NO FEAR

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FREE DVD: Ubuntu 10.04 "Ubuntu User Edition." Plus, Kubuntu, openArtist, and more. See Page 6.

"I don't fear computers. I fear the lack of them." – Isaac Asimov

Dear Ubuntu User Reader,

I am 100% on the same page as Isaac Asimov, the man who gave us the famous "Three Laws of Robotics." Asimov is one of the world's most famous and most celebrated writers, and rightly so. In his lifetime, he penned hundreds of books and wrote thousands or short stories, articles, essays, and so on.

The man loved to write.

Such faults aside (yes, I am kidding), Asimov gave us some of the most memorable visions of computers and robots in the science fiction genre. He provided singular visions of humans merging with their computer intelligences in *The Final Question*, introduced us a far-out version of the Internet Archive (the so-called "Way Back Machine") long before its time, asking questions about the future of information and how it could be preserved over millennia in the "Foundation" series. We struggle with these questions now, decades later, as increasingly fragmented data formats threaten our very history – of unknown tomorrows – before it happens.

In the world of robotics, Asimov dabbled with childish glee, creating characters and ideas that live on in our modern world. R. Daneel Olivaw, the positronic humanoid robot, and his human partner, Elijah Baley, solved crimes, applying Asimov's Three Laws to help uncover the identity of the evildoers. For the record, those three laws, originally published in the 1942 short story, "Runaround," stand at the heart of modern considerations for protecting humans from their computerized creations.

1. A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.
2. A robot must obey any orders given to it by human beings, except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.
3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law.

See? It's all about us, and rightly so. We are the humans and they are our machine servants, after all. But, in today's world, something incredible has happened. We are more concerned today with protecting computers from other humans, than humans from computers. Whatever visions Asimov and others writers might have had about the power of machine intelligence, it is still a long way from the visions of the past century.

Computers and the computer networks that span the globe are fragile creations whose health and well-being is in the hands of those "white hats" who are forever trying to harden and protect our systems from the "black hats" that seek to destroy them or otherwise direct their use to nefarious purposes. By and large, the balance seems to rest with the white hats, but the forces of evil never sleep. That's why security is so important and why you need to consider security even when dealing with home desktops and networks.

In this issue of *Ubuntu User*, you'll find some great information for keeping your system safe and for understanding how Linux security works. You'll read about tools for hunting down rootkits and other hidden malware. We'll give you an introduction to AppArmor in our Discovery Section, and I have it on good authority that there's also an article covering some really cool firewall tools.

In terms of security claims, Windows and Linux are always duking it out. We'll keep the tension going by exploring VirtualBox 3.1, which is a great way to run the latest Windows in a safe, isolated virtual world. If you dual-boot to Windows 7, you might occasionally find your Ubuntu Linux boot manager overwritten by a Windows update (I can vouch for this one). To help you recover from such an event, check out EasyBCD.

And because it's all fun until somebody loses an … uh, sorry thinking of something else. Because it's all about fun, check out PlayOnLinux, a tool for running Windows applications and games under Linux. We've got Wiican, a tool that lets you use a Wii remote as a mouse substitute, and the Subsonic media streaming server. While you're busy having fun, you might also want to check out the review of Eschalon II.

There's Fontmatrix, a font manager for Linux, and the WL-404 Webcam, a cool cam that attaches directly to your network. And over in the world of scripting, Æleen Frisch's column focuses on conditional loops in Bash. Finally, if any of this sounds like a foreign language to you, check out Anaphraseus, a computer-aided translation tool for OpenOffice.

Until next time …