

Notes 4.6: POP3 and SMTP support

Interview by Betsy Kosheff

[Editor's note: This article resides in "Iris Today", the technical Webzine located on the <http://www.notes.net> Web site produced by Iris Associates, the developers of Domino/Notes.]

Want all the bells and whistles of the new 4.6 client, plus access to Internet Mail? Jackie Ferguson implemented the support for the POP3 retrieval and SMTP send Internet mail standards. Here, she talks about this first leg of the journey to Maui, the next-generation Internet messaging client.

Which Internet mail standards does the Notes 4.6 client support?

SMTP and POP3. Maui will add support for IMAP and MIME.

What's the benefit?

Up to now, you needed to have a NotesMail server to send and receive your mail, but with Notes 4.6, you can connect to an Internet mail server through your ISP. Or, if your company has other types of non-Notes mail servers, you can send and receive mail via these POP3/SMTP servers and still have all the benefits of the 4.6 client.

So, for example, I don't need both Notes and my Eudora mail?

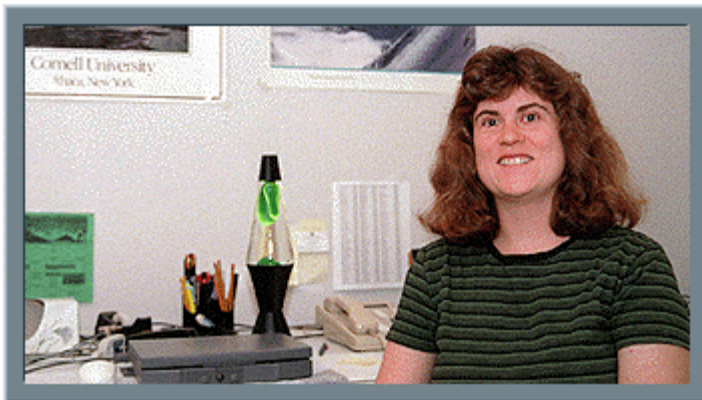
Right, you're getting the support Eudora gives you and you can set 4.6 up to do NotesMail or Internet mail and easily switch back and forth between them. Obviously, you're getting more features with Notes 4.6, like support for calendaring and scheduling, but this opens up the world to be able to tie Notes to other Internet mail servers.

How do I set it up?

It's all done from your standard location profile document. You just click on your preferences and input a few details from your ISP. There's a new field called "mail system," and you either make that Notes or Internet.

What are the differences between NotesMail and POP3?

Besides features like calendaring and scheduling, and things like message tracking, delivery notification and receipts, with NotesMail, your mail file is off on a file server where you can look at it but don't need to pull it over. But with POP3, you're always retrieving it. The interface for retrieval is through the replicator page, so that it looks as if you're working with a local database. It's looks the same as NotesMail and you can use the little "retrieve mail" icon on the lower right. If you're working offline, you can save messages in the same outgoing mailbox.



What's actually been involved in getting Notes to support POP3 and SMTP?

We had to tie existing underlying code for import and export of Notes to the Internet (currently used by the POP3 server implementation) to the user interface and other existing parts of Notes code. So, the work involved hooking into the Location settings, and the replicator page for the UI. I tied into the existing address lookups for the mail send. With Notes, we have all the features already implemented, we just have to fit them into a new protocol.

Isn't this a lot of work for one person?

Not really, it works better to have small teams of people working on these things, and with 4.6, we tried to keep it as small as possible, just a few people to get the key work done.

How difficult is it working with the POP3 and SMTP protocols?

The protocols are stable but they are not the most current, like IMAP4, which we'll be supporting next in Maui. IMAP is going to add the capability for remote replication, and use of folders, plus the ability for partial downloads. These are really basic, longtime features of NotesMail but they just haven't been included yet in the Internet mail world because it hasn't had the attention of the industry. And MIME adds support for complex multiple part (including multimedia) messages, which will be stored without any loss of data in Maui.

What's been hardest about this project?

Probably the issues around making 4.6 support all the international languages, because, for Internet mail, there are a lot of things you have to do for non-ascii characters -- Chinese, Korean and Japanese, and that's been keeping me real busy. It's been a great product to work on because the work I've been involved in touches a lot of areas of the product, from the lower level protocols up to the interface to the workstation replication page.

When will I be able to manage Internet mail as part of my "universal Inbox?"

With Maui, you'll get both the new 4.6 navigation interface and new Portfolio Database, plus support for NNTP, LDAP, and IMAP4, as well as MIME. The result will be a universal Inbox for all types of information including corporate mail, news servers, directories, personal mail from your ISP, all in a single Inbox with one place to manage all of the information from all different sources.

What's next for you?

I'm also working on a project we're calling the light client implementation of Notes 4.6. It's a kit with most of the features of the full product but with some pieces taken out to reduce it to it's smallest possible size for download. Certain things like Thesaurus and Spell Checker pieces, template files and sample demos can be added in, if desired, by going out to the Web or to a Notes database here on Notes.Net. This will give you a new client quickly so you can play around with it and we've simplified setup a lot for the home office user.

Then, it's on to Maui and the next set of Internet mail standards.

ABOUT JACKIE FERGUSON

Jackie Ferguson joined Iris in July 1995. Before her current role in charge of adding SMTP and POP3 mail support to the Notes 4.6 client, she worked on the Domino Advanced Server clustering and administration process capabilities.

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