

Two Types of Users

A while back I read an article talking about the "death" of Linux on the desktop. Naturally there are a lot of dissenting opinions, mostly from people who use Linux on a daily basis on their desktop machines. When I read the article, it was pretty clear what the author's definition of "death" was. The author was referring to the likelihood of the "average person", or more accurately, the computer-illiterate to choose Linux over Windows or Mac operating systems. I can understand that view within those constraints, though the "date of death" was set around 2002 or some such. Personally, I saw a chance at life for Linux a year or so back, when the small "netbook" laptops were the new big thing. Linux was making some substantial inroads in that arena, as it was better suited to the smaller memory and drive footprints of those little machines than Windows. Unfortunately, it didn't take long for the Linux-based netbook to be all but murdered by Windows, though it had to be more with XP than Vista.

Based on the "regular person" guidelines of the article writer, I would set the death of the Amiga platform somewhere in the mid-nineties, between the bankruptcy of Commodore and the bankruptcy of Escom. Perhaps that seems harsh, but again we are talking about the general public here, not people who know all about computers. Sadly, while the Amiga and its relations, including MorphOS, AROS, the various hardware projects, and more, may survive for years to come, it's unlikely they will ever be on the radar

of the general public ever again. I guess if some think Linux is already off the public consciousness, what chance does the Amiga have?

The basis of all this talk is the idea that there are two types of people in the world of computers and operating systems — the ones who know something about computers and the ones who don't (and probably don't care to). Way back, way way back, the vast majority of computer users were the first type, largely because computers were somewhat demanding, and you had to learn something about them just to use them, and to decide which to buy among all the available platform choices. Nowadays, computers are a commodity, and like any appliance most people don't really care about its workings or attached brand name as long as it does what they want it to do adequately. That's one of the big reasons why Windows and Mac are the big names today — both excel at doing the basics (Internet, games, managing media) with a relative minimum of fuss from the user. Each has advantages in certain areas, but it all works out about the same if one doesn't sweat the details. Linux can do the basics about as well as the others, with the added benefit of the bulk of the available software being free, but even with lots of advances in ease-of-use, Linux still often requires its users to have a bit more on the ball compared to Windows or Mac. One has to pick among a million-billion different variations for one. Linux has a very strong following among the "people who know something." Putting it to serious application, or at least putting more thought into its use beyond "Can I read my email and play MP3s with it?" The Amiga family is more

than capable of handling the basics of Internet and futzing around, though the available software and support is not quite there.

What made the Amiga unique throughout its life is it's always been about more than simply doing the basics, whether it was graphics and gaming in the old days to desktop video to just the enjoyment of a simple yet powerful operating system. That may have kept the Amiga and its descendants from the mass appeal of its peer systems, but it also made it something special in the eyes of the "people who know something" who could appreciate it. Even with all the various systems I've used over time, the Amiga family is the only one that's been special to me over the last couple of decades — above and beyond the "basics," that is.

...by Eric Schwarz
from the AmiTech-Dayton Gazette,
June 2009

Broadband Penetration

A new broadband survey out from Strategy Analytics shows the US in 20th position when it comes to household broadband use, well behind countries like South Korea, Singapore, and the Netherlands.

The report focuses on broadband penetration by household rather than by person. Many other reports use a per-capita broadband measurement, but Strategy Analytics says that those reports are simply using the wrong data.

"In far too many cases, people are looking at the wrong things," said Strategy Analytics' Ben Piper.

"Residential broadband is overwhelmingly consumed on a household basis — not individually. Reporting broadband penetration on a per-capita basis misses the mark, and can provide grossly misleading results."

Using this metric, South Korea tops the list; 95 percent of South Korean households have a broadband connection. No one else comes close to that figure, either. The number two spot on the list is held by Singapore, which has 88 percent household broadband penetration.

The US, with a mere 60 percent household broadband penetration, is in 20th position on the list. Strategy Analytics estimates that the US will fall to 23rd place by the end of the year.

Here are the top 20 countries and their respective household broadband percentages:

- South Korea (95%)
- Singapore (88%)
- Netherlands (85%)
- Denmark (82%)
- Taiwan (81%)
- Hong Kong (81%)
- Israel (77%)
- Switzerland (76%)
- Canada (76%)
- Norway (75%)
- Australia (72%)
- Finland (69%)
- France (68%)

- United Kingdom (67%)
- United Arab Emirates (65%)
- Japan (64%)
- Sweden (63%)
- Estonia (62%)
- Belgium (62%)
- USA (60%)

To what does Strategy Analytics attribute the phenomenal Internet saturation of South Korea? "Its highly urbanized population, as well as to the existence of a comprehensive government-backed broadband policy."

The Federal Communications Commission is currently drafting such a plan for the US.

...by Nate Anderson
<http://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/news/2009/06/us-20th-in-broadband-penetration-trails-s-korea-estonia.ars>

C=64 Forever: Click to Play

When the C64 was launched in 1982 it immediately set the standard for 8-bit home computers. Its low cost, superior graphics, high quality sound and a massive 64 KB of RAM positioned it as the winner in the home computer wars, knocking out competitors from the likes of Atari, Texas Instruments, Sinclair, Apple and IBM.

Selling over 30 million units and introducing a whole generation to computers and programming, the C64 shook up the video games industry and sparked cultural phenomena such as computer music and the demoscene. In recent years the C64 has enjoyed a spectacular revival manifesting itself once again as a retro-computing platform.

To allow you to experience and relive the wonders of this unique computer, Cloanto, developers of Commodore/Amiga software since the 1980s, has introduced C64 Forever, a revolutionary preservation, emulation and support package. C64 Forever embodies an intuitive player interface, backed by a built-in database containing more than 5,000 C64 game entries, and advanced support for the new RP2 format, dubbed the "MP3 of retro-gaming".

Watch or download the C64 Forever presentation (HD video) to learn more: <http://www.c64forever.com/>

July Calendar

July 8 — Amiga-By-The-Loop Chapter
7:00 pm — South Grand Prairie Library
760 Bardin Road, Grand Prairie

July 8 — MCCC Board of Director's Meeting
Approximately 9:15 pm — Location TBD

July 25 — Newsletter Deadline — 7:00 am

MCCC 4418 Sharpsburg Drive Grand Prairie, Texas 75052
<http://www.amigamccc.org>