

New2Linux: Image Viewers – a confusing array

November 4, 2021

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for
Virtual Meeting of Linux-Ottawa

Why?

- Images are important data for all users
- There is a huge number of image viewing programs, NOT all equal. How do we advise novices?
- Not only novices find this confusing
- What are reasons for distro choice of default viewer?
- How does a user choose appropriate viewer(s) for their particular needs?
- What are some considerations in doing this?

Distros make different choices!

Default image viewers for different distros

antix 19.3 x64 -- mirage

xubuntu 18.04.5 -- ristretto

ubuntu 21.04 -- (Eye of) Gnome Image Viewer 40.0 (??)

ubuntu 20.10 -- (Eye of) Gnome Image Viewer 3.38.0 (latest is 3.38.5)

lubuntu-20.04.1-desktop-amd64.iso -- LXImage-Qt

bl-Helium-4-amd64.iso -- mirage 0.9.5.2

lithium-2.1-amd64.hybrid.iso -- ristretto 0.8.3

Debian Testing 20 (11.1) -- eye of MATE 1.24.1

Linux Mint 20.2 -- xviewer 3.0.2 (eog/eom fork)

lxle-18043-64 -- mirage 0.9.5.2

kubuntu-20.04-desktop-amd64.iso -- gwenview 19.12.3

Why the different choices?

Mirage source would not install easily on LM20.2.
Suspect it uses only old libraries (possibly Python 2.7 too, as .py file failed to run).

– Install from “old-releases.ubuntu.com”

(Eye of) Gnome/MATE (eog/eom) seem to be in a family fight – why?

Mint has recently moved to **Xviewer** from **eom**. It is another fork of eog. (Also recommends **pix**)

Documentation?

- Appallingly little documentation in source code repos e.g. Github for xviewer
 - None on the “why” a new viewer is needed
 - Almost certainly there are reasons beyond personal whims or fancies
- **OPINION!:** Such missing information is a potential project (e.g., a wiki) where novices can contribute questions and results of searches.

Issues

- Novices almost certain to want a viewer that launches by (double) click or “Enter” from file manager
 - Leads to issue of file manager choices
 - For this talk, mostly overlook CLI options
 - Reasonable variety of image file types supported
- Useful if “arrow” keys (or GUI buttons) allow other images in directory to be displayed i.e., cycle through
 - Some (e.g., gwenview) show thumbnails
- Default window should be as big as possible and image should fill it reasonably – difficult to program/config well

Issues (2)

- OPINION!: Default viewer should be just that
 - Mostly this is the case
 - NOT a photo manager (e.g., digiKam, Shotwell, pix)
 - But showfoto from digiKam installable alone
 - NOT a photo editor (e.g., GIMP)
 - Helpful if “delete” and rotate allowed
 - Ideal I have not (yet?) found: **easy** app launch from within the viewer for current image file.

Issues (3)

Does it make sense to promote a common viewer across platforms?

- Could use web browser to view images
- Irfanview is Win/WINE usable, not Mac
- “Comment” often NOT the ITPC comment.
- Others?

User preferences

- I like to see comments, possibly other info
 - LXimage – shows EXIF, not comment
 - Fim – (CLI, but easy to set to open from file manager) displays comment! But who wrote it? Configuration?
 - ShowFoto – is the image viewer of digiKam and quite powerful (and big), but not a beginner tool
 - Mapivi does lots, but “old fashioned” and klunky
- Display defaults vary. While they can be reset, I suspect novices will find this awkward (I do!). Sometimes can reset when there is a software update.

Take-away Message

- Default viewers generally OK
- As Linux promoters, we should urge developers to give a capsule account of the “why” for their software
- And note / develop short cheat-sheets for both ourselves and novices to provide pros/cons and important options. Is this file a starting point?
- Is there a place for tools to help customize viewers? Or to choose viewers that are suitable for particular purposes.