

Windows Enterprise OU Administrator Tips Redirecting IE Favorites to User's AFS Home

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This document outlines how to configure "multiple user" Windows systems (such as public lab systems) to store the Internet Explorer "Favorites" into the user's AFS home folder. The end result is that each user's IE "Favorites" are restored at each login to a system configured in this manner.

The user must login with their ISU NetID (to gain access to their AFS network file folder). Each system used must be configured using this technique and must have the following software installed:

- "IBM/Transarc AFS" client (for AFS network file access)
- "MountAFSHome" (for attaching the user's AFS home folder dynamically at login time)

These products are both available from the "Advanced" Scout-kit list (the AIT MicroNet Scout is available from <http://www.ait.iastate.edu/downloads>).

This technique applies to Windows 2000 and Windows XP-Professional systems.

Method

1. Install the "IBM/Transarc AFS" client and "MountAFSHome" on your system (the system which will be imaged for a lab build).
2. Modify the "MountAFSHome.bat" file found in:

C:\Program Files\MountAFSHome

such that it maps the user's AFS home folder to a predictable (unused) drive letter. Replace the second parameter, by default "*" (meaning "first available drive letter"), with your desired drive letter. For example (choosing drive letter "J"):

MountAFSHome.exe %USERNAME% J

3. Login with an account that will mount an AFS home folder (i.e. an account that is a valid ISU NetID). The NetID's AFS home folder should be mapped to the drive letter selected in Step 2. Set up the desktop, application prefs, printing, "Start" menu, etc. as you would like any walk-in ("Default") user to see.

4. If you are doing this on Windows XP and are uncomfortable performing registry edits directly with RegEdit, you can use Windows XP's "TweekUI" (see Note 3 below). If you are running Windows 2000 you MUST use RegEdit.

Run "RegEdit" and drill down to the following registry hives:

HKCU\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Shell Folders
HKCU\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\User Shell Folders

Where: "HKCU" means "HKEY_CURRENT_USER"

Locate the string value "Favorites" in BOTH hives and modify it to reflect the AFS home folder location as follows:

J:\Documents\Favorites

5. Logoff
6. Login in with a local administrator account and locate the user profile for the NetID used in Step 3. User profiles for all users that have logged in are stored in:

C:\Documents and Settings

Note that depending on domain membership and operating system type the profile will be stored in a folder called "<netid>" or "<netid>.<domain>" (where "netid" is the NetID you logged in with in Step 3 and "domain" is domain membership of the system). Copy the user profile for the NetID used in Step 3 to:

C:\Documents and Settings\Default User

When a new user logs into the lab system, the registry settings configured in Step 4 are copied from the "Default User" to a local profile (in "C:\Documents and Settings") for the current user. Since the "Default User Favorites" has been re-directed, this causes the redirection of the current user's "Favorites" folder to their AFS space. [See Note 4 below]

At this point logging in with any ISU NetID will result in the default user environment (set up in Step 3 above) and IE "Favorites" being stored in their AFS home folder in "\Documents\Favorites".

Notes

Note 1:

The “Documents\Favorites” folder does not have to pre-exist in a user’s AFS file space. It will be automatically created the first time the user logs in.

Note 2:

When the computer is logged in with a local account rather than an Active Directory domain account (in other words not logging in with an ISU NetID which has corresponding AFS space), Internet Explorer will default back to the “normal” location for “Favorites”.

Note 3:

Windows XP users can download and install TweakUI.exe to perform the registry changes (rather than using RegEdit directly). TweakUI.exe is available from:

<http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/pro/downloads/powertoys.asp>

The steps for follow (replacing Step 4 above) are:

1. Pre-create the “Documents\Favorites” folders within the AFS home folder (to allow them to exist for selections within TweakUI)
2. Install and run TweakUI and navigate to “My Computer” and “Special Folders”
3. Select “Favorites” from the “Folder:” drop down box
4. Click “Change Location” and click “Yes” to the warning dialogue box
5. Navigate to the desired AFS folder (“J:\Documents\Favorites”) and click “OK”
6. Click “Apply” and “OK” to close Tweak UI

Note 4:

If a user with an existing profile stored on the system (in “C:\Documents and Settings”) logs in and access to their AFS home folder is not available (due to network, AFS problems, etc.) then the profile settings configured in Step 4 are lost for that user on that system. Windows will permanently revert all registry settings in that user’s local profile back to the “normal” location for “Favorites” (i.e. back in the locally stored profile). Usage of the “Favorites” stored in their AFS folder (after AFS service is back) will not be restored until the registry changes in Step 4 are done for each user in this state on each machine they tried while AFS was unavailable. In a lab environment where users do NOT expect their profile data to be retained, the simplest way to deal with this is to delete all local user profiles in “C:\Documents and Settings” EXCEPT “Default User” (and maybe “All Users” and others you wish to save) on all systems.

If you have a product such as “Centurion Guard”, “DriveShield”, or “DeepFreeze” (which prevents permanent changes to the local hard-drive) then this shortcoming is not an issue. Using these products means changes to the local profiles are lost at each system restart. Each user logging in after a system restart is always initialized from the “Default User” settings (and therefore has the changes configured in Step 4).

Note 5:

Public lab systems not using drive protection (such as “Centurion Guard”) often use scripts or products such as “delprof.exe” (from the Windows 2000 or 2003 Server Resource Kit) to periodically clean up locally stored profiles on lab systems. Make SURE you retain the profile for "Default User" (and maybe "All Users" and others you wish to save) when regularly removing locally stored profiles.