

Network File System (NFS)

- References: Douglas Comer, Internetworking with TCP/IP, p430-432
- Simson Garfinkel and Gene Spafford, Practical UNIX and Internet Security, p605-631
- NFS is used by GNU/Linux client/server file access
 - the Ubuntu clients import user files (held on /home) across NFS
- NFS is used by LTSP
 - the root filesystem is held on NFS
 - includes **all** system binaries

Network File System

- NFS available on many operating systems
 - OSX, UNIX, GNU/Linux, Free BSD, Solaris
 - Windows
- NFS built on top of Sun's RPC (remote procedure call) mechanism
 - open standard, originally produced by Sun Microsystems
 - uses RPC authentication

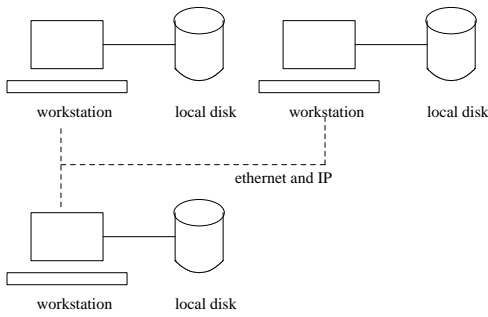
Network File System Disadvantages

- uses RPC authentication
 - easily spoofed
- filesystem data is transmitted in cleartext
 - data could be copied

NFS Advantages

- stateless server and client
- server can be rebooted and user on client might be unaware of the reboot
- client/server distinction occurs at the application/user level *not* the system level
 - highly flexible, so we need to be disciplined in our administration/configuration

A typical GNU/Linux network



- configuration is *very* flexible

GNU/Linux configuration

- flexibility could be a disadvantage as system administrators have to fight their way through many different options for various components just to perform simple operations
- it is possible that all machines are configured identically (except for their hostname, IP address etc)
 - and ghost a hard disk
- could configure the network operating systems so that all local disks can be seen by all machines

A typical GNU/Linux network

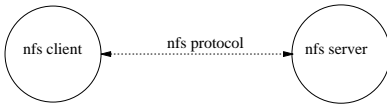
- alternatively machines could be very different
- one machine has the common file system
- one machine has the system executables

Disadvantages of GNU/Linux configuration

- complexity
- flexibility requires system administrators be disciplined otherwise overall system may become unmanageable
 - when more machines are added

NFS configuration example

- can network file systems between different architectures
 - little endian, big endian - it makes no difference
- NFS design is built from three main parts: a protocol, a server and a client



NFS versions 1 and 2

- both suffered from performance problems
- both suffered from security problems
 - security dependant upon IP address or worse DNS entries

NFS Version 3

- defined in RFC1813, June 1995
- fixes some of the limitations of v2
 - support for 64-bit file sizes and offsets
 - supports files \geq 2GB

NFS Version 3

- provides support for asynchronous writes on the server
- reply information in the RPC contains additional file attributes
 - which avoids the need to refetch them
- added a REaddirPlus operation
 - to optimize directory scanning
- obtains multiple file name, handles and attributes

NFS Version 3

- much effort was put into improving the performance of TCP
 - some implementations rivalled UDP
- NFS v3 can operate across TCP as well as UDP
- improves performance, and allowed it to work more reliably across the Internet

NFS Version 4

- RFC3010, December 2000
 - revised in RFC 3530, April 2003
- includes more performance improvements
- mandates strong security
 - introduces a stateful protocol
- developed with the IETF (Internet Engineering Task Force)
- NFS v 4.1 extends the protocol to exploit clustered servers
 - distributes files across multiple servers

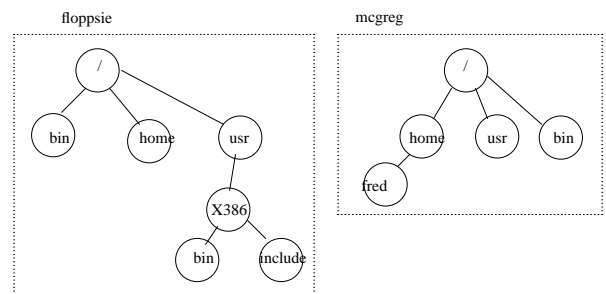
NFS configuration example

- components fit into the ISO-7 layer model

Level 7	Application	NFS
Level 6	Presentation	XDR
Level 5	Session	RPC
Level 4	Transport	TCP UDP
Level 3	Network	IP
Level 2	Data Link	Logical
Level 1	Physical Link	Ethernet

NFS example

- suppose we have two machines



NFS configuration example

- our task is to allow machine floppsie see directory /home/fred on mcgreg
- tell floppsie where this directory resides
- need to tell mcgreg that floppsie is trusted

NFS configuration of floppsie

- edit /etc/fstab on floppsie and add the following line

# remote fs	mount point	type	options
mcgreg:/home	/home/mcgreg	nfs	

NFS configuration of mcgreg

- need to tell machine mcgreg that /home is exported and that floppsie is allowed to see it
- edit /etc/exports on mcgreg and add the following line

/home	193.63.128.0/255.255.255.0(rw) \
	193.63.152.84(rw)

- why do we use 193.63.152.84 rather than floppsie?