Dropbox

Dropbox is a nice tool to synchronize some documents between computers. It is available on our Linux desktops, but take care of a couple of things:

- Dropbox offers 2GB storage. But synchronization implies, that a local copy is made. Default location is in your home directory, but perhaps you don't have 2GB there (or you don't want to waste the limited space that you have in home). So make sure you move your Dropbox folder to another location, preferably on the local disk of your desktop. (Dropbox preferences - Advanced tab).

Not only will that prevent quota problems on /home, it will also be faster, because your local copy is actually local.

- **IMPORTANT**: As of October 2018, Dropbox is giving warnings that it will stop working on unsupported filesystems, which includes nfs (network file system, eg the /home disk). Two scenarios to solve this:

1. A new setup of Dropbox will by default start in `/home` and complain. Go into the preferences and move Dropbox to a location on the local disk (`/data1` or `/data2`). That should solve the issue and stop the warnings.
2. If you followed earlier advice, and moved `~/Dropbox` to a local disk, but kept a symbolic link, the warning will appear since dropbox apparently doesn't understand this. Unfortunately, you can not simply tell Dropbox where the directory actually is. So here is a series of actions to work around it, and end up with the desired setup: Dropbox on the local data disk, without the link and without complaints
   - Close dropbox to make sure nothing is running
   - Rename the Dropbox directory on your local disk. E.g. mv `/data1/yourusername/Dropbox /data1/yourusername/Dropbox2`
   - Remove the symbolic link in your home directory, and create a new one: `rm ~/Dropbox; ln -s /data1/yourusername/Dropbox2 ~/Dropbox`
   - Restart dropbox. It will complain, as usual.
   - Go to the preferences and tell Dropbox to move its data from `~/Dropbox` to `/data1/yourusername`. So actually, it will go through the symbolic link and move `Dropbox2` to `Dropbox` in the new location
   - Restart dropbox again. It will now work with the local location (`/data1/yourusername/Dropbox`)
   - If you want, you can now remove the symbolic link from your home directory
3. An alternative method tricks dropbox into seeing another directory as your home, so you can avoid using the nfs mounted home disk. However, using this method, dropbox cannot be started automatically when you log in, you have to use the commandline to start it up, although file manager access will work once started.
   - Stop Dropbox if it is already running
   - Create the directory where you want the Dropbox files on the local disk, eg `/data1/yourusername`
   - Point HOME to that location, and start installing dropbox: (`setenv HOME /data1/yourusername ; dropbox start -i`)
   - Next time you log in, repeat this command without the -i option: (`setenv HOME /data1/yourusername ; dropbox start`)

Setting up Dropbox on the Linux desktops

The first time you want to start Dropbox, find it in the `Internet` menu of your desktop environment, and make the required configuration changes (taking into account the points listed on this page). Dropbox will integrate with the desktop file manager, and can also display a tray icon for easy access, and by default it will set itself up to start automatically the next time you log in on the desktop.

Note that Dropbox sync is not running when you don't have a desktop session active, eg if you log in over ssh. You can still add files to your Dropbox folder, and they will be sync'd the next time dropbox is started on the desktop, or commandline synchronization is started (see below).

Some important settings:

- Location of your Dropbox folder. See above. Use the local disk of your desktop, not /home
- Disable LAN sync (Dropbox preferences - general tab). It would only be useful to synchronize between computers in the local network, but the computers in our network can share disks through automount, so there just is no point to have Dropbox generate a lot of network traffic to duplicate a feature we already offer (with much greater flexibility, and not limited to a single directory of 2 GB).
- Do not run Dropbox on multiple desktops at the same time. Dropbox isn't aware of the fact, that a data location like `/net/computername/something` is shared between computers, it will try to synchronize from that location on one computer, to that same location on another computer, potentially overwriting or damaging the files. And again: there is no need to use Dropbox to synchronize between computers in our network
- However, synchronizing between desktop and laptop is possible, and useful. No harm there, since there are no shared disks. But here as well, LAN sync will not work, so switch it off please.

Commandline tools

Dropbox also provides a commandline tool to handle your shared folder. The command is called `dropbox`, and is usually called with sub-commands to check the status (`dropbox status`), start dropbox if not already running (`dropbox start`). See the man page or `dropbox help` for more details.

Dropbox on Windows

It is unfortunately not possible to have Dropbox working on the Windows pcs that are part of the domain. This seems to be a known bug with user profiles that are stored on a central cerver, something Dropbox currently cannot handle. On those machines, you are limited to using the dropbox web interface for uploading and downloading your files.
Alternatively, one can use other cloud storage tools such as OwnCloud, which do work on Windows domains.

See also

See also https://www.dropbox.com
man dropbox for the manual page of the commandline tool.
See Cloud storage for a list of other, similar programs.

From:
https://helpdesk.strw.leidenuniv.nl/wiki/ - **Computer Documentation Wiki**

Permanent link:
https://helpdesk.strw.leidenuniv.nl/wiki/doku.php?id=linux:dropbox

Last update: **2020/07/22 09:15**