

Scribus Layout Guide for PCLinuxOS Magazine

by Paul Arnote
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You've signed up to be a part of the **PCLinuxOS Magazine** staff. There are numerous ways to contribute. You can help edit articles. You can create artwork. You can write articles. You can be a "technical advisor," ensuring that the magazine articles are technically accurate. Or, you can help typeset the articles for the magazine. It's the latter that we will concentrate on.

Preliminary "Stuff"

Before we can get started on learning how to lay out the magazine articles, we have to define the specifications that are used in laying out the magazine. Adherence to these specifications are important, so the magazine has a unified and congruent appearance from article to article.

The magazine is laid out using Scribus, the open source desktop publishing program that is in the PCLinuxOS repository. So, if you have not already done so, you will need to open Synaptic and install Scribus to your computer.

Next, you will want to have some templates. Thankfully, there are several templates for the magazine. While they vary in length, they are all based on the one page template, created by me and Meemaw. Archie Arevalo created the first template, and it was wonderful but we have changed to a new one. From the PCLinuxOS Magazine group on

Google Groups, you can [download](#) the one page, four page, eight page, 12 page, 16 page, 20 page, and 24 page templates from the group's file area. All the templates are in the [PCLinuxOS-3-Column.tar.gz](#) file. The only one you are required to use is the one page template. However, all the work has been done for you on the other templates, and they make your life a lot easier when having to lay out articles longer than one page. Obviously, you will want to use the longer templates for longer articles. I have yet to have an article submitted that wouldn't fit within one of these templates. Using Ark, un-compress the templates to the `~/scribus/templates` directory. Bear in mind that the `.scribus` directory is a hidden directory in your `/home` directory, so you will need to enable "View Hidden Files" in your file manager software (Konqueror, Dolphin, Nautalis, or Thunar).

When you start to lay out a new article, simply open one of these template files as an existing document. Before you do anything else, re-save the file with the name you will call the new article layout. This will prevent you from potentially corrupting your "clean" templates. Don't worry if you corrupt them, as they are readily available for download from the file area on Google Groups. Alternatively, you can mark your "clean" templates as "read only" files, preventing you from accidentally overwriting them and their contents.

Let's Get Started

When I open Scribus, you should have my work area set up like in the screen shot below. I will explain why and how you can set your work

area up similarly. In the example below, the one page template is loaded, and you are seeing a "naked" magazine page.

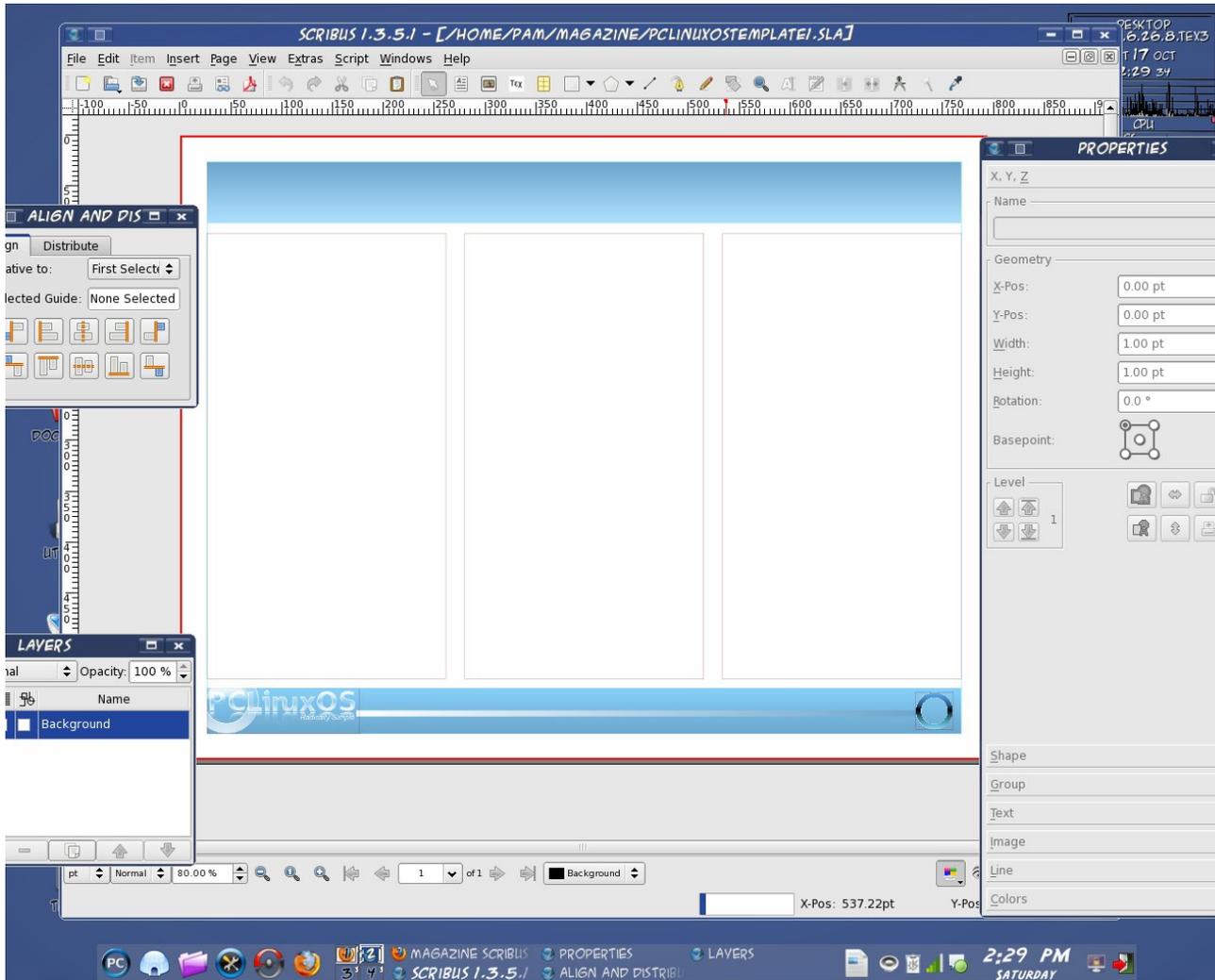
At the far right side of the work area is the **Properties** dialog box. This is where you will do a lot of work, customizing the elements of the layout components (text, graphics, photos, etc.). Here, you will control the positioning of the various elements on an X (horizontal) and Y (vertical) axis, the shape of objects (and whether text flows around those objects or not), the style and color of the text, the scaling of graphics and photos, the style of line used, and colors of various objects. I point this one out first, because it is one of the most heavily used dialog boxes in Scribus. This dialog box can be easily displayed by either right clicking on a page element and selecting Properties from the pop-up context menu, simply by just pressing F2, or by choosing the Scribus menu Windows » Properties.

At the upper left corner is the **Alignment & Distribution** dialog box. We can use the tools in it to help us align objects. We'll discuss it further later on. You can display this dialog box easiest by choosing the Scribus menu Windows » Align & Distribute.



At the lower left corner is the **Layers** dialog box. Certainly, we can create the layout all in one layer and not have to worry about layers. My first few attempts at laying out the magazine articles





"Background." I then create a separate layer for the article headline and page sub headings, another for photos and graphics, another for links, etc. I think you see the pattern. This helps you focus on one element of the layout at a time. It also has the added benefit of protecting your work from "accidental" slips of the mouse cursor. This dialog box is displayed by either selecting the Scribus menu Windows » Layers, or simply by selecting F6. The way the Layers dialog box appears (in the graphic on the previous page) is how I always set up my layers when I am laying out the articles for the magazine.

At the center of the window is where most of your work will occur. At the top, where it is blank is where the article headline goes. The larger grey boxes below the headline is where the body of the text for the article go, as well as any graphics that accompany it. At the lower right of the center work space, is the blue ring. This is where the page numbers go when final assembly of the magazine occurs. Unless you are doing the final assembly, you will not be doing anything inside the blue ring.

One thing that you might notice early on, is that the units of measure with the magazine templates defaults to points, abbreviated pts. Points is the standard measurement in the publishing world for defining the size of type. So, before we can go much further, we need to know what the "standard" magazine measurements are in the template.

Under the X, Y, Z tab of the Properties dialog box, we will find the sizes of the following elements.

was done that way. And, without any doubt, it can work just fine that way. But, the more you use layers,

the more you appreciate them. Typically, you will have the text in the layer that is usually labeled



Headline:

X-Pos: 30.00 pt
Y-Pos: 40.00 pt
Width: 732.00 pt
Height: 40.00 pt
Rotation: 0.00

Left Column Text Box:

X-Pos: 25.00 pt
Y-Pos: 95.00 pt
Width: 235.00 pt
Height: 438.00 pt
Rotation: 0.00

Center Column Text Box:

X-Pos: 278.50 pt
Y-Pos: 95.00 pt
Width: 235.00 pt
Height: 438.00 pt
Rotation: 0.00

Right Column Text Box:

X-Pos: 532.00 pt
Y-Pos: 95.00 pt
Width: 235.00 pt
Height: 438.00 pt
Rotation: 0.00

Multi-Column Widths:

1 Column: 235.00 pt
2 Column: 488.50 pt
3 Column: 742.00 pt

Under the Text tab of the Properties dialog box, we can further define the attributes of the text placed in their respective places on the page.

Headline:

Font: Bitstream Vera Sans
Style: Bold Oblique
Size: 30.0 pt
Line Spacing: Automatic
Scaling Width of Characters: 100.0%
Offset to Baseline of Characters: 0.0%
Manual Tracking: 0%
Scaling Height of Characters: 100.0%
Color of Font: White
Align Text: Center
NO Shadowed Text

Page Sub Heads:

Font: Liberation Sans
Style: Bold
Size: 14.0 pt
Line Spacing: Automatic
Scaling Width of Characters: 100.0%
Offset to Baseline of Characters: 0.0%
Manual Tracking: 0%
Scaling Height of Characters: 100.0%
Color of Font: White

Align Text: Right
NO Shadowed Text

Body Text:

Font: Liberation Sans
Style: Regular
Size: 10.0 pt
Line Spacing: Automatic
Scaling Width of Characters: 100.0%
Offset to Baseline of Characters: 0.0%
Manual Tracking: 0.0%
Scaling Height of Characters: 100%
Color of Font: Black
Align Text: Left

Are you feeling overwhelmed? DON'T! You most likely won't have to mess with many of these settings. However, to insure that the magazine has a uniform and coherent appearance, we need to list the specifications. And, nearly all of the articles in the magazine will need to adhere to these specifications. On occasion, there will be some deviation from these specifications, but that will be decided on a case-by-case basis by the magazine's chief editor.

Often, the headline font size will vary, and will be adjusted (downward only in size ... we don't want SCREAMING headlines) to allow a desired headline to fit.

On another note about the headline, did you notice the last item under the definitions that appear in the Text tab of the Properties dialog? It says "**NO** Shadowed Text." I need to explain why. While it may



be tempting to allow Scribus to create the shadowed text, problems arise whenever the end user attempts to print out a page with KPDF. It SEVERELY slows down the print rendering, often to the point of locking up a user's computer. So, it's best to avoid its use. We can easily create a "faux" text shadowing that is much easier to render, and that does not lock up a user's computer.

To create the text shadowing ourselves, you will first need to click on the headline text. Immediately, you will notice that the headline will be surrounded by a broken-line red box, with sizing handles at the corners and at the mid-points. Now, from the Scribus menus, select Item » Duplicate. You will see a copy of the text appear. Under the X, Y, Z tab of the Properties dialog box, change the X-Pos setting to 28, and change the Y-Pos setting to 43. Under the Text tab of the Properties dialog box, change the text color to Black. Then, back under the Scribus menu, select Item » Level » Lower. And that's it – we have our shadowed text! Trust me – it's a lot easier than it sounds. Just follow the steps.

Since we now have two objects that are inextricably linked to produce our shadowed text, it's a good idea to group them together and lock them. The easiest way to group them together is to use the Scribus selection tool (the arrow on the tool bar at the top of the screen). Click and drag your mouse to encompass the two items. This should cause both items to be highlighted with the red broken line box. From the Scribus menu, select Item » Group. Now both items will be grouped into one single item. Right click your mouse on the newly grouped item, and select "Is Locked" from the pop-up context menu to lock the item in place.

Placing the Text

Now this part is very easy. Simply left click within the first column (the left column) on the first page, and select "Get Text" from the context menu that pops up. This will allow you to select text from a file on your computer. By far, the best results come from using plain, ordinary text (*.txt) files. While you can import the text from an OpenOffice Writer file, you end up adding an additional layer of complexity due to the formatting in the OpenOffice Writer file. My motto, when I was teaching, was KISS ... Keep It Super Simple. Using plain text files is the most simple way, and works exceptionally well.

Since the templates have the text flow from text frame to text frame predefined for you, the text should flow from one text frame to the next, seamlessly.

Once you have the text placed in the text frames, it is possible to edit that text and change its appearance. While you can perform minor edits within the text frame itself (such as misspellings, punctuation, etc.), it's often much easier to perform the text edits en-masse. Such edits as changing the style of portions of the text are much more easily done by right clicking on a text frame and selecting "Edit Text" from the context menu that pops up. This will open up an Edit Text dialog box, with the text preloaded into it. Now, simply highlight the text in the dialog box that you want to change the style of (say you want to make the byline of an article bold), and change the font to Liberation Sans Bold. The exact same thing applies if you want some text to appear as italics, only you would choose Liberation Sans Italic as the font to use to display the highlighted text

with. You can do a similar thing with color, although colored text must be used sparingly. The default color of the text for the body of the magazine articles is black, and for the most part, should remain black to maintain and increase readability. One such example is maintaining readability for those readers who may experience color blindness.

Graphics, Screenshots, Quotes and Photos

Endless pages of text is, in a word, boring. Just take a look at any technical or scientific article. Page after page of nothing but text makes the pages appear very gray, and lack visual appeal. Without anything to break up the grayish appearance of the text, there's nothing to anchor the eye and people tend to lose their place much more easily, making reading more difficult and decreasing comprehension. Typically, it takes a very disciplined mind to be able to read page after page of grayish text and maintain a high level of comprehension. This is why, in other publications (like magazines and textbooks), frequent use is made of other graphical elements like charts, graphs, screenshots, and photographs. Plus, the old adage "a picture is worth a 1,000 words" is true, as adding other graphical elements help improve comprehension.

Some articles don't lend themselves well to graphics, especially if you are attempting to present a concept or idea. Often, concepts or ideas are just that – conceptual, and don't have any physical representation, or at least are difficult to represent with any kind of physical representation. In those cases, it's possible to break up the grayness of the



text by pulling out quotes from the article to display as an extra graphical element, displayed in a larger font size in a complimentary font face.

In any case, whether we are adding graphics, screenshots, photos, or quotes, the method is the same. We want to add the visual element and have the text flow around it. (Don't forget that we are adding things in layers, so you will place these visual elements in their own layer.) This is also where knowing the template measurements is important. So the X-Pos, Y-Pos, and column width measurements (in the X, Y, Z tab of the Properties dialog box) take on some added importance.

For example, if we want to place a photo or screenshot in the upper left column, we will want the object placed so its X-Pos is 25, its Y-Pos is 95, and (if the photo or screenshot is to only be one column wide) the width of that object is 235 pts. The easiest way to achieve this is to manually adjust the values in the Properties box. Simply select the image tool from the Scribus toolbar, and click and drag to the object's approximate size. Use the values in the Properties dialog box to refine the measurements.

You should now see a marker on the screen for the new object. If it's an image, right click on it and select "Get Image" from the context menu. Point to the file you want to use and double click it (you may have to change to the directory where you've stored your images). Go to the Image tab in the Properties dialog and select "Scale To Frame Size." The image will be automatically scaled to fit into the space you've defined. By default, the image will be scaled proportionally, so that the image doesn't appear to be distorted. You may need to make some slight

adjustments in the image frame (typically, either lengthen or shorten the height) to fill the space you have in mind for the image. Right click on the image frame, and select "Adjust Frame to Image" from the context menu that pops up. Next, click on the Shape tab in the Properties dialog, and select "Text Flows Around Frame." Magically, you will see the text shift and adjust to flow around the new image frame. Were you to do this with a quote, you would select the text frame tool from the Scribus toolbar, and you would see a text frame, instead of an image frame. You would still select the Shape tab in the Properties dialog box, and select "Text Flows Around Frame" to get a similar effect. You would then specify the text to display, along with the font size, font face, and font style in the Text tab in the Properties dialog box, instead of the image tab. As a shortcut, after defining the text frame, right click on it and select "Edit Text" from the pop-up context menu, and simply enter the text there, making all the changes there at once. This is the same method that I use when creating captions for images.

Page Sub-Heads

If the article you are typesetting (yes, that's what you are doing) is longer than 1 page – and most articles are – each subsequent page will need what I term a page sub-head. This is a smaller sized headline in the upper right corner of the page, with the same text as the main article headline, in most cases. The page sub-head should be 14 pt size, using the Liberation Sans font, boldface, white in color, and right aligned. Again, do NOT use Scribus' shadow text setting. In fact, the page sub-heads have no

shadowing whatsoever. The page sub-head exists to help keep the reader oriented as to what article they are currently reading.

The Y-Pos will always be 30 pt. The X-Pos, along with the width, will alter on a case by case basis, varying with how long the text is. To get proper alignment, the right edge of the page sub-head must align with the right side of the right text column. The easiest way to do this is to first click on the right column, then hold down the Shift key on the keyboard and select the text frame that contains the page sub-head. Next, from the Alignment & Distribution dialog box, select the right-alignment button (see graphic. It's the fourth button from the left in the top row of buttons.). Be sure that the "Relative To" setting is set to "First Selected" before attempting the alignment. See, I told you we'd talk more about the Alignment & Distribution dialog box later on (now).

After you get the first page sub-head aligned, you can streamline the process by noting the X-Pos measurement (remember, the Y-Pos will always be 40.00 pt). Now, just highlight the page sub-head, right click, and choose "Copy" from the pop-up context menu. Move to the next page, right click in the page banner, and select paste. Highlight the copy by clicking your mouse on it, then directly enter the same X-Pos measurement as the first, and make the Y-Pos measurement 30.00 pt.



Finishing Up

By this point, you should be pretty much done with the layout of the magazine article. Now, it's time to package everything up for the final assembly of the magazine, which will be done either by the chief editor or someone he designates. That person will not only proof read the article again, but will also pay close attention to insure that all the style rules for the magazine layout are followed. Then, they will assemble the individual articles into the one, common PDF file that you have come to expect for the PCLinuxOS Magazine.

First, we need to make sure all the files you used in the page layout are available to be delivered to the final assembler. To do this, from the Scribus menu, select File » Collect For Output. You will be prompted to pick a directory to place the output files into. I recommend creating a separate directory for each magazine article. Once you click on OK, you Scribus will place a copy of each of the page elements into that one directory.

Next, it's time to create a PDF of your layout. Select the PDF icon on the Scribus toolbar, and you will be presented with the PDF Export dialog box. We will be creating the PDF file to be compatible with PDF version 1.4 (right side of the dialog box, about 1/3 of the way down). Towards the bottom of the General tab, we need to change Compression from Automatic, to None. Using compression makes the PDF file load very, very slowly in KPDF, so we want to avoid its use. Under the Fonts tab, we want to embed all the fonts used in the article to create the PDF file. This insures that readers viewing this on computers that may not have all the included fonts

installed on are able to view the document as it was intended to be viewed. Like it or not, there will be users who will be viewing the magazine on a Windows computer (possibly while at work), and Windows will not have the free open source fonts installed; hence, it's difficult to predict the results the reader will get on a "foreign" computer.

Finally, change the directory where the PDF file is stored to the same directory used for the Collect For Output step. Then select Save. Once you have the PDF file created in the Collect For Output directory, compress the entire contents of the directory into a tar.gz file. Then, upload the resulting tar.gz file to the magazine group's file area (maximum file size for upload is 10 MB).

There you have it. A step by step guide to how to layout articles for the magazine.

Hints & Tips

Make liberal use of layers.

After you have elements placed on the screen, lock them in place by right clicking on the item and choosing "Is Locked" from the pop-up context menu.

Group related objects together.

Don't try to position things precisely with the mouse. Instead, use the X, Y, Z tab of the Properties dialog box. It's much easier.

Screenshot Showcase Layout:

1) Copy the header from the page, and fit it PRECISELY (width-wise) in the remaining two columns.

2) Make the "header" deeper, to precisely fill the column height (two column should be 488.50 pt wide, 438.00 pt high, XPos = 278.50 pt, YPos = 95.00 pt)

3) Place headline (max 30 pt) at top of two column block, just as we do for the main headlines, using Bitstream Vera Sans Roman Oblique. Duplicate the headline, re-do the positioning, and create your headline shadow.

4) Place a 2 pt line under the headline, after you have created the headline shadow.

5) Position an image frame within the colored block so that (initially) there is a 5 pt "margin" on both sides (L and R).

6) Right click on the image frame, and select "Get Image." Choose your image (should have already been resized, either with Kim or GIMP to 480 px wide).

7) If necessary, re-center the image within the color block.

8) Add text frame under image, same width as image. Use Liberation Serif, 10 pt, Bold Italic, right aligned with the right edge of the image. Place posters name, date, and desktop environment/version. You have probably noticed that I have all that info in the file name of the images.



Creating hyperlinks in Scribus:

- 1) You need to change the text color to blue yourself, because Scribus won't do it.
- 2) On the Scribus PDF toolbar, there is an icon with two "shoe-prints" on it. Click on it, and draw a tight rectangle around your blue text.

(If the PDF Toolbar isn't visible, click on Windows in the menu bar, and at the bottom make sure PDF Tools has a check mark in front of it. Mine shows up to the right of the page I'm working on.... you might have another window over it.)
- 3) Double click the rectangle you just drew on the screen.
- 4) At the top of the dialog box that appears, select "Link To External Web Site."
- 5) Then, enter the URL in the entry box in the middle of the dialog box. Then click OK.

*Updated January 30, 2011 by Paul Arnote
PCLinuxOS Magazine Chief Editor*

Magazine Layout Quick Reference

Headline:

X-Pos: 30.00 pt
Y-Pos: 40.00 pt
Width: 732.00 pt
Height: 40.00 pt
Rotation: 0.00

Left Column Text Box:

X-Pos: 25.00 pt
Y-Pos: 95.00 pt
Width: 235.00 pt
Height: 438.00 pt
Rotation: 0.00

Center Column Text Box:

X-Pos: 278.50 pt
Y-Pos: 95.00 pt
Width: 235.00 pt
Height: 438.00 pt
Rotation: 0.00

Right Column Text Box:

X-Pos: 532.00 pt
Y-Pos: 95.00 pt
Width: 235.00 pt
Height: 438.00 pt
Rotation: 0.00

Multi-Column Widths:

1 Column: 235.00 pt
2 Column: 488.50 pt
3 Column: 742.00 pt

Headline:

Font: Bitstream Vera Sans
Style: Bold Oblique Size: 30.0 pt
Line Spacing: Automatic
Scaling Width of Characters: 100.0%
Offset to Baseline of Characters: 0.0%
Manual Tracking: 0%
Scaling Height of Characters: 100.0%
Color of Font: White
Align Text: Center **NO** Shadowed Text

Page Sub Heads:

Font: Liberation Sans
Style: Bold Size: 14.0 pt
Line Spacing: Automatic
Scaling Width of Characters: 100.0%
Offset to Baseline of Characters: 0.0%
Manual Tracking: 0%
Scaling Height of Characters: 100.0%
Color of Font: White
Align Text: Right **NO** Shadowed Text
Y-Pos: 30.00 pt

Body Text:

Font: Liberation Sans
Style: Regular Size: 10.0 pt
Line Spacing: Automatic
Scaling Width of Characters: 100.0%
Offset to Baseline of Characters: 0.0%
Manual Tracking: 0.0%
Scaling Height of Characters: 100%
Color of Font: Black
Align Text: Left





