The boot process, init and runlevels

1 Aim

After successfully working through this exercise, You will:

- be familiar with standard runlevels in a Linux system
- be able to rescue a system without the main dynamic link libraries using an alternative init
- be able to change through runlevels, and understand their purpose
- be familiar with the main parts of the boot sequence

2 Background

2.1 init and runlevels

- Linux has seven modes of operation
- Referred to as runlevels
- The Linux Standards Base (http://refspecs.freestandards.org/LSB_3.0.0/LSB-Core-generic/LSB-Core-generic/runlevels.html) defines the following standard runlevels that all distributions should follow to be compliant:
  0  halt
  1  single user mode
  2  multiuser with no network services exported
  3  normal/full multiuser
  4  reserved for local use, default is normal/full multiuser
  5  multiuser with a display manager or equivalent
  6  reboot
- The init process governs runlevels. init is the first program that the kernel runs.
- To change from one runlevel to another, you can use telinit or simply init:

  $ sudo init level

  For example, if you are currently in runlevel 5, you can change to runlevel 3 by executing the command:

  $ sudo init 3
2.2 Runlevel 1, or Single-user Mode

You can change to runlevel 1 in this way too.

- Mainly used for diagnostic purposes
- Starts only a subset of the possible services, e.g.
  - No networking
  - No mail services
  - No name lookup services
    - Except /etc/hosts
  - No file-sharing services etc

You can also select a runlevel when the kernel boots. When you see the LILO screen (the one with the red hat logo, before the system boots), press (Ctrl-x) and then, at the boot: prompt:

```
boot: linux 1
```

2.3 An alternative init, and when you might need it

Normally the init program (/sbin/init) is started automatically by the kernel; the location is known by the kernel. But sometimes you need to specify an alternative init program, such as when the main dynamic link libraries do not correspond with the executables on the system. In that case, nothing works until they match. A useful tool is a statically linked shell, which does not depend on other dynamically loaded libraries. There is one called sash, which you will install today. The sash package installs sash as /sbin/sash.

To start the computer using /sbin/sash as the init process, you can type the following at a LILO prompt:

```
boot: linux 1 init=/sbin/sash
```

and the system will provide you with the limited capabilities of the stand-alone shell, definitely better than no access at all!

3 Procedure

1. Make sure you have sash installed:

   ```
   $ rpm -q sash
   ```

   If it tells you it’s not installed, then go and install it:

   ```
   $ cd /ftp/rh-7.1-updated/RedHat/RPMS
   $ sudo rpm -Uhv sash-3.4-8.i386.rpm
   ```

2. Verify that you have sash there in the right place:
$ ls -l /sbin/sash
-rwxr-xr-x 1 root root 508268 Aug 14 2001 /sbin/sash

(The date and size will be different, but similar).

3. Use the ldd program to verify that sash is not dynamically linked. Then compare the result with running on bash:

   $ ldd /sbin/sash
   $ ldd /bin/bash

4. Create a boot disk for Red Hat 7.2 like this (assuming that the automounter mounts ictlab:/var/ftp/pub on /ftp). Start by putting a formatted floppy disk (that has no bad sectors) into the drive (all contents will be replaced), and:

   $ cd /ftp/redhat-7.2/updates/images/i386
   $ dd if=bootnet.img of=/dev/fd0

   and wait until the data copying and conversion program dd has finished creating a boot floppy.

5. boot your system into single user mode, as described in section 2.2 on the preceding page.

6. Change to the /lib directory, and examine the important dynamic library loader, ld-linux.so.2:

   # ls -l /lib/ld-linux.so.2
   lrwxrwxrwx 1 root root 11 Dec 15 08:44 /lib/ld-linux.so.2 -> ld-2.2.4.so

7. Now you will do something that you will probably never do again: rename ld-linux.so.2!

   # mv ld-linux.so.2 ld-linux.so.2-orig

8. Now examine this file:

   # ls -l ld-linux.so.2-orig

   Oh dear, it doesn’t work! What to do?
4 Getting out of Disaster

Read section 2.3 on page 2 and using the procedure there, recover from this situation, and when finished, make sure that you can have the normal ls command work.

Hints:

1. Type help when you have sash running
2. Type -ls within sash

5 Now again!

1. rename the file /lib/libc.so.6:

   # mv /lib/libc.so.6 /lib/libc.so.6-orig

2. This time, boot your computer using the linux installation disk, but this time, at the LILO prompt, enter:

   boot: linux rescue


4. Agree to mount your Linux file systems.

5. Make sure that you are working on your hard disk, and not /dev/hdc, the one that Samson has installed on the internal hard disks!

6. Fix the problem again, and verify that it all works.

7. Show your lecturer.

5.1 More about runlevels

Runlevels give great flexibility to the system administrator. Have a look in the /etc/rc.d directory. First, make your terminal window nice and wide, then:

$ cd /etc/rc.d
$ ls -lr rc?.d

This will list the contents of the directories /etc/rc.d/rc0.d, /etc/rc.d/rc1.d, /etc/rc.d/rc2.d, /etc/rc.d/rc3.d, /etc/rc.d/rc4.d, /etc/rc.d/rc5.d and /etc/rc.d/rc6.d.

Each directory contains lots of symbolic links to scripts in /etc/rc.d/init.d. Some start with Knn, and others start with Sxx, where xx is a two-digit number.

Under the control of /sbin/init, these scripts are run with the argument start if they start with Sxx, and stop if they start with Knn.

1. Look at the links in /etc/rc.d/rc0.d. Do most of them start with Sxx or Kxx?
2. Why do you think this is so? 

3. Look at the links in /etc/rc.d/rc3.d. Do most of them start with Sxx or Kxx? 

4. Why do you think this is so? 

5. Try running a few of these scripts by hand: 

   $ sudo /etc/init.d/autofs stop  
   $ sudo /etc/init.d/autofs start

6. What do you think the **chkconfig** program does when you type: 

   $ sudo chkconfig --level 345 autofs off

   and

   $ sudo chkconfig --level 345 autofs on

   Do each of these things, and look for any change in the symbolic links before and after each of the two steps.