

The sys admin's daily grind: TTYtter

TWITTERING MACHINE

Twitter, so everyone says, is modern, fun, sociologically illuminating and otherwise useless. Even Charly feeds a budgie – but at the console, it's a question of style.

BY CHARLY KÜHNAST

Like graphical clients – in fact, I would be lost without Thunderbird – but because I often spend hours in front of machines without X11, I keep on top of the good old command-line tools. For example, I love using the Mutt mail client, and both slrn for Usenet and Irssi for IRC run on a small root server in a screen session.

Recently, I added another animal to my console zoo: TTYtter [1]. As you might guess from the hybrid name, TTYtter is a non-graphical Twitter client.

```

charly@salami: ~
# starting background monitoring process.
#
TTYtter> a0> <<_syslog> Asterisk: you have new voice mail
a1> <<_syslog> VDR: recorded <<Lost>>
a2> <<_syslog> VDR: less than 10GB left in /var/lib/video/
a3> <<_syslog> Asterisk: you have new voice mail
a4> <<_syslog> islay: loadavg on islay.kuehnast.com exceeds 8.0
a5> <<_syslog> islay: loadavg on islay.kuehnast.com normal
a6> <<_syslog> VDR: service vdradmind-am stopped
a7> <<_syslog> VDR: service vdradmind-am started
-- notification: API rate limit is currently 100 req/hr
-- your version of TTYtter is up to date (0.9.5)

```

Figure 2: VDR or the Asterisk server twitter moderately important status messages – via a Twitter channel in this case.

The Perl script uses either cURL [2] or Lynx [3] to connect to the Twitter API. TTYtter's author, Cameron Kaiser, who also happens to be a doctor, deliberately

avoided special Perl modules like *Net::Twitter* so that he could run the tool on systems that are not allowed to download modules from CPAN.

I normally start my TTYtter with the following command:

```

ttytter -vcheck -ansi -wrap
-user=Username:Password

```

The first parameter checks that my TTYtter version is up to date. (Kaiser is still polishing the client; version 0.9.5 was the latest when this issue went to press.) The *-ansi* option tells the program to use extended control characters – so the console can support a colored display, for example.

The *-wrap* parameter gives me clean newlines after 79 characters by default.

Admin Style to the Max

After launching, TTYtter shows me the last 10 tweets and the last two direct messages. At the prompt, I can write another tweet and dispatch it. To use any of the Twitter API's other functions, I need to issue IRC-style commands preceded by a slash (/). Typing */trends* displays a list of the current hot topics (Figure 1). Conveniently, TTYtter also provides a list of commands [1].

```

File Edit View Terminal Tabs Help
-- notification: API rate limit is currently 100 req/hr
-- your version of TTYtter is up to date (0.9.5)
/trends
<<< TRENDING TOPICS >>>
/search #starwarsday
/tron #starwarsday
/search "Happy Star Wars Day" OR "May Day"
/tron "Happy Star Wars Day" "May Day"
/search #musicmonday
/tron #musicmonday
/search "Swine Flu"
/tron "Swine Flu"
/search H1N1
/tron H1N1
/search #SwineFlu
/tron #SwineFlu
/search Wolverine
/tron Wolverine
/search Fourth
/tron Fourth
/search Apple
/tron Apple
/search Cyber-FM
/tron Cyber-FM
<<< TRENDING TOPICS >>>
TTYtter>

```

Figure 1: The TTYtter */trends* function displays a list of hot topics.

Incidentally, it is not difficult to control the Twitter API directly with cURL. The line

```

curl --basic --user
"User_Name:Password"
--data-ascii "Blafasel"
"http://twitter.com/statuses/
update.json"

```

sends the text *Blafasel* as a Tweet under my username. In fact, this example actually has a meaningful use. For example, I just twitter any status messages from my server that are interesting, as you can see in Figure 2. ■

INFO

- [1] TTYtter: <http://www.floodgap.com/software/ttytter/>
- [2] cURL: <http://curl.linux-mirror.org/>
- [3] Lynx: <http://lynx.isc.org/>

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