

book reviews

SPAM KINGS: THE REAL STORY BEHIND THE HIGH-ROLLING HUCKSTERS PUSHING PORN, PILLS, AND %*#@)# ENLARGEMENTS

Brian S. McWilliams

Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly and Associates, 2004. 256 pp. ISBN 0596007329.

*Reviewed by Rik Farrow
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I had just finished burning a CD with seven months' worth of spam (740 MB), part of a project I had started last year on the sources of spam relays, when I decided to read *Spam Kings*. I wondered whether McWilliams' book would provide any insight into the minds of the people who spam. It does that, and more.

McWilliams is an investigative reporter who has appeared in the public eye before with his writing as well as his exploits, such as publishing the contents of Saddam Hussein's email. In *Spam Kings* he has created a detailed narrative that brings the lives of both spammers and anti-spammers into focus. He spins his research into the business of spamming into colorful and sometimes astonishing accounts of spammers. McWilliams' main character, David Hawke (a.k.a. Britt Greenbaum, Walter Smith, Michael Girdley, Bo Decker), is a chess-playing, ex-neo-Nazi health fanatic whose spamming exploits begin in a double-wide in South Carolina and continue on the mountain slopes of the Northeast. Hawke not only makes a good living "working" part-time, but also shares his skills with young chess players he meets at tournaments.

McWilliams also examines the ranks of spam fighters, following them as they spar online or do a better job of tracking down spammers than the state authorities who occasionally arrest and prosecute them. Being an active anti-spam activist isn't much fun: it requires lots of hard work, determination, and a thick skin to take the online insults. One advocate gets into her car only to discover a bullet hole in the windshield, and many others receive death threats by phone.

As Hawke writes in his manual for spammers, *The Bulkbook*, spamming (as well as anti-spam activities) is not for everyone: "If you are bothered by complaints or easily swayed, then you should stop reading this immediately and find another plan for making money."

Spam Kings will not teach you the technical details of spamming, but it will introduce you to the social and some of the economic details. For example, a response rate of 0.2% is considered very good. And sex, or, rather, promises that your sexual experiences will be increased or improved, sells.

McWilliams scribes a fascinating story that I found easy to read. If you have ever wanted to know more about the seamy underground of spamming, this is the book for you.

Two on Mobility

MOBILE APPLICATIONS: ARCHITECTURE, DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Valentino Lee, Heather Schneider, and Robbie Schell

Upper Saddle Hill, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2004. 331 pages. ISBN 0-13-117263-8.

MOBILE IPV6: MOBILITY IN A WIRELESS INTERNET

Hesham Soliman

Boston: Addison-Wesley, 2004. Pp. 338. ISBN 0-201-78897-7.

*Reviewed by Chuck Hardin
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As the number of wireless devices connected to the Internet increases, so does the number of applications designed for such devices and the requirement to provide them with reasonable IP connectivity. It's therefore unsurprising that there are more books covering these subjects and that they display a wide range of quality.

Soliman's *Mobile IPv6* covers the subject of the IETF draft standards for mobile extensions to the IPv6 address space. These extensions are intended to provide clients with session continuity and full reachability as they go from network to network.

Unfortunately, the book does not provide a similar continuity as it goes from subject to subject, nor is its coverage of basic material complete. The summary of Internet protocol layers, for example, lists only five layers; I think the OSI would like to know where the other two layers went. The material in the chapter on security is rather disjointed. I'm not sure why the basics of public key cryptography are covered in such superficial detail, just enough to get the basic concepts but not enough to implement anything useful.

Mobile Applications is significantly better organized. It clearly achieves its purpose, which is to describe approaches to designing applications to be run on wireless devices. It does not cover actual implementation of such systems in detail, but that is not its stated purpose. Although it is ostensibly a Hewlett-Packard publication, the book does not dwell exclusively on HP's solutions in this space; there's one mention of their OpenView monitoring product, but that's it.

The striking thing about both books is their emphasis on design principles that seem good regardless of whether one is working with wireless networks or not. When *Mobile Applications* urges the reader to design with a range of browsers

in mind or to avoid requiring the use of plug-ins that may not be available to many users, or when *Mobile IPv6* recommends familiarizing oneself with IETF standards, I can only reply, "Amen." Perhaps

wireless technology is temporarily forcing programmers to adopt better habits in some ways.

I hope that Soliman improves his book; it discusses a subject that

deserves good coverage, and with a tighter focus and better organization, it would provide that. *Mobile Applications*, on the other hand, is a fine reference work as it is.

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