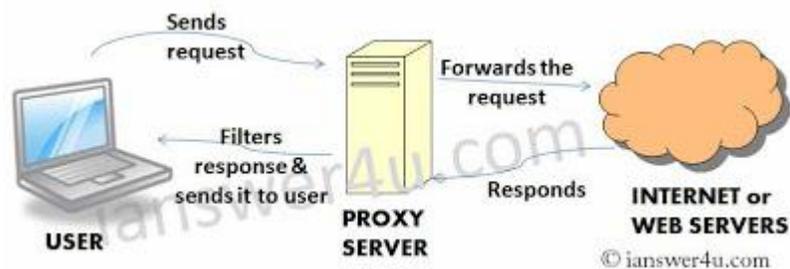


WHAT ARE PROXY SERVERS?

Proxy servers, just like simple web servers, complete the requests made by clients. But the difference is that proxy servers don't have the resource that clients request for. A proxy server just connects clients to the main web server and acts as a middleman/ intermediary. It is like you trying to talk to your friend through a third person. Then the next question that came to my mind was: - Why do we need a proxy server then, can't we directly contact web servers to gain the required information ? Yes, we can but there are situations where using a proxy server is beneficial for a user as well as for organisations.



Proxy Server Concept

Uses of Proxy Servers

Now that you have some idea about what a proxy server is, you may think that we don't need a proxy server if we can access some resource or file directly from a web server. But there are some inherent advantages of using a proxy server for a general user as well as organisations.

- Due to various reasons, organisations and ISPs block access to various sites. This content filtering is made possible by proxy servers. So depending on the content access policies of the organisation, the network administrator can configure the settings of proxy servers.
- Proxy Servers also help in improving the performance by addressing client requests faster. This is possible by use of cache. Consider that you access facebook often using proxy site. Then a friend of yours, on the same network, also tries to connect to facebook through the proxy site. Facebook homepage will now be saved in the proxy server's cache rather than retrieving from remote server again and your friend will be able to access it faster.
- Proxy Server helps in keeping the client's IP address anonymous, thus ensuring better security.

- Although they help organisations in blocking sites and filtering content but at the same time, some proxies allow user to access blocked sites. Such proxies help the user get through various firewalls and controlling softwares which are installed to regulate access.
- Proxies can be used to log internet usage within an office or by a particular user.
- Proxy server can be used as firewall to scan outbound and inbound flow of data. Thus they also nullify chances of hacking.

I hope now you know the advantages of proxy servers. But a word of caution, proxy servers are difficult to configure and if not done properly, a hacker can exploit it to gain sensitive data.

Source: <http://www.ianswer4u.com/2012/06/what-are-proxy-servers.html#axzz3Qs5RV0Sb>