Appendix: KDE (The K Desktop Environment)

INTRODUCTION

The focus for the large part of this guide has been with the GNOME Desktop. However, there is another popular graphical desktop environment out there known as the K Desktop Environment, affectionately known as KDE. It is included with most systems, and has a strong user-base, just like the GNOME Desktop. KDE offers an alternative desktop computing experience in that while the applications should all function in the same manner irrespective of the desktop environment chosen, the look and feel of the graphical desktop are different. Desktop-specific tools and applets may also be different from one environment to the next.

This section will briefly introduce KDE as well as highlight some of the more important differences from the user's perspective between the KDE and GNOME Desktops.

LOGIN INTO KDE

To login to the KDE Desktop rather than the GNOME Desktop,
at the graphical login screen, click on Sessions at the bottom, and then select the KDE option. Enter your username and password – there might be a pop-up warning asking if the change is for the current session or for all future sessions (this can be permanently changed using the programs "system-config-switchdesk" on a Fedora/Red Hat system and "switchdesk" on a Debian system.).
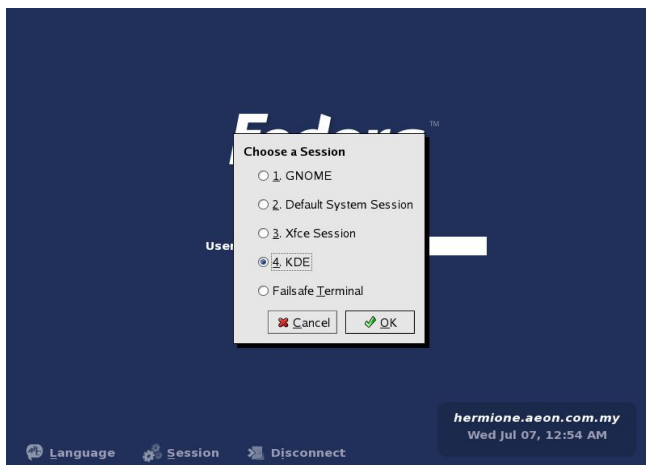

Fig. Choosing KDE at the Login Screen

After login, the KDE Desktop is displayed and as can be seen below is rather similar, but not identical, in appearance to the GNOME Desktop shown in Chapter 1.

THE KDE DESKTOP

The KDE Desktop has similar components to the GNOME Desktop and their functionalities and usage do not differ much. So on the desktop we find the following familiar components: the Menu System, the Panel, the Desktop itself.
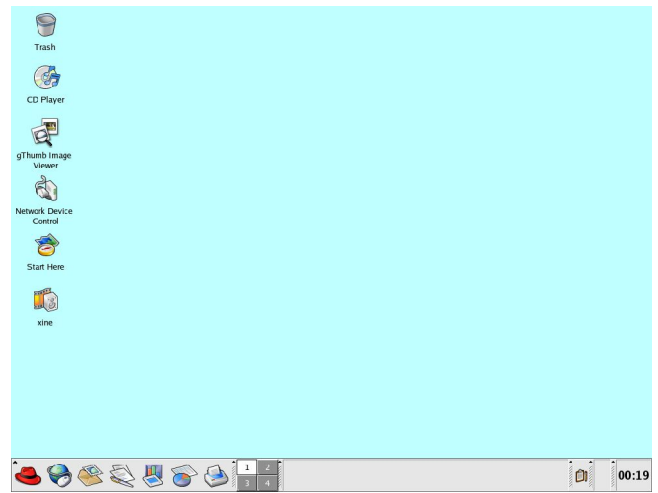

Fig. The KDE Desktop (Fedora Core)

On closer examination of the Desktop there are some subtle differences, For example, one of the things that set KDE apart from GNOME, would be the icon set. In contrast to GNOME, there is no "Computer" icon, but just some for your devices, and the usual "Start Here" set. KDE on systems other than Red Hat Linux or Fedora Core, will look a lot different, as the themes can be configured otherwise.

Fig. KDE Desktop Icon Set

Another item that you will notice is that if you right-click on the Desktop, the right-click pop-up menu differs from the GNOME offering. It allows you to create new documents, edit bookmarks (which are a handy feature to jump to places quickly with just a few clicks of the mouse button), and of course, run a command.
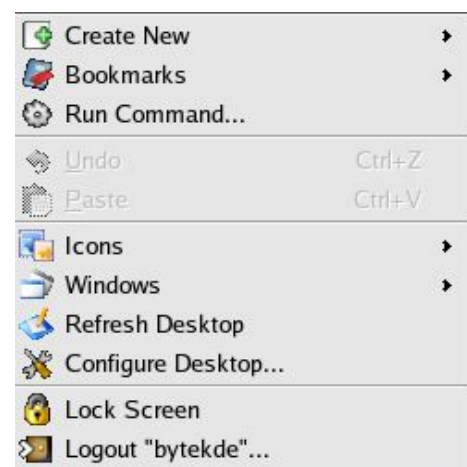

Fig. Right-click Menu in KDE

By clicking on the Main Menu, again, differences will be prevalent. But notice that the categories of applications are similar? It is just the look and feel, that seems to differ a little.

Fig. KDE Menus

CONTROL CENTER

There is a central place where all the Desktop and system configuration can be set and viewed – the KDE Control Center.

Fig. KDE Control Center

The Control Center can be launched from the Main Menu,

> Main Menu --> Control Center

This central place for configuration makes it very convenient for users and administrators alike. Using the Control Center is easy. To configure a particular setting or parameter, open up the section it is under and select the item to configure. For example, to change the background colour, select,

> Appearance & Theme --> Background

KLIPPER – CLIPBOARD APPLET

Klipper is a unique feature of KDE – it provides for clipboard access in the GUI application environment. It allows a multitude of copying and pasting options, and works well between all applications. Using Klipper, one can cut and paste text seamlessly between applications running on KDE. To place Klipper on the Panel, right-click on the Panel,

> Add --> Applet --> Klipper

Fig. Klipper

KONQUEROR - FILE MANAGER AND WEB BROWSER

Lastly, one major difference between KDE and GNOME is the file manager. In KDE, Konqueror is the default file manager. Konqueror provides all the functionalities one will expect from a modern file manager, including navigation of the filesystem, file/folder copying, renaming, deletion and creation and application launching.
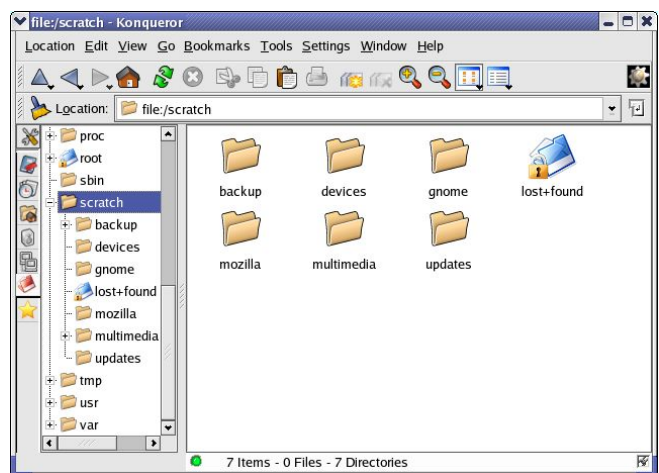

Fig. Konqueror File Manager

It is also able to display graphic image files and generate an image gallery web page from them. In addition. Konqueror is a standards-compliant web-browser and is perfectly capable of browsing the WWW on the Internet - just enter the website to go to in the Konqueror location bar.

Fig. Konqueror Web Browser

To learn more about the many features of Konqueror, see the online Konqueror documentation which can be invoked by selecting from the Konqueror main toolbar,

Help --> Konqueror Handbook

THE HELP CENTER

One of the best ways to learn about how to use KDE effectively is through its online help documentation – the Help Center.   This can be invoked from the Main Menu,

Main Menu --> Help

The Help Center covers the graphical desktop usage and configuration as well as the KDE applets and applications. Standard Unix/Linux manual and info pages can be accessed from here too.

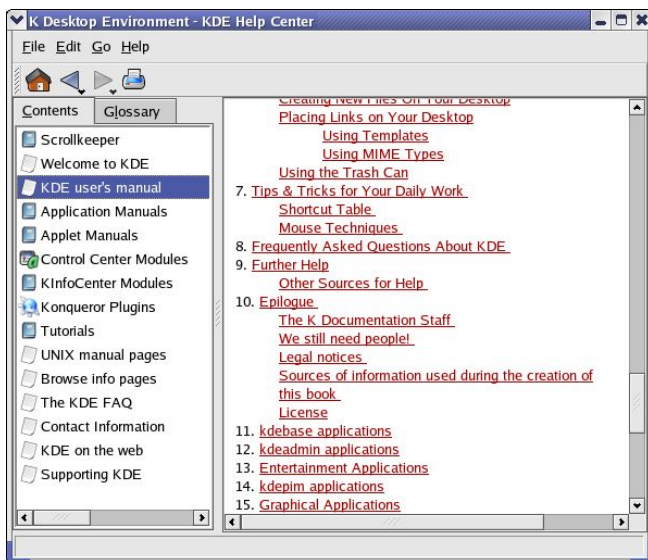The KDE Help Center should be consulted for more information about how to use KDE.

Fig. The KDE Help Center