David Fanning wrote:
> Christopher Thom writes:
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>> Between QS and expose, I feel
>> constricted and frustrated whenever I end up back on linux boxes...
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>
> Gentlemen, please take this over to alt.sex.fetish where
> it belongs!
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> Cheers,
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> David
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Wow! Never did I think that a simple question about cursor usage on the
Mac (and an off-hand remark that astronomers are moving toward Macs as a
platform of choice) would trigger such lively conversation! I was off
at a meeting over the past week so missed the real-time fun. There was
a lot useful in the discussion -- most of which I still need to digest
-- and Ken's Mac tips page is a good start. Thanks to all!

By the way, while I am in no way, shape, or form a wizard, some of us
astronomers do know at least a little bit about Unix... ;-)

For what it's worth I currently have about 8 Linux boxes in my group.
My foray into the world of Macs is the result of spending far Far FAR
!!!FAR!!! too much of my time trying to keep all of those boxes happy.
The beginning of the end was RedHat's decision to drop support of RedHat
9. (That one still really annoys me. If they wanted to do Enterprise,
fine. But Fedora should have picked up seamlessly where Version 9 left
off.) The middle of the end was probably about the time I had to
rewrite a bunch of code to cope with the fact that MetaCity is far less
configurable than sawfish, which lacking support ceased to be a real
option. The end of the end was when I spent the better part of a month
over the summer chasing strange hardware/software interactions on a
Linux box I was configuring with a big RAID array for network backups.

Somewhere in there I also got fed up with having to live with different
environments on my Linux desktop and my Windoze laptop (which had to run
things like Word, Excel, Powerpoint, Dreamweaver, Adobe, etc.).

In the end, I'm a scientist and not a system administrator. As much as I support the idea of Linux, I have to face the fact that productivity for me is not about muscle memory (which I keep having to relearn in the Linux world anyway), or about learning to make this week's flavor of Linux sing. It is about having a machine that is straightforward to support and maintain. Don't get me wrong. I am a STRONG supporter of the idea of open source. Yes, I know that OSX is not built on the best, latest, most pure, most efficient, or most whiz-bang version of Unix. And playing around with an OS IS fun. But in the end what I really need (as do my publication list and grant income) is a platform with lots of supported and useful capability that I can take out of the box and use with a minimum of pain.

Curiously, this is much the same line of reasoning that brought me to IDL 15 years ago. I grew up in a world where "image processing environment" was a euphemism for "C compiler," and for a long time was adamant about using no code that I had not compiled and for the most part written from scratch. But following a series of moves from Bell Labs UNIX to VMS to Sun to DEC/Ultrix, I finally bit the bullet and decided to move to IDL instead of porting all of my old code yet again. Clearly it was a good decision.

So, on the recommendation of a LOT of colleagues, I just bought a MacBook Pro, a Mac Pro, and one of those lovely 30-inch monitors. Time will tell whether this is the environment I settle in to.

Cheers,
Jeff Hester