



An up-to-date look at free software and its makers

PROJECTS ON THE MOVE

We look at the Wwwoffle proxy server, the Rubrica contact data manager, the eSvn GUI-based SVN front-end, and the MDB Tools converter.

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Thanks to cellphones and GPRS or UMTS, the Internet has become a constant companion. Business associates expect their contacts to be available 24/7, and assuming you have a UMTS network, surfing with your laptop or PDA is not an issue. GPRS, however, can make surfing today's graphics-rich websites a real challenge.

are working on something else, you can surf at speeds more typical of a broadband connection.

Wwwoffle version 2.9 also can add a footer to each page that shows when the page was downloaded. To save bandwidth, the application filters Flash animations, Java applets, and animated gifs by user request.

A "DontGet" list lets you specify pages that Wwwoffle should skip and prevents graphics downloads. The software caches the http protocol and can also handle ftp transfers.

Contact Management with Rubrica

If you have ever tried launching one of the heavyweight Gnome or KDE standard address book applications on older hardware, you might appreciate a less resource-hungry alternative. Rubrica [2] is based on Gtk and thus targets Gnome

Money Matters

The Wwwoffle program [1] dates back to the days before flat rates. It was designed to help modem users reduce online costs. Wwwoffle (World Wide Web Offline Explorer) is a proxy server optimized for offline browsing.

After feeding a URL list to the program, Wwwoffle downloads sites, including graphics, and stores them in its internal cache. This allows users to surf the Web without getting online. If you use GPRS to download pages while you

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[1] Wwwoffle: <http://www.gedanken.demon.co.uk/wwwoffle/>

[2] Rubrica: <http://rubrica.berlios.de/>

[3] eSvn: <http://zoneit.free.fr/esvn/>

[4] MDB Tools: <http://mdbtools.sourceforge.net/>

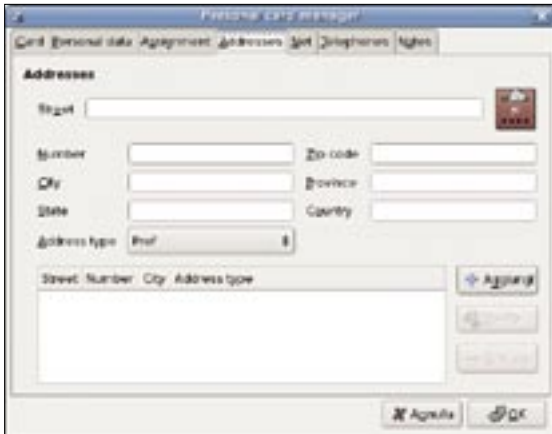


Figure 1: Rubrica stores as many phone numbers and snailmail and email addresses as you like.

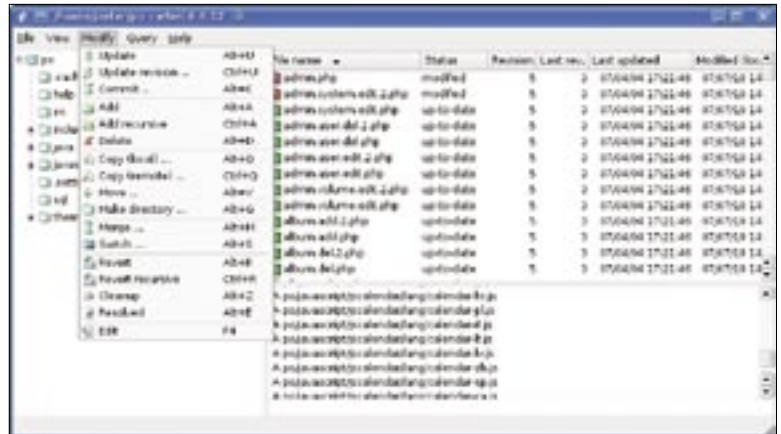


Figure 2: eSvn highlights files with local changes in red and gives users menu-based access to a full set of SVN functions.

users or users with any other Gtk-based desktop environment.

Besides its frugal memory requirements, Rubrica impresses with useful features. For example, Rubrica recognizes that some people have more than one cellphone or landline. A Rubrica contact will accept multiple numbers in the *Home*, *Work*, *Fax*, *Cellular*, or *Other* categories (Figure 1), in addition to multiple postal and email addresses and URLs. Rubrica gives you just as many fields per contact as KAddressbook or Evolution and groups them neatly into the bargain.

The Rubrica software also exports calendar data to HTML, giving users the ability at least to view their data on their PDAs. The application can also import CSV, GnomeCard, KAddressbook, and Evolution data.

The program also impresses with a neat interface. Not a single icon is wasted, and the icons do what you expect. A list of contact groups is on the left of the main window and you can assign icons to the groups for better visibility. Rubrica manages multiple address books in addition to contact groups. Users can access all the groups defined in Rubrica within the address books, thus avoiding the need to create groups multiple times. Incidentally, Rubrica stores its data in an intuitive XML format with an open specification.

eSvn

Most FOSS developers still rely on the console when it comes to managing source code with their favorite revision management tools. However, it can be difficult to find the commit information

you need in a monochrome *svn log* display. eSvn [3] proves that there is an alternative. The GUI-based front-end offers a neat Qt interface and supports almost all SVN functions (Figure 2).

An overview of all the files belonging to a working copy makes it easier to trace development steps. Files modified locally are highlighted in red. The file list shows the revision, the update, and the local change date.

SVN commands such as *update*, *commit*, *blame*, or *log* are accessible via the menu – something that will take the headaches out of version management for newcomers. The graphics interface facilitates handling of revisions, tags, and individual development branches. Under the hood, eSvn relies on the SVN binaries, thus inheriting the stability of SVN in its handling of versioning data.

MDB Tools for Access

The major disadvantage of proprietary formats is that they are largely unintelligible to anyone but the vendor, which is why proprietary formats have no reason to exist in the free software community. But if you are forced to use Microsoft Access databases at work, you will be happy to hear that the commu-

nity has managed to decipher the Microsoft database format – MDB Tools [4] converts MDB format to MySQL, Oracle, Sybase, PostgreSQL data, and others. The next version of the tool will even provide write access to Access databases. In addition to Access, the Microsoft programs Money and Exchange use the same database engine, known as the Jet Engine, and MDB Tools can interpret output from both.

Besides the converters, the MDB Tools package also has a simple ODBC driver and a GUI that displays MDB file content graphically and exports data to a user-defined CSV format (Figure 3). SQL queries can be used for the export process.

Linux users couldn't do a thing with Access databases before the MDB Tools arrived on the scene. Now you can at least read the data and convert to another format, without any hitches in most cases. ■

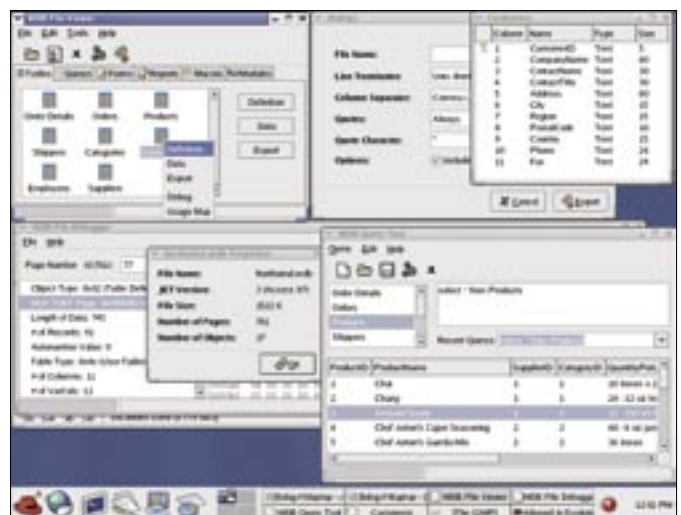


Figure 3: The MDB Tools GUI displays Access database content and exports data to CSV files.