

Shared Internet Drive

Making an Internet server part of your
desktop

Background

Sometimes it's useful to have a space on the Internet on to which you can copy files for:

- Sharing
- Backup
- Publishing to other people

This is possible using something called FTP – File Transfer Protocol – which is a program that allows you to save files to and download files from the Internet. To use FTP, you require an FTP account to be set up on an available Internet server, and a piece of software called an FTP client to access the files. The FTP client isn't viewed by software on your PC as being an available disc drive, however, and to copy files to and from the Internet you need to start up the client and run the client program to move files between your PC and the Internet.

A better way of doing this would be to have an Internet server FTP drive available on your desktop as another drive, similar to your C: or D: drives.

There are a few companies who provide this service, but this document describes how to do it with any FTP account using a publicly available piece of software called NetDrive.

The FTP Account

To use NetDrive you will require an FTP account.

If you wish me to set one up for you, and you're a non-profit / charity organisation, please contact me via the CommunityHost website (www.communityhost.org.uk) and I will do so.

For the FTP account, you will require the following pieces of information:

1. The Server Name
2. The FTP Account User Name
3. The FTP Account Password

Before you start installing NetDrive, write these pieces of information down.

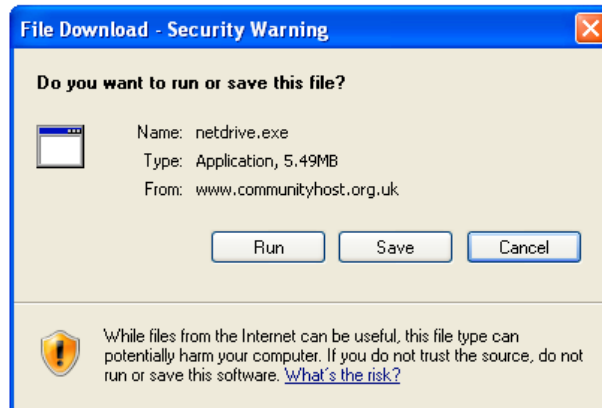
Acquiring NetDrive

The NetDrive program is a piece of software created by the Novell Corporation.

The program is no longer actively supported by Novell.

To get a copy, download it from the CommunityHost site at www.communityhost.org.uk/downloads/utilities/netdrive.exe

When you use this link, you will see the below dialogue displayed:



Press the Save button and save this file somewhere on your PC.

Once the download has finished, go to where you have saved the file and double click on it to run it.

Installing and Configuring Netdrive

When you run the Netdrive installer, it will install the NetDrive program on to your PC.



If this screen is displayed, press the 'Run' button.

You will be prompted to select the installation language, and then there will be a couple of other prompts to follow during the installation process. Select the default options in each case.

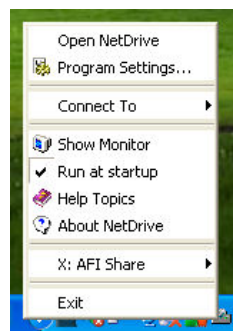
At the end of the installation process, you may be told to restart your PC; you can do this either immediately or later. You should restart your PC, if requested, before you start to configure NetDrive.

Configuring NetDrive

Once installed (and after a reboot, if necessary) you can start NetDrive up to configure it.

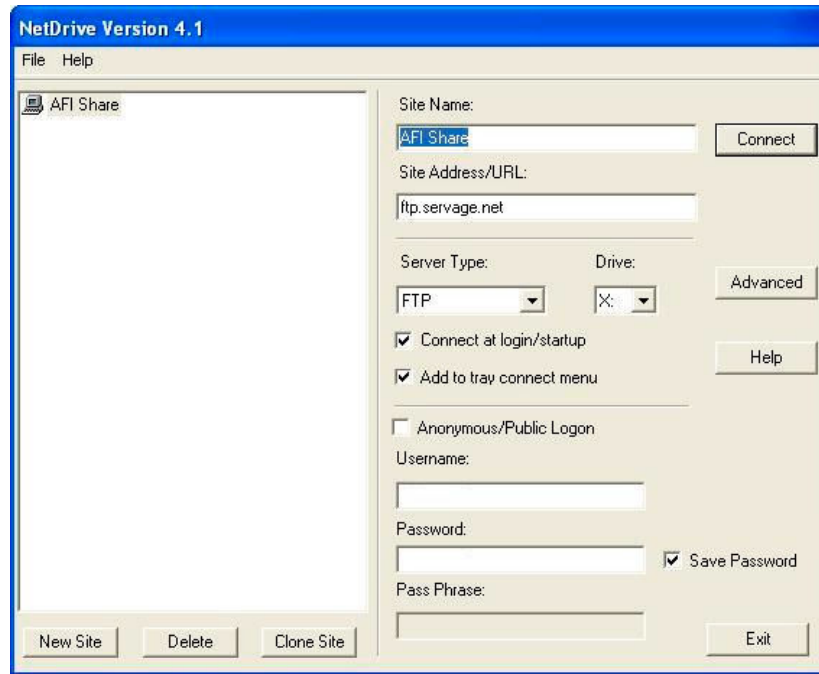
This can be done by selecting the NetDrive icon in the System Tray (bottom right of the screen is a row of small icons each representing a running program on your system. Moving the Mouse Cursor over the icons will display the name of the program. The NetDrive icon is a small grey rectangle.) or by running the program from the Programs Menu.

Should you choose to use the System Tray, right-click on the icon and the menu displayed below will be shown.



Select the 'Open NetDrive' option. If you choose to run the program from the main program menu, select the NetDrive program from the NetDrive group. However you start the program, the below screen will be displayed.

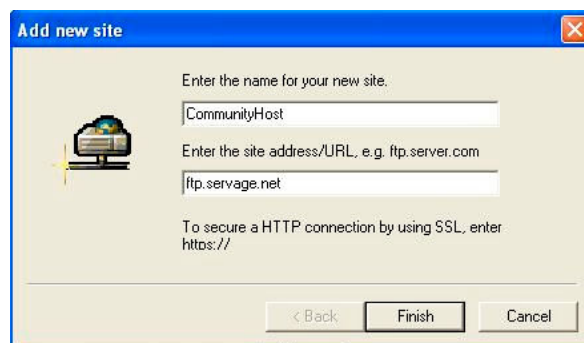
The first time you run this program, it will be an empty screen.



This is where you will configure the program to connect to the desired FTP site. You will need the FTP server details mentioned earlier on in this document to perform this task.

Press the 'New Site' button and enter the name by which you wish the site to be known on your system. Here it's 'AFI Share'.

Now enter the address of the FTP server in to the 'Site/Address URL' box. Here the server is ftp.servage.net.



When you're done, press Finish.

Then continue to enter the remaining data required.

Ensure that Server Type is set to FTP, and that the Drive letter shown (X in this example) is suitable for what you want.

Check the 'Connect at login / signup' box if you are on a broadband or similar 'always on' network connection. Otherwise you will be prompted to connect whenever you try and access the drive. If you check this box, you will be connected when your machine connects to the Internet.

Enter the username and password given to you to access the FTP server, and check the 'Remember Password' box.

NOTE – Don't remember the password if you're on a public machine, or if the machine you use is shared with other people that you do not wish to be able to access the Network Drive.

Once you have entered the data, press the Connect button. NetDrive will then attempt to connect you to the FTP server and set the drive letter (X here) to represent that FTP server.

When the connection has been made, you may press the Exit button; NetDrive has been configured.

Troubleshooting

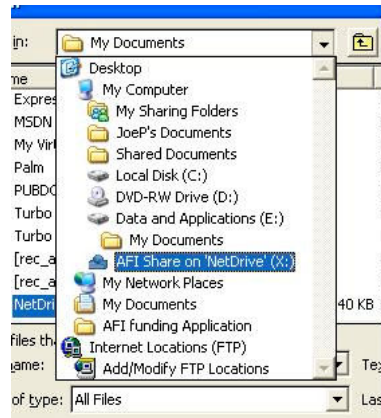
If a connection cannot be made, check the following:

1. That the machine is connected to the Internet.
2. That the drive letter selected is not already in use on the computer.
3. That the FTP server name entered is correct.
4. That the username and password connected are correct.
5. That your Firewall is not blocking FTP services.

Using NetDrive

Once installed and configured, the drive specified in the configuration process will be available to you from Windows applications File menus just like any other drive.

For example, here is how the drive appears on a Microsoft Word 97 dialogue:



To use the drive, simply select it like any other drive.

The only things to be aware of are:

1. Large files may take a while to save and load from an Internet Drive. Just give the programs time to work.
2. Some Anti-Virus scanners will attempt to scan any document loaded from an Internet Drive – this can again cause delays.
3. If your Internet connection is slow, or the server is busy, then this will also extend the time taken to save files.

Virus Scanner Impact

As an example, a 1 Mb Word file took up to 8 minutes to transfer to an FTP drive when AVG's 'Resident Shield' option was running and checking the mapped drive.

When AVG was configured through its control panel to OMIT the mapped drive from its scanning, the same file transferred in 20 seconds.

Whether you choose to configure your virus scanner to ignore files being saved and loaded from your Internet drive is obviously a question that only you can answer.

