



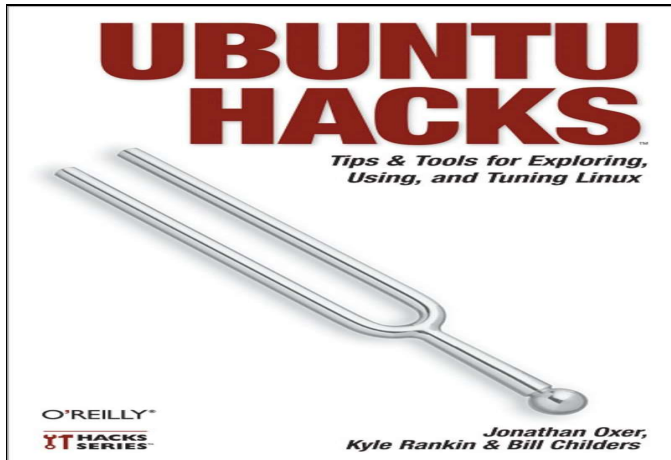
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Book review: Ubuntu Hacks by Jonathan Oxer, Kyle Rankin and Bill Childers

By Brian Turner

I want to tell you a little story. One that involves: love, greed, selfishness, guilt, shame and finally—confession. A torrid little story this is. It revolves around a geek and his *love* for free software. Not just free as in freedom, we’re talking free as in “keep my cash in my wallet” free! I’ll be playing the part of the geek, Ubuntu will play the part of free software.

O’Reilly has released another excellent book in the Hacks series—“Ubuntu Hacks”. Three authors accept credit on the cover: Jonathan Oxer, Kyle Rankin & Bill Childers. Jonathan has written “How To Build A Website And Stay Sane” and is president of Linux Australia. He has presented dozens of tutorials, papers, and keynotes at conferences like LinuxTag and Open Source Developers Conference. He has also been a Debian developer since 2002. Kyle Rankin wrote one of the first Hacks books I read—“Knoppix Hacks”, and there are a couple of other books credited to him as well. He is also the current president of the North Bay Linux Users Group. Bill Childers has been working with Linux and Unix since “before it was cool”. And because you can’t make this kind of thing up, you should know that he also serves as a chairman with the Gilroy Garlic Festival Association.



The book’s cover

...but back to our story. Our geek enjoys the Hacks books for one reason only: *greed*. You see, these books typically contain 100 nuggets of pure gold. Not raw, just found it in the hills, gold. We’re talking refined by fire, tested, stamped and approved gold. Our geek can’t tell you that his first impression was unbiased because he has read so many of these books. What he can tell you, though, is that this one continues the tradition of delivery just when it is needed most.

Now, because the geek in our story *loves* free software, and because he is just *selfish* enough to want nice things, big and beautiful things (for free!), he immediately set out to see if the book could help in his current quest—to build a web server with PHP support. No doubt, many of you have been down the road: get Apache,

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where's the GCC?, build Apache, get PHP, rebuild Apache with PHP support. No doubt, many of you have experienced nothing but blindingly simple success. We'll leave out the gory details, but our geek was making progress toward the end goal and was almost there when this book arrived. Should he have turned to the pages for help when his independent struggle was about to yield success? Would the book contain exactly what he needed, when he needed it most? Of course! Our geek is stubborn about doing things on his own, but not that stubborn. Sure enough, Tip Number 96 "Build a Web Server", was there waiting for him. So with some small level of *guilt*, he typed in one `apt-get` command for Apache2 and one `apt-get` command for the PHP module. Bring on the *shame*. Turns out that creating a working webserver with PHP support just wasn't that tough.

First tried and favorite tip so far, number 96 "Build a Web Server"

The contents

This golden nugget was nestled in amongst four hundred and forty seven pages like a coin in a treasure chest. Along with the other 99 nuggets, these gold pieces are divided up into ten rich chapters. Chapters that include: Administration, Security, Multimedia, and even Getting Started.

Who's this book for?

This book is for you. Obviously, if you are reading this review, you probably wanted to know how to make Ubuntu do very specific things and wondered if this book would deliver. Right on the cover is the promise of "Tips & Tools for Exploring, Using, and Tuning Linux" and let me tell you, it delivers. If our geek were tricked into a *confession*, it would be an admission that it is because of books like this one that he gets his tricky work done. If you use Ubuntu at work, this book pays for itself with just one tip. If you use Ubuntu at home, it might pay for itself after a few tips. (The geek in our story believes his personal time is worth something.) Either way, it's a great book to have beside you.

Relevance to free software

This book is about solving real world challenges without asking you to spend another dime on software. If you are a fan of this type of "free", this book has you covered. However, Chapter 3 does cover multimedia and this can become an issue for some. Whatever your views or concerns, it is still good to know what is out there.

Pros

This book will save you time solving your own problems and make you look brilliant when solving problems for others. Just having a book with a title that includes "hacks" might even gain you some points among your peers. It could even increase your gas mileage (or not... your mileage may vary).

Cons

If you enjoy the journey more than the destination, this might not be for you. Rather than taking down the path of enlightenment, you are going to get solutions to problems immediately.

Title Ubuntu Hacks

Cons

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Author Jonathan Oxer, Kyle Rankin and Bill Childers
Publisher O'Reilly
ISBN 0596527209
Year 2006
Pages 447
CD included No
FS Oriented 9
Over all score 10

In short

Biography

Brian Turner (/user/14825" title="View user profile.): After 18 years supporting communication networks, satellite and microwave, I've discovered some fun on the PC again. GNU/Linux, Mac OS X and MS Windows all have their uses, but GNU/Linux is where the fun is at.

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