

The state of Gentoo

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It's been three years since LWN last covered Gentoo Linux, so checking in on Gentoo's activities since then seems appropriate. Let's start with a re-introduction to Gentoo. Gentoo is a source-based distribution that is unlike the more common binary distributions because packages are compiled on your machines rather than remotely on the distribution's infrastructure. Source-based distributions allow for far more customization than is possible with binary distributions because you can not only control which packages are installed, but also which features of a given package are enabled (and consequently how many dependencies get pulled in).

This leads to compelling advantages for a number of use cases, although Gentoo isn't suitable for everyone. For example, Gentoo is superb on developer workstations because you get a proven-working toolchain and all development packages (headers and so on) by default, as well as good support for building live packages directly from Git/Subversion/CVS/etc. It also stands out for use in embedded or other minimal configurations, systems that need every last drop of performance (since you can control the compilation flags for every package), and other places requiring significant customization.

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