

KDE's KOffice

An Office Suite that Delivers

MS Office was a major reason behind the growth of Windows as it allowed users to work in a user-friendly environment. Now, KOffice seems to be emerging as a good alternative in the Linux arena, not just because it is free but also a complete product.

During my days with the Penguin, I have been questioned a significant number of times from most users planning to migrate to Linux from any Microsoft OS. I have just seen an ad of iMac with Microsoft Office priced half as a bundled offer. Moreover, Bill Gates' team is already willing to produce a Microsoft Office for Linux too and hopefully working on that. This article is to fill the stopgap situation between no Microsoft application for Linux and welcome Penguin from Microsoft.

I first felt the need of an office product for Linux when I installed RedHat 5.2 on a Pentium-I system at my office and my boss asked me, "Can you efficiently deliver all the MIS reports required using this OS?" Answering NO made me feel guilty because he and all my colleagues started laughing at me. The inference was "Linux is just good for

nothing." By then Linux had started to conquer the world of Mail and Web servers, but for a desktop user it was still a 'no-no'.

Gnumeric was the first application I used that can help an office assistant but working with the first version was a nightmare. Then I got Star Office from Sun in a CD. I installed it and it 'worked' with all the fluency Microsoft Office had, though it was slow.

KDE Office suite is the perfect answer to the above question. There are a number of features for desktop users in Linux—Abiword is a gem for word processing, Gnumeric is great in making spreadsheets but when you talk about office applications you must choose KDE Office.

"WHAT IS UNDER THE HOOD OF KOffice SUITE?"

KOffice is equipped with:

KOffice: Workspace is just like your Microsoft Binder that enables you to start any office application at any time.

KWord: FrameMaker-Like word processing and DTP applications compete with Microsoft Word and a bit more than that.

KSpread: Scriptable spreadsheet application like Microsoft Excel with additional features included.

KPresenter: Presentation program like Powerpoint but has more options.

Kivio: Flowcharting program.

Kontour: Vector drawing program.

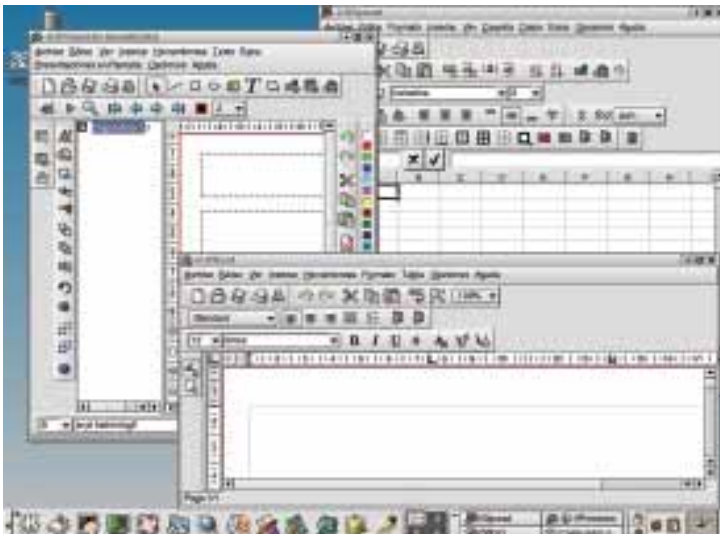
Krita: Painting and image editing application.

KPlato: Project management application.

Kugar: Business quality report generator.

KChart: Chart drawing application.

KFormula: Easy-to-use formula editor—used with KWord with a 'Greek Letters' option.



KOffice Suite



KChart screenshot

“HOW TO GRAB KOffice? WHAT SOFTWARE DOES KOffice DEPEND ON?”

The official website for KOffice is <http://www.koffice.org>.

RedHat 7.3 comes bundled with KOffice 1.1 and RedHat 8.0 comes with KOffice 1.2. The latest release of KOffice is KOffice 1.2 and is designed to run with KDE 3.0 or later. Qt 3.0.x, KDesupport, arts, and KDElibs packages are all required to run KOffice. kdbase is strongly recommended too.

You may find the KOffice-1.2 RPM for RedHat 7.3 at <http://www.gtlib.cc.gatech.edu/pub/kde/stable/koffice-1.2/RedHat/7.3/i386/>. RPM for other distributions (SuSE, Mandrake) are available at http://www.koffice.org/announcements/announce_1.2.phtml#package_locations. Older RPM versions are also available at <http://www.rpmfind.net>; you may search for other RPM installers too.

You can download Koffice 1.2 in bziped tar format from <http://www.koffice.org/releases/1.2-release.phtml>.

“I HAVE DOWNLOADED THE REQUIRED FILES. HOW DO I RUN THEM NOW?”

Installation of KOffice-1.2 is just like installing any other Linux application, but if you compile it all from source, it is time-consuming.

RPM installation: A fresh installation can be performed using `rpm -ivh <full/path/name> <name_of_the_binary_rpm>` as root. An upgrade to KOffice-1.1 can be done by using `rpm -Uvh <full/path/name> / <name_of_the_binary_rpm>` as root.

Tar.bz2 installation:

```
bunzip KOffice-1.2.tar.bz2
tar xvf KOffice-1.2.tar
cd koffice-1.2
./configure
make all
su -c "make install"
```

If you used `./configure—prefix` to install KOffice in a different location than the rest of KDE, you’ll need to add this to `/etc/kderc`:

```
[Directories]
prefixes=/the/prefix/I/used/for/koffice
```

Another solution is to export `KDEDIRS = /the/prefix/I/used/for/koffice:/the/normal/kdedir`

You will now be able to start each individual application, or run the integrated KOffice Workspace for easy access to all of the applications.

“WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO MY MICROSOFT WORD AND EXCEL FILES?”

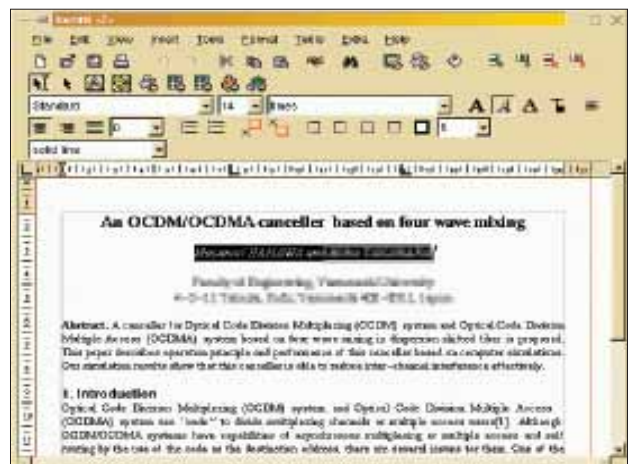
You can import Microsoft Office documents in KOffice easily and work with them.

KWord is the replacement of Microsoft Word. I will only discuss KWord features in this issue.

The rest of this article is for those who are new to KOffice and want to start with KWord. Experts are requested to stop reading here.

KWord FEATURES

- Use of frames is a boon to DTP experts. Not only Text frames but Graphics frames are also available.
- Templates are available though they have to be installed separately. Consult the KOffice website to install them.
- Stylist to add, edit, remove and update styles is also available.
- Insertion of special characters, variables (author name, page number, date etc), expressions (attn:, best regards, and so on for document creation) is allowed.
- Scanning of images is possible from within KWord. This runs XSane in the back.
- Multiple columns per page, chapter numbering, auto correction, spell checking and auto generation of table of



KWord screenshot

contents is possible.

- Paragraph style sheets, borders, alignment, line spacing, indentation, page breaks, and font type, style, colour and size can all be done.

KOffice TOOLBAR

Basic options of the menu bar are just the same as the Microsoft Word menu. You'll find all of File, Edit, View, Insert, etc and one additional 'Frames' menu. I am not going to discuss known menu features here—only the uncommon ones are detailed below.



You may wish to send a file directly via mail. The option you may consider for that is File > Send File. For the first time, an e-mail client (for me it was Balsa) will start. From the next time the e-mail client will start automatically. You have to attach the file and send it to your destination.

Find and Replace is another option that resembles these features in Microsoft Word. Moreover, apart from specifying text (case sensitive, partial word or whole word), you can specify format (e.g., font, colour, size, etc) of the text to search.

You can undo up to any level in KWord.

You can also view a document in a split asynchronous window (View > Split View). Splits can be horizontal or vertical (View > Splitter Orientation). A splitter can be removed at any point of time (View > Remove Split).

Insertion of weblink, file, footnote is also allowed. For that call the Insert (alt + I) pull down menu. Footnote appears in a frame at the bottom of the page. Footnote number can be either auto incremented or set manually. Endnotes are not yet implemented.

Chapter numbering with multiple depths and lists numbering are both allowed in KOffice. Roman, lower Arabic or upper Arabic numbers, lower or upper alphabetical letters and different bullets can be used for numbering. Starting and ending texts can be specified.

Insert > Scan Image scans a document and inserts it in a proper location.

From Format option you can format the page and its orientation. A4, A3, B3, B5, US letter or custom-size and some other page sizes are available under page formats. Page orientation can be portrait or landscape. You can format fonts and paragraphs from the format option of the menu. Paragraphs can be aligned (left, right, justify, and centre), bordered, indented, bulleted (typical or custom bullets can be placed), tabulated (tab stops can be configured) from Format > Paragraph.

Header and Footer can be switched on or off from Format menu using Format > Show Header or Format > Show Footer.

You can define whether header/footer will be the same for the whole document or different for even and odd pages. To edit header/footer just click into the frame of the header/footer and make the required changes. Page number, page x or y, author name, etc. can be placed inside a document using Insert > Variables. Expressions or selected words required during letter writing (e.g., Hi, Best Regards, Certified) can be inserted by Insert > Expression.

Totally configurable tables are realised in KWord using frames. Every table is a frameset. Rows and columns can be inserted or resized, tables can be moved. Tables can flow to multiple pages also. Joining of cells is easy and the most required option featured in KOffice. Table style can be selected from various templates created by the user.

With the auto-correction feature, KWord can be programmed so that in the case of two consecutive uppercase letters, the first remains in capitals and the second is converted to lowercase. Tools > Enable Autocorrection enables the autocorrection feature while creating or editing documents. You can define more flexible rules, such as a combination of characters may be replaced by a symbol from Settings > Configure Autocorrection.

Spell checker (supported by ispell/aspell) is included in KWord. Spell checker can be started by pressing its button on the toolbar.

The most important thing included in KOffice is Mail Merge. You can use an existing data source. Data can be fetched from any SQL database installed in your system. Tools > Configure > Create New > Internal Storage > OK will return a place to enter data for mail-merge. First, you have to create entries (i.e., column name as in a data table). Clicking the 'Add Entry' button (third button from the right along the toolbar), a small dialogue box will appear. Type a descriptive name of your entry in the dialogue box (name, address, e-mail etc.). Then records have to be entered. Pressing the 'Add Record' button allows you to enter records. Record and entry can be deleted by pressing 'Remove Record' and 'Remove Entry' buttons. To insert a merge field, place the cursor at the desired place in the document. Select Insert > Variable > Mail Merge... from the menubar. A list of available entries will appear. Select the desired entry, and click OK. The merge field, a placeholder, is inserted at the current cursor location and is surrounded by chicken lips (< >). The cursor can be placed in a new location in the document to insert another placeholder. When you are done inserting placeholders, you can proceed to printing your document. To delete a merge field, simply place the cursor at the end of the merge field, and press the Backspace key. The entire merge field will be deleted.

KWord comes with a good Help page that will answer most of the questions arising from day-to-day use. **LFY**

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