

NScache

HIDDEN TREASURE

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There are thousands of tools and utilities for Linux. "Out of the box" takes the pick of the bunch and each month presents a program which we consider to be indispensable or, perhaps, little known. Here we examine the cache browser `nscache`.

After an extensive surfing session using *Netscape*, probably the most widely used web browser under Linux, there is a wealth of files in your personal **disk cache**. Netscape itself offers only very limited capabilities for viewing these files. *NScache*, a browser for Netscape's disk cache, makes considerably more use of the filed data.

Old acquaintance

Stefan Ondrejicka, the author of the program, is already known to many people through *pavuk*, a download tool for web pages. *NScache* has its homepage at *Sourceforge*, which is also home to a

number of other open source projects. As the program is only available in compiled form for Red Hat Linux 6.1, we can obtain the source code and compile it ourselves.

What do we need?

To be able to install *NScache* we need **GTK+** (version 1.2.0 or later) and the **Berkeley Database Library**.

With the file *nscache-0.3.tgz* on board, we can move on to the actual installation procedure:

```
tar xzf nscache-0.3.tgz
cd nscache-0.3
./configure
make
su - (enter root-password)
make install
exit
```

If an error occurs at *configure* or *make*, this is often because although the necessary libraries may be present the corresponding developer packages are not. Distributions separate these from the actual libraries. The packages can be identified by the `dev`

Disk Cache: This is temporary storage space which is created by Netscape on the hard disk and reduces the need to constantly re-request web pages and images.

This cache is usually located in the directory `~/netscape/cache`.

~ (**Tilde**): The tilde is shorthand for the user's home directory.

GTK+: A library, originally written for the graphics program *Gimp*, which is used to program menus, windows and dialog boxes under the *X Window system*.

or *devel* in their name. You need to install these before you can move on to compiling NSCache. Once the program has been compiled successfully using *make*, obtain root rights using the command "*su -*" so that we can install the program below the */usr/local* directory using *make install*. We relinquish the root rights again with the *exit* that follows.

What is in it?

In order to test NSCache open an **X terminal** and enter:

```
nscache &
```

The ampersand sign (&) causes the program specified before it to run in the background. Without it the **shell** in the X terminal would not be able to process entries again until NSCache had finished.

NSCache will now output a report, showing a tree view of the content of the disk cache (Figure 1). This view comprises three levels:

- **Protocol** (*ftp* or *http*),
- **Servername** and
- File name on the server.

Sections of the tree can be expanded or collapsed at a click of the mouse on the plus or minus signs. Individual file entries are shown in the disk cache with their original **URL** and their local file name.

It is also possible to display a view which is sorted on the basis of different criteria, as shown in Figure 2. The view is switched using the two tabs *Tree view* and *Sorted view*. The URL, the size of the file or the date when it was last accessed can be selected as the criteria by which to sort the view.

Action

If you have selected a file using the left mouse button, a context menu can be retrieved using the right mouse button. Probably the most useful actions are viewing the file using *View file* and deleting it using *Delete file*. We can, therefore, go through the cache and, if need be, remove particular files. MIME-type

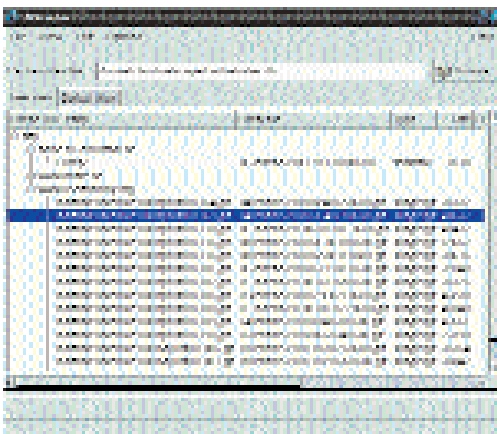


Figure 1: A tree view of the Netscape cache

Berkeley Database Library: This library provides functions that can be used to access files organised in the University of Berkeley's database format. This format is widely used under Unix - the library therefore comes as standard in Linux distributions.

X terminal: Programs under the X Window system which provide a text terminal (similar to a command prompt window under Microsoft Windows.) Widely used X terminals include *xterm*, *kvt* and *gnome-terminal*.

Shell: One of the most important parts of any Unix system - it provides a command line-controlled user interface for the system.

Protocol: A standardised procedure which allows programs in a network to communicate with one another. Well-known protocols include *ftp* ("file transfer protocol") and *http* ("hypertext transfer protocol").

Server: A program that provides a service for use by one or several clients. Examples of servers include X servers, FTP servers, WWW servers. The term server is also used to describe the computer on which the program is running.

URL: "Uniform Resource Locator", is the unique address of a resource on the Net. The URL also indicates the transfer protocol, e.g. *http://www.linux.dellinks/Distributionen/* or *ftp://ftp.gwdg.de/linux/mirrors/*.

MIME: Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions, a method of indicating standardised files types. Examples of MIME types include *text/plain* (plain text file without formatting) and *video/mpeg* (mpeg-compressed video stream). MIME is used primarily in mail programs and web browsers.

specific view programs can be assigned using the menu item *Options/Viewers setup...* (Figure 3) using File viewer. In the example configuration the image viewing program *xv* was assigned to the type *image/gif* while the X terminal *xterm*, with a text browser retrieved in it *w3m*, was assigned to the type *text/html*.

In addition, an external browser (e.g. *netscape*, *lynx* or *w3m*) can be given as a *URL viewer*. If need be, this retrieves the file concerned directly from the Net using *View URL*. In the entry fields of the configuration dialog *%f* stands for the name of the local file and *%u* for the corresponding URL.

Armed with this handy tool, no-one has any excuse for trying to tidy up the Netscape disk cache using the *rm -rf ~/.netscape/cache/* sledgehammer method. Now you can see what's useful and what isn't before you delete it.

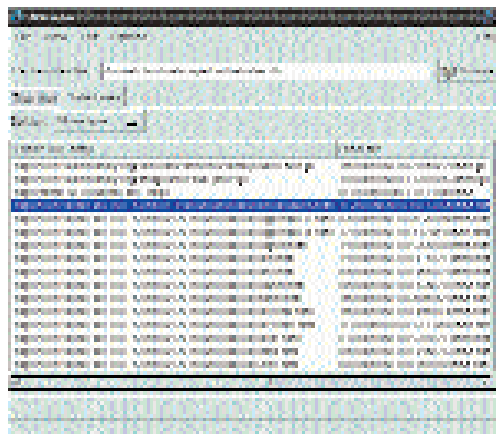


Figure 2: Sorted view

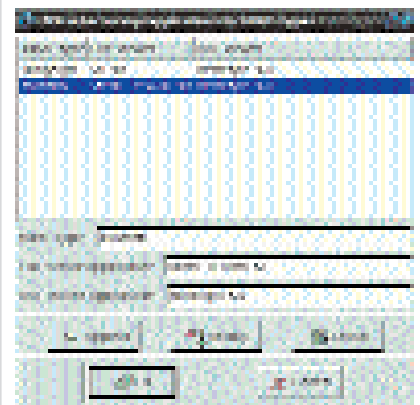


Figure 3: Setting the external viewer

Info

NsCache home page

<http://nscache.sourceforge.net>