Early Access Program - NoPWS

InterSystems Corporation, winter 2022.

Overview

As previously announced at Global Summit 2022, InterSystems will discontinue shipping or installing an Apache-based web server (often referred to as the private web server or PWS); this change is currently planned for **InterSystems IRIS 2023.1**.

With this new approach, you have full control to choose which web server best suits your purposes, and how you configure, maintain, and update it. A key benefit of this change is that you will no longer have to wait for an updated kit from InterSystems to get the latest version, which is important especially in security vulnerability situations. InterSystems will provide tools that you can use to help to configure Apache or IIS. (Note that the InterSystems IRIS Community Edition will continue to install a PWS.)

Installing a web server is a common process and typically easy – and it is well documented by the various web server vendors.

You can find example code on the InterSystems Developer Community (https://community.intersystems.com/post/discontinue-apache-web-server-installations-aka-private-web-server-pws) for Ubuntu, Windows, and macOS. They demonstrate a quick installation so you can see the new behavior when InterSystems products do not include or install a web server. (Note that this code is provided as is and it not supported, nor is it sufficient to host mission-critical or data-sensitive applications.)

FAQ: No Private Web Server (PWS)

What is the Private Web Server?

InterSystems installed a web server alongside all versions of IRIS for convenience. Starting with InterSystems IRIS 2023.1 (tentative), InterSystems will no longer install web servers, but will continue aiding in the configuration of Apache (*nix) and IIS (Windows).

InterSystems recommends to not use the Private Web Server (PWS) but use a web server of your choice.

Why is InterSystems discontinuing installing the PWS?

1. Increased security - Installing the PWS means that the installed version is almost always out-of-date.
2. No longer critical - The modern web is much simpler than in years past. Installing a web server can be as easy as yum install httpd
3. Less redundancy - Eliminates customer confusion about when customers should install their own web server vs when to use the private web server
4. Faster reaction to security and general updates for the web server of your choice
5. Slightly smaller installers & containers

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What web servers will be supported?

InterSystems is supporting three Web Servers: Apache, Nginx and IIS. InterSystems IRIS will configure Apache and IIS. Nginx has always been a manual configuration process.

Will the IRIS installer assist with configuring web servers?

Yes, the InterSystems IRIS installer will offer to configure Apache/IIS if installed on the same machine. For this to work Apache/IIS must be installed prior to the installation of InterSystems IRIS.

If InterSystems IRIS and the web server are not installed on the same instance the WebGateWay can be used to to configure Apache or IIS.

InterSystems is not in the position to assist with the installation of web servers.

Will the installer ask about decisions related to the web server removal?

Yes! The installer will detect if you have a local web server and, if none is found, will give you the option to abort the installation or proceed anyway. If the installer detects a local web server, it will ask if it should make configuration changes to that web server.

What happens if I have a deployment with a PWS and I install a new version?

If an existing PWS is present IRIS will continue to use it.

Has the IRIS installer changed?

Yes. During install, IRIS will check to see if a local web server is installed.

- If there is a local web server already installed, the installer will ask if it should be configured. Answering yes, the installer will configure the web server.
- If there is no a web server already installed, the installer will tell the user that no web server was found and ask if they want to abort the IRIS install.
- If the user chooses to install IRIS without configuring the web server, no web server is installed or configured.

What about the InterSystems IRIS Community Edition?

The Community Edition will continue to install and the PWS as before. Outside of Containers, InterSystems will restrict the Community Edition to localhost, for the release that no longer installs the PWS.

Evaluations are special license keys for the community edition and will continue to work as before. Therefore, no change is needed.

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How will this work in containers?

1. Community Edition containers will be unchanged (as matches the CE installers)
2. The iris containers will not have Apache installed. We recognize that this adds a speed bump to the experience of anyone trying to get started (see mitigation below).
3. The iris-lockeddown containers have never included the web server, so no change is proposed to these containers. ← Customers are encouraged to use the lockeddown containers for production environments

Mitigation

In order to facilitate straightforward access to a management console for users of the iris containers, we'll need to provide and maintain the following:

1. Example Dockerfile that adds and configures the web server & web gateway from the base iris container
2. Example docker-compose and podman-compose files that runs a correctly configured web gateway next to the iris container
3. Example kubernetes YAML that demonstrates the same.

In other words, we want to make this an easy "copy-and-paste" exercise to get back to current functionality

What process should I follow if I would like to remove the PWS?

Once a customer has migrated off the private web server, they'll need to remove it manually. (Add link to future documentation)

In the past every IRIS installation on the same machine had its own web server. How does this work now?

You only need to have one installation of Apache or IIS. The IRIS installer will automatically find and detect Apache or IIS and add the IRIS instance to that web server (unless the user did not select that option during the installation dialog).

What will the behavior be with the Unattended installer?

The Unattended installer already has a configuration step related to web servers: ISC_PACKAGE_WEB_CONFIGURE.

The default value was set to N (No), which worked well as InterSystems shipped a fully configured Private Web Server (PWS).

With the release of the InterSystems version that will no longer install a PWS, the default for this option will be Y (yes), which requires that a web server is installed prior to running the Unattended installer. Customers that would like to perform their own web server configuration or use a central web server, should explicitly change the ISC_PACKAGE_WEB_CONFIGURE setting to N (No).

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The Unattended installer will only configure Apache (on *nix platforms) and IIS (on Windows) if they are installed locally.