Review: Apache OpenOffice 4 vs. LibreOffice 4.1

Not so fast, LibreOffice -- OpenOffice has a shiny, new, and improved major release of its own

16

By Serdar Yegulalp | Follow

InfoWorld | Aug 7, 2013

Once, whenever you referred to the free productivity suite that competes with Microsoft Office, people knew exactly which program you were talking about. Lately, though, OpenOffice -- formerly of Sun/Oracle, now under the aegis of the Apache Foundation -- has taken a backseat to LibreOffice, an upstart spun off from OpenOffice's own source code. While the two share a common code base and similar missions, they differ in their feature sets and the licensing for their source code.

For some time, LibreOffice seemed to have taken the crown from OpenOffice. Libre had commandeered a sizable portion of the OpenOffice developer base, introduced a faster revision cycle, and attracted a large number of users, thanks in part to LibreOffice now being the default productivity suite for many Linux distributions.

[Read the InfoWorld review: LibreOffice 4 leaves you wanting more | The best open source desktop applications | Track the latest trends in open source with InfoWorld's Open Sources blog and Technology: Open Source newsletter.]

But OpenOffice has staged a comeback, with a new revision to the left of the decimal point. Challenging LibreOffice's spanking new version 4.1, Apache OpenOffice 4.0 boasts a splashy in-document user interface, hundreds of bug fixes, and many more features big and small. Is it enough to take back the crown?

The reigning champ: LibreOffice 4.1
It's somewhat astonishing how quickly LibreOffice grabbed the spotlight from its older brother, but at least some of the blame belongs to the way OpenOffice changed hands multiple times -- Sun, then Sun/Oracle, then Apache -- with the project's directions

handled rather autocratically at times. In response, LibreOffice was spun off by former OpenOffice project members who wanted to give the software a better home and a more predictable release schedule (every six months).

LibreOffice 4.0, which debuted back in February, didn't quite seem like a 4.0 product. The changes were mostly incremental or trivial. For instance, although the improvements to .docx cross-compatibility and the ability to attach comments to ranges of text were useful, the ability to use Firefox Background Themes as a skinning mechanism for LibreOffice was frivolous at best.

Version 4.1 is at about the same level of change: incremental, if generally positive. The LibreOffice folks haven't undertaken any radical reworking of the program. The look and feel haven't shifted at all, and they've wisely kept many minor interface updates that made sense. For example, in Writer, the word counter shows up in the document's status bar; you don't have to tediously invoke it from a menu option, as still required in OpenOffice.

InfoWorld Scorecard	Spreadsheets (20.0%)	Usability (15.0%)	Presentations (20.0%)	Word processing (20.0%)	Value (10.0%)	Interoperability (15.0%)	Overall Score (100%)
LibreOffice 4.1	8.0	7.0	8.0	8.0	9.0	7.0	7.8
OpenOffice 4.0	8.0	7.0	7.0	8.0	9.0	8.0	7.8

❯ From CIO: 8 Free Online Courses to Grow Your Tech Skills

💬 View 16 Comments

YOU MIGHT LIKE

10 Things You Must Eat in Mumbai

cooks.ndtv.com

Infoworld

The Ultimate Way to Get Cheap Hotel Rooms

Hotel Bargains

Watch Cheddar TV: The CNBC for Millennials

Facebook | Cheddar

Investing Rs.1000 Per Month Can Lead to Long Term Wealth Creation.

MyUniverse

Gamers around the world have been waiting for this game!

Forge Of Empires - Free Online Game

The Endless Mini $79 PC: A desktop for the masses

Windows 10 Keyboard Shortcuts

Google's Pixel C is a killer Android tablet on a productivity mission

At The Age Of 80 She is Doing Things Which We at 40 Can't Do.

Ashiana Housing