How to test if imap and pop mail server service is working with Telnet cmd

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I've recently built new mail **qmail** server with vpopmail to serve pop3 connectins and courierimap and courierimaps to take care for **IMAP** IMAPS.

I further used telnet to test if the Linux server pop3 service on (110) and imap on (143) worked fine, straight after the completed qmail install.
Here is how to test mail server with vpopmail listening for connections on pop3 port :

debian:~# telnet mail.mymailserver.com 110
Trying 111.222.333.444...
Connected to mail.mymailserver.com.
Escape character is '^]'.
+OK
USER hipo@mymailserver.com
+OK
PASS here_goes_my_secret_pass
+OK
LIST
1 309783
2 64053
3 2119
4 64357
5 317893
RETR 1
My first mail content retrieved with RETR commandgoes here ....
quit
+OK
Connection closed by foreign host.

You see I have 5 messages in my mailbox, as you can see I used **RETR** command to check the content

of my mail, this is handy as I can read my mails straight with telnet (if the mail is in plain text), of course it's a bit more complicated if I have to read encrypted or html mail, though still its easy to write a tiny parser and pipe the content produced by telnet command to lynx or some other text based browser.

Now another sys admin handy tip is the use of **telnet** to check my mail servers IMAP servers is correctly operating.
Here is how:

debian:~# telnet mail.mymailserver.com 143
Trying 111.222.333.444...
Connected to localhost.
Escape character is '^]'.
* OK [CAPABILITY IMAP4rev1 UIDPLUS CHILDREN NAMESPACE
THREAD=ORDEREDSUBJECT THREAD=REFERENCES SORT QUOTA IDLE ACL
ACL2=UNION STARTTLS] Courier-IMAP ready. Copyright 1998-2010 Double Precision, Inc. See
COPYING for distribution information.
01 LOGIN hipo@mymailserver.com here_goes_my_secret_pass
A OK LOGIN Ok.
02 LIST "" *
* LIST (\Unmarked \HasNoChildren) "." "INBOX"
02 OK LIST completed
03 SELECT INBOX
* FLAGS (\Draft \Answered \Flagged \Deleted \Seen \Recent)
* OK [PERMANENTFLAGS (* \Draft \Answered \Flagged \Deleted \Seen)] Limited
* 5 EXISTS
* 5 RECENT
* OK [UIDVALIDITY 1312746907] Ok
* OK [MYRIGHTS "acdilrsw"] ACL
03 OK [READ-WRITE] Ok
04 STATUS INBOX (MESSAGES)
* STATUS "INBOX" (MESSAGES 5)
04 OK STATUS Completed.
05 FETCH 1 ALL
...
06 FETCH 1 BODY
...
07 FETCH 1 ENVELOPE
...
As you can see according to standard to send commands to IMAP server from console after a telnet connection you will have to always include a command line number like **01, 02, 03 ..** etc.

Using such a line numbering is not obligitory and also letters like *A, B, C* could be use still line numbering with numbers is generally a good idea since it's easier for reading on the screen.

Now line 02 shows you available mailboxes, line *03 SELECT INBOX* selects the imap Inbox to be further operated with, *04 STATUS INBOX* cmd displays status about current mailboxes in folder.

FETCH 1 ALL instructs the imap server to get list of all IMAP message headers. Next command in line *05 FETCH 1 BODY* will display the message body of the first message in list.
The *07 FETCH 1 ENVELOPE* will display the *mail headers* for the 1 message.

Few other IMAP commands which might be helpfun on connection are:

08 FETCH 1 FULL
09 FETCH * FULL

First one would fetch complete content of a message numbered one from the imap server and the second one *09 FETCH * FULL* will get all the mail content for all messages located on the remote IMAP server.

The *STATUS* command aforementioned earlier could take the following list of arguments:

 MESSAGES, UNSEEN, RECENT UIDNEXT UIDVALIDITY

These commands are a gold mine for me as a sysadmin as it helps quickly solve problems, hope they would help to somebody out there as well ;)
This way is a way shorter than bothering each time to check, if some customer e-mail account is improperly configured by creating setting up a new account in Thunderbird.