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Macintosh Access to Btrieve on Netware

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TOPIC -----

We have a Novell network (currently upgrading to 3.11) using SoftPC, MagicPC and Btrieve. We would like to use applications that are resident on the Novell server. What can we use to access Btrieve files created in DOS format from a Macintosh? Can we run applications? Will there be a performance penalty?

DISCUSSION -----

Accessing Btrieve files from a Macintosh workstation cannot be done directly from the Macintosh OS as we don't know of an implementation of Btrieve that is Macintosh OS compatible. There are other B-tree library solutions like c-tree Plus from FairCom, but they are not file-compatible with Btrieve. There are, however, several solutions for executing DOS programs on a Macintosh, and these could be those same Btrieve-based applications used on the PCs.

The classic solutions for executing DOS applications on a Macintosh are SoftPC (from Insignia Solutions, Inc.) or a DOS coprocessor card. The coprocessor cards, such as the Orange Micro Mac286 or Mac386, are PCs on a card that plug into a Macintosh and are accessed via a Macintosh program. These hardware solutions tend to be faster, but are also much more expensive.

A third and more recent solution is Novell's Netware Access Server. This product installs on the Netware server and allows up to 16 simultaneous virtual DOS sessions to be distributed over the network to workstations. The workstations run client software that provides the DOS session in a Macintosh window. Since you already have a Netware server installed, this might be the way to go.

Performance of each solution depends on the application. The Mac386 card is likely to give the best performance, but this isn't very cost effective if a number of users need them. The performance potential of the Novell solution is good, especially if the Btrieve files are located on the Netware server with the DOS session server. The only network traffic is for user input and screen updates. With a database application, this may even outperform the DOS coprocessor cards.

We recommend that you first try the PC applications with SoftPC, since you already have that. If the performance isn't to your liking, you may wish to try another solution. Either way, it sounds like you're already very close.

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