

BOOK REVIEWS

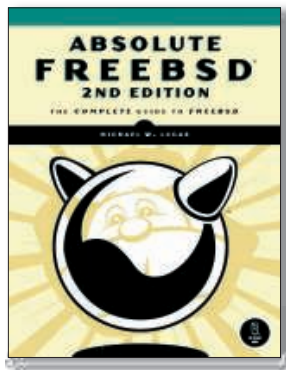
BY JAMES PYLES

Absolute FreeBSD, 2nd Edition

Absolute FreeBSD claims to be a “one-stop shopping” text for all things FreeBSD. Although it isn’t an impossible goal to achieve, not all books live up to this kind of hype. Happily, Michael W. Lucas wrote a winner.

I have to admit that although I’m familiar enough with Linux in general – and Debian-based distros in particular – to feel comfortable reviewing books in that area, I’ve never entered the world of FreeBSD or *nix. With that in mind, this “one-stop shopping” book should be able to teach me FreeBSD administration.

Absolute FreeBSD begins with the usual introduction and history lesson and then introduces the various help resources you can find online, where to get



the operating system, and how to install it. Next, Lucas covers the boot process, backup and restore, kernel management, network configuration, and so on.

Lucas states that he wrote the book to be read from cover to cover, so there are no surprises there. What makes the book stand out is the thoroughness with which he covers each topic and the clarity of his writing. Although he is not the only system administrator who knows how to write

and keep it interesting, Lucas writes with a style that not only tells you what you need to know but also makes you feel like he’s actually talking to you.

FreeBSD has changed over the years not only in terms of technical improvements and innovations, but also in ac-

cess. What was once the purview of the elite kernel programmer and *nix guru is now within the grasp of anyone with the ability to install an operating system, configure services, and read source code. Although Linux gets most of the buzz, at least in casual open source circles on the web, FreeBSD has been quietly working behind the scenes since before Linux even existed.

If you’re a *nix admin, or want to be, or are just curious about the potential FreeBSD has to offer, you should pick up a copy of the latest edition of this Michael W. Lucas book. You won’t be disappointed.

Michael W. Lucas
Paperback, 774 pages
No Starch Press, 2007
ISBN-10: 1593271514
ISBN-13: 978-1593271510
£ 30.23, US\$ 44.95, EUR 86.18

Knoppix Hacks, 2nd Edition

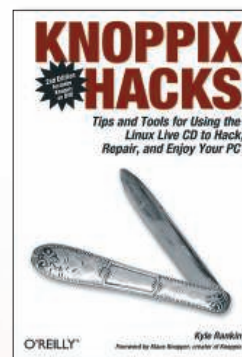
The first edition of Rankin’s book was well received but is now dated. Knoppix continues to develop, and with the advent of new products such as Windows Vista, you might want some extra rescuing. The latest incarnations of Knoppix and *Knoppix Hacks* can help. In fact, Knoppix provides hacks for the operating system of your choice, so don’t just think of the Live CD as a Windows fix.

I was a little disappointed that the Live CD is now a Live DVD because my Windows machine only has a CD drive, which means I must test the DVD on my Ubuntu box. *Knoppix Hacks* helps right away – the latter part of Hack #1 shows you how to create an SBM boot floppy that will let you boot from almost any kind of optical disc. Also, Hack #2 ex-

plains how to boot a virtual Knoppix using the QEMU virtual machine environment.

As I read through Rankin’s book, I discovered that an abundance of options are available with Knoppix. Although Knoppix is billed as the “Swiss Army knife” of Linux distros, it’s not just a “fix it” disc. For example, consider Hack #43: “Convert Knoppix to Debian Unstable.”

Like the other books in O’Reilly’s Hacks series, Rankin’s update doesn’t disappoint. Both Knoppix and *Knoppix Hacks* live up to their reputations as



being highly versatile and flexible – a real “one-stop shopping” environment for a variety of needs. Although you can read the book from cover to cover, it is really meant to be a reference guide for specific tasks.

Repair Linux, rescue Windows, and even create your own customized version of Knoppix – all these options are available. If you like Knoppix, get a copy of *Knoppix Hacks*.

Kyle Rankin
Paperback, 420 pages
O’Reilly, 2007
ISBN-10: 059651493X
ISBN-13: 978-0596514938
£ 17.66, US\$ 34.99, EUR 24.31

Linux Networking Cookbook

I'll admit that I'm of a fan of Carla Schroder's articles. This self-described "bratgrrl" is self-taught in the realm of Linux and entered the world of computing – and ultimately systems administration – at the age of 37. As a mid-life career changer myself, I am intrigued by her story and wanted to review her book for reasons other than it simply being a Linux book. Schroder wrote the *Linux Cookbook* for O'Reilly back in 2004, so this isn't her first foray into the world of writing books. *Linux Cookbook* was well received, so I wanted to see whether *Linux Networking Cookbook* could live up to her previous effort.

Like most cookbooks, Schroder's book is a collection of Linux recipes. In this case, the recipes are designed to take the reader through a set of specific network administration tasks on Linux platforms.

Often cookbooks include only loosely related recipes under general topics, but the "Building" chapters in *Linux Networking Cookbook* use each recipe as a

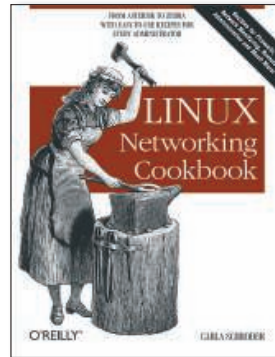
step in a process. For instance, Chapter 2, "Building a Linux Gateway on a Single-Board Computer," comprises 13 separate recipes, but each recipe is actually a step in the process of accomplishing the chapter's task. From the chapter titles, simply pick the task you want to perform and work through the recipes in numerical order.

Other chapters discuss principles rather than specific steps. For example, Chapter 6, "Routing with Linux," details the principles of configuring routing on a Linux platform, but you won't learn the specifics of actually building a router. Of course, not all networking tasks involve constructing a dedicated Linux box to achieve a particular goal. This flexible approach helps the book appeal to readers who want to learn the principles of networking, in addition to

goal-oriented readers who want to put together Linux networking devices.

Linux Networking Cookbook was written with both the newbie and seasoned veteran in mind, but readers do need know basics such as what TCP/IP is; the differences between hubs, routers, and switches; and what makes a LAN different from a WAN.

If you have an interest in network administration or are an admin who wants to learn more about networking in the Linux world, Schroder's *Linux Networking Cookbook* is the resource for you.



Carla Schroder
Paperback, 638 pages
O'Reilly, 2007
ISBN-10: 0596102488
ISBN-13: 978-0596102487
£ 30.23, US\$ 44.99, EUR 86.18

THE MATHEMATICS OF HUMOUR

TWELVE Quirky Humans,
TWO Lovecraftian Horrors,
ONE Acerbic A.I.,
ONE Fluffy Ball of Innocence and
TEN Years of Archives
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