

CLI Magic: Patching the differences

By *srlinuxx*

Created 20/02/2006 - 2:25pm

Submitted by srlinuxx on Monday 20th of February 2006 02:25:53 PM Filed under [HowTos](#) [1]

Working with free and open source software, one frequently hears terms such as bugs, updates, and patches. When developers come across shortcomings in their software, instead of repackaging the software with the changes, they can provide a patchfile that contains details of all required changes. Two important tools used in the process are diff, which creates a patchfile, and patch, which applies it. You can use both tools with text or HTML files.

As the name suggests, diff documents differences between two files. diff compares files line by line. Running the diff old_file new_file command displays the differences between files on your screen. The -u switch creates output in the unified diff format, which displays each difference with a few unchanged context lines above and below the change. A unified diff file can help you determine where changes have been made.

To create a unified diff format patchfile, run the command diff -u old_file new_file > patchfile. Here is a quick example to illustrate how diff works. We have files named first.txt and second.txt with inventory lists of sports equipment:

[Full Story](#) [2].

[HowTos](#)

Source URL: <http://www.tuxmachines.org/node/5155>

Links:

[1] <http://www.tuxmachines.org/taxonomy/term/98>

[2] <http://applications.linux.com/applications/06/02/16/1938203.shtml?tid=47&tid=89>