

WRITE ACCESS

More on Spelling

I am writing this email to agree with Paul Clenton when he raises the rather large issue of the creeping US Americanisation of the world, as exemplified in language. I am an Australian, who has lived and worked in the US. I have also visited the UK for work and play, so you could say that I have experienced this issue from both sides.

The comments made by the editor sound well and good but do not seem to recognize that there is a worldwide bias creeping into language and even general culture on a broader scale. This pattern is particularly the case in magazines: Many seem to be pandering to the US sensitivities, but the US Americans do not seem to recognize the validity of non-US sensitivities at all.

As Paul says, it doesn't feel quite right to read US spelling in an English magazine, and even in my multi-cultural country we primarily speak UK English, so it equally feels that way here. The seemingly enforced changing of the spelling to US English here makes me feel like a second-class citizen in my own country... and I would suggest that mine is not a unique reaction.

Of course there are commercial consideration for you. But really Linux is an international operating system with very strong support for non-US English languages, so why are we all acquiescing to US American insular attitudes in the associated Linux magazines? Why not let US Americans read magazines in UK English and other English variations (what do the Finns use?). Surely nobody will be permanently damaged by the experience.

As I have bought your fine magazine *Down Under* with all its spelling eccentricities, I obviously do not consider the spelling to be an overriding consideration. Over the years I have naturally bought many US magazines as well. But it would still be encouraging to read a UK magazine in the spelling of its own country.

John Paterson

LM Thanks for your comments. Given the problems of selling one magazine all around the world, we welcome your further insights on this matter. I won't restate all the reasons we gave in the March issue for adopting American spelling, but since this matter is still in the air, allow me to add one more thought.

As an American operating in what is (at least partly) a very British publishing space, I can tell you that people on my side of the ocean grow up admiring British English for its humor, its concision, and its depth of expression.

We take these values very seriously at *Linux Magazine*. Spelling is not the same as writing; nor is spelling an especially reliable indicator of attitude or cultural bias. I could show you magazines that have perfectly British spelling, but the prose is peppered with way more American-style hyperbole and bravado than we would ever dream of including in these gentle pages.

Liking Xandros

Following a pleasant experience with an Asus Eee PC, I installed Xandros Linux on my desktop. I tried other distros from your magazine, but I found Xandros much easier to use due to its file manager and control panel, so I went back to it and now use it on all our computers. Many of your readers will doubtless criticize this choice due to the deal Xandros made with Microsoft. But in the real world, businesses willing to adopt Linux need to interoperate with Windows.

It seems to me that the Linux community is more interested in religious arguments about free software and seeing their own name on a distribution than they are in creating a real competitor to Microsoft. Say what you like about Xandros, at least they have put some effort into creating a version of Linux that is easy for Windows users to switch to.

Julian Moss

LM Xandros wasn't alone in making the Microsoft deal, and the other distros who made the deal all still seem to have customers. There is much to say on this issue, but in the end, the best part is that you found a Linux you like.

Please send your comments and suggestions to letters@linux-magazine.com