## Special Focus Issue:Clustering

### Guest Editor: Joseph L. Kaiser

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**BY TINA DARMOHRAY**

# apropos

## by Tina Darmohray

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I had a rather heated discussion with another system administrator the other day. It was Monday morning after the cutover to a new mail server, and we were encountering the usual glitches that go along with such an upgrade. I tripped across the first in the list of things we'd need to fix when I sent some email to one of the managers who was out on vacation. Shortly there-after I got an error message in my mailbox saying that smrsh couldn't run the vacation program. I was tracking down the fix for vacation when the other administrator showed up at my cube. When I shared with him what I was trouble-shooting he launched into a diatribe of derogatory comments about sendmail saying that it was antiquated, overly complicated and, just like BIND, needed to be replaced.

It was probably the culmination of the morning, which already felt like a full day, but I took issue with his comments about sendmail and BIND. I agreed that sendmail's con-figuration file wasn't for the faint of heart, but insisted that programs like sendmail and BIND, indeed the IP protocols themselves, were not antiquated. In fact, I argued, they are on the short list of programs and protocols that have scaled to the size of the Inter-net and remain viable and robust; obviously an accomplishment worthy of respect.

This isn't the first time I've heard disparaging comments about these programs. For some reason, people love to hate them, and often the more publicly, the better. It's as if by vocally calling attention to perceived flaws in these programs, they feel they boost their own technical stature. Many times, however, the people making the disparaging comments don't have first-hand knowledge of the programs they're criticizing. Such was the case with my fellow admin; in the course of his ranting he revealed, "Postfix is so much easier and can do everything I need; I never could figure out that .cf file, any-way!"

I happen to like sendmail.cf files. Maybe it's because I like a challenge? But I can appre-ciate that others may prefer something simpler to use. What I've become less tolerant of is folks randomly criticizing some of these great examples of networking applications. The fact that these programs and protocols scale and perform today as they have is a tribute to their design and garners my respect on that account alone. Experience shows that it's not that easy to get this "right." Why, oh why, do folks want to berate the few examples which have?