

The Linux graphics stack from X to Wayland

By *srlinuxx*

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In the early 1980s, MIT computer scientist Bob Scheifler set about laying down the principles for a new windowing system. He had decided to call it X, because it was an improvement on the W graphical system, which naturally resided on the V operating system. Little did Bob know at the time, but the X Window System that he and fellow researchers would eventually create would go on to cause a revolution. It became the standard graphical interface of virtually all UNIX based operating systems, because it provided features and concepts far superior to its competition. It took only a few short years for the UNIX community to embrace the X windowing system en masse.

In this article, we'll take a look at the development of the Linux graphics stack, from the initial X client/server system to the modern Wayland effort.

What made X so special, of course, is legendary. X was the first graphical interface to embrace a networked, distributed solution. An X Server running on one of the time sharing machines was capable of generating the display for windows that belong to any number of local clients. X defined a network display protocol so that windows from one machine could be displayed on another, remote machine.

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