

The sys admin's daily grind: Cluster SSH

Spontaneously Simultaneous

Charly doesn't relish the idea of searching through the logfiles of a dozen proxy servers when page requests fail. Now that he has deployed Cluster SSH, he can pull the strings on many machines at the same time. *By Charly Kühnast*

To load balance and improve availability, you first need to organize your servers in a cluster. To remove the element of surprise from cluster management, all of the member servers should be identical – which makes the cluster easy to manage but also makes the task really boring. Cluster SSH [1], which saves you a load of work with very little overhead, has a minimalist Tk interface with a text input box. Commands you type in the box are run on all connected servers (Figure 1).

When launched, Cluster SSH expects a list of servers, to which it then opens SSH connections – for example:

```
user@server1 user@server2 user@server3
```

To optimize this, I can group the servers below a keyword (a tag) in the `/etc/clusters` file:

```
proxys admin@proxyl admin@proxy2U
admin@proxy3
mailserver admin@mailserver1
admin@mailserver2
admin@mailserver3
```

Now, when I call `cssh proxys`, the login terminals for all the proxy servers I defined will appear. I can use the tags in a server list again. If I now add

```
allservers proxys mailserver
```

to the `/etc/clusters` file, Cluster SSH opens a terminal window for all servers tagged `proxys` and `mailserver` when I call:

```
cssh allservers
```

The desktop is fairly crowded now, but it can be useful if you need to, say, check server uptimes – if the uptime is too high, it

means I've forgotten a kernel update. If you create a `~/.csshrc` configuration file for each user, the settings in this file will supplement or override the `/etc/clusterd` file.

Revamped

Rumor has it that some people don't really like dark terminal windows like that shown in the screenshot. The entry

```
terminal_bg_style = dark
```

adds vampire-friendly illuminations. If you prefer something more mortal, just change `dark` to `light`.

Cluster SSH can also assign a font color to each server, which can be useful. When the font color is always the same on the server, after a while, you can identify the nodes simply by the color of the 24 terminals on view. If this is altogether too garish for your liking, just close your paintbox by typing `terminal_colorize = 0`. To change the standard screen size of 24 lines with 80 characters each, issue something like:

```
terminal_size = 120x32
```

Don't cluster without Cluster SSH. ■■■

INFO

[1] Cluster SSH: <http://sourceforge.net/projects/clusterSSH>

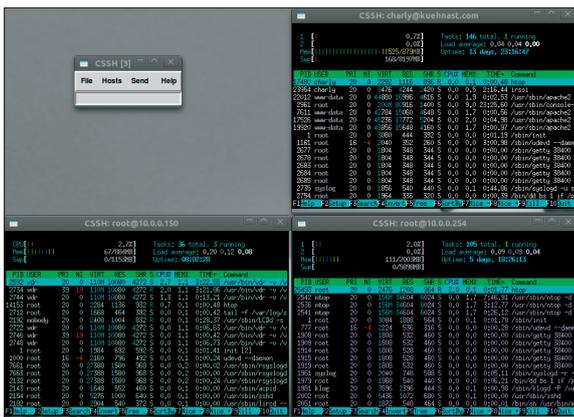


Figure 1: `htop` is running on each of three clustered machines – Cluster SSH removes the need for the administrator to visit all nodes separately.

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