Designing greetings cards with KreetingKard

WISH YOU WERE HERE

If you want to send your friends birthday greetings or a personalized picture postcard, KreetingKard can help. **BY FRANK WIEDUWILT**

I f you are looking for something more than impersonal, store-bought greeting cards, or even if you just want to add a personal note to your vacation snapshots, you may be interested in the KDE tool known as KreetingKard. KreetingKard can give your postcards and greetings cards an individual design.

Installation

KreetingKard Version 0.7.1 is available from the KreetingKard homepage at [1] as a source code archive and a Klik file [2] for OpenSuse 10, Kanotix, and CPX Mini [3]. The Klik file is easy to install, assuming you have the Klik client.

Users of other distributions will need to build the program from the source code. To do so, download the *Kreeting-Kard-0.7.1.tar.gz* source code archive from the program website at [4], and use ark, or give the *tar -xzvf Kreeting-Kard-0.7.1.tar.gz* command to unpack the file. After changing to the new directory that this process creates, *Kreeting-Kard-0.7.1.*, enter *make -f Makefile.cvs* to create the Makefile templates and the *configure* script.

Finally, run *./configure* to create the makefiles, and then run *make* to build the source code. After becoming root and typing *make install* to install the program and the templates, you can launch the program by entering the *KreetingKard &* command.

First Greetings

The program comes up with a tidy interface. You can use the sidebar on the left of the workspace to toggle between the template selection, editor, and address book features. Start by selecting a template for the card. Out-of-the-box KreetingKard gives you a selection of Japanese postcards as templates (Figure 1).

You can easily remove the background image from the Japanese postcard. To do so, click the page with the background image, and then select *Edit | Erase Image* in the menu. As the KreetingKard file format is XML-based, you can use a text editor such as Kate or Nedit to create an empty template of your own.

The XML source code in Listing 1 gives you a two-page template for an A6 postcard. You can store this text in a file
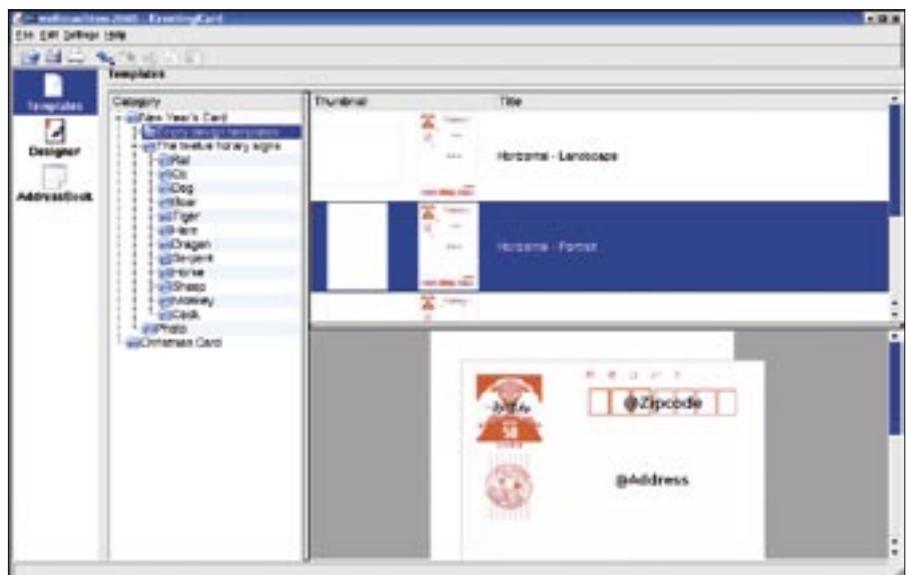

Figure 1: KreetingKard showing its Japanese origins.

with a *.kk* suffix, such as *template.kk*, to allow KreetingKard to find it.

Finally, open the template you just create in KreetingKard to view the empty, two-page card. The next step is to position various elements on the card.

KreetingKard includes tools for text boxes, images, addresses, addressees, and zip codes. The program fills the address fields with data from the integrated address book.

Design Tools

You can format text fields with different font types, typefaces, and colors. The content in a text field always uses the same formating. Text can be set vertically or horizontally within a field, and paragraphs can be left or right justified, or centered. The program does not break lines of text automatically, so make sure you add new line characters to prevent the text dropping out of the text box.

The program can handle graphics in any format supported by Qt. Images can be scaled and inserted at any position on the card. KreetingKard does not have its own image manipulation tools. When you save a document, the program stores images in the XML file, which tends to bloat the file. On the other hand, you just need the KreetingKard file if you are emailing a card. To add a background image, double click the background and select the image. KreetingKard scales the image to fit the page size, and this can distort the image. You can use the *Edit | Print Image* menu function to specify whether to print the background image, or just display the image on screen.

When you are satisfied with the appearance of an element, select the element and then press *Lock* in the toolbox to prevent inadvertent changes.

At present, KreetingKard does not have tools for creating graphical elements such as lines, arrows, and polygons, so you will need to insert pixel graphics for these elements.

The program prints the greeting card pages separately, allowing you to print the front and back pages of the card in two sessions.

Figure 2: Positioning text and images on a card.

Mass Mailing

KreetingKard gives you an internal address book, which is useful if you need to send a card to more than one recipient. Select *AddressBook* in the sidebar on the left to access the database. The current version of the address book turned out to be fairly unstable. Addresses kept disappearing from the database after I quit the program.

You can import data from your KDE address book by clicking three times. Start by selecting *File | Import | KAdressbook* in the menu to import your address list to KreetingKard. Note that KreetingKard does not sync your address data with KAdressbook, and remember to re-import before you send out the next batch of cards.

Enter the name, address and zip code for each addressee. *Joint Name* lets you add more names to the name field. The data input mask has a number of options grouped under *Print*. Use the options to specify whether to *Print* a record or not (*None*), or if the card for this record has already been *Printed*.

The *Groups* list lets you assign addresses to various groups. Note that you can't assign an address to multiple groups without re-entering the address. Be careful when you delete a group of contacts: KreetingKard does not prompt before deleting.

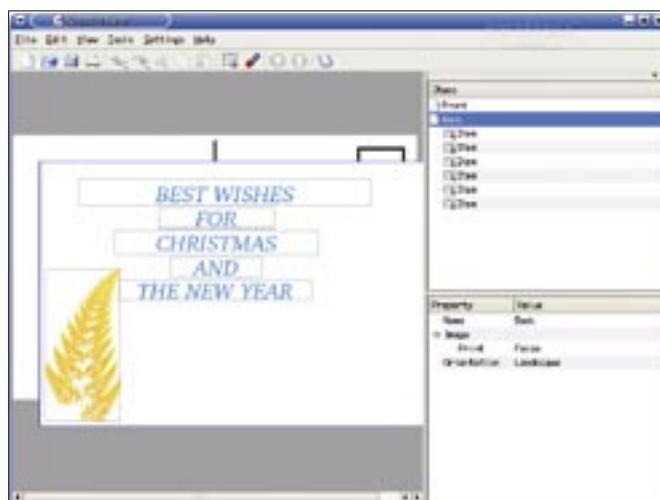After adding a database field to a card, KreetingKard will not print unless at least one record in the address book has a *Print* tag. After printing, you can tell the program to remove the tag, and change it to *Printed*.

The input box for the sender address looks just like the addressee box. To access the box and add your data, select *Sender* in the sidebar.

Conclusions

KreetingKard makes it easy to create personalized greeting cards. And the fact that the program has an integrated address database means that you can use KreetingKard to send mailings for long lists and large events. However, the current version of the program lacks tools for creating graphical elements, and the program is less stable than we would have liked. In our lab, KreetingKard crashed without warning when we selected pages, or elements.

At this time of writing, the text formatting options are also limited. The program does not have an automatic line break feature, and it does not let you assign a background color or image to a text box. There is no online help, but then again, the feature scope of the program is so limited that you can probably do without it. ◾

Listing 1: KreetingKard template

```
01 nonumber
02 <?xml version="1.0"
   encoding="UTF-8"?>
03 <KreetingKard version="0.2.0"
   >
04  <Paper width="379" x="0"
   y="0" height="567"
   imageprint="1" selected="1" />
05  <Paper width="567" x="0"
   y="0" height="379"
   imageprint="1" />
06 </KreetingKard>
```

INFO

[1] KreetingKard homepage: *http://linux-life.net/program/cc/kde/app/kreetingkard/*.

[2] Klik: *http://klik.atekon.de/*

[3] Klik file for KreetingKard: *http://kreetingkard.klik.atekon.de/*

[4] Download: *http://linux-life.net/program/cc/kde/app/kreetingkard/dl/*