

K-tools

SCANDAL MONGERS

Fancy a bit of gossip? Stefanie Teufel shows you how, with the IRC client KSirc, you'll be kitted out for hour-long chats.

Anyone who thinks that only little old ladies and their friends gossip, has certainly never looked in on a refined chat in IRC. Moreover, KDE wouldn't be KDE if it didn't send you on your way with the IRC client KSirc, an easy-to-use tool, which makes the virtual coffee morning twice the fun. The best thing is that KSirc is part of the Network package, so you don't even have to install the program specially.

A smart suit

If you've called up your IRC client in the K menu via Internet/ Chat Program (KSirc) or alternatively, entered *ksirc* & in a terminal window, the program switchboard immediately recommends a control server. Should this fail to occur then just select a server from the Connections menu.

If you've read the title to this section then it should come as no surprise that you can smarten up the appearance of your IRC client. Under Options/ Colour setting, there will be a range of colours to choose from, and in Options/ Universal Character Set, you can look for your favourite font.

For those you who are colour-mad, KSirc even supports background images. To use this feature simply activate the field background image under the menu item Options/ Colour Preferences, and locate the appropriate wallpaper.

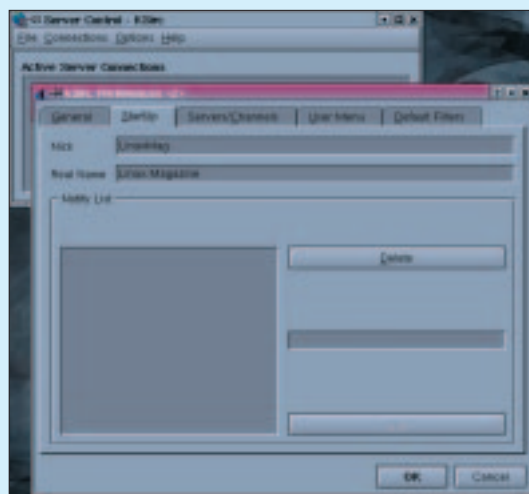


Figure 1: A nick needs to be given some thought

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In this column we present tools, month by month, which have proven to be especially useful when working under KDE, solve a problem which otherwise is deliberately ignored, or are just some of the nicer things in life, which – once discovered – you wouldn't want to do without.

More important than all this graphical chitchat is the fact that you should now make up a nickname for the IRC, if you have not already done so. Unlike Usenet, it is in fact the done thing in IRC to give oneself a pseudonym, by which one can be addressed by others. As soon as you click into an IRC network where someone is already using this pseudonym – known as a nick, in the jargon – you will get an error message and will have to select another nickname.

Enter your desired name in the tab Options/ Preferences/ StartUpmenu under nick, (Figure 1). Under your real name, you can enter your true name, should you want to publicise it. But take care – even if you hide your real name here, finding it out would scarcely pose a problem to another IRCer, unless you have provided your computer with firewalls in such a way that, even using utilities such as Finger, not a word about you will be able to escape it.

If this is not the first time you have knocked around in IRC and you already know some other IRCers, and you want to be kept up to date on where they've got to, then enter their IRC nicks in the reporting list underneath. When later on you go onto IRC and the person concerned (or another person, who is already claiming this nick for himself) is also there or joins it, you will be informed of this by a Notify message. If you wish to underline this with a bleep, you can set this in the General tab under signal tone for messages.

Off to the Net!

KSirc presents you with a selection of the best-known IRC servers of the day, via Connections/ New server or the F2 key. These servers are all neatly ordered

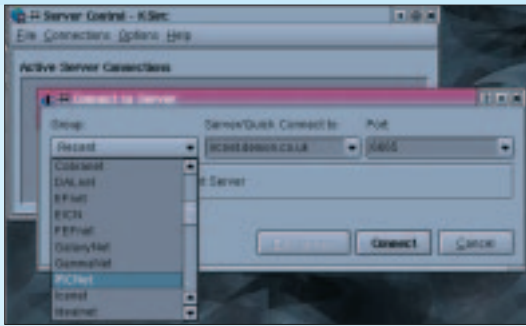


Figure 2: Click on in!

according to the various IRC networks so you can, for example, settle simply for an IRC server in the largest IRC network, IRCNet (Figure 2). Since almost all IRC servers can usually be addressed via **port** 6667, you can leave this setting as it is, although you may also find settings of 6665 to 7000.

Now make sure you are connected to the Internet, so that when you click on the connect button a connection can be made to your selected server and all of the users thereon.

A new window immediately pops up, in which you will firstly be overpowered by the welcome message from the server (Figure 3). It's worth reading this and complying with any codes of conduct included therein, so as not to attract the wrath of the IRC ops – the operators responsible for the IRC server. Repeated violations of the rules can make you a persona non grata, and in the worst case you can be denied access to the corresponding IRC network.

Now you are in the big wide world of IRC, which you can clearly recognise by the fact that the window has filled server controls with new life: A list of all IRC

IRC The acronym IRC stands for Internet Relay Chat and refers to a loose collection of servers, which enables its users to meet in so-called channels, in order to talk via text and in real time. All those who have clicked into a channel can see everything other people there are saying. The serious drawback of IRC is that you can't exactly use it offline, so all too often it leads to your becoming BT's best customer. So remember your phone bill and do your chatting off-peak in the evenings...

Port A dock for network connections. Ports are numbered and many of these numbers have already been assigned a fixed service (well-known ports). For example FTP uses Port 21, SSH Port 22, TALK Port 517 and so on.

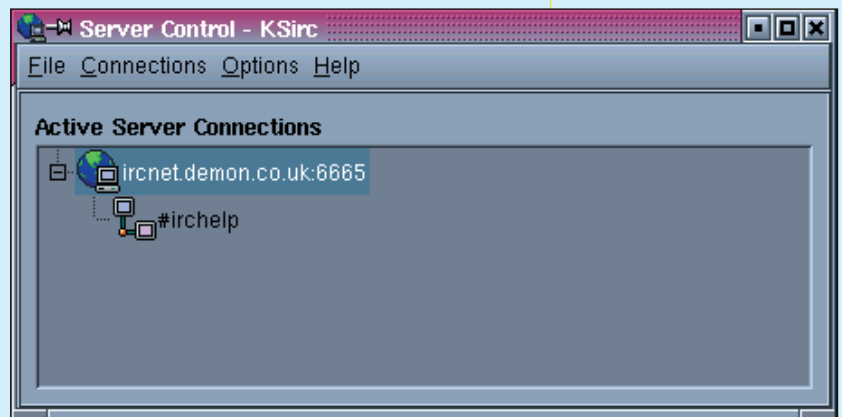


Figure 4: Where am I?

servers can be seen showing you which you have made contact with; whether any of your favourite friends and enemies from the Notify list are romping around in the same IRC network; and indicating the channel into which you have clicked (Figure 4).

If you enter a channel by clicking on its name in this drop-down menu, you get a main window divided into

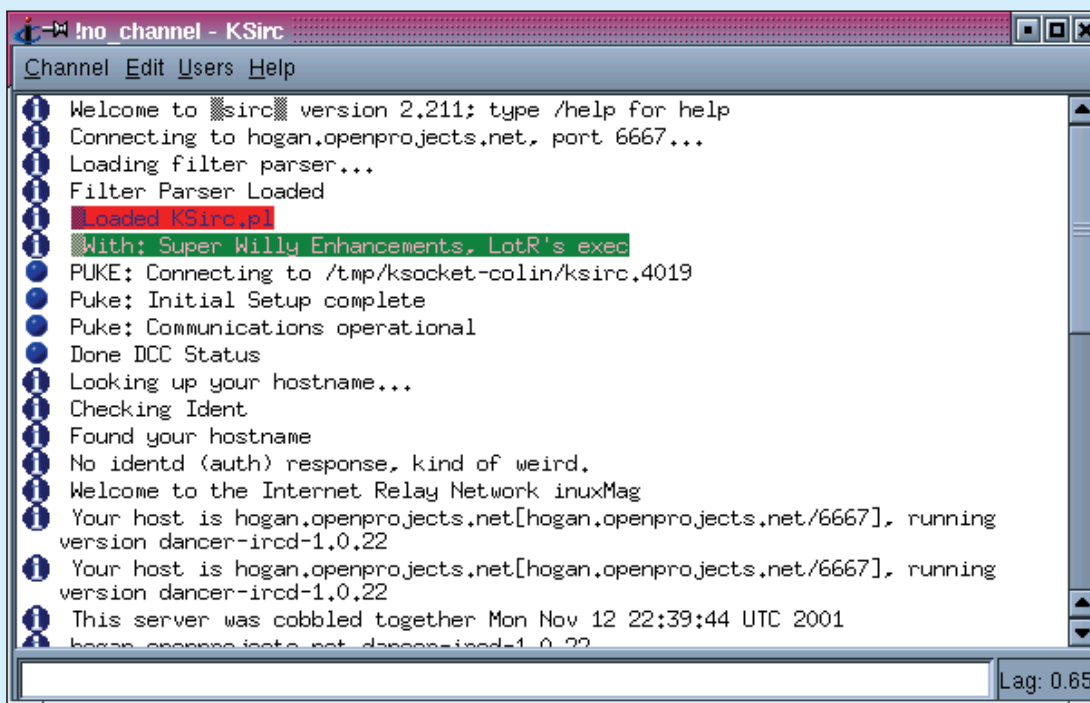
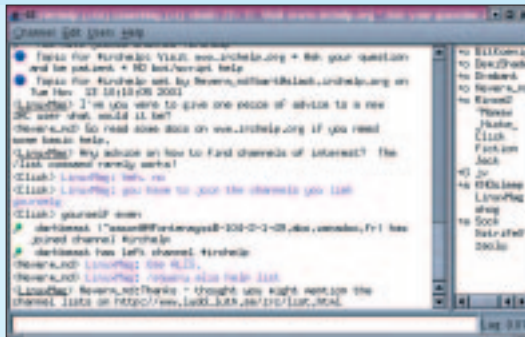


Figure 3: Sometimes welcome greetings are a bit sad

Figure 5: In the IRC it can get pretty wild



three different areas (Figure 5). In the biggest of these you will see, apart from the messages from the server, the conversations of your co-chatters. If the exchange of words is rushing past you too quickly, you can look later at any snatches of conversation which you have missed by sliding the right roll bar. If the pre-set 200 line buffer is not enough for you, adjust the number in the server control window under Options/ Personal settings/ General with the aid of the field marked Size of the buffer.

The right-hand window shows all the users who are in the channel. The most important area is the inconspicuous line on the bottom edge: This is the command line, on which you type in all your actions and send them off with the [Enter] key. Please do not forget: IRC commands are always started with a forward slash: /.

For anyone who is a little uncertain, typing /help shows you all the available commands. Anything you don't mark with a / at the start of the line is visible to all channel occupants. Your own actions, and the

public actions by the other channel inmates, are shown in the main Kirc window in various colours and marked with icons at the start of the line (Figure 6).

Since life can be grey enough, Kirc allows you to dip into the paint pot to highlight your conversational contributions. For example, if you express your enthusiasm for Kirc with the exclamation: [Ctrl+B] Kirc[Ctrl+B] is [Ctrl+K][7] [Ctrl+U] dead cool[Ctrl+U] [Ctrl+K][7], you will see a bold 'Kirc', 'is' in the normal font and an underlined, orange 'dead cool'.

The control codes, with which you can enclose emphasised words are listed in Table 1. Nests are allowed here (as our example with [Ctrl+K][7] for orange and [Ctrl+U] for underlining shows). You can even change the foreground and background colour of your text at the same time.

So that you don't have to remember the whole range of colour codes, as soon as you press [Ctrl+K] a colour selection window pops up, in which you need only seek out the foreground (top) and background colour (lower row) by mouse clicks.



Figure 6: Go wild with colour

Cyber stalking

If you want to get a more detailed impression of your co-chatter, click on the respective user in the right-hand window and in the menu list select User/ Whois. You can check his or her availability via User/ Ping, and uncover the IRC client of your opposite number with User/ Version.

If someone has particularly piqued your interest, you can avoid missing any of their utterances by following them inconspicuously with User/ Follow. Kirc then makes his or her actions stand from the grey mass for your benefit. You can immediately cancel this snooping with User/ unFollow.

Some are more equal

By now you have been wondering why some channel inmates are more equal than others, namely those whose nicks are marked out in bright red. This is how Kirc marks out the channel operators, or ops for short. The person who breathes life into a channel automatically gets more rights than all the other users who arrive later.

As a channel op one can, for example, throw people out of the channel (User/ Kick in the channel window); ban them completely (User/ Ban); grant other channel users op rights (User/ Op); and withdraw this privilege (User/ Deop). There are also actions in the user menu which only an op can perform: see the little box For OP only on the user menu tab under Options/ Personal settings. ■

Table 1: Colour codes

[Ctrl+B]text[Ctrl+B]	bold text
[Ctrl+U]text[Ctrl+U]	underlines text
[Ctrl+R]text[Ctrl+R]	text in which foreground and background colour are reversed
[Ctrl+O]text[Ctrl+O]	normal text
[Ctrl+K][0]text[Ctrl+K][0]	white text
[Ctrl+K][1]text[Ctrl+K][1]	black text
[Ctrl+K][2]text[Ctrl+K][2]	blue text
[Ctrl+K][3]text[Ctrl+K][3]	green text
[Ctrl+K][4]text[Ctrl+K][4]	red text
[Ctrl+K][5]text[Ctrl+K][5]	brown text
[Ctrl+K][6]text[Ctrl+K][6]	violet text
[Ctrl+K][7]text[Ctrl+K][7]	orange text
[Ctrl+K][8]text[Ctrl+K][8]	yellow text
[Ctrl+K][9]text[Ctrl+K][9]	pale green text
[Ctrl+K][10]text[Ctrl+K][10]	cyan text
[Ctrl+K][11]text[Ctrl+K][11]	light cyan text
[Ctrl+K][12]text[Ctrl+K][12]	light blue text
[Ctrl+K][13]text[Ctrl+K][13]	pink text
[Ctrl+K][14]text[Ctrl+K][14]	grey text
[Ctrl+K][15]text[Ctrl+K][15]	pale grey text