

Running Linux on the desktop: a 20-year retrospective

- **Speaker:** Dawn Cooper
- **Room:** HC 108
- **Time:** Sun 2:00 pm – 2:30 pm
- **Format:** Lecture (30 Min + Q&A)
- **Difficulty:** Introductory
- **Track:** OSS Distributions
- **Additional Tags:** Random
- **Presenter Location:** In-person
- **Experience:** umpteenth time speaking / several-th time speaking
- **At:** anywhere / at lfnw

Description:

In 2006, a curious young tinkerer bricked a Windows laptop by accident — and discovered Linux as a result. What followed was a two-decade journey through the evolving landscape of desktop Linux, from early Ubuntu CDs to modern, polished distributions like Linux Mint.

This talk traces 20 years of Linux on the desktop through Dawn's personal experience: the early days of constant debugging and rough edges, the shift to macOS and Windows for stability, and the eventual return to Linux as the ecosystem matured. Along the way, she highlights major turning points:

- The rise of LibreOffice over OpenOffice
- Steam's investment in Linux gaming and the Proton revolution
- The growth of professional-grade open-source tools like FreeCAD, Blender, and Inkscape
- Increasing hostility and lock-in from proprietary operating systems
- The surprising ease and reliability of modern user-friendly distros

Dawn reflects on how open-source software has become dramatically more viable for everyday users, why the desktop experience has improved so much, and why the future of free operating systems looks brighter than ever.

Target Audience:

- Technically curious folks
- Anyone interested in the evolution of desktop Linux
- People considering switching (or switching back) to Linux

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