

18 April 2006

By: Bogdan Radulescu, Editor, Linux Software Reviews



[gFTP Review](#)

Do you transfer files?

We talked about two FTP clients for KDE so I think it's time to bring in the spotlight one that's popular in GNOME world. (If you have the required libraries you can use it in any graphical environment). The standard FTP client in GNOME is gFTP, which uses the gtk2 library. It has an old school interface that, at the same time, looks smooth. It has all the features you expect from a FTP client and even a little extra. It supports FTP, FTPS, HTTP, HTTPS, SSH2 and FSP. There is nothing special about the support for the first protocols, but the last two and especially the last one caught my attention. **The Special Features** used to do secur transfers through SSH, in the command line. To be honest, I haven't really thought about doing this in a graphical client, but now I'm reconsidering things. It can be relaxing and easier to transfer files this way. But the FSP protocol really aroused my curiosity because I didn't know what in the world is *that*. A quick search on the Internet explained that FSP stands for File Service Protocol and that this one is a very lightweight UDP based protocol that is good mainly for running anonymous archives. It is supposed to be bandwidth friendly and at the same time sufficiently fault tolerant. I located a FSP server and used gFTP to connect to it. It was interesting because I had a feeling that it connected very quickly and that the browsing of files was fast. I tried to download a file to see how fast can this be and maybe compare with the classical FTP and HTTP, and... surprise! gFTP skipped the transfer of the file several times. I tried two more FSP servers and this happened again. I guess this feature might be broken and it's a shame because, as far as I know, it is unique. **The Others** Other interesting features include support for FXP and Bookmarks. As a reminder, FXP is a method of transfer from a FTP server to another. A great advantage is that the speed is limited by the bandwidth between the two remote machines. These two features are very common with GUI FTP clients and are supposed to greatly increase the usability of the program. I'm ashamed to admit this, but initiating a FXP transfer took me more time than downloading the data on the HDD and then upload it on the other server. This is because I hardly find out how to connect to two FTP servers in the same time. I'm not saying this program has a bad interface because is not the case but sometimes maybe some very simple tasks require too much effort. For example, I am used to press the first letter of the name of a directory or file in the navigation pane and then the select function to jump at that point. This doesn't happen in gFTP and I find it a little frustrating. Another frustrating thing it that the stop button that should disconnect me, is never active. While you can still use Ctrl+D to disconnect, some users might just assume their session expired and can still remain connected. I hope this bug will be fixed in the near future. I guess that if you use this program a little you will get used to it and I'm sure it will satisfy all your the needs. Adding bookmarks is very easy, useful and it also has some interesting feats out of the box. A feature that can be very useful when you use FTP transfers a lot and still need the bandwidth for other tasks is bandwidth limiting. gFTP has an internal program for viewing files. From the options window you can choose to use another one and even one for editing files. This is a nice feature to have and is appreciated especially by web designers and network administrators that connect through SSH. Last but not least I would like to point out the "Compare Windows" feature from the Tools menu. It can really come in handy sometimes, so don't forget about it. **The Good** Support for multiple protocols is a considerable plus. I like that editing and viewing files is possible. Limiting bandwidth can be crucial sometimes and the support for bookmarks is very nice. **The Bad** Sometimes the interface is not very usable. Some bugs are present, which occasionally crash the program. **The Truth** While it is not as good as KFTPGrabber, it's better than

Kasablaca. If you just want to transfer files every once in a while you can safely use gFTP, but if you want the best of the best you'll have to move on.