PLUM

An Extensible Visual Environment for MH

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What Is Plum?

- **A visual front end for MH for ASCII terminals.**
- **A highly configurable, extensible programming environment.**
- **An experiment in writing a large program in *perl*.**
- **‘‘Look and feel’’ derives from several pre-existing tools, including *vi*, *rn*, *dired*, and *tcsh*.**

Motivation

- **Mail handling takes up an inordinate amount of time.**
- **Wanted to use MH for flexibility.**
- **While MH helps a lot in mail processing, *+inbox* still gets clogged.**
- **Stand-alone file browsers convenient for rapid access.**

Alternatives

- ***elm*** **– didn't use MH**
- ***xmh*** **– dependent on X, not easily extensible.**
- ***vmail*** **– didn't like key bindings, not extensible.**
- ***mh-e*** **– didn't want *emacs*, or to code in LISP.**

Features

- **Easy to get started on (especially for *vi* users), but plenty to learn for those who wish to plumb its depths.**
- **Uses external calls to MH for everything except message display.**
- **Caches scan info, folder names, open message filehandles for speed.**
- ***(tcsh*-style completion on folder names, commands, variables.**
- **Extension language is *perl*, not LISP.**

More Features

- **Takes advantage of any size window.**
- **Bindable keys.**
- **User-defined functions.**
- **Internally documented.**
- **Maintains multiple open folders, and easily switch between them.**
- **Postcompiling guarantees constant start-up time even if it grows to 100,000 lines.**

Difficulties

- **Speed – start-up time, message display, rescanning**
- **System dependence – cbreak mode varies**
- **Complexity – needed complex data structures, module partitioning**
- **Coherency – knowing when things have been updates; *anno***
- **Software development tools – ctags, lint, xreffer**

Current State of *plum*

- **Undocumented.**
- **About 5000 lines of code; probably halfway done.**
- **Runs on BSD and SysV machines (if you try hard enough).**
- **Used by around 40 people prior to last week's alpha release to the net.**
- **Available for anonymous *ftp* from convex.com [130.168.1.1] in /pub/perl/scripts/plum.1-31.shar.Z.**

Wish List

- **bugs fixed**
- **user guide & internal doc**
- **autoconfiguration**
- ***rn* % escapes**
- **context-sensitive completion**
- **integrate MH sequences and *vi* style buffers, visually**
- **visual marks**
- **caching of scan listings between runs; autoscanning**
- **multichar bindings, maps?**
- **support all MH commands, with switch completion**
- **undo**
- **news reading mode**