

Thursday, August 29, 2013

Less^H^H^HUnknown features of Solaris 11: Virtual Consoles

A customer looked at me really puzzled when doing this. When we were working at setting up a system at the console, I needed more than one command line.

Customer: "On Linux systems we would use virtual consoles"

Joerg: "On this operating system, too"

Next time you are working on the console of your system (perhaps just the console you see in Virtualbox), just try pressing the alt-key and the cursor left or cursor right key in parallel respectively Alt+F1 for the first, the system console. Alt+F2 for the second console ... and so on. Nothing innovative, especially as Solaris used to have them in the past (but lost them out of reasons unknown to me) ... more a feature from the "Damned! At last!"-department, but still really useful.

That said, there may be moments where you even need more than the six virtual consoles available to you. As usual things are controlled by SMF in Solaris:

```
root@template:~# svcs | grep login
online      9:38:54 svc:/system/console-login:default
online      9:38:55 svc:/system/console-login:vt3
online      9:38:55 svc:/system/console-login:vt4
online      9:38:55 svc:/system/console-login:vt2
online      9:38:55 svc:/system/console-login:vt6
online      9:38:55 svc:/system/console-login:vt5.
```

Let us add two consoles. We will leave out console 7 as this one is usually used by Xorg and can be used to switch to X.:

```
root@template:~# svccfg -s console-login add vt8
root@template:~# svccfg -s console-login add vt9
root@template:~# svccfg -s console-login:vt8 setprop ttymon/device=astring: "/dev/vt/8"
root@template:~# svccfg -s console-login:vt9 setprop ttymon/device=astring: "/dev/vt/9"
Now we just have to enable them:
```

```
root@template:~# svcadm enable console-login:vt8
root@template:~# svcadm enable console-login:vt9
Now try Alt+F8 or Alt+F9.
```

Do you want to learn more?

docs.oracle.com - man page: vt(7i) - Solaris virtual console interface

Posted by Joerg Moellenkamp in English, LKSF, Solaris at 10:35

You wrote: "Solaris used to have them in the past (but lost them out of reasons unknown to me)"

The old virtual consoles were an undocumented and officially unsupported feature of the Solaris x86 console code. When the SPARC & x86 console frameworks were unified for Solaris 8, it was decided that including them in the result wasn't required since they didn't realize how many people were actually using them without documentation or official support. It was later realized to be a mistake, but then restoring them wasn't a high enough priority to work on until the OpenSolaris era.

Anonymous on Aug 29 2013, 18:53

This explains why I never found any documentation about it ... it was just a guy with a fully unix-compliant beard who showed it to me

... Anonymous on Aug 29 2013, 20:03

Virtual consoles were part of Solaris and officially supported up to and including Solaris 2.6. They were still in Solaris 7, but you had to manually enable them to get them to work. Virtual consoles were gone by Solaris 8.

Virtual consoles were dropped, if I remember correctly, in order to bring on support for the new USB serial bus, i.e. keyboards and mice.

I have reviewed my own personal archives and unfortunately I didn't have anything. Found that odd as that was something I frequently used, so I will have to dig deeper.

Blog Export: c0t0d0s0.org, <http://www.c0t0d0s0.org/>

In the mean time, here is a link to a setup guide from access1.sun.com, via the WayBack machine, for your review.

Thank you,

Jerry Kemp

<http://web.archive.org/web/20010606092554/http://access1.sun.com/cgi-bin/rinfo2html?244502.faq>
Anonymous on Aug 30 2013, 04:34