

Using a screwdriver as a hammer

Interesting discussion last night on Xaraya's IRC channel. I installed An amazingly good looking IRC client for OSX This client has a feature called a *buddy list* which shows you the online status of people on IRC servers they are on regularly, much like the IM clients show an online status for people.

The feature saves me visiting tens of irc servers just to find out that the person i need is not there.

To be able to maintain this online status, colloquy sends /whois commands to the registered servers and channels to get the online status of the people in the buddy list. Obviously the sending of *some* command is necessary for this information.

When i started adding people to the buddy list, one of the serverops asked me why i was sending him /whois commands every 30 seconds. At that time, i didnt know what was happening. A little investigating showed that it was the buddy list feature.

In short, the discussion went fairly quickly into "user experience" versus "irc is not designed for this and stop doing this please". This is interesting for me, because usually i am on the side telling people the *the system is not designed to do this* while at this time i was in the *end users chair*

There's no escape from this argument, the feature saves a lot of time, but is using a technique not intended for that particular goal. Who should give in? I dont know.