

The sys admin's daily grind: GestiÓIP

Herding IP Cats

A tidy house, a tidy mind they say, and I'll leave it up to you to consider what being disorganized might mean. Anybody who has tried to manage hundreds of IP addresses using just a sheet of paper or a spreadsheet will probably appreciate some help. *By Charly Kühnast*

Once a network starts to grow beyond cozy boundaries, it becomes difficult to keep track of all its elements. And, it really doesn't matter whether you use DHCP to assign your addresses or do the job manually, which is not unusual on server networks. Of course, you could ping the whole network:

```
nmap -sP 192.168.5.1-254
```

or you could output the DHCP server lease table. Although doing that, tells me which computers are "alive" on the network right now, it doesn't tell me whether the addresses are really free or occupied by computers that just happen to be offline right now. I could also maintain a manual list in an OpenOffice.org spreadsheet, at the risk of people thinking I'm uncool.

What I really want is an IPAM tool – in other words, an IP address management

utility – that would help me break free of the constraints of paper and spreadsheets. GestiÓIP [1] is a promising candidate in this field. This Perl program, which is licensed under the GPLv3, requires a web server and a MySQL database. A convenient shell script helps you complete the installation and gives you precise details of the other modules you need to install, if any.

The interface is neat and tidy and speaks English, German, Spanish, or Catalan. No matter which language you choose, you have to tell GestiÓIP which network to monitor. It will retrieve information from the DNS PTR records, thus quickly revealing machines that have a DNS entry but are not listed in the network overview. This means that you have to keep your DNS clean.

Alternatively, GestiÓIP can use SNMP to retrieve data. The third option clearly shows that the program's author is an experienced network administrator: It

you a clear and uncluttered overview that includes the occupied IP addresses on your network (Figure 1), the status of the corresponding hosts, and a table with details. A search function on each page and typical search engine-style notation for including and excluding search keys help you quickly find individual hosts.

For now, the missing auto-discovery feature is the only thing left on my wish-list, and my wish looks likely to come true in the near future. Otherwise, functional scope and usability are nicely balanced – and this is why I will be using GestiÓIP as my certified IP manager in the very near future. ■■■

INFO

[1] GestiÓIP: <http://gestioip.net>



Figure 1: GestiÓIP, a useful web application listing 254 free and occupied IP addresses.

lets you import information on hosts from a spreadsheet table.

Intermission Free

Unfortunately, GestiÓIP doesn't automatically discover computers by periodically scanning the network, but the next version aims to stop this gap. After importing the data, GestiÓIP gives



CHARLY KÜHNAST

Charly Kühnast is a Unix operating system administrator at the Data Center in Moers, Germany. His tasks include firewall and DMZ security and availability. He divides his leisure time into hot, wet, and eastern sectors, where he enjoys cooking, freshwater aquariums, and learning Japanese, respectively.