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Learning Debian GNU/Linux

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Preface

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Acknowledgments

Lately it seems that two topics crop up in conversation after conversation: the stock market and Linux. As for the stock market, I'm something of a pessimist. When friends and even perfect strangers continually recount their recent financial successes, I conclude that a stock market correction is overdue. (I've shifted my investments to bonds.)

As for Linux, I'm considerably more - perhaps wildly - optimistic. When my realtor tells me about the TV feature on Linux she saw on CNN, I see it as a harbinger of Linux Spring. Like her, my cable TV repairman, and my colleague in the next office, you've probably heard about Linux from a magazine, radio or TV program, or a friend. You're wondering what Linux is about and whether you should give it a try. If so, particularly if you currently use Microsoft Windows, this book was written for you.

Not long ago, Linux was the plaything of the technical elite. Today, however, Linux is much easier to use. Every day brings a new tool or feature designed for

ease of use. If you work with Microsoft Windows and have dabbled a bit in MS-DOS, or are curious about what happens inside Windows, you can install and configure Linux. Thousands of people from all walks of life - even journalists, who are notorious for their technical ineptitude - have already done so.

This book will make your Linux journey easier, by giving you the big picture, providing you with step-by-step procedures, and getting you started doing useful or fun activities, such as word processing or games. This book focuses on the needs of the new Linux user and on desktop Linux applications. You'll learn about networks and servers, but the details of those topics are left for more advanced books.

This book includes a CD-ROM that contains Debian GNU/Linux, so you have in your hand all you need to get started using Linux. Much of the material in this book applies to Linux generally and not merely to Debian GNU/Linux; so, even if you prefer to use another Linux distribution, you'll probably find this book useful.

Organization of This Book

Chapter 1, *Why Run Linux?*, is designed to introduce you to Linux and help you determine whether Linux is appropriate for you.

Chapter 2, *Preparing to Install Linux*, helps you understand what's involved in installing Linux and guides you through a procedure to gather information needed to successfully install Linux.

Chapter 3, *Installing Linux*, takes you step-by-step through the installation of Linux.

Chapter 4, *Issuing Linux Commands*, describes the basics of how to use the Linux command-line interface, which resembles MS-DOS but is much more powerful and sophisticated.

Chapter 5, *Installing and Configuring the X Window System*, shows you how to install and configure X.

Chapter 6, *Using the X Window System*, shows you how to use X, the graphical user interface included with Debian GNU/Linux. If you've used Microsoft Windows, you'll find X familiar and easy to use.

Chapter 7, *Configuring and Administering Linux*, shows you how to configure your Linux system. Administering a multi-user operating system such as Linux is somewhat more complicated than administering a single-user

operating system, but Linux includes tools that simplify the work.

Chapter 8, *Using Linux Applications and Clients*, describes several of the most popular applications available for Linux, including desktop suites and word processors.

Chapter 9, *Playing Linux Games*, describes several of the most popular games available for Linux. The chapter also shows you how to run your favorite Microsoft Windows games under Linux.

Chapter 10, *Setting Up a Linux-Based LAN*, shows you how to connect your Linux system to other systems on your local area network.

Chapter 11, *Getting Connected to the Internet*, shows you how to connect via your Internet Service Provider (ISP) to the Internet. Once connected, you can use your Linux system to surf the Web and access other familiar Internet services.

Chapter 12, *Setting Up a Linux-Based WAN*, shows you how to set up servers that users around the world can access via the Internet. For example, you'll learn how to install and configure Apache, the world's most popular web server.

Chapter 13, *Conquering the BASH Shell*, digs deeper into the BASH shell, the Linux command-line interface first introduced in **Chapter 4**. Here you'll see firsthand just how powerful and easy to use Linux can be.

Appendix A, *Linux Directory Tree*, describes the structure of the principal Debian GNU/Linux directories.

Appendix B, *Principal Linux Files*, describes the principal Debian GNU/Linux configuration files.

Appendix C, *The Debian Package Management Utilities*, describes the utilities provided by Debian GNU/Linux for working with packages. These utilities let you install applications, uninstall applications, and query a database that describes installed applications. This appendix also includes commands for installing the applications described in this book.

Appendix D, *Managing the Boot Process*, explains how PCs boot and describes how to configure your system to conveniently boot Linux.

Appendix E, *Linux Command Quick Reference*, briefly describes the most useful Linux commands. It also presents Linux equivalents for common MS-DOS commands.