

The Sysadmin's Daily Grind: LCDproc

Show Me!

Every rack-mounted server doesn't need its own dedicated monitor. But if you decide to go headless, it helps to fit the server with an LCD device that displays real-time information on critical events. LCDproc is the tool you need to control the display. **BY CHARLY KÜHNAST**

Servers are often expected to work without input and output devices. In most cases, this is fine for the administrator; after all, you can use SSH, serial consoles, and syslog forwarding. But it can still make sense to fit the server with a small LCD device. An LCD at least gives the server a chance to alert you to really important events. LCDproc [1] is the software you need to control the display.

LCDproc Version 0.4.5 supports a wide range of displays for both the serial port and USB. The LCDproc download is a 350 KByte tar archive. Typing

```
tar xvzpf lcdproc-0.4.5.tar.gz
```

puts the installation guide in the `lcdproc-0.4.5` directory. The guide starts by saying if you're in a desperate hurry, type:

```
./configure --enable-drivers=all
make
```

And if you start wondering why that doesn't work, come back and read the rest of the file.

Fair enough, but restricting LCDproc to the drivers you actually need for your display gives you a more ele-

gant approach. You can type `./configure --help` to list your options. My display was built by Crystalfontz [2]. LCDproc even has a curses driver for it. That may sound useless, but it does make sense for people like me, who develop or test their LCDproc clients on a computer that is not fitted with an LCD. Setting up the driver is quite simple:

```
./configure --enable-drivers=C
cfontz,curses
make && make install
```

Divide and Conquer

LCDproc comprises two components: a server that communicates with the hardware, and a client that tells the server what to display. The server takes its defaults from a file called `/etc/LCDD.conf`. Check out the directory where you unpacked LCDproc for a sample file. You need a few simple modifications to enable the CFontz driver:

- First delete the line that says `Driver=none` or tag this line as a comment.
- Then remove the comment tag at the start of the `Driver=CFontz` line. If your display is an older model – like mine was – that should complete the installation steps. More modern devices, with firmware version 2.0



or later, additionally need the following two lines:

```
NewFirmware=yes
Speed=19200
```

Now let's launch the server:

```
/usr/local/sbin/LCDD &
```

This brings the display to life, and you should be treated to your first status message, telling you that you do not have an active client. Don't worry; it is easy to change that, as LCDproc has a collection of pre-configured clients. One of them displays the current system load. To launch the client, type:

```
/usr/local/bin/lcdproc C &
```

I use the display for video recording projects, where it provides a summary of the date, the channel, and the name of the program (see Figure 1).

INFO

- [1] LCDproc:
<http://lcdproc.omnipotent.net>
- [2] Crystalfontz:
<http://www.crystalfontz.com/>

SYSADMIN

smartmontools62

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Admin Workshop 66

This month we examine *cron*, *at*, and *anacron*.



Figure 1: LCDproc displaying the channel name on the LCD attached to my digital video recorder.

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