

Of netbooks, tablets and Linux's revenge

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Five years ago, I wrote an article about the relatively new class of netbook computers. I suggested the ultra-low price machines running GNU/Linux posed a problem for Microsoft. That's because it needed to charge something for Windows, pushing the price of Windows-based netbooks above similar systems running free software. As I wrote:

This combination of good functionality and out-of-the box ease of use with a price so low that it's almost at the impulse-buy level could prove problematic for Microsoft. Until now, there has been no obvious advantage for the average user in choosing GNU/Linux over Windows on the desktop, and plenty of disadvantages.

Low-cost netbooks suddenly gave people a fresh reason to look at free software. The new systems running GNU/Linux were highly portable, rugged (since they used solid state storage), booted up quickly, and didn't crash. It's true the software was different from the usual Windows desktop, which was a problem for some people, but as a quick way of accessing the internet or scribbling down notes, netbooks met a real need for those willing to be flexible.

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