Gmail Tip #59: New Feature! Gmail adds POP "Mail Fetcher"

Gmail now lets you to fetch mail from up to 5 of your other, POP-enabled non-Gmail accounts! And once the messages are pulled into Gmail, you can leverage all of Gmail's great features. (Note that nor all email services support POP access.) As of this writing, Gmail states that this feature is currently only enabled for a limited number of users. They're working on making it more available soon. Read on to see if you have access to Mail Fetcher, and how to set it up….

First off, let's see if you have access to Mail Fetcher. Click on the Settings link and click the Accounts tab. If you see a section titled "Get mail from other accounts:" then you should have access. Click the "Add another mail account" link, and a window will open. Enter your email address, and click "Next". Fill in the required information about your POP account, and click the "Add Account" button. You can add up to 5 accounts.

You can specify if Gmail will leave a copy of the messages on the server or not. If you opt not to leave messages on the server, then they will be effectively "moved" to Gmail, clearing off of the server. This means you don't have to manage email in two places. This is pretty standard.

You can also specify if Gmail connects using a secure connection (SSL).

Now comes the real power! You can define how Gmail will handle the messages once they are received. There are two additional settings that you can optionally configure:

Label incoming messages
If you'd like to automatically label all messages that are retrieved from your non-Gmail account, select this option. You can choose to use the predefined label (set to your email address by default), you can select an existing label, or you can create a new one from the drop-down list. If you are pulling from multiple accounts, this lets you nicely "flag" from accounts they are coming from. And if you decide not to use this option, then all messages seamlessly arrive into your Inbox unlabeled. It is unclear at this time if messages pulled in using Mail Fetcher are processed by Filters.

Archive incoming messages

Mail from this account can be archived directly, without showing up in your Inbox. You may want email from a specific account to be pulled into your Gmail account, but you may want it to bypass your inbox. An example might be a mailing list account. Just have it auto-Labeled and auto-archived, and the messages will nicely show up in that Label view, but they won't clutter the Inbox.

Finally, once your account has been successfully added, you'll have the option of setting up a custom "From" address. This allows you to compose messages in Gmail, but have them appear to be sent from your other email account. This is existing functionality, but can now be tied to specific Mail Fetch accounts.

Once set up, Gmail will check your other accounts on a regular basis (the frequency is unknown at this time.) New mail will appear automatically in your Gmail account (the location depending on the settings you defined.) At any time, you can always disable Mail Fetch for specific accounts from the Accounts tab of your Settings page.

Once again, Gmail provides new capabilities that really enhance and improve upon its already great feature set. This new feature is not revolutionary, but it helps make Gmail a more complete solution.

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