

TelnetD: Thin-Client Access to Text Apps

REVIEW: Pragma's updated Telnet server gives NT multiuser capabilities

BY WILLIAM WONG FOR PC WEEK LABS

GRAPHICAL THIN CLIENTS ARE ALL THE rage, but Pragma Systems Inc.'s updated InterAccess TelnetD gives companies a convenient, low-cost way to make Windows NT a multiuser system by giving users access to text-based applications through thin-client Telnet sessions.

Version 4.0 of Pragma's Telnet server software does just as well when it comes to text applications as the more expensive graphics-based Citrix Systems Inc.'s WinFrame, a multiuser version of Windows NT 3.51, and Microsoft Corp.'s WinFrame-based multiuser version of NT 4.0, Windows Terminal Server, expected to ship this month. In PC Week Labs' tests, TelnetD 4.0 also proved

more robust than two competing Telnet products, Georgia Softworks' Windows NT Telnet Server and Seattle Lab Inc.'s SLnet Telnet Server, and merited designation as a PC Week Labs Analyst's Choice.

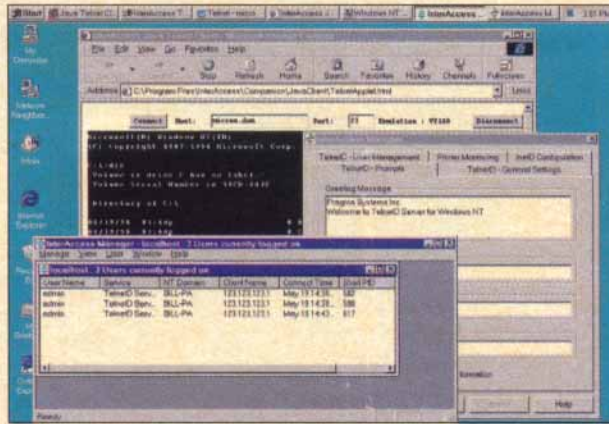
TelnetD provides access to legacy applications plus command-line management applications and lets administrators and applications developers skip the overhead and expense of buying and deploying Windows terminals.

Although Telnet is supposedly a "dying" technology, PC Week Labs concluded after testing TelnetD that it can help administrators give legacy applications a new lease on life.

Nicely wrapped

Pragma's impressive wrapper technology ran every text-based application we tested, even ones that the other Telnet servers could not run. Version 4.0 adds much-needed features, including a GUI management

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InterAccess TelnetD uses a GUI to manage text-based Telnet clients.

TelnetD 4.0

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application (see screen, Page 87), improved security and printer redirection.

Released in April, TelnetD 4.0 runs on Pentium- and Alpha-based Windows NT servers and includes clients for Windows NT, Windows 95 and any Java-capable browser.

The full \$399 Pragma package, which provides an unlimited number of connections, comes with a two-user version of InterAccess Terminal Server, which is TelnetD's serial-port sibling. It also includes InterAccess Companion, a useful set of text-based applications that let TelnetD users do such things as change their passwords and terminate processes. A two-connection version of the software without InterAccess Terminal Server is only \$149.

TelnetD's unlimited-connection version is a bargain compared with Seattle Lab's SLnet Telnet Server 2.3, which costs \$699 for a version allowing unlimited connections.

Georgia Softworks' Windows NT Telnet Server 4.14 is \$124 per connection. Although TelnetD has better security, management tools and printer redirection capability, Georgia Softworks' product has a useful remote-session monitoring feature not found in Pragma's product.

Although Microsoft's Windows NT Resource Kit includes a Telnet server, it is not supported by the company and has limited management and terminal emulation features compared with other Telnet servers. Microsoft has announced but has not priced or released a Windows NT Services for Unix Add-on Pack, which will include NFS support, password synchronization and a Telnet server.

Everything's in working order

In addition to providing access to legacy applications, TelnetD worked well with Windows NT command-line administration programs and with new test applications we wrote. TelnetD supports color text and the use of a mouse, making it the ultimate text-based thin-client server.

TelnetD server installation took only a few minutes. We started with the Telnet applications bundled with Windows 95 and Windows NT but quickly switched to Pragma's clients to take advantage of their color support, printer redirection and mouse support. We used Microsoft's Internet Explorer to access a Web page that used Pragma's new Java client, but the client's performance was slow, which is characteristic of most Java-based clients.

On the other hand, TelnetD's server performance was fast, and its application support was robust. In other Telnet servers, some text-based

applications fail to run because they bypass the server and access Windows NT directly. Pragma's Console Wrapper 2.0 technology forces the applications to work with the TelnetD server.

Pragma's new GUI management program, InterAccess Manager, runs on any Windows 95 or Windows NT PC. We did find it odd that the management program must be started with a command-line argument to list active Telnet sessions. We used the command-line version of InterAccess Manager to configure session settings for individual users, but TelnetD does not support settings based on Windows NT groups.

We exercised TelnetD's new security features by enabling encrypted passwords and restricting access based on IP address. TelnetD's Windows NT

event log entries were useful for tracking successful and failed log-in attempts. Printer redirection was handy when accessing the TelnetD server over the Internet, and this capability will make the product useful for point-of-sale applications.

Changes that programmers will appreciate include the ability to import all Windows NT environment variables, addition of an environment variable with the Telnet session's process ID, TCP/IP socket support and named semaphore support. These proved handy when we wrote some simple BASIC applications that used inter-process communication. ◀

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PC WEEK LABS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

InterAccess TelnetD 4.0

If access to text-based applications is enough,



USABILITY	B
CAPABILITY	A
PERFORMANCE	A
INTEROPERABILITY	A
MANAGEABILITY	B

administrators of Windows NT networks will find Pragma's InterAccess Tel-

netD a more affordable way to provide multiuser access to Windows NT than Citrix Systems' WinFrame or Microsoft's upcoming Windows Terminal Server. The 4.0 upgrade, which adds access from any Java-capable browser, also outperforms competing Telnet servers.

- + Wrapper technology runs text-based applications; includes GUI management application, improved security features and printer redirection capability; includes Windows 95, Windows NT and Java clients; available in serial-port terminal server version.
- Slow Java client; no Windows NT group-level configuration capabilities; lacks remote-session monitoring capability.

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Scoring methodology:
www.pcweek.com/reviews/meth.html