

## Linux 403 - Onlyoffice suite

Dr. Marc & Rosemary Durham, Theway Labs, Bixby, OK © 250109

**Tradition.** Those who have used Microsoft Windows OS and Office Suite for years are waking to the reality, you do not own it, but are renting. Consequently, you pay an annual fee to use. It has become so invasive with apps and bots that it is a nuisance, leaky, and vulnerable to malware. The third brick is the software is largely cloud-based, moving from local control, making it prone to data mining.

The three bricks are recapped. Rental price, invasive bloatware, and uncontrolled vulnerability.

**FOSS.** Free, or open source software is what its name says. It is free to use. I have yet to understand who covers the cost of large open source systems development, improvements, and maintenance. FOSS eliminates the rental, since it is free to use. FOSS is inherently more secure, since the code is available to investigate. Many FOSS systems are still local, with cloud-based available for collaboration.

Nevertheless, Windows dominates on desktops because of initial packaging. However, Linux dominates on servers, large systems, and development because of size, availability, and open source.

What is the reason that Windows still dominates desktops? In particular, Word is the defacto standard for documents. Since we want the Word accessibility, most settle for Windows OS. An alternative has been elusive.

What is the problem? Word had a proprietary binary format until forced by governments to provide open source format. In 2007, they switched to Open Office XML (OOXML) noted as docx, xlsx, and pptx.

The open source community developed the Open Document Formats (ODF) which was also XML based, but totally incompatible with OOXML. LibreOffice, OpenOffice, and others decided not to play the Microsoft game but develop their own game.

The problem is Word has about 95% of the market. So, that is the format people expect. Therefore, the players developed a docx look alike, but it can never be compatible. Any app opens a document and manipulates it with a native format. So, for example, if LibreOffice opens a docx file, it is converted to ODF. As a result formatting is screwed up. It is really that simple. Libre cannot make a totally compatible document.

**OnlyOffice** is a different player. It is an international group, started in 2009, who decided to build on the OOXML format, making it virtually identical to Word. OnlyOffice is available in 25 languages. with more than 5 million users in over 100 countries, but it is largely unheard of in the USA.

OnlyOffice is cross-platform, available on Windows, macOS, Linux, Android, and iOS. The suite includes a document, spreadsheet, and presentation totally integrated.

When going FOSS, like most, I tried LibreOffice. It has some really nice features, but one insurmountable drawback. It just is not Word compatible. Having written hundreds of documents, even with stylesheets, it is not importable. Formatting is blitzed. LibreOffice can save a docx file, but when it tries to reopen, the file is discombobulated.

Interestingly, OnlyOffice can open the Libre docx, then manipulate the stylesheets and resave it as docx, which Word is happy. But that is a tedious, sucky process. As of today, I have restructured all the archival odf/docx files of the past LibreOffice year with OnlyOffice. Adieu, sayonora, farewell until a better performance with the majority documents.

**The transition** to Linux is a totally no-brainer, with an Office alternative. Linux is a compact OS that works on old or new, fast or slow, desktop or laptop or Raspberry Pi. It is so much easier to use after a short learning curve. My preferred distro is Ubuntu with Kubuntu flavor using KDM plasma graphical user interface, otherwise what most think of as the Window.

**Installation** could not be easier. In Kubuntu, open the Discover shopping bag on the Taskbar. In its search block type OnlyOffice. Under OnlyOffice Desktop Editors, click Launch. Done.

**To open**, click on the Application Launcher gear, Highlight Office icon. Move right to drop down menu and click OnlyOffice. If you have used Word, you are in familiar territory. Rather than drop down menus, most everything is icon driven. For questions, click >File >Help. A very active forum addresses bugs and features desired. <https://forum.onlyoffice.com/>. It is a win.

**Why** was I so slow to transition? Better security, cheaper, smaller, faster, easier to use. FOSS wins!

**Life is good.** Enjoy!



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