Debathena Jaunty Release Notes

Debathena Jaunty Release Notes

On this page:

⚠️ **Note:** The Solaris platform has been phased out, and subsequent releases will not be available for the Solaris platform. The last Solaris release is [Athena 9.4]

In Summer 2009, IS&T released Debathena on Ubuntu 9.04 ("Jaunty") to the public Athena clusters. This release replaces the previous Debathena Intrepid beta release as well as the [Athena 9.4 Release]. The Debathena project brings Athena to all Debian-based distributions (including Ubuntu) and is a joint collaboration between the Student Information Processing Board and Information Services & Technology. For more information on the Debathena project, see http://debathena.mit.edu.

Summary of Changes

Some of the most visible changes effective with this release are the following:

Operating System Changes

1. Red Hat Enterprise Linux 4 replaced with Ubuntu 9.04 ("Jaunty"):
   While Debathena supports all Debian-based distributions, IS&T has selected the latest release of Ubuntu (9.04) for the public cluster environment. Ubuntu is designed with usability in mind and is by far the most popular Linux distribution among incoming students

Basic Application Software

1. GNOME components (including Evolution) upgraded to version 2.26:
   This version of GNOME is included with Ubuntu 8.10 and includes significant improvements in features and usability over the previous 2.8 version. Evolution includes a number of features, such as the ability to integrate with Google Accounts (including Gmail and Google Calendar)
2. The "sudo" command is now supported on public workstations:
   Users can now use the "sudo" command (which uses your Kerberos password) to become root in addition to the "su" command (which uses the workstation's root password). The default root password has not changed.
3. The Console window has been removed:
   The Console window has been removed from this release due to incompatibilities with the Ubuntu login process. We may restore this functionality in future releases.
4. No notification of new e-mail messages in Console window:
   As the Console window has been removed, we can no longer display the number of new e-mail messages on the server.
5. The legacy Sawfish window manager has been removed:
   This window manager is no longer supported by IS&T. Private workstation users can continue to install and use it, but ~/.athena-sawfish files will no longer be honored.
6. The legacy Dash interface has been removed:
   The Dash interface was a remnant from the Athena 8.0 days and was becoming increasingly incompatible with modern software. We have decided not to include this interface with Debathena, and ~/.athena-dash files will not be honored.
7. Lockers are automounted on /mit simply by accessing by /mit/lockername:
   While the `attach` command remains in Debathena, lockers can be accessed simply by accessing the relevant directory under /mit. If you wish to run software out of lockers, you will still need to use the `add` command.
8. Removable devices (CDs, DVDs, USB drives) will automatically mount; root access is no longer required:
   Removable device support has been vastly improved by virtue of switching to Ubuntu as the underlying operating system. The `attach-usb` command in the consult locker is no longer necessary to mount USB drives.
9. Change in handling of legacy ~/.tcshrc files:
   Users with very old accounts may have ~/.tcshrc files. These files will not be executed instead of ~/.cshrc, meaning that users with ~/.tcshrc files will not receive a number of Athena customizations. If you experience problems logging in to Athena, check for a ~/.tcshrc file in your account and rename it. If any content in your ~/.tcshrc file is still relevant, please migrate it into ~/.cshrc.mine

10. Removal of certain legacy tcsh environment variables:
    The $athena_path and $athena_manpath variables no longer exist, and you should not reference them in your dotfiles. Use $PATH and $MANPATH instead.
11. The WINDOW_MANAGER environment variable can no longer be used to select a different window manager. Ubuntu has dropped support for the WINDOW_MANAGER environment variable. Window managers should be selected from the login screen using the "Session" option. For more complex customization or for window managers that are not supported by Ubuntu, users will need to create their own ~/.xsession.

For Developers

1. Libraries such as GNOME and Gtk+ are now the standard OS-provided versions rather than custom MIT versions:
   Building software on Athena should be easier since most **configure** scripts or **Makefiles** should have no problem locating the necessary libraries.
2. /usr/athena and /bin/athena are now symlinks and provided for compatibility only, so standard paths can be used in shell scripts:
   Using Athena as a development platform is much easier, since there should be no need to change shebang (#!) lines in shell scripts or special case the location of various programs. All user binaries are in /usr/bin or /bin, and all sysadmin binaries are in /usr/sbin or /sbin.

For Private Workstation Owners

1. This release is not intended for use on Private Workstations.
2. Network configurations and services are managed by the OS:
   Athena 9 configured network settings and services via two custom features: /etc/athena/rc.conf and the mkserv program. Debathena does away with these, and network settings and services such as sshd, httpd, etc. are managed by the operating system, allowing you to use the standard graphical tools provided by Ubuntu and Debian.
3. /etc/athena/rc.conf will be removed:
   IP address, hostname, and network device settings will be configured by the underlying operating system.
4. Access control via /etc/athena/access is desupported:
   Access control will be via the /etc/security/access.conf file, which has a substantially different format.
5. Using mkserv to enable remote access and other services will be desupported:
   Network services will be configured by the underlying operating system.
6. A krb4 srvtab can no longer be used for kerberized services instead of a krb5 keytab:
   All kerberized services (telnetd, sshd) require a keytab.

Technical Changes

1. Improved user management with Hesiod and nss_nonlocal:
   Previously, user management was accomplished by adding users to the /etc/passwd file when they logged in. User information is now retrieved directly from Hesiod via the nsswitch library. This has the advantage that information like the user's shell updates immediately upon a change in Hesiod, rather than waiting for the user to logout. The nss_nonlocal modules is included in order to avoid any security problems related to namespace conflicts between local and Athena-wide users.
2. attach is no longer setuid root:
   The attach program on Debathena runs setgid attach, not setuid root. While lockers can be accessed via the /mit automounter, the attach program is still useful for the add shell function and Zephyr subscription functionality.
3. Athena machines will no longer respond to requests on ports 13 (daytime) and 37 (time):
   This feature will be de-supported. The same information can be obtained via athinfo hostname date.
4. Most Athena machines no longer run a local caching nameserver by default. debathena-workstation and debathena-cluster run local caching nameservers, but other flavors of Debathena do not. Users wishing to run a local caching nameserver by hand can install the debathena-dns-config package.

Related Links

[Athena 9.4 System Release Notes]
Athena at MIT
Athena Online Help
Athena Consultants
Debathena Private Workstation Owner Guide