

East SIG Report – November 2023

After welcoming members to the November of East SIG, host Frank Maher outlined the nights agenda below:

Presentation 1: **Q&A** with George Skarbek

Presentation 2: **Introducing Google's E-Calendar** – by John Thomson

Presentation 3: **Getting started with Linux Mint** - by David Hatton

Q&A by George Skarbek.

Question: Was anyone effected by the Optus shutdown?

Answer: It didn't affect me too much. I did the usual things, reset the modem switch it off then the router. Then put then back on in the correct sequence, modem first then router. Still nothing so then I thought I'd contact Optus. The mobile phone wouldn't ring out, then used the landline which comes through the same link and it was dead. I then realised the problem was more than just the local suburbs.

There was power to the landline phone so it gave a dial tone but wouldn't ring out.

[Audience member] There is a phone connection on the back of the NBN box but that's only available for people with special needs. This is very much restricted for those with life support needs. Thousands of businesses were affected by the Optus shutdown.

Introducing E-Calendars – by John Thomson

Introduction

- E-Calendars are the electronic version of paper calendars, with many more features.
- They can be used to integrate your daily plans across all devices without relying on pen & paper. They enable you to keep in touch with family, friends (& colleagues) & prompt you when events occur!

e.g. At MelbPC, each SIG has an entry in the main calendar. SIG members can each have a copy of the calendar running on their own devices.

- E-Calendars come from various sources. As MelbPC is part of the Google "ecosphere" - it makes sense to use Google's version, but there are many alternatives, for example:
 - Microsoft,
 - Apple
 - Samsung etc

Most have interchangeable features & can "talk" to each other. John recommends using the Google calendar as all MelbPC members have a Google account.

- E-Calendars can be accessed in multiple formats, including schedules of events, weekly or monthly event lists in spreadsheet format.

Benefits of using E-Calendars

- E-calendars can integrate your daily plans across all devices, without relying on pen & paper. They enable you to keep in touch with family, friends, MelbPC members & prompt you when events occur!

- You can synchronise E-Calendars across all your devices, Phone, Tablet, Laptop or Desktop computer.
e.g. When entering an appointment on your phone, your wife or partner can view that on their device, provided you have WiFi connection, as the entry is instantly synchronised.
- E-Calendars can “Share” your calendars with your contacts. e.g. Family, Colleagues, Club activity groups.

Google Account & Calendar

- Everyone who has a Gmail email address has a Google Account.
- An E-Calendar is part of each Google Account. Your account includes all the other extras that come from Google and at no cost!
- Some people have several Gmail accounts and therefore have several Google Calendars. These calendars can be grouped together to talk to one another.
- You can create a desktop shortcut to take you to your Calendar. Click on the 3 dots at the top to take you straight to your calendar.
- When logged into your Google account, the Calendar is found by clicking the "Channel 9" symbol at the top right on your Google Chrome browser. This reveals all the Google "Apps" associated with your Google account seen in Figure 1. Along with the calendar app, these include: Google Maps, Chat, Drive and other free Google "Cloud" services.

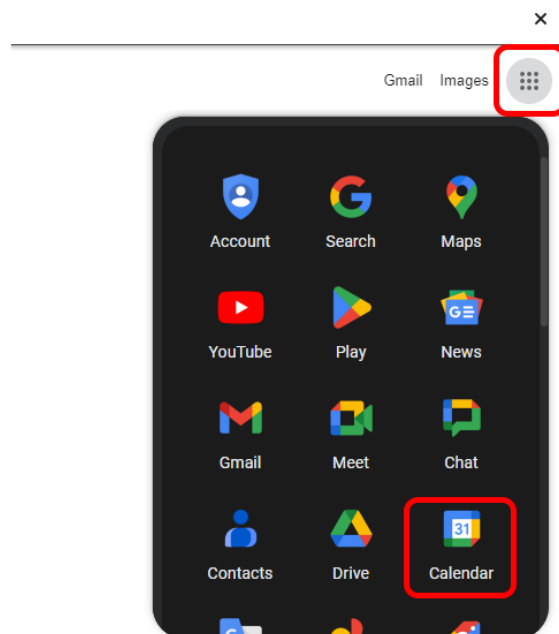


Figure 1 – Chrome browser displaying the Google menu

Shared Calendars

- Each calendar is individual but can be linked or shared with others.
- Each calendar can show “Events” from linked calendars.
- Each calendar can show "Events" from other Programs (e.g. a theatre booking via Email).
- Individual events can be sent from one Calendar to another.
- Calendar events can be generated externally & automatically entered in the correct calendar’s account.

For example, the emailed acknowledgment of a booking can be automatically entered in your calendar. In Figure 2, the calendar confirmation for the caravan park booking was inserted automatically on receipt of the email approval.

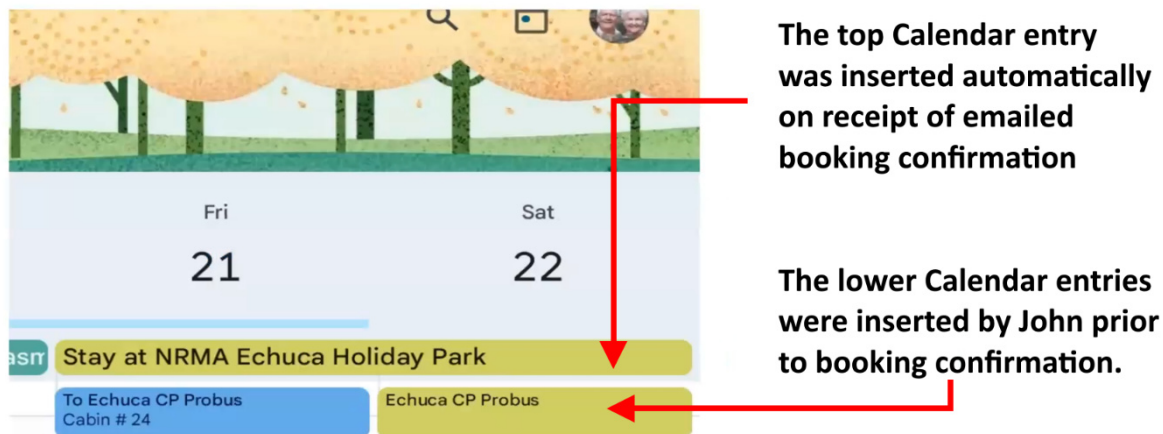


Figure 2 – Calendar showing automatic confirmation entry.

- Each Calendar can show "Events" from linked Calendars
- Individual events can be sent from one Calendar to another

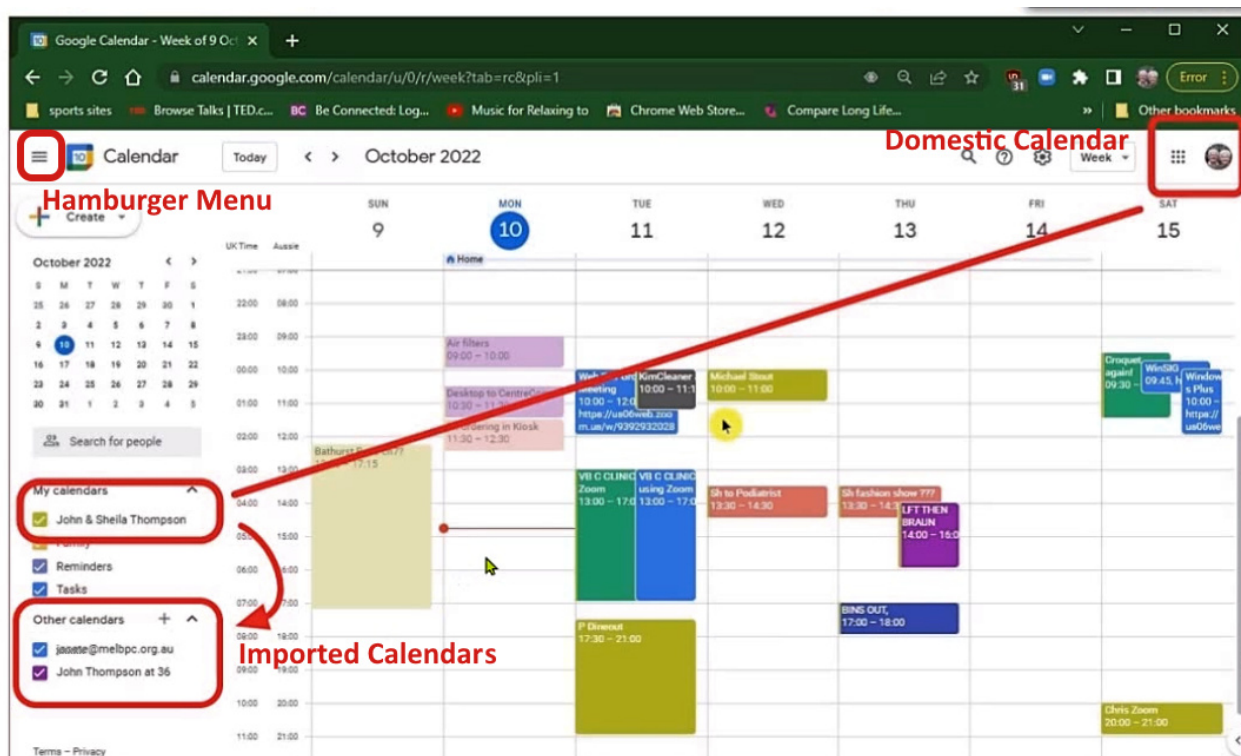


Figure 3 – John’s Domestic calendar

- Figure 3 shows a typical week view of John’s domestic calendar. Although this is his domestic calendar, there are events imported and shown from 2 other profile calendars as indicated.
- In the calendar shown, John has assigned different colours to differentiate the different events. e.g. MelbPC SIG meetings are normally blue, joint appointments olive, etc
- The hamburger menu (top left near the “Calendar” icon), turns the left panel on or off.

- Individual events can be sent from one Calendar to another. This is done from the hamburger menu when set to “On”, by selecting the calendars name.

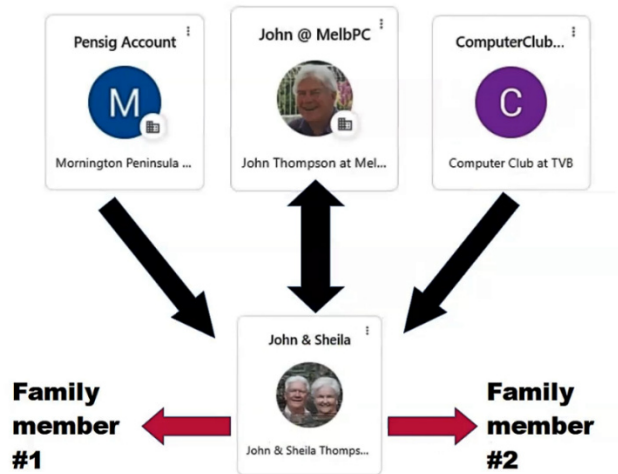


Figure 4 – John’s calendar sharing connections

John’s domestic calendar is shared with his two adult children as shown in Figure 4, so they know where he and his wife are if needed. However, only John or his wife can edit the events shown on his domestic calendar.

Repeat Events

Calendar events can be generated to repeat at whatever intervals you specify: daily, weekly, fortnightly, monthly, yearly or every 2nd Thursday night of the month for MelbPC East SIG meetings.

Each Event can carry details such as location of the event, details, duration, generate notification sounds & be colour coded for easy interpretation. On a smart phone, alerts can be set to warn of an approaching Zoom meeting or when you need to leave home to attend a meeting in order to arrive on time.

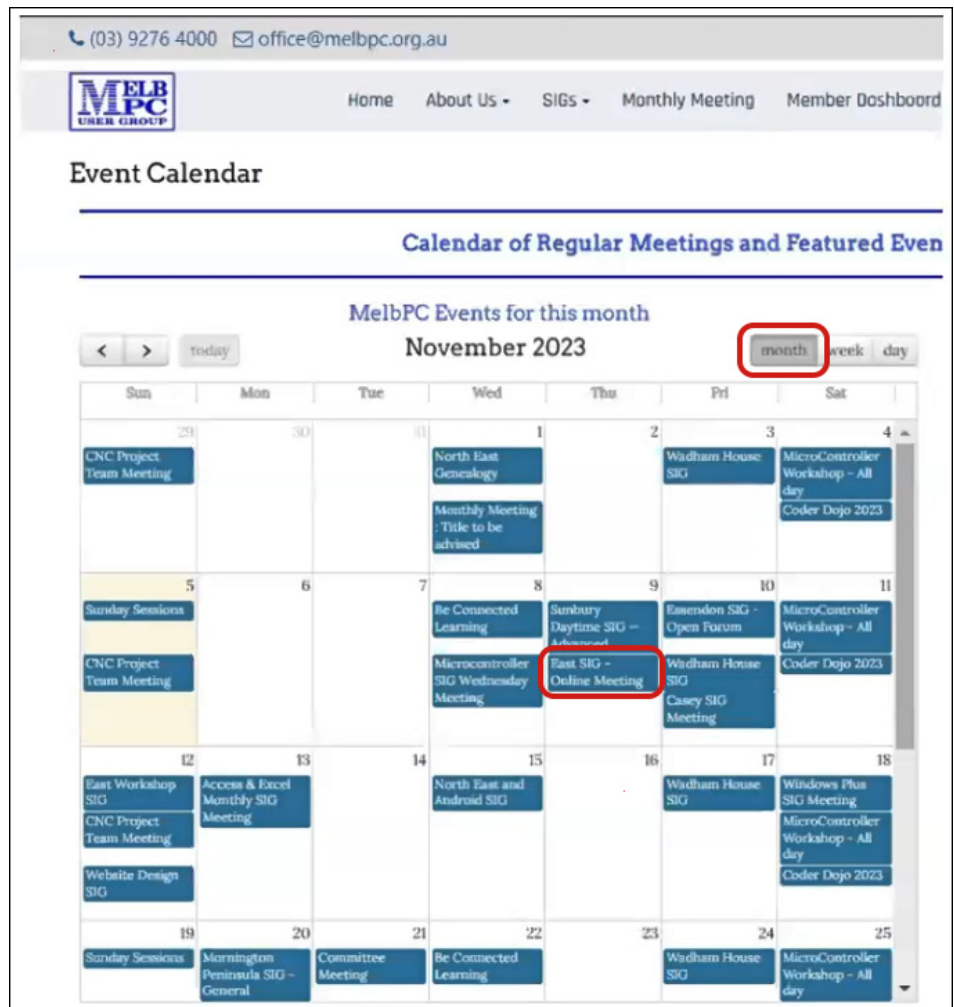


Figure 5 – MelbPC website monthly SIG Calendar

Calendars can show "Events" from other Programs (for example a theatre booking, via email, or Gmail in our case). e.g. the earlier caravan booking shown in Figure 3.

Editing of events can only be done by the "Owner" of the calendar, who initiated the event.

Figure 5 shows the "SIG" calendar from the MelbPC website, with SIG meetings repeated, usually monthly. By registering for a SIG you should be able to get all the meeting dates automatically entered into your calendar, along with the meeting codes to get into the Zoom meetings.

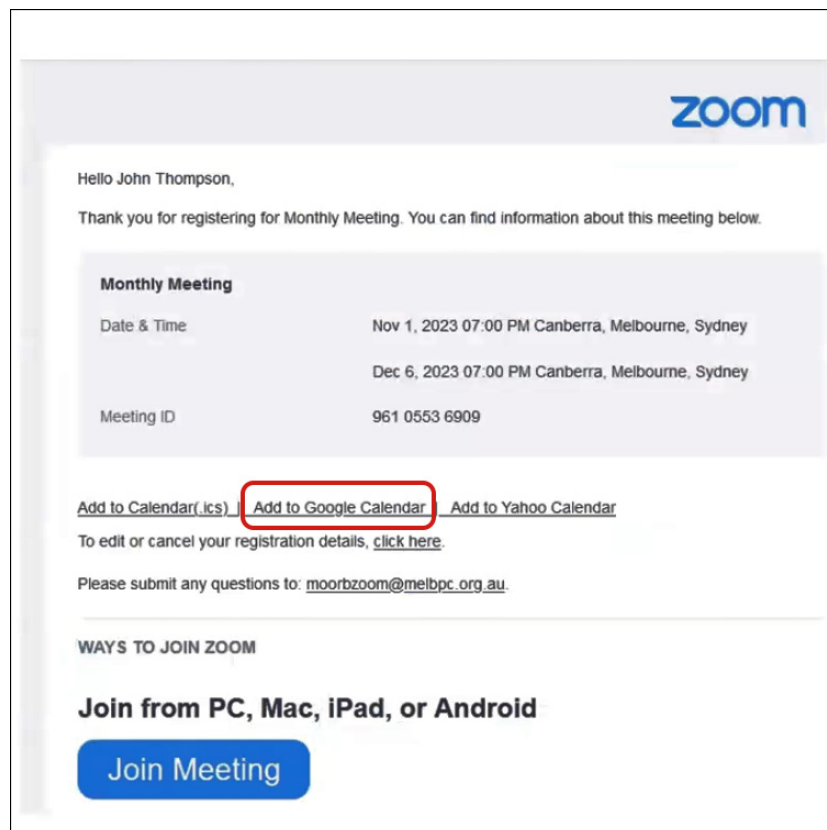


Figure 6 – Zoom Monthly meeting email confirmation

Figure 6 shows an email from Zoom confirming John's registration for the December MelbPC monthly meeting. The email includes an "Add to Google Calendar" link. When clicking that link the entry is added to John's Google MelbPC calendar.

Beware that Google tries to trap you into creating a "Meet" event instead of a "Zoom" one!

Notes

- A "Calendar Event" can only be Managed (i.e. Created, Edited or Deleted) by the "Owner" or originator of the "Event".
- A "Calendar Event or series of Events" created by others, can be emailed and thus copied to your calendar.
- "Event Copies" can then be "Managed", Printed, Duplicated and Published.
- Editing is not possible except if Ownership is changed - subject to agreement from recipient. This is done via the menu system but has to be agreed to by both parties.

Calendar Listings and Views

The following 2 graphics (Figures 7 & 8) from John's presentation show the different ways you can view your calendar listings. The first shows a daily listing or schedule, while the second is a monthly view setup in spreadsheet format.

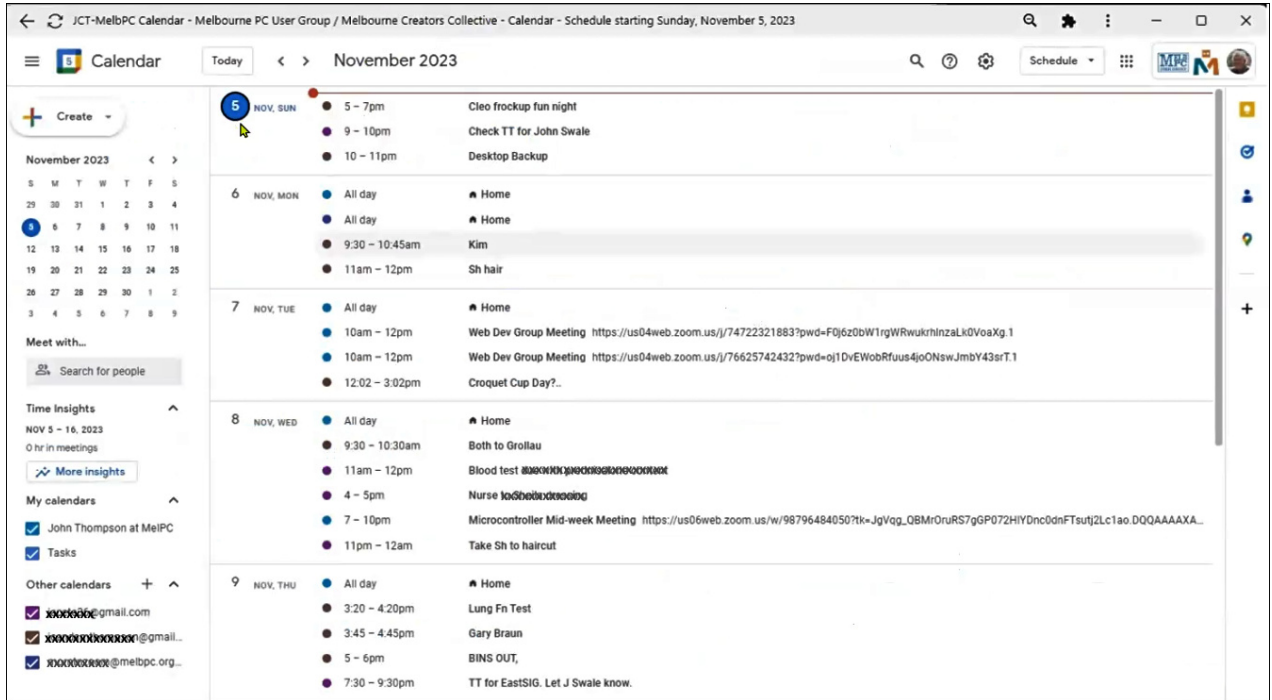


Figure 7 Daily listing or "Schedule" of events

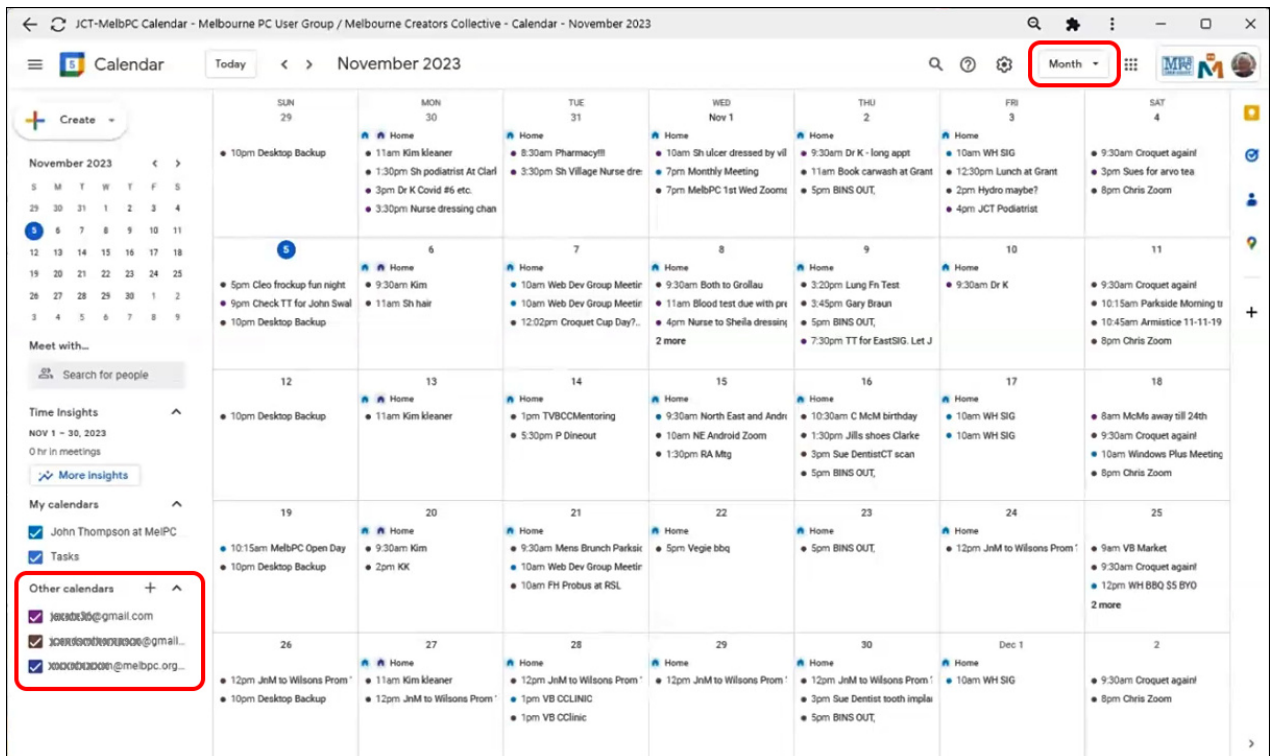


Figure 8 Monthly view of events

In both calendar views, observe how the view displays the calendars associated with specific accounts (i.e. email addresses).

Using calendars on Tablets & Mobile Phones

John recommends setting up everything on your PC, emphasizing the advantages of the larger computer screen and the convenience of using a keyboard, which ultimately makes the process much easier. When your Google Calendar is configured on your Android smartphone (see Figure 9), using Google on Android becomes easy.

If you're setting up Google Calendar on a smaller screen, using a stylus can be beneficial.

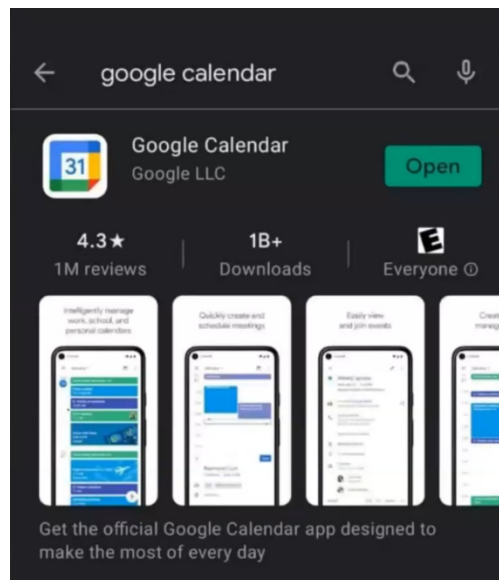


Figure 9 -Google Calendar available from the Google Play store

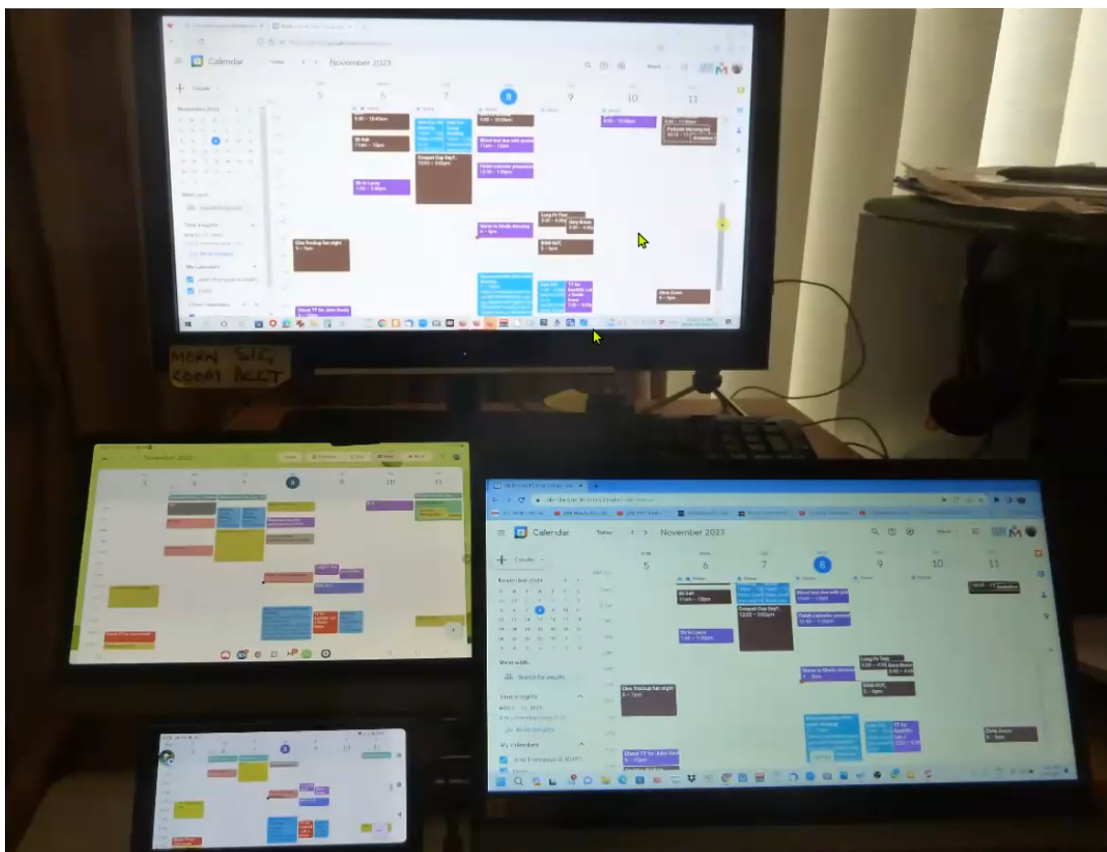


Figure 10 - All devices in sync.

To conclude his presentation, John displayed a photograph (Figure 10) of a PC, a Laptop PC, an Android Tablet and Android phone all displaying the same Google calendar. All devices are in sync with same information, although colours change slightly from PC to Android.

E-Calendar Q & A

Following John’s presentation, a number of the audience members posed pertinent questions which I’ve included below, as they contribute to an expanded understanding of the topic.

Q1. When an event from a theatre booking appears in your calendar, it can only be changed by the owner, who sent the booking namely the theatre. Is that correct?

A1. Editing of events can only be done by the "Owner" of the calendar which initiated the event.

Q2. I’ve found different Time Zones can cause problems if you’re not careful.

A2. [Audience member replies] I’ve found when I enter the American time of an online event I wish to attend, the calendar automatically displays the Australian time for the event.

Q3. I've just entered the MelbPC calendar into my calendar and I don't see any of the events showing up. I assume this is because I need permission to see them? Do you know how I can get that permission?

A3. For you to get the whole MelbPC calendar onto your calendar, it would have to be initiated from the MelbPC end. MelbPC would send you a request to be able to do it. You would then have to agree to that request and send it back to them. I believe it's a handshaking agreement to make sure it's all legal.

The individual SIG calendars can be added to your calendar by registering with the SIGs. John has registered with the various SIGs he is interested in, and the registration with the SIG gives you automatic entry into Google calendar rather than the whole calendar. Refer to Figure 6 where to select “Add to Google Calendar” from the Zoom email registration.

Q4. As many million people rely on Google Calendar, can you make copies of the calendar in case you lose your account?

A4. I occasionally do a screen capture of my calendar and print that if going somewhere where Wi-Fi may not be available.

You can import and export your calendar. On my MelbPC calendar below, hover over the owner of the calendar and 3 dots appears. Select the dots and a menu appears where you select “Settings and Sharing”. That will then display a host of further options where “Export calendar” is one. This is where you can share your calendar with others. Refer Figures 11 & 12.

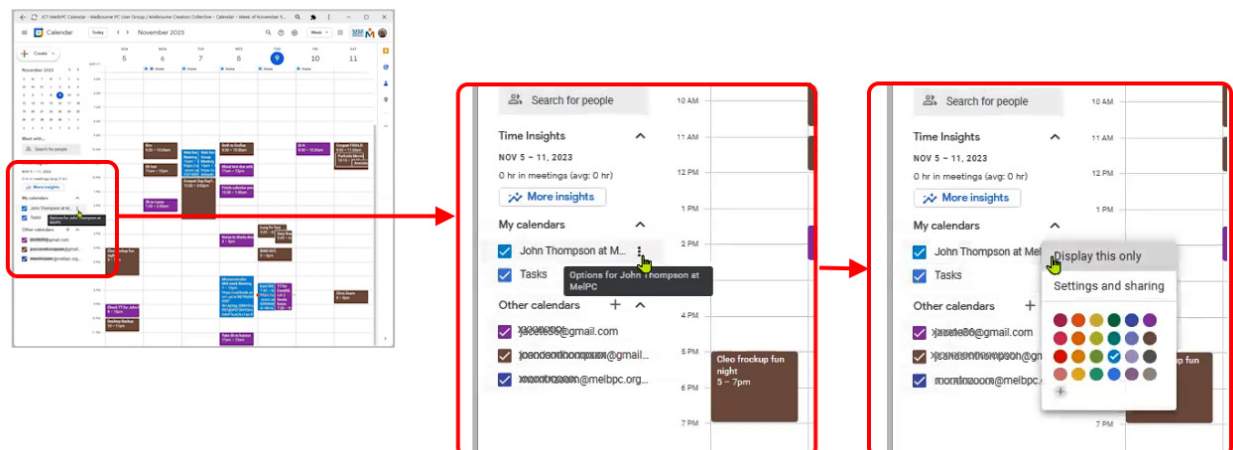


Figure 11 – Settings & Sharing Menu.

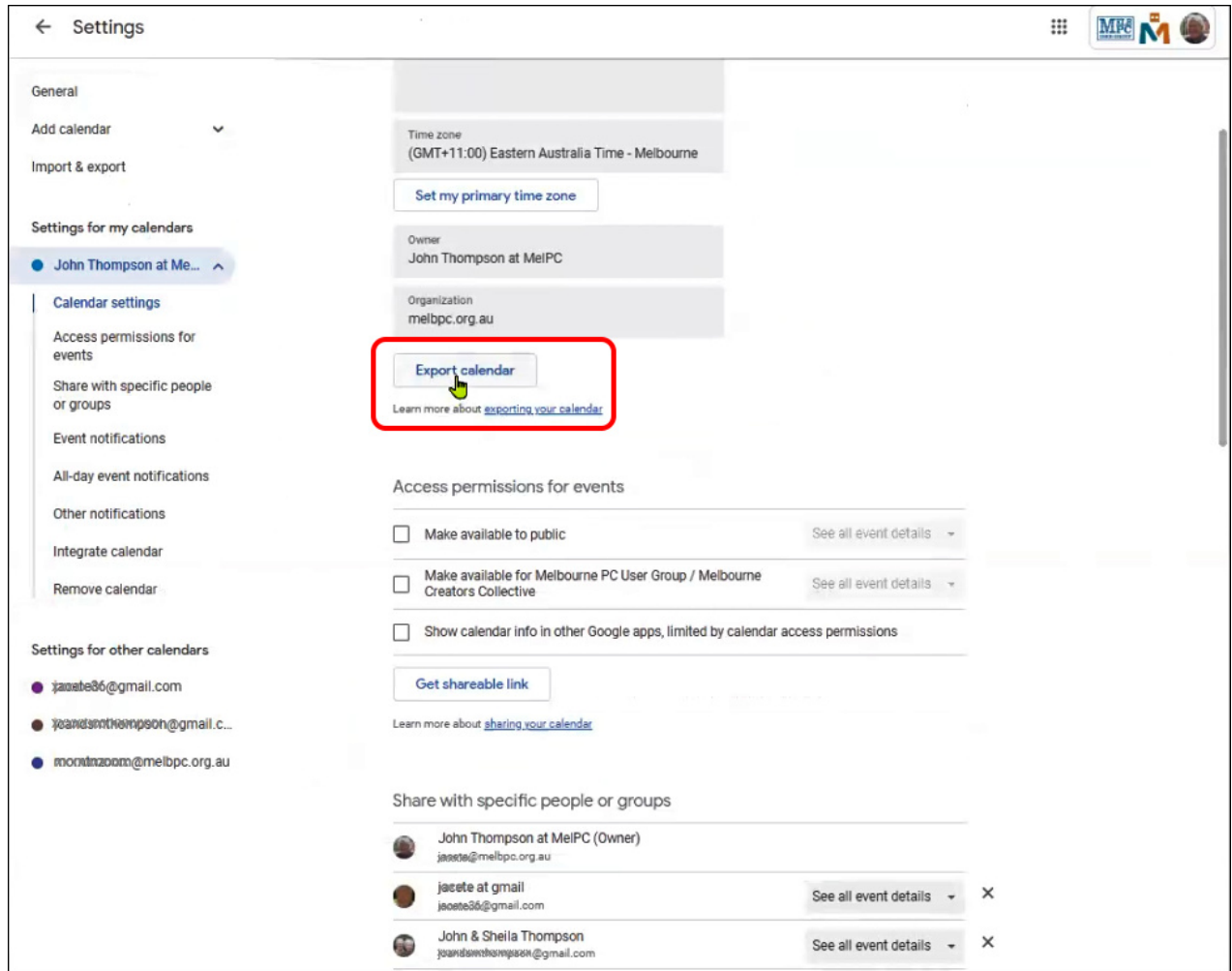


Figure 12 – Export calendar & other setting options.

Getting started with Linux Mint – by David Hatton

Introduction

In his presentation, “Getting Started with Linux Mint”, David Hatton covers essential aspects of the Linux operating system, in a simple and easy-to-follow manner. The following report is derived from David's notes, with a few minor additions included as he elaborated on specific topics.

David commences by giving a brief history of early computing, highlighting its impact on Linux's development. He then explains the difference between free and Open-Source software, discusses Linux distributions, outlines system requirements, and concludes with a practical Linux Mint demonstration. David Hatton's presentation was a helpful guide for beginners wishing to try Linux for the first time.

Linux - Some Computing History

Linux is fundamentally a Unix clone, written from scratch with no Unix program code, designed to make Unix users feel at home with Linux. Linux developers have tried to keep the Unix functionality intact while making improvements where it has been decided that this would be beneficial.

Some Key Dates ...

- 1969 - ARPAnet commenced operations creating the first transcontinental computer network. This gave some incentive to develop software that could talk to other computers at the other end of the network.
 - Unix development was started by Ken Thompson and Dennis Ritchie at Bell Labs.
- 1971 - First edition of Unix released
- 1972 - Dennis Ritchie wrote the first version of the C programming language. The C programming language emerged as a solution to the challenge of having diverse computers with distinct assembly codes, which necessitated writing a version of Unix for each machine. C, being a high-level language, streamlined much of the system programming work. This was one of the reasons C was developed.
- 1974 - Completed porting Unix, largely rewritten in C, to several different machine types.
- 1975 - Microsoft founded – selling Altair Basic
- 1983 - Richard Stallman announces the start of the GNU project (GNU is Not Unix)
- 1985 - Free Software Foundation founded - a nonprofit organisation promoting computer user freedom and defending the rights of all free software users.
- 1990 - MS Windows 3.0 released. This was a major event in computing
- 1991 - Linus Torvalds started developing a free Unix kernel for 386 based machines using the Free Software Foundation's GNU toolkit.
 - In 1991, the 386 computer was the latest and greatest. Linus Torvalds, then a university student, wanted something on his 386 computer, that would talk to the University Main Frame computers that were running Unix. He started developing some connection software that grew into Linux.
- 1994 - Linux kernel version 1.0 released with approximately 176,000 lines of code.
- 2012 - Linux kernel 3.2 released with approximately 15,000,000 lines of code.

Free and Open Source Software

Linux, often referred to as GNU/Linux, is licensed software and *not* in the public domain.

Broadly speaking there are two classes of license, Free Software licenses and Open Source licenses. The license most used for components of GNU/Linux is the General Public License (GNU GPL).

See the websites <https://www.gnu.org> and <https://opensource.org>

Linux Distributions

The Linux operating system and its applications aren't produced by a single organisation, as different organisations and software developers create the various parts that make up a Linux installation.

These parts include:

- The Linux kernel (the core of the operating system)
- The GNU shell utilities - the terminal interface and many of the commands you use therein
- The X server - which sets up the basics of a graphical desktop.
- The desktop environment - which runs on the X server to provide a specific graphical desktop
- Utilities to manage addition and removal of application and system software
- Application software, e.g. Web browsers, Office suites, media players etc.

They're almost all built from open-source software distributed as source code

Other organisations and/or groups take on the task of combining a selection of the various parts mentioned above, into a coherent set of software that can be installed on computer hardware. This provides a computer operating system and application programs required by the computer user.

These sets of software are called Linux Distributions, and the organisations/groups that create and maintain them, are usually referred to as the distribution maintainers.

To find out more about the various distributions, the website <https://distrowatch.com> is the place David recommends for that information.

Getting Started with Linux Mint

The system requirements to run Linux Mint are quite modest, and generally, any system capable of running Windows 7 or a later version would be perfectly suitable to run Linux Mint.

- 2GB RAM (4GB recommended for a comfortable usage).
- 20GB of disk space (100GB recommended).
- 1024×768 resolution monitor – higher is better.

The link to the official website for Linux Mint is <https://linuxmint.com>

Linux Mint has 3 main versions:

- Cinnamon – This is the most popular and has been developed specifically for Linux Mint. It is slick, beautiful, and full of new features.
- MATE – This is a classic desktop environment which was the default desktop between 2006 and 2011. It has fewer features than Cinnamon, but runs faster, uses fewer resources and is more stable than Cinnamon.
- Xfce – This version is a lightweight desktop environment. It doesn't support as many features as Cinnamon or MATE, but it's extremely stable and very light on resource usage.

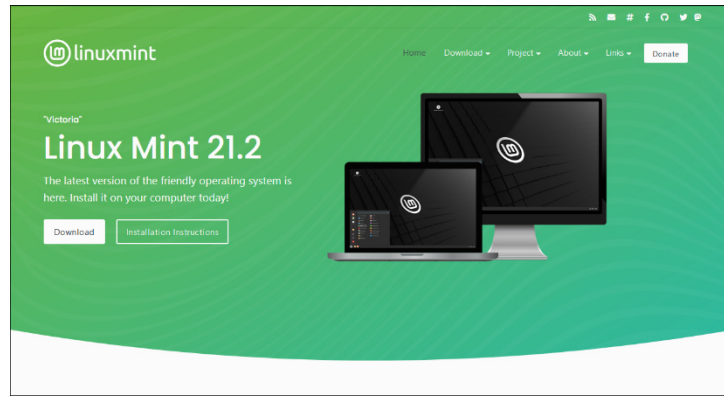


Figure 13 – Linux Mint website <https://linuxmint.com>

David recommended the installation guide at <https://linuxmint-installation-guide.readthedocs.io/en/latest/> as a very good resource for installing Linux Mint.

Getting Started with Linux Mint - Installation

To install Linux Mint ...

- Download the Linux Mint installation .iso from <https://linuxmint.com>
- Verify the downloaded .iso file (Optional if installing from a recognised site)
- Create a bootable USB drive from the downloaded .iso file using Balena Etcher.
- Start a Live Session using the bootable USB drive and check that your hardware works with Linux Mint. Open up a browser and check for internet connectivity and check the printer works.
- Install Linux Mint from the Live Session.

Demonstration - Linux Mint - Installation

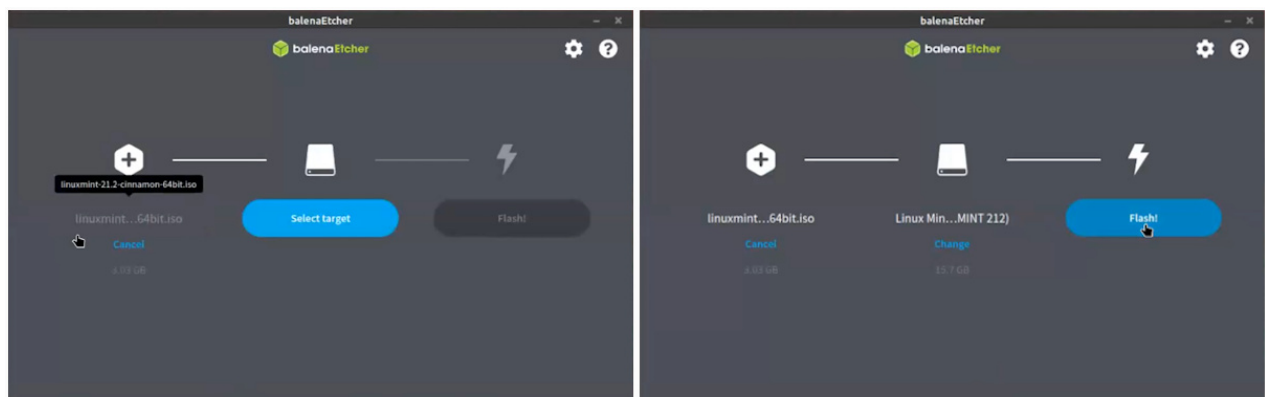


Figure 14 – Creating a bootable USB stick using Balena Etcher

For the purpose of this demonstration, David loaded Linux Mint Cinnamon from the bootable USB created using Belena Etcher on a Virtual Machine, to demonstrate how the installation proceeds. Refer Figure 15.

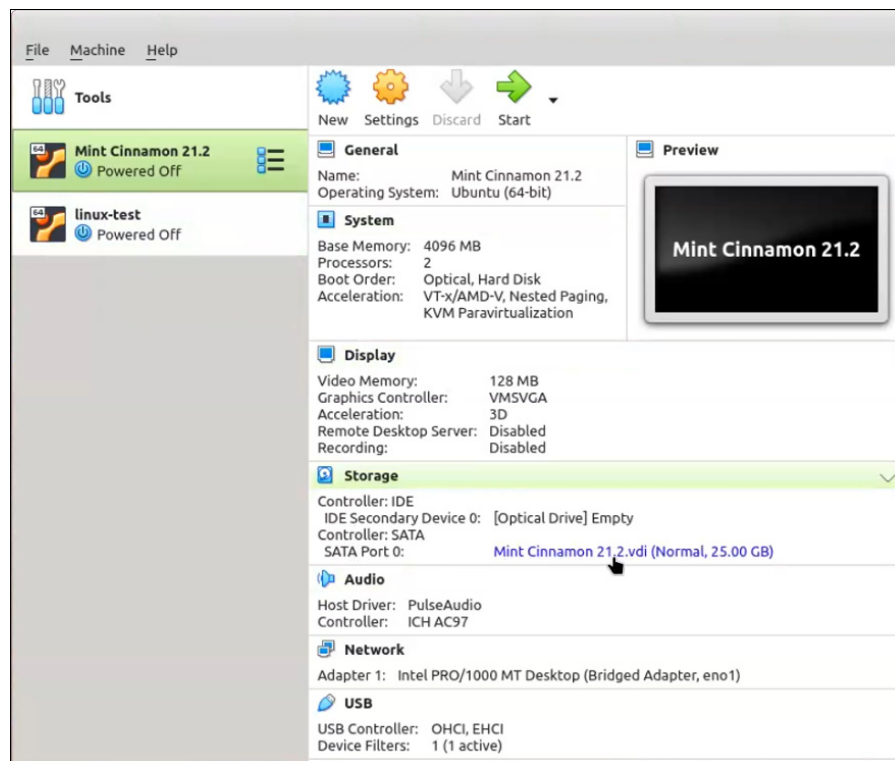


Figure 15 -Setting up a Virtual machine for Cinnamon21.2

Members wishing to try Linux Mint would use the bootable USB drive to the load Linux, preferable in Live mode running from the USB, rather than installing it. This option confirms that the hardware will work with Linux Mint and devices are correctly identified.

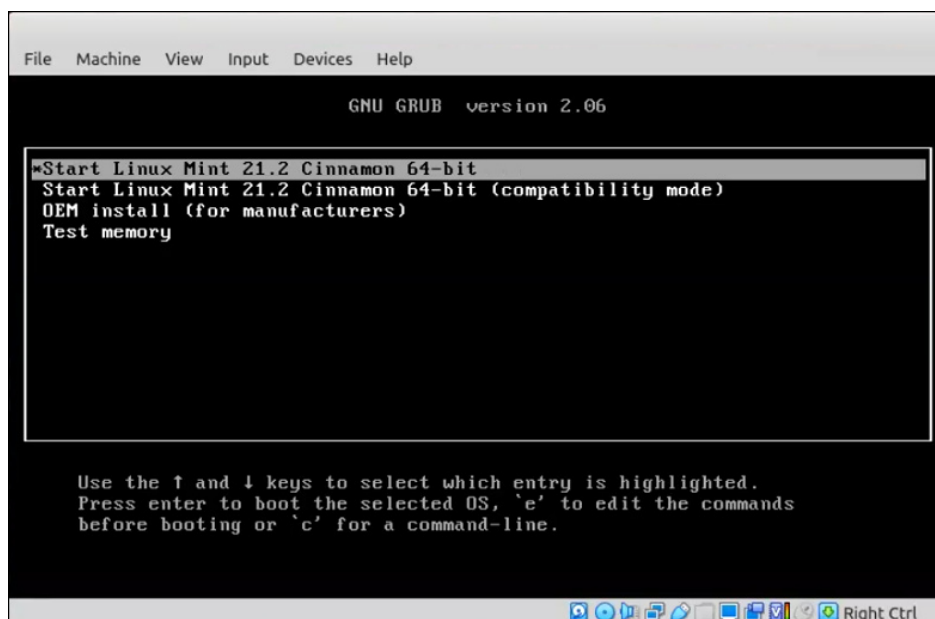


Figure 16 -Starting the Linux Mint install

Once Linx Mint has loaded, the first step David recommends is to set the display to suit the monitor being used. Figures 17 and 18 show how this is achieved.

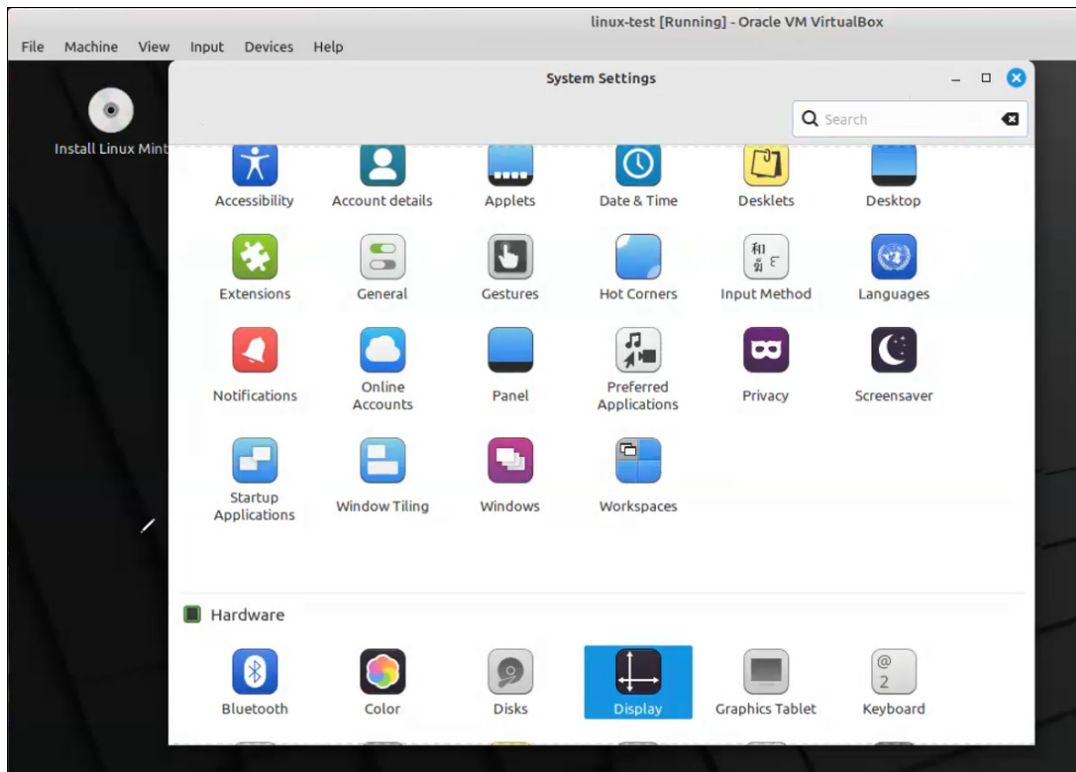


Figure 17 -Resetting the display

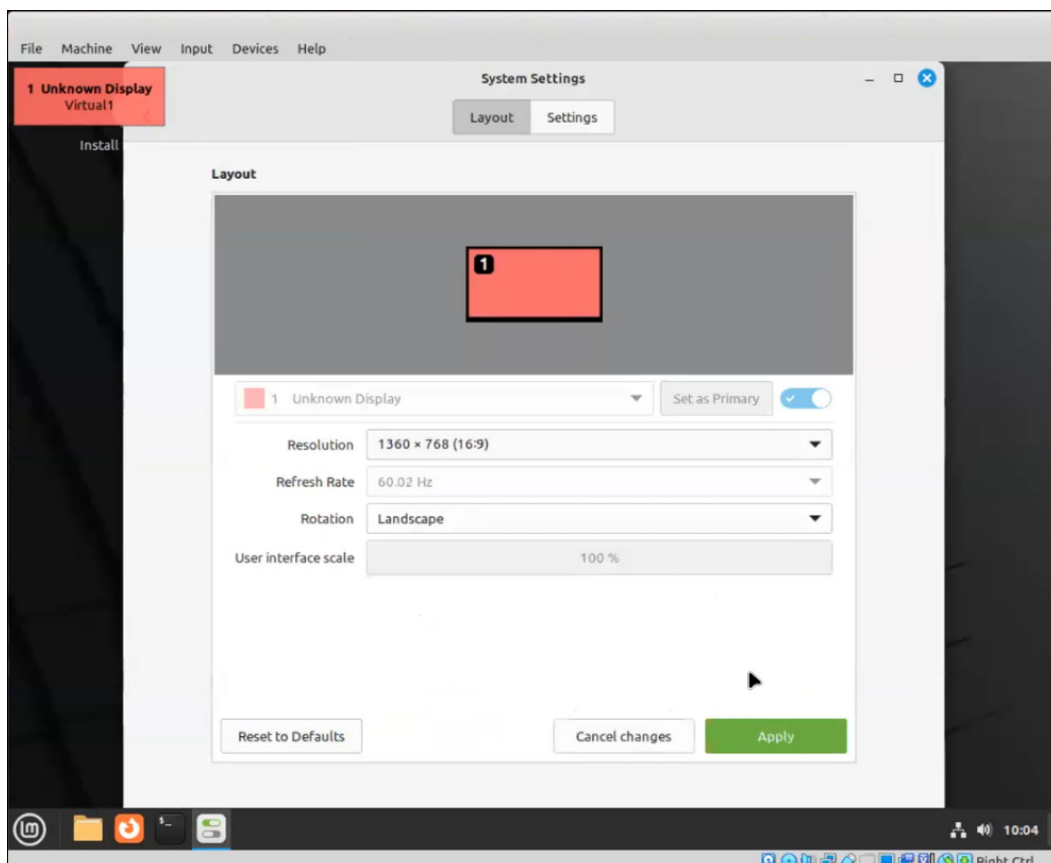


Figure 18 -Resetting the display

The following graphics are taken from David’s live demonstration on some of the items he covered.

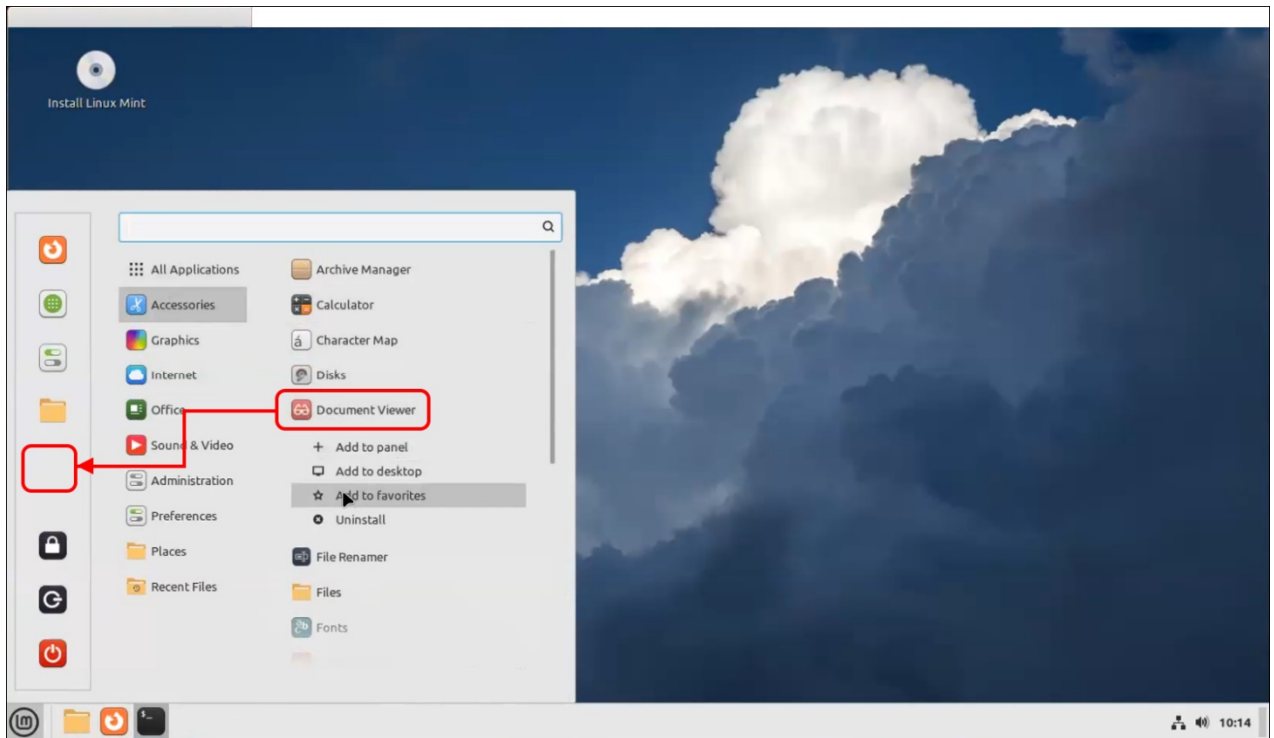


Figure 19 -Linux Mint User Interface.
Adding “Document Viewer” to the Favourites Panel.

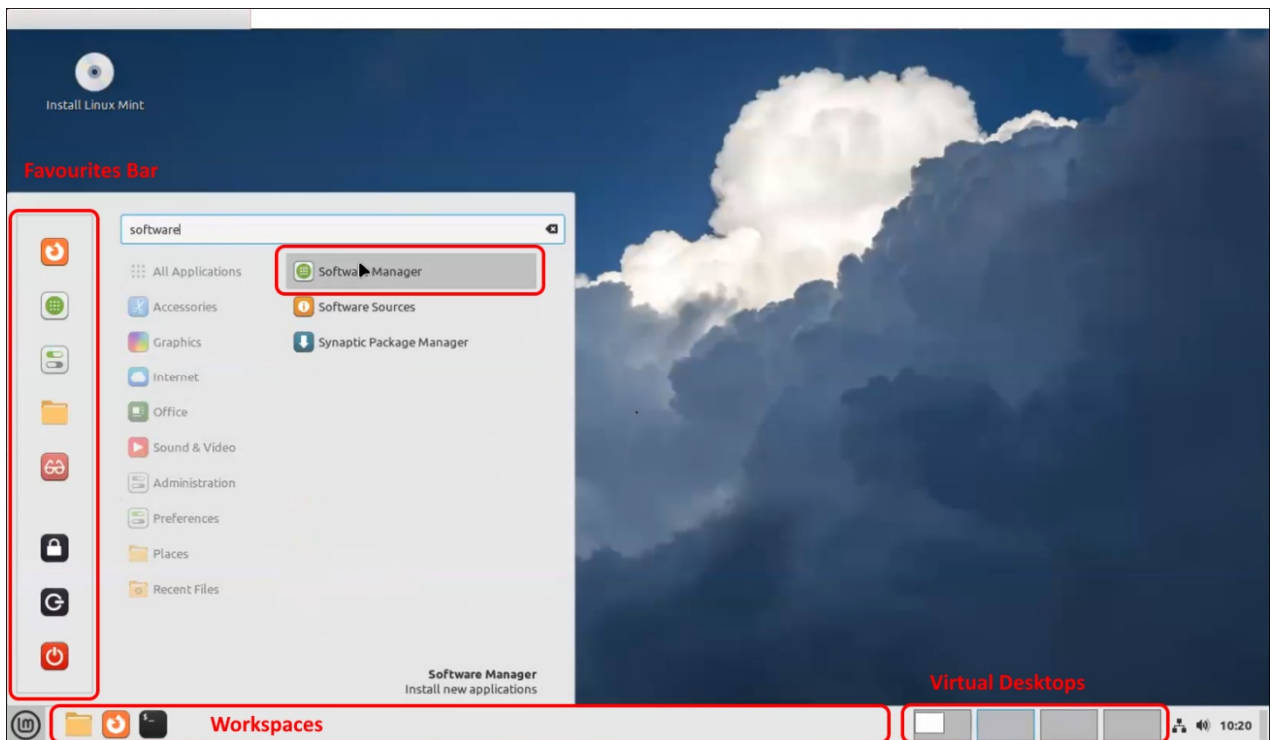


Figure 20 – Linux Desktop displaying Software Manager

Although Linux Mint comes preloaded with a rich variety of software, more is available for download from the Software Depository below.

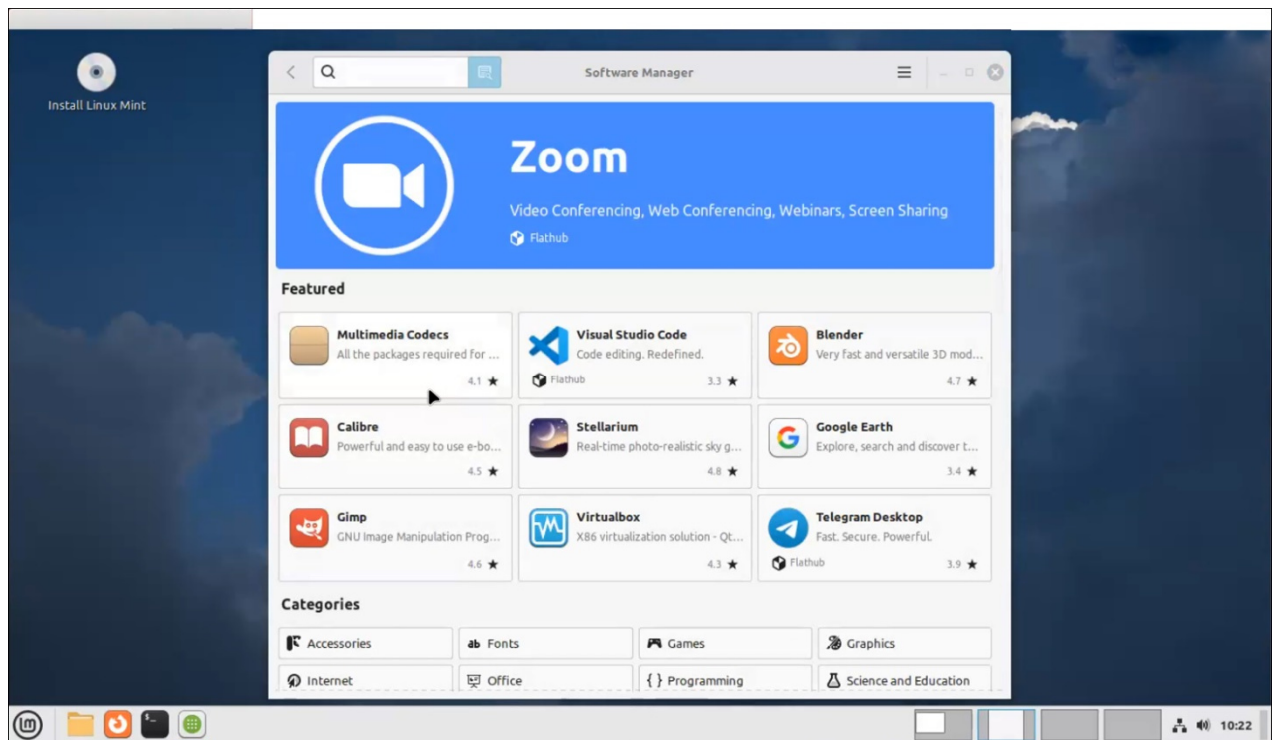


Figure 21 - Software depository

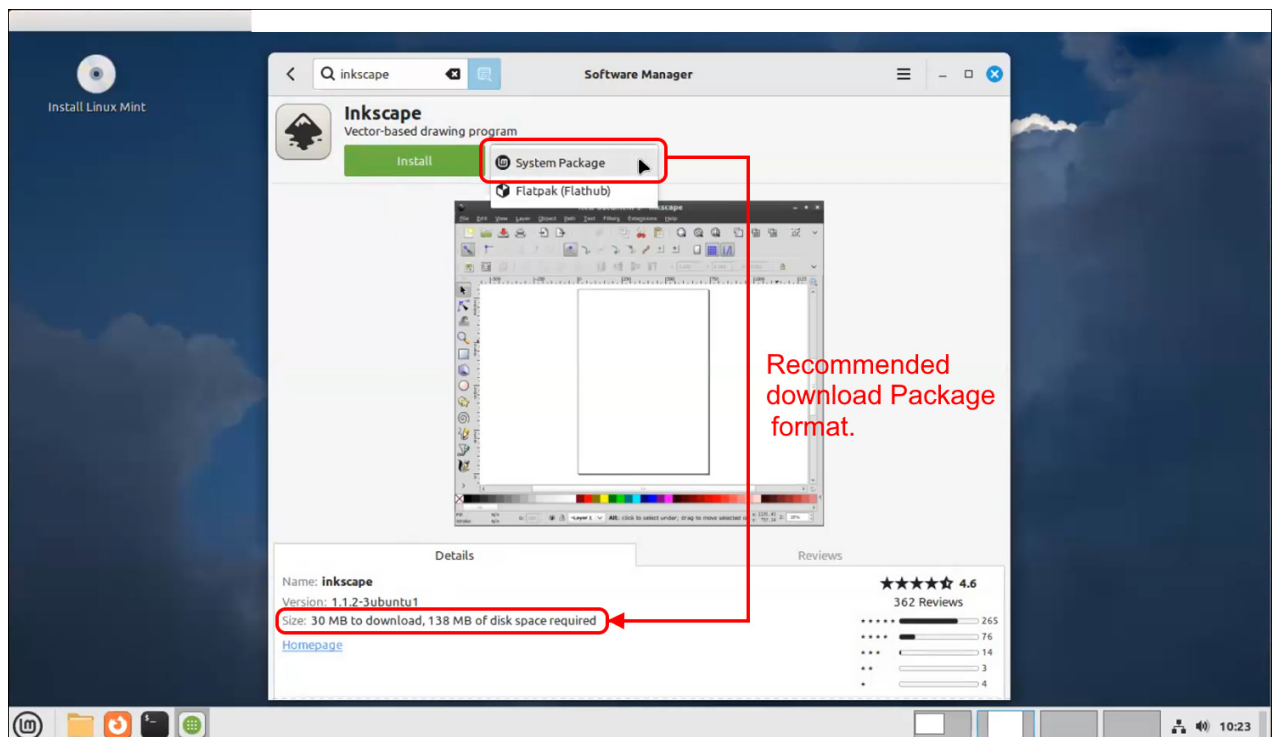


Figure 22 - Software download package formats

All operating system updates and updates for programs installed from the Software depository are updated via the “Update Manager”. Programs installed as part of the installation package need to be updated separately.

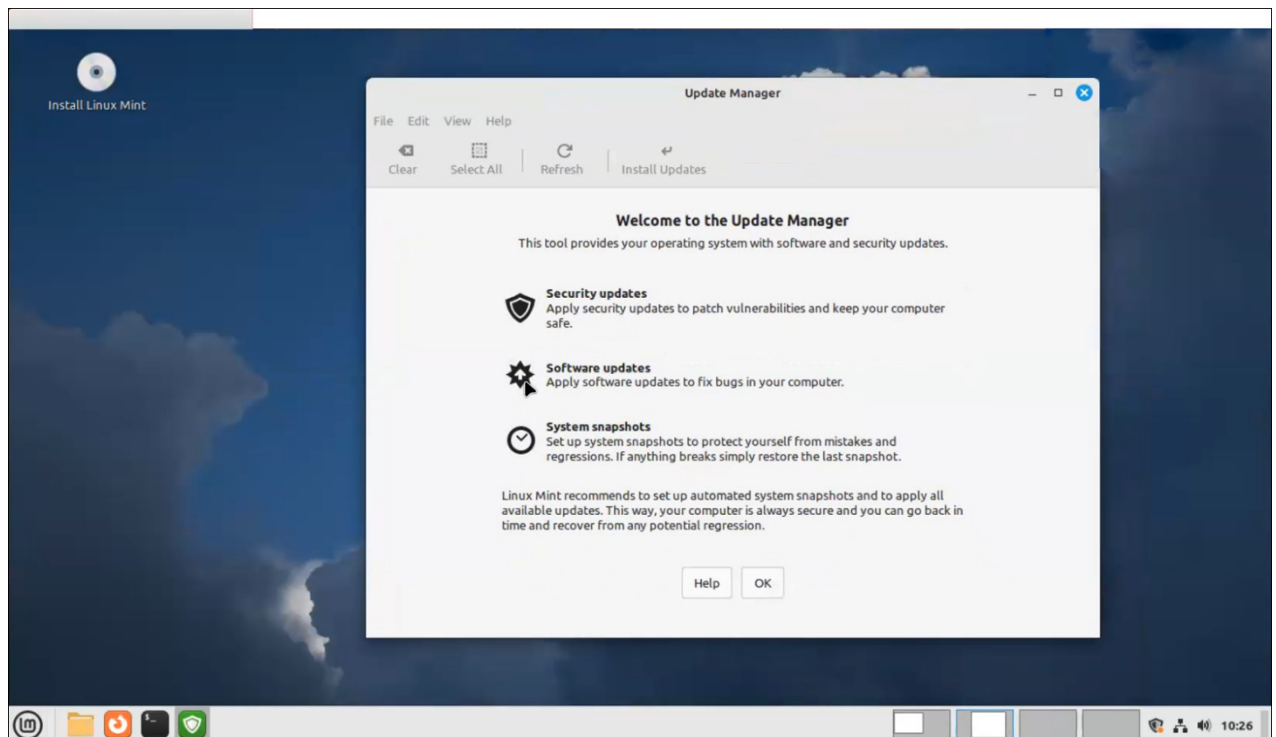


Figure 23 – Update Manager

Neil Muller