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2019 New Tower Computer

2019-6-4: My (John Nash) current primary “working” machine, called J6, is a Sept 2011 tower, which has served me well and is still a useful and well-balanced computer for my needs.

Needs

- a lot of management of files, since I have a goodly collection of computer archives, having been involved with building and using computers since 1961, and I have managed to preserve many of the files, as well as materials from my academic career, my creative writing, folk dance, and personal and family history material.
- some computation (i.e., scientific computing), as well as specialized text processing, which can be intensive but is NOT gaming; I also do some scripting as well as programming for math/stat.
- much communication activity (web, email, video chat, ftp/ssh)
- some investigation of other distros (even –horrors– non-Linux) using VMs under VirtualBox
- some photo, audio and video editing, but mainly of the snip-and-glue variety

Likes

I like a fairly big screen. At one time J6 had two monitors, a 24“ HDMI and a 20” VGA, but I've found just the 24“ is fine. Smaller screens (as on my laptops) are not as helpful for writing and programming. I use headphones for audio – no fancy speakers.

I also like a decent keyboard as I am a touch typist. However, it is useful to have a numeric pad. While I'm happy with a lot of pointing devices, I find a mouse easiest, and use my left hand for this, though I am right handed. This seems to avoid some wrist stress I had a decade ago when a friend suggested this simple change. (It also inhibits folk from using your computer!)

Current machine

J6 has the following very edited setup:

- Motherboard GA-890GPA-UD3H
- AMD Phenom™ II X6 1090T Processor
- 16GiB System Memory (4*4Gib DIMM 1600 MHz (0.6 ns))
- display RS880 [Radeon HD 4290]
- multimedia RS880 HDMI Audio [Radeon HD 4200 Series]
- RTL8111/8168/8411 PCI Express Gigabit Ethernet Controller
- 2 * 1TB WDC WD1002FAEX-0 in RAID (mirrored) – used as data storage
- 500GB ST3500630AS used for OS and home directory
- 250GB ST3250820A used for holding VM images and similar material
- BD-RE WH16NS40 optical drive (CD, DVD, BlueRay)

Considerations

These could each consume a lot of discussion. I am prepared to use them as topics in Linux Ottawa meetings and put a summary of the discussion here.

- Reliability: I probably want reliability more than performance.
  - error-correcting memory?
  - RAID disks; If so, how?
  - New disks? Old ones likely close to possible failure.
  - UPS backup? If so, what size.
- Performance vs. power consumption:
  - Choice of processor
  - Use of SSD for OS and related files
  - Size of memory
  - Power supply - Would like low power profile, esp when idle.
- Human and usability factors
  - probably can use existing 24” monitor; switch old 20“ to J6
  - Likely will take BlueRay drive and put older DVD in J6.
  - easy access disk bays and connectors for USB
  - standardize on USB3 or do I need other connectors (SATA, FireWire, ??)
  - Current machine has no Bluetooth. Is it worth it?
  - Do I need wifi? I prefer wired networking.
  - Could keep current mouse and keyboard, but probably time to replace.
  - I have a plug-in USB webcam, which I leave unplugged except for times when video chatting.
  - Printers and scanners are external.
- Value for money.

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