copy of Windows just delete the old version then install another clean version to start again.

To install Ubuntu inside VirtualBox you will need to use the iso file which you downloaded earlier: this will install Ubuntu as a virtual machine within VirtualBox.

Install Ubuntu to Replace Windows

You can also install Ubuntu instead of Windows. This means that you will lose your current system with all its settings, program and data. My advice is that you should think long and hard before you start this process because, once started, you will have lost all your Windows information.

To install Ubuntu to replace Windows just start your computer with the Ubuntu CD which you downloaded and burnt in an earlier step. You will then just follow the screen prompts to complete the installation. You will then be able to use Ubuntu instead of Windows with all its features.

Please remember that you cannot just revert to your previous Windows settings if you do not like Ubuntu. It is for this reason that I strongly suggest that you use one of the other ways to run Ubuntu before you take this step.

Please remember: this is not a game where you can press *Reset* and return to your previous Windows world.

Update

I have managed to find an Optus wireless USB modem. After starting my computer with the Ubuntu CD I inserted the wireless modem into the USB drive. The device was recognised but no driver was installed so I could not get onto the internet using this device.

I expect that a Telstra USB wireless modem would have the same problem.

Ubuntu will work with an ADSL internet connection very well, and it will work with a USB modem if you can get one with a Linux driver.

Further Information

Picasa	www.picasa.google.com
Ubuntu Linux	www.ubuntu.com
Ashampoo Burning Studio	www.ashampoo.com
VirtualBox	www.virtualbox.org