

Articles Published in 2006 (Excluding Linux Journal columns)

[2006: The year the FSF reached out to the community](#)

Not many people realize it yet, but 2006 saw a change of direction in the Free Software Foundation.

[Tufte's Beautiful Evidence combines theory with practical advice](#)

A review of Edward Tufte's *Beautiful Evidence*, Tufte's latest collection of essays on graphical presentation of information. Tufte's mixture of theory and practice and his ideas' resemblance to Orwell's, as well as his efforts to combine analytical rigor with design theory all combine to make this one of the most intellectually stimulating books I read in 2006.

[Brazilian state struggles to write free software license](#)

A description of the Brazilian state of Paraná's struggle to write a license for the software it releases. What happens when free software ideals come into conflict with federal law? (if, in fact, they do)

[Portrait: RaphLevien, font-designer and free software contributor](#)

Levien's free fonts are some of the most striking that I've ever seen. As soon as I saw them, I knew that I'd be writing about them sooner or later.

[SPI to transfer domain names to OSI](#)

Routine coverage of the monthly IRC meeting of the board of directors for Software in the Public Interest.

[A survey of Linux file managers](#)

A back-to-basics article on a topic that everyone seems to have an opinion on.

[FSF makes MMORPG campaign a high priority](#)

Brief coverage of the Free Ryzom Campaign, whose goal was to buy an online roleplaying game and convert it into a free software project.

[Why FOSS isn't on activist agendas](#)

Free software is all about ethics. So why doesn't it appeal more to activists of any political persuasion?

[Configuration: the forgotten side of security](#)

People usually think of computer security in terms of reactive measures like anti-virus programs or applying a patch. But there's a larger, even more important aspect to security: designing and configuring a system so that it's not vulnerable in the first place.

[Mandrake founder discusses new distro](#)

First coverage of the alpha release of Ulteo, a new GNU/Linux distribution headed by Gael Duval, the original creator of Mandrake.

[Linux.com's coverage becomes part of arguments in Israeli GPL case](#)

Usually, I write the news rather than help make it. In this case, though, a previous article I wrote became part of the story.

[LinuxBIOS ready to go mainstream](#)

We may be months away from having a free BIOS as an option when we buy a new computer. At any rate, it will come sooner than most people expect.

[Bastille: rated security with education](#)

Bastille is a system hardening tool for the major GNU/Linux distributions. I consider it a basic necessity for any permanent installation.

[OpenOffice.org announces contest winners](#)

I was a judge for OpenOffice.org's first contest for templates and clip art, sponsored by WorldLabel.com. So, naturally, I was the first to announce the results.

[Housekeeping utilities for Debian packages](#)

Coverage of a couple of applications that improve package management in the Debian distribution.

[As Etch progresses, Debian's release manager talks turkey](#)

A description of the Debian release process, its structure and immediate challenges.

[SPI set to settle long-standing domain name dispute](#)

Something a little different: covering a board meeting of Software in the Public Interest on an IRC channel. I suppose this is the online equivalent of covering a meeting at city hall.

[SoftMaker Office 2006 beta: Not a killer app](#)

A review of a proprietary office suite that runs on GNU/Linux. It has its fans, but, as you can tell from the title, I'm not one of them.

[Seven tips for leading FOSS programmers](#)

IT departments are a separate reality in corporate culture. In this story, I try to suggest the most important things that managers should know about how to interact with computer programmers.

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IT departments are a separate reality in corporate culture. In this story, I try to suggest the most important things that managers should know about how to interact with computer programmers.

[Java news met with cautious optimism in free Java community](#)

Sun Microsystems's announcement that it is going to free the code for Java is probably one of the biggest stories in FOSS in 2006. In this story, I cover some of the reactions to the news.

[CLI Magic: Enhancing the shell with fish](#)

I always wanted to have an article included in the CLI Magic series on Linux.com. With this article about the fish command line interface, I finally got my wish.

[gNewSense joins list of FSF-approved distros](#)

gNewSense is an Ubuntu-based distribution with one important difference: all files that refer to proprietary firmware are removed from the kernel as well as the rest of the operating system. The

result is less wireless connectivity, but otherwise technically much the same as any modern distribution.

[Linux printing: much done and more to do](#)

Printing in GNU/Linux has come a long way in the last five years – but there's still some finishing touches needed.

[Building customized financial documents with free spreadsheets](#)

My contribution to a financial software week. I don't use any specialized applications, so I went back to basics.

[Searchmonkey balances command-line power and desktop ease of use](#)

A short article on a very promising search tool for the desktop.

[Unicode 5.0 continues toppling of Tower of Babel](#)

Coverage of the release of the Unicode 5.0 standard, and what it means for the future of computing.

[Building and leading FOSS communities](#)

How three large and popular distributions interact with the communities around them, and help them to grow.

[Mandriva 2007: back in the race](#)

Mandriva has made more news recently because of its business than because of its software, but, with this edition, it resumes its place as one of the top GNU/Linux distributions.

[How to advocate for FOSS in schools](#)

A discussion of how to introduce free software into local school districts by three people who've been successful in doing so.

[Brazilian government faces challenge over proprietary tax software](#)

The Brazilian government requires some citizens to use proprietary software to fill out their tax forms – and the Latin American branch of the Free Software Foundation is trying to change things.

[How to choose the right screen shot program](#)

GNU/Linux has at least half a dozen programs for taking screen shots. Which one should you use?

[Merging corporations with co-ops and open source](#)

The Vancouver PHP Users' Group recently featured a talk by Greg Dean about his efforts to set up a co-op business for people working with free and open source software. Dean and his supporters believe that they've found a way to combine the best of corporations with co-ops, thanks to some of the unique laws of British Columbia, Canada.

[Organization to pay Debian developers begins work](#)

Ongoing coverage of Dunc-Tank, the unofficial organization that hopes to help the Debian project by paying selected developers.

[FSF should separate GPLv3 changes](#)

My solution to the ongoing controversy over the attempts to write the third version of the GNJ General Public License? Separate the changes, so that the uncontroversial but needed changes aren't lost with the controversial ones.

[Reiser filesystem development to continue](#)

Hans Reiser, the originator of the ReiserFS and Reiser4 filesystems, was arrested in connection with the disappearance of his wife. Covering the criminal charges seemed ghoulish and intrusive, but many people were wondering what would happen with his development work, so I thought it a legitimate topic to cover. Not everyone agreed.

[Super Grub Disk delivers easy boot record recovery](#)

You can never have too many recovery disks. This one is especially useful and instantly became part of my collection.

[Creative Commons revisions face same challenges as GPL](#)

Creative Commons's efforts to revise their licenses in a public process are running into the same sorts of issues as the Free Software Foundation's efforts with the GNU General Public License.

[Updated Free Documentation License released](#)

The GNU Free Documentation License is yet another of the standard free software licenses being revised in 2006.

[Why Torvalds is sitting out the GPLv3 process](#)

Nobody was asking why Linus Torvalds wasn't taking part in the effort to revise the GNU General Public License when he had so many opinions on the subject, so I thought I would.

[Recall proposal puts Debian leader in dunc-tank](#)

The conflict in the Debian project over Dunc-Tank, the unofficial organization that planned to pay selected developers, took an ugly turn with a general resolution to recall the project leader on the grounds that his involvement in Dunc-Tank was a conflict of interest.

[Proposal to fund Debian reveals debate about developers' motivations](#)

Dunc-Tank is the stuff of instant controversy: an organization that wants to pay selected Debian developers to help the next release along. In a distribution that has always prided itself on its non-corporate ways, the suggestion met immediate opposition.

[Alacarte: GNOME's long overdue menu editor](#)

Six years ago, the GNOME desktop had a menu editor. Finally, it has one again.

[Growing pains for Google's Summer of Code](#)

The Summer of Code is an internship program for free software sponsored by Google. It's wildly popular – but also needs some reorganization, participants say.

[Robert Scales leads Raincity with passion and openness](#)

I heard Robert Scales speak about open source business models at Barcamp Vancouver and thought he deserved a wider audience.

[Alleged GPL violation spurs accusations, lawsuit](#)

The GNU General Public License is being tested in Israeli court.

[Online word processors: A hands-on comparison](#)

After covering online applications earlier in the year, I thought it time to summarize the pros and cons of some of the leading ones.

[Maintainer's resignation highlights problems in Debian project](#)

Problems seem to be dividing the Debian community.

[FSF reaches out to social activists](#)

The Free Software Foundation believes that social activists should be its natural allies – and is setting out to convince them.

[Marketing FOSS with donor-paid ads](#)

Mozilla made headlines when it took out an ad to promote the Firefox web browser. Can other free software projects do the same, or was that a one-time phenomenon?

[10 common misunderstandings about the GPL](#)

The GNU General Public License is one of the most widely used free software licenses – and one of the most frequently misunderstood. In this article, I debunk some of the most common fallacies.

[BarCamp Earth: a local report](#)

BarCamp is a free software version of a conference, with everyone who attends participating. In two years, it has become a global tradition. I attended the Vancouver event this year to see what it was about.

[Linux Libertine Open Fonts offers free Times Roman alternative](#)

Fonts with a free software license are a new phenomenon. Here, I cover one of the most popular free fonts.

[The GPLv3 process: Public consultation and private drafting](#)

With everyone talking about the public process being used to draft the new version of the GNU General Public License, I thought I'd find out exactly what the process was.

[FSF hires new GPL compliance engineer](#)

After five years of being the Free Software Foundation's enforcer, David Turner is turning his role over to Brett Smith, a long-time volunteer.

[Developing effective slide shows](#)

A plea for sanity in the use of slide shows, cleverly disguised as a back-to-school article.

[Marketing FOSS projects](#)

My first co-written article. This one is with Joe “Zonker” Brockmeier, an OSTG editor.

[Torvalds' comments on GPLv3 committees refuted](#)

Hours after the second draft of the third version of the GNU General Public License was released, Linus Torvalds began to criticize it. Some of his comments are at least worth a discussion – and may even be right. However, his suggestion that the committees formed as part of the process were

not receiving input from the community and were not being listened to by the writers of the draft doesn't seem supported, judging from comments from the committee members themselves.

[Reiser4 and the politics of the kernel](#)

This article tries to summarize one of the longest-standing issues in the development of the Linux kernel while staying neutral. I was pleased to receive at least one comment that suggested I had succeeded.

[Symphony OS marches to a different drum](#)

Symphony OS is a GNU/Linux desktop that tries to rethink graphical interfaces. I'm not sure that its experiments are always successful, but they are always interesting as a challenge to convention.

[A five minute guide to opposing DRM](#)

It occurred to me that a summary of reasons why people should object to Digital Rights Management technologies would be useful, so I used the greater free implied by a blog to attempt one.

[Should FOSS users become consumer activists?](#)

One of my rare commentaries, this piece sets out the case for free and open source software users endorsing hardware manufacturers who are friendly to them.

[Little-known APT utilities for Debian desktop users](#)

A round-up article, describing tools designed for use with Debian's package management system.

[Eben Moglen explains highlights of GPL3 second draft](#)

An interview with Eben Moglen of the Free Software Foundation and Software Freedom Law Center a few hours after the release of the second draft of the third version of the GNU General Public License.

[NeroLinux revisited: No better than the alternatives](#)

NeroLinux is a version of a small part of the popular Nero suite, one of the most popular suites for burning CDs and DVDs on Windows. Unfortunately, it has nothing to offer that free software tools on GNU/Linux don't do at least as well, and is poor value compared to Nero's Windows products.

[OpenOffice.org extensions](#)

For my second blog entry for Linux Journal, I returned to the subject of OpenOffice.org to cover an aspect of the office suite that has been generally overlooked.

[RIAA conducting "reign of terror," lawyer says](#)

Ray Beckerman is a lawyer involved in several of the notorious cases in which the RIAA has brought dubious charges against people for downloading music illegally. His description of the typical way in which such cases are conducted is chilling.

[New Fedora test lead begins work](#)

This article is the result of a long interview with Will Woods, a Red Hat employee who is determined to bring testing rigor to the Fedora Project in particular and to free software in general.

[Michlmayr: QA brings together the cathedral and the bazaar](#)

Martin Michlmayr is the former Debian Project Leader. He's now doing a Google-sponsored degree at Cambridge upon quality assurance in free software projects. In this article, I report on some of his preliminary findings.

[Ubuntu open to aiding derivative distributions](#)

This is a brief followup to "A GPL requirement could have a chilling effect on derivative distros." In the original article, I quoted the Fedora Project as saying that it would be reluctant to help derivative distros comply. Ubuntu, however, had another perspective.

["Worst copyright law in Europe" passed in France](#)

[DADVSI](#) (Loi sur le Droit d'Auteur et des Droits Voisins dans la Société de l'Information, or Law on Author's Rights and Related Rights in the Information Society) is France's answer to the American Digital Millennium Copyright Act. Its passage was marked by endless irregularities, and dissent against the bill continues.

[Taking Tabs to the Limit with Tabbrowser Extensions](#)

For my first blog entry for Linux Journal, I focused on a tool that I have quickly found essential for my daily work. Tabbrowser Extensions is considered a controversial Firefox extension by many, but I wouldn't be without it, despite the fact that it can be a little buggy.

[Dropping GNU/Linux helps restore Corel profitability](#)

When I first became interested in GNU/Linux, Corel was a major company in the field. A few years later, it had dropped development for the operating system as it struggled to survive. Amusingly, I was accused of sensationalism because of the headline, although it seems to summarize the attitudes of Corel executives.

[Gnash, the free Flash player, makes progress](#)

A field test of Gnash, the free software alternative Flash player. This project is on the Free Software Foundation's high-priority list as one of the major remaining needs for a free desktop, so I thought it well worth covering, even in its incomplete state.

[A GPL requirement could have a chilling effect on derivative distros](#)

This article explores the problems faced by derivative GNU/Linux distributions when trying to comply with the GNU General Public License's requirement for them to make source code available. Many are unaware of the requirements, and wrongly believe that they only have to provide the source code for packages they modify. The article was Slashdotted, and, in some circles, wrongly perceived as an attack on the Free Software Foundation.

[Canadian anti-DRM coalition makes timely debut](#)

While I covered IntellectualPrivacy.ca, I took the time to report on the general status of Digital Rights Restrictions technologies in Canada, where I live. We narrowly missed being as badly off as the United States in 2005, but everyone expects that the issues will return as soon as the new Conservative government finds the time.

[Anti-DRM campaign targets the RIAA](#)

Still more coverage of the Defective By Design campaign – this time, in advance. This time, the

tactic was to have supporters phone up the Recording Industry Association of America and equivalent organizations around the world to protest Digital Rights Restrictions. Apparently, the RIAA received thousands of calls.

[Anti-DRM campaign expands, faces challenges](#)

Coverage of the Defective By Design protests in 8 American cities on Saturday, June 10. I made about 20 phone calls and wrote the article the same day – that's what journalism is all about!

[Libranet's last goodbye](#)

Libranet was one of the oldest Debian-derived distributions. Its development had been suspended in November 2005 due to the death of its founder, but many of its users hoped it would somehow continue. Unfortunately, it won't.

[Google Spreadsheets and the usefulness of online applications](#)

The announcement of Google Spreadsheets made me start to think about online applications in general. I can't help wondering if they serve any point, especially if you're a free software user.

[OpenOffice.org virus debunked by experts](#)

Kaspersky Lab exaggerated a routine macro function into a virus. Experts responded quickly, pointing out the exaggeration.

[First look: Xara Xtreme LX](#)

A review of version 0.5 of Xara LX. So far, so good was my conclusion – but the ultimate success will depend on whether the unimplemented tools and extras are added.

[Using Debconf to configure a system](#)

A description of Debconf, an alternative to editing text file in Debian and its derivative distributions.

[FSF launches anti-DRM campaign outside WinHEC 2006](#)

The FSF launched its Defective By Design campaign against DRM on Microsoft's home turf. I wasn't there to see it, but I received a report soon afterwards from the organizers.

[Review: ThinkFree Online](#)

I wasn't too impressed by ThinkFree as an office suite on my hard drive. However, as an online application, it's by far the most advanced one that I've seen.

[Chilling Effects site defends online freedom of expression](#)

A Chilling Effect is the threat of a law to stifle free speech. The Chilling Effects site is an attempt to document online chilling effects, and to advise the general public about them.

[Fedora board chair looks ahead](#)

An interview with Max Spevack, the chair of the Fedora Board about the changes he hopes to see in the Fedora distribution in the coming months.

[Canadian census developers add Linux support](#)

As a result of my other stories about the Canadian online census – or, to be precise, as a result of the responses to them – developers working for the Canadian census took the first step towards

correcting the problems with it by adding support for GNU/Linux. For me, it was a small, but heartening proof of the effectiveness of responsible advocacy.

[Canadian census controversy continues](#)

A follow-up to my original article on the subject. It turns out that the online census raised some security issues and may have violated several of the procurement rules laid down by the Treasury Board. Most of this information came from people contacting me because of my first store on the subject (see below).

[Canadian online census discriminates against FOSS](#)

Sometimes, stories come the most ordinary places you can imagine. This one came from my daily mail, and my inability to use the online census web site with GNU/Linux. It developed more momentum than I could have dreamed.

[Laid back at Linuxfest Northwest](#)

Coverage of a one-day conference in Bellingham Washington – one of the most relaxed and enjoyable GNU/Linux events that I've ever attended.

[Ututo-e: "the only free distribution" revisited](#)

A year previously, I reviewed the Argentinean distribution Ututo-e. Hearing that Richard Stallman had started using the distribution, I decided that it was time to examine the next version of the distribution.

[Free software, you've been framed](#)

As the Free Software Foundation prepares for its anti-DRM campaign, I discussed with Peter Brown, executive director, the difficulties of entering a debate when your opposition has set the terms of reference.

[Xara retools for FOSS](#)

A profile of Charles Moir, the CEO of Xara, about he has transformed the company while porting its flagship product to GNU/Linux. It's a gutsy move, that flies in the face of conventional wisdom about major companies porting their applications.

[FSF supports average users with high-priority list](#)

The FSF high priority list is a group of projects that most urgently need to be developed so that users can have a free software desktop without giving anything up. The list makes an interesting comparison to Novell's list of software that users want to see ported to GNU/Linux.

[Using OpenOffice.org's spadmin as an advanced font manager](#)

Spadmin is leftover from the days when printer supporter on UNIX-like systems were dicey. However, the utility is still useful as a font manager for those working with dozens of fonts inside OpenOffice.org.

[Last look: Applixware](#)

in the late 1990s, Applixware was one of the only office suites available for GNU/Linux. Today, it shows its age, but still have a few tricks to show modern office programs.

[Why technical writers aren't using FOSS](#)

A short commentary based on a mailing list exchange in the fall of 2005. Like many commentaries, it brought more comments than most articles that I research carefully for days before writing.

[First look: AjaxWrite](#)

AjaxWrite is the first of a new series of on-line applications by Ajax13, a new company founded by Michael Robertson of Linspire fame. It seems a good start, but needs more work to match rival projects like Writerly.

[Package management meets version control in rPath](#)

rPath is a new company founded by Red Hat alumnae. Its tools are developed to make the production of a distribution quicker – often, it claims, twenty or thirty times faster.

[ActiveState reactivates](#)

After being owned by Sophos for several years, ActiveState, the toolmaker for free programming languages, recently re-emerged as a separate company again. In this article, I interview David Ascher, ActiveState's CTO, but where the company has been and where it's going.

[Outsourcer sees FOSS as unlikely ally](#)

An article based on an interview with the CTO of EPAM, one of the largest outsourcing companies in eastern Europe.

[Graphite: smart font technology comes to FOSS](#)

Like KMFL, Graphite is a project developed by SIL International. It not only introduces smart font technology to GNU/Linux, but gives free software one of the most advanced versions of it.

[KMFL lets users switch keyboards on the fly](#)

KMFL is a GNU/Linux version of Keyman. It brings a small, but useful piece of functionality to free software, especially if you are working with non-European languages or several languages at once.

[Review: GNOME 2.14](#)

Version 2.14 is an incremental release of the GNOME desktop, but notable for its general increased speed and performance.

[Smart Unicode fonts released under free license](#)

A short article about the release of Charis SIL and Doulos SIL, two high-quality fonts that are among the first to be released under an FSF-approved license.

[First look: Fedora Core 5](#)

A review of Fedora Core 5, the community version of Red hat.

[Debian decides on GNU Free Documentation License](#)

Coverage of the Debian general resolution vote to resolve a three year old debate. The article includes a sidebar that summarizes the Condorcet voting system.

[First look: KOffice 1.5, part 2: The minor applications](#)

The second part of my review of the Koffice suite, a sometimes-neglected project that deserves far

more attention and support than it usually gets. In this part, I look at the applications for such uses as graphics, project management and charting, and come up with some conclusions that are slightly different from those in part 1.

[First look: KOffice 1.5, part 1: The major applications](#)

My first two-part article! Koffice often gets ignored in favor of OpenOffice.org, so I used the occasion of the first 1.5 beta to take a thorough look. In this part of the article, I look at Koffice's applications for word processing, spreadsheets, and presentations, as well as general performance.

[A survey of free font licenses](#)

The license used by Bitstream to release the Vera fonts is the basis for thinking about free font licenses. Recently, however, two new licenses have emerged that build upon the Bitstream Vera license. This interest raises the possibility of more quality fonts being available for free and open source software.

[FOSS for OS/2: keeping the flame alive](#)

In the mid-Nineties, before I discovered GNU/Linux, OS/2 was my main operating system. To my surprise, despite years of neglect from IBM, OS/2 survives, with a new third-party version of the operating system, aided by an array of free and open source software.

[Hacking OpenOffice.org dictionaries](#)

This is an article inspired by feedback and requests. I probably wouldn't have thought of it by myself.

[The open source portfolio initiative](#)

The Open Source Portfolio Initiative is a multi-university educational project designed to incorporate portfolios into other aspects of online learning. The OSPI is built on SAKAI, an educational Content Management System, making for a powerful combination.

[Setting up international character support](#)

A how-to that explains changing the locale and keyboard layout in GNU/Linux to use an international standard such as UTF-8. I wrote the article because I was embarrassed about not being able to spell correctly the names of non-English email correspondents.

[Free software advocate finishes third in Canadian election](#)

A followup to my earlier article on Mathieu Allard, the only candidate for a major political party to make free software party of his campaign in the January 23, 2006 Canadian election.

[Gentium: an award-winning font joins the free software world](#)

Developed by Victor Gaultney for SIL International, a Christian academic organization, Gentium is a font with a lot going for it: It is aesthetically pleasing, issued under a free licence and, when complete, will completely support the Unicode encoding formatting, making it useful for virtually every written human language.

[Debian scrutinizes GPL3](#)

Debian GNU/Linux is publicly debating the first draft of version 3 of the GNU General Public Licence. This article summarizes some of the leading views, as well as the views of Branden

Robinson, the Debian Project Leader. Given Debian's strict free software guidelines and its members experience with licensing issues, the debate is one of the most thorough that the draft has received so far.

[Canadian election candidate takes stand for FOSS](#)

A profile of Mathieu Allard, the New Democratic Party candidate for the riding of Saint Boniface, Manitoba in the January 23, 2006 election. Allard was the only candidate from a major party to make the use of free and open source software part of his campaign platform. He also spearheaded the first free software resolution for a major political party in the Manitoba NDP's 2005 convention.

[Review: Conglomerate XML Editor reaches basic functionality](#)

Conglomerate is a WYSIWYG editor for XML with a difference. Instead of trying to imitate a word processor, it's designed to show the structure of the document that is being created.

[Helping IT to work with marketing using Extended DISC](#)

According to the president of the North American Extended DISC franchise, IT workers and marketing employees tend to favor different types of behavior. This article summarizes how IT workers can overcome this natural difference and the benefits of working to do so.

[WorldLabel.com release reflects growing use of OpenOffice.org](#)

A short news item, reflecting the growing popularity of FOSS software.

[Why UserFriendly went private again](#)

An article based on an interview with J.D. Frazer and David Barton, the team behind the popular UserFriendly comic strip. The article explains how the business went public during the dot-com craze, then successfully went private – and lived to tell the tale.