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What is conserver?

From an email I once sent...

Conserver is an application that allows multiple users to watch a serial console at the same time. It can log the data, allows users to take write-access of a console (one at a time), and has a variety of bells and whistles to accentuate that basic functionality. The idea is that conserver will log all your serial traffic so you can go back and review why something crashed, look at changes (if done on the console), or tie the console logs into a monitoring system (just watch the logfiles it creates). With multi-user capabilities you can work on equipment with others, mentor, train, etc. It also does all that client-server stuff so that, assuming you have a network connection, you can interact with any of the equipment from home or wherever.

The FAQ

Here's the conserver [FAQ](#). Got any additions? Let me know.

Mailing Lists

There are currently two mailing lists available. announce@conserver.com is an announcement-only mailing list for informing of new versions, major developments, etc. users@conserver.com is for general Q&A, discussions, ideas, etc. for conserver users. You can sign up by sending a message to announce-request@conserver.com or users-request@conserver.com with a subject of "subscribe" or head over to the online [web pages](#).

Origin

The console server software found here is a heavily modified version originally written by [Tom Fine](mailto:fine@head-cfa.harvard.edu) (fine@head-cfa.harvard.edu) at [Ohio State](#) and then Kevin S Braunsdorf (ksb+conserver@sa.fedex.com) at [Purdue University](#). Patches from Robert Olson (olson@mcs.anl.gov) at [Argonne National Laboratory](#) were then applied to get network console support.

Arnold de Leon (arnold@corp.webtv.net) then fixed various bugs and added enhancements while at [Synopsys](#). I then took the result, continued fixing things, and added features we found useful.

[GNAC](#) (Global Networking and Computing - currently [Certainty Solutions](#)) has been supporting my coding efforts (in too many ways to list) since 1996.

The conserver.com Distribution

The result is a combination of many people's work. This version is being released in hopes that it will help others. There is no warranty or support implied by the distribution of the software.

So, what the heck is up with all the different conserver versions? Well, the original authors are continuing to distribute their own threads of the software so you have three main threads (as far as I know). First, there's Tom Fine's thread at <http://he-www.harvard.edu/~fine/Tech/console-server.html>. He isn't actively developing it, however, according to the website. Next, there's Kevin Braunsdorf's version at <http://www.npcguild.org/software/pundits/>. It doesn't look like Kevin is working on his thread any more either. No new versions have been out since August 2000 (version 8.5), but maybe this info will be out of date by the time you read this (I last checked Feb 10, 2004). Lastly, the conserver.com version is based on Kevin's "5.21-Beta" distribution, but since **HEAVILY** modified and enhanced (more details in the "Origin" section above).

If I were looking for a conserver package I would definitely use the conserver.com distribution. Why? It's actively maintained, has many more features than the other versions (see [CHANGES](#) for a semi-scary history), and has an active user community. Kevin's version does have UPS support (basic serial port line toggling bits) which is missing in the conserver.com version, but no one has asked me for it, so does anyone actually need it?

Downloading

The current version, released on Apr 10, 2007, is [conserver-8.1.16.tar.gz](#). You can get it via [FTP](#) or [HTTP](#). See the [CHANGES](#) file for information on the latest updates.

For those worried about legal issues, the [LICENSE](#) file should help show it's distributed under a [BSD license](#).

As of version 6.1.7, the packaging and numbering scheme has changed. I used to package conserver as conserver-GNAC-v.vv. Since [GNAC](#) (now [Certainty Solutions](#)) has changed its name I've decided to drop the GNAC portion and use a three-digit version number (conserver-v.v.v). Why change the version numbering? I need to differentiate this thread of the code from the original authors' and I couldn't come up with a good replacement for the GNAC name - sad, but true.

Installation

Check the [INSTALL](#) file for instructions.

Online Documentation

I've put a small set of documentation [here](#). I'm hoping to expand it over time.

Systems Tested

Here's a list of systems that I've been told can successfully compile conserver. If anyone has more to add to this list (or something on the list doesn't work any more), please let me know.

- AIX 4.3.3/5.1/5.2, native cc
- BSDI BSD/OS 3.X, gcc
- Cygwin (w2k), gcc 2.95.3
- DEC Tru64 4.0, gcc
- DEC Tru64 4.0/5.1, native cc
- FreeBSD 4.x (i386) gcc
- FreeBSD 5.x (i386/amd64/sparc64) gcc
- FreeBSD 6.x/7.x (i386/amd64/sparc64/ia64) gcc
- HP-UX 10.20, gcc
- HP-UX 11.10 parisc and ia64, native cc
- Irix 6.15, native cc
- Linux 2.2.18 (x86), gcc
- Linux 2.4.2 (x86), gcc

- Linux ia64, native gcc
- Linux RedHat 6.2 and 7.2 (x86), native gcc
- MacOS X, native gcc
- Solaris 2.5.1 thru 9 (sparc/x86), gcc
- Solaris 7/8, native cc
- Solaris 10 and Solaris Express (build 33) (x86), gcc and native cc

Other Good Information

Zonker Harris has fabulous documents regarding the hookup of consoles to terminal servers and other such devices. His [Greater Scroll of Console Knowledge](#) is a great place to start.

User community [contributions](#) contain a variety of helpful items.

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