



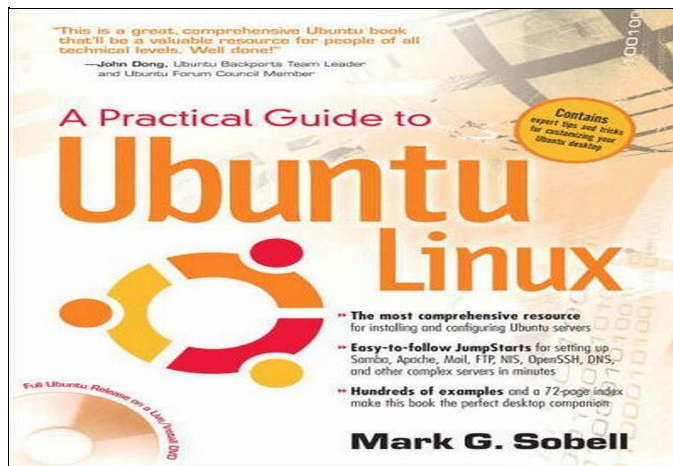
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Book Review: Practical Guide to Ubuntu Linux by Mark G. Sobell

Maintain your system

By Alan Berg

Mainstream Linux distributions such as the ever-popular Ubuntu have the potential to contain thousands or tens of thousands of packages and have a wealth of supporting services activated on computer boot ups. Mark G. Sobell's book *A practical guide to Ubuntu Linux*, published by Prentice Hall, describes the details of maintaining these complex structures on your own machine.



The book's cover

My first impression of the book was that the content was well chosen and relatively timeless. Rather than dwelling on particular superficial features, Ubuntu Linux's underlying structures are described in great detail. The benefit of this is that the content will remain valid despite the frequent updates we see in today's competitive market place.

Even though the author based the content on Ubuntu 7.10, the book is generic enough to be true in most Linux based situations.

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The book is self-contained with a Live CD and books source code included for quick installation. By the time you have finished reading you should be able to maintain an Ubuntu server or two.

The contents

This practical guide is composed of 1200 pages divided into six sections, and twenty-seven chapters and five appendixes. Mark G. Sobell explains installation, basic practical concepts, maintaining the system and details a lot about the client and server side of Linux and specifically Ubuntu 7.10.

If you are new to Linux and are moving away from Windows, with a little patience and a bit of trial and error you'll find that this book will guide you layer by layer into the right mind and skill set. The book contains many listings and screen grabs, helping readers find their way through the wealth of tools.

After describing installation, there are two excellent chapters (9,11) on the Bourne Again Shell. I suspect I will reread them a couple more times when I am repairing systems that I have broken.

Section four covers System Administration and is a delight to read. This is the meat of the book and in my opinion is the most useful. A clear and crisp description of the *init* daemon helps set a well thought out learning path.

If you want to relax and have some fun, then chapter 16 on building the Linux Kernel may well be for you. (In the past, I have spent many hours optimizing my own machine by turning off unnecessary drivers, not because of any real gain, but it is fun.)

Section five, *Using Clients and Setting Up Servers*, explains essentials such as ssh, scp, FTP, NIS, NFS, exim4, spamassassin. The final chapter on the Apache web server is handy for those of you who like maintaining their own web site.

Who's this book for?

This book is for the practical and pragmatic Linux owner that happens to be running Ubuntu.

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Relevance to free software

Linux is free software. Ubuntu is a shaped version of Linux with a lot of communal effort and polish behind it. Ubuntu has built a reputation for creating an excellent experience for desktop orientated owners and then later for server administration.

Mark G. Sobell's book discusses free software only, and helps build the necessary knowledge to run services on top of Ubuntu.

Pros

This book is thorough and detailed, with enough digestible information to make a motivated reader into a plausible administrator.

Cons

The book discusses Ubuntu 7.10; however, Ubuntu 8.04 has just arrived. Personally, I don't think this as much of a detractor as the book is generic enough remain very relevant.

Book

Title A Practical Guide to Ubuntu Linux(R)
Author Mark G. Sobell
Publisher Prentice Hall PTR
ISBN 9780132360395
Year 2007
Pages 1200
CD included Yes
FS Oriented 10
Overall score 9

In short

Biography

[Alan Berg](#) (/user/8" title="View user profile.):

Alan Berg Bsc. MSc. PGCE, has been a lead developer at the Central Computer Services at the University of Amsterdam for the last eight years. In his spare time, he writes computer articles. He has a degree, two masters and a teaching qualification. In previous incarnations, he was a technical writer, an Internet/Linux course writer, and a science teacher. He likes to get his hands dirty with the building and gluing of systems. He remains agile by playing computer games with his kids who (sadly) consistently beat him physically, mentally and morally.

You may contact him at [reply.to.berg](mailto:reply.to.berg@chello.nl) At [chello.nl](mailto:reply.to.berg@chello.nl)

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