Managing User Accounts

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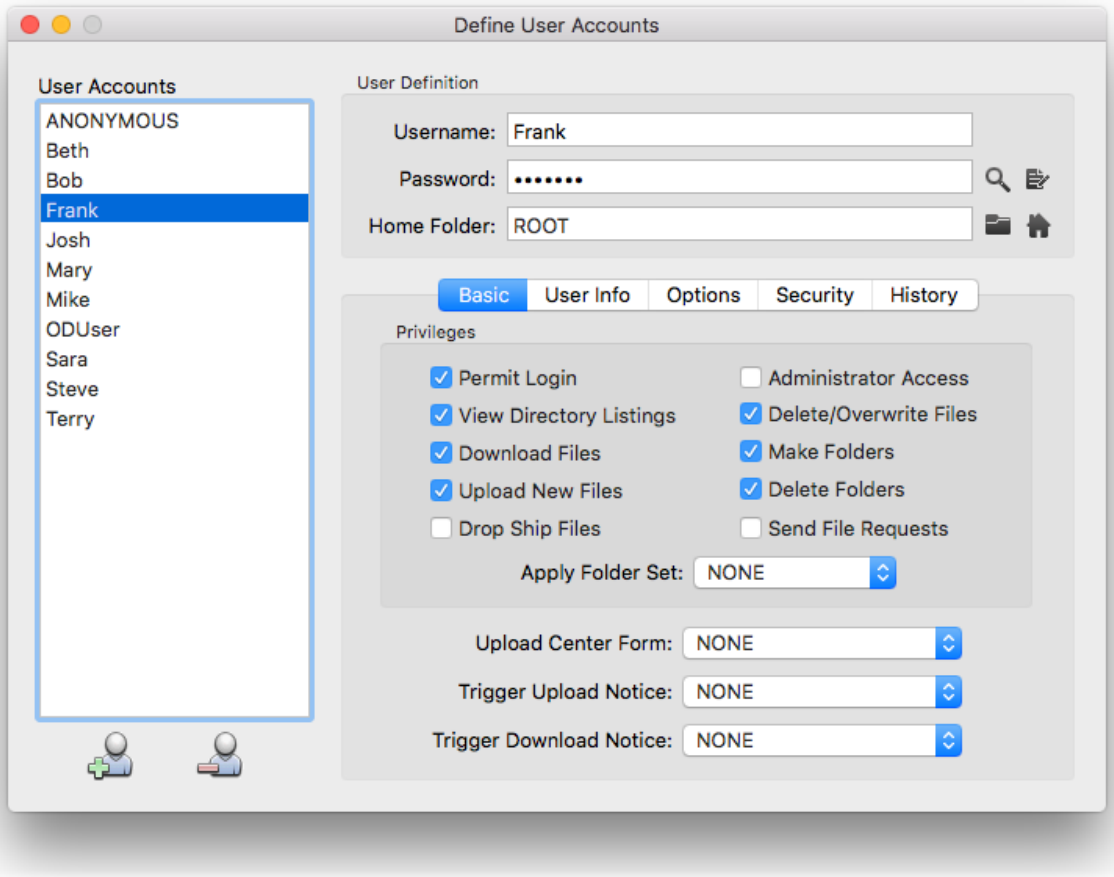
The basic operation of a file transfer server boils down to two key components: accepting connections over the network (including the Internet) and recognizing and managing each unique user. Providing the basic FTP service, and the networking required to support it, are covered in several other articles in this Rumpus package. Here, we'll focus on creating and maintaining the user accounts which will allow the server administrator to manage the various people who will transfer files to and from the server.

User Accounts

The FTP protocol requires that anyone who wishes to access the server log in by supplying a username and password in order to begin a session. In Rumpus, you will create one or more user accounts, each of which will have a unique username. It is easiest to think of a user account as the definition of a particular person who will be using your server.

To manage user accounts, open the "Define Users" window in Rumpus.



The Define Users window

In the screen shot, 10 user accounts have been created (“ANONYMOUS” is a special account set aside for unsecured users, which we’ll discuss later), and the account “Frank” is selected. Each of the fields on the window can be set independently for each user account, and will reflect the user account currently selected in the “User Accounts” list. In this case, Frank’s name and access privileges are displayed and can be edited.

The “Privileges” checkbox group defines the actions that the user can or can’t perform.

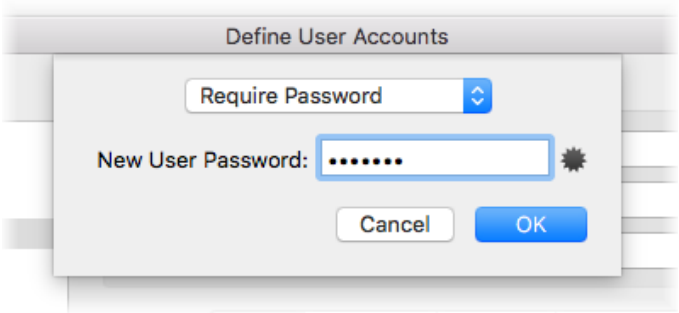
To create a user account, click the “Add New User” button just below the user list. A sheet will drop down asking you to supply the name and password of the new account. After completing the sheet, privileges and other account options can then be set. When you are done defining accounts, just close the window.

Passwords

There are two tools next to the "Password" field that can be used to set and manage user account passwords.

The magnifying glass icon will reveal the password, if needed. Display of the password can be toggled on and off by clicking the button, but Rumpus will also obscure a displayed password automatically after 30 seconds or if another user account is selected. The keyboard equivalent of the "expose password" button is command-e.

Passwords can be changed by clicking the "edit" button, which opens the sheet shown below.



A pop-up menu allows you to select whether an account should require a set password, require that the user supply an e-mail address (although the address will not be verified) or allow the user to log in without a password at all. In general, user accounts should be set with a strong, unique password. The "Allow Any Password" and "Allow E-Mail Address" options are usually used only for restricted anonymous access.

New passwords can be automatically generated by clicking the "new password" button. Rumpus-generated passwords will always follow the password requirements specified on the Web Settings window, Options tab, in the "Password Options" box. At a minimum, passwords will always include at least one number, one lowercase letter and one uppercase letter. Passwords will never contain a capital letter "O", the capital letter "I" or the lowercase letter "l", as these characters look similar or identical to the numbers "0" or "1" (depending on the font). This avoids confusion when communicating passwords generated by Rumpus to end users. "O" and "0" are always the number zero and "I", "l" and "1" are always the number one.

Common User Account Settings

When you are creating your first few user accounts, most of the available account options can be left at their defaults, at least initially. There are a few options, however, you may need to consider right away:

Home Folders - Giving Each User Their Own Space

In many cases, FTP users are completely unique, so that each has their own area on the server and is restricted from viewing content of other users. There are a couple of ways of accomplishing this, but the easiest and most reliable is to use “Home Folders”.

To start, create a folder on the local system for each user who will need their own space. We strongly recommend that all user content folders be placed in the FTP Root folder, which is the folder “/Users/Shared/” by default. Name user folders so that they are easy to recognize and distinct for each user account. In fact, giving the folder the same name as the user account is a good idea.

Back in Rumpus, select the user account (or create a new one, as described above) and click the folder button next to the “Home Folder” field. In the standard Mac file/folder selection box that opens, select the user folder you just created. That’s it... When a user logs in to your server with the defined name and password for that account, the view they will see of your FTP server will be limited to their own user folder.

In most cases, the “Allow User To Move Out Of Home Folder” checkbox (found on the “Security” tab of the Define Users window) should be left off. This option tells Rumpus whether or not users should be able to move out of their own folder hierarchy. When the option is disabled, users will not be able to see anything outside of the contents of their own folder (and it’s sub-folders). If you turn the option on, users will initially be logged in to their own FTP user folder, but will be able to move up into the “FTP Files” folder and then back down into the folders of other users. In some cases, this is a handy feature, but when each user is unique and should be denied access outside of their own folder, “Allow User To Move Out Of Home Folder” should remain off.

Drop Boxes - Blind File Uploads

Another common use for FTP servers is the "Drop Box", in which case a user can upload files, but is not allowed to download or even see files that already exist on the server.

To define a drop box user account, create the account normally, including assigning a Home Folder as described above. Then enable the "Permit Login" and "Upload New Files" privileges, and leave all others off. In particular, with the "View Directory Listings" privilege disabled, users logging in with the given user account will not be able to see existing files already on the server.

The Anonymous User

Rumpus predefines one special user account: "ANONYMOUS". This is the guest account that all FTP clients and servers use for unsecured access. In other words, if you want to provide public, no-password-needed FTP access, enable the "Permit Login" privilege for the ANONYMOUS user account, and configure the other user account settings for this special user according to the access you would like to grant unsecured users.

When FTP client applications log in without the user supplying a name and password, they will automatically send the name "Anonymous" and will normally send the user's e-mail address as the password. If you don't want to allow unsecured access at all, simply turn off the "Permit Login" privilege for the ANONYMOUS user account.

User Accounts And The Web File Manager

The Rumpus Web File Manager respects all FTP user account settings, so whether users connect via FTP or WFM, the same user setup options all apply. User home folders and drop boxes, for example, work equally well when a user logs in through a Web browser using the WFM versus via FTP. In fact, the same user can access the server one time through the Web File Manager and the next over FTP, and their view of the server will remain consistent.