                   IMAP4 COMPATIBILITY WITH IMAP2BIS

Status of this Memo

Introduction

   The Internet Message Access Protocol (IMAP) has been through several
   revisions and variants in its 10-year history. Many of these are
   either extinct or extremely rare; in particular, several undocumented
   variants and the variants described in RFC 1064, RFC 1176, and RFC
   1203 fall into this category.

   One variant, IMAP2bis, is at the time of this writing very common and
   has been widely distributed with the Pine mailer. Unfortunately,
   there is no definite document describing IMAP2bis. This document is
   intended to be read along with RFC 1176 and the most recent IMAP4
   specification (RFC 2060) to assist implementors in creating an IMAP4
   implementation to interoperate with implementations that conform to
   earlier specifications. Nothing in this document is required by the
   IMAP4 specification; implementors must decide for themselves whether
   they want their implementation to fail if it encounters old software.

   At the time of this writing, IMAP4 has been updated from the version
   described in RFC 1730. An implementor who wishes to interoperate
   with both RFC 1730 and RFC 2060 should refer to both documents.

   This information is not complete; it reflects current knowledge of
   server and client implementations as well as "folklore" acquired in
   the evolution of the protocol. It is NOT a description of how to
   interoperate with all variants of IMAP, but rather with the old
   variant that is most likely to be encountered. For detailed
   information on interoperating with other old variants, refer to RFC
   1732.

IMAP4 client interoperability with IMAP2bis servers

   A quick way to check whether a server implementation supports the
   IMAP4 specification is to try the CAPABILITY command. An OK response
   will indicate which variant(s) of IMAP4 are supported by the server.

If the client does not find any of its known variant in the response,
it should treat the server as IMAP2bis. A BAD response indicates an
IMAP2bis or older server.

Most IMAP4 facilities are in IMAP2bis. The following exceptions
exist:

CAPABILITY command
        The absense of this command indicates IMAP2bis (or older).

AUTHENTICATE command.
        Use the LOGIN command.

LSUB, SUBSCRIBE, and UNSUBSCRIBE commands
        No direct functional equivalent. IMAP2bis had a concept
        called "bboards" which is not in IMAP4. RFC 1176 supported
        these with the BBOARD and FIND BBOARDS commands. IMAP2bis
        augmented these with the FIND ALL.BBOARDS, SUBSCRIBE BBOARD,
        and UNSUBSCRIBE BBOARD commands. It is recommended that
        none of these commands be implemented in new software,
        including servers that support old clients.

LIST command
        Use the command FIND ALL.MAILBOXES, which has a similar syn-
        tax and response to the FIND MAILBOXES command described in
        RFC 1176. The FIND MAILBOXES command is unlikely to produce
        useful information.

* in a sequence
        Use the number of messages in the mailbox from the EXISTS
        unsolicited response.

SEARCH extensions (character set, additional criteria)
        Reformulate the search request using only the RFC 1176 syn-
        tax. This may entail doing multiple searches to achieve the
        desired results.

BODYSTRUCTURE fetch data item
        Use the non-extensible BODY data item.

body sections HEADER, TEXT, MIME, HEADER.FIELDS, HEADER.FIELDS.NOT
        Use body section numbers only.

BODY.PEEK[section]
        Use BODY[section] and manually clear the \Seen flag as
        necessary.

        FLAGS.SILENT, +FLAGS.SILENT, and -FLAGS.SILENT store data items
                Use the corresponding non-SILENT versions and ignore the
                untagged FETCH responses which come back.

        UID fetch data item and the UID commands
                No functional equivalent.

        CLOSE command
                No functional equivalent.

        In IMAP2bis, the TRYCREATE special information token is sent as a
        separate unsolicited OK response instead of inside the NO response.

        IMAP2bis is ambiguous about whether or not flags or internal dates
        are preserved on COPY. It is impossible to know what behavior is
        supported by the server.

IMAP4 server interoperability with IMAP2bis clients

        The only interoperability problem between an IMAP4 server and a
        well-written IMAP2bis client is an incompatibility with the use of
        "\" in quoted strings. This is best avoided by using literals
        instead of quoted strings if "\" or <"> is embedded in the string.

Security Considerations

        Security issues are not discussed in this memo.

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