

An FTP Command-Naming Problem

In using the File Transfer Protocol, I've noticed that the choice of names for two crucial commands is faulty. The commands are STOR, which tell the Server to take a file in, and RETR, which tells the Server to send a file out. The trouble is that telling the Server to "retrieve" a file sounds like a desire for the file to be taken in by the Server rather than be sent out. For that matter, telling the Server to "store" the file sounds like it could be either a command to send it out or a command to take it in. The names of the commands, then, are both connotatively ambiguous and not very mnemonic if they are thought of as commands to the Server. (If they're thought of as commands to the User Host, they make more sense -- but they're not commands to the User Host.)

Of course, memorizing the denotations -- despite the connotations -- is a solution. But it would probably be easier for users if the names were more suggestive of the functions named. Therefore, I propose that PUSH and PULL be added to the FTP as synonyms for RETR and STOR, respectively (I hope). Even GIVE and TAKE would be an improvement. At the very least, SEND should be a synonym for RETR. (1)

(1) Note that by specifying synonyms rather than replacement, existing correct reflexes -- and "automata" -- are not disturbed, while newcomers to FTPing are given a better chance of choosing right.

[This RFC was put into machine readable form for entry]
[into the online RFC archives by Alex McKenzie with]
[support from GTE, formerly BBN Corp. 9/99]