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THE MAGAZINE OF USENIX & SAGE

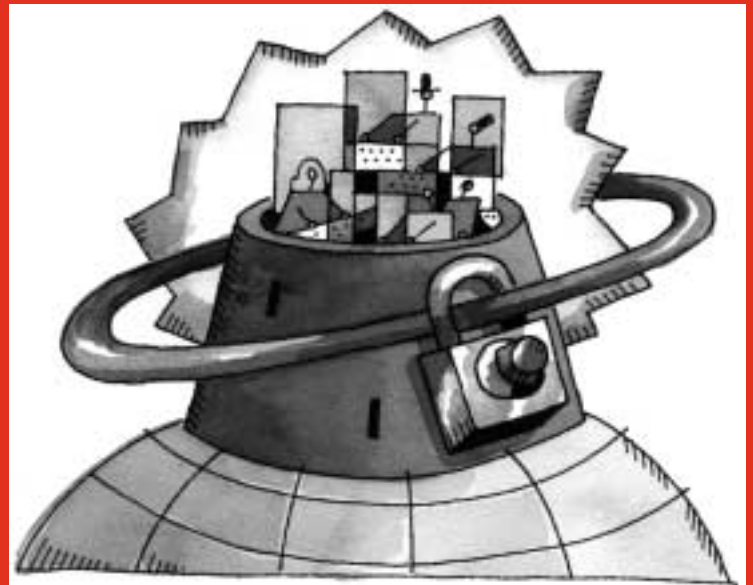
December 2002 • volume 27 • number 6

Focus Issue: Security

Guest Editor: Rik Farrow

inside:

MOTD



USENIX & SAGE

The Advanced Computing Systems Association &
The System Administrators Guild

motd

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I Really Hate to Complain, But . . .

I am so tired of spam. It was driving me to distraction before my local sysadmin installed a spam-mitigation system (doesn't matter which one – it seems to do an OK job – and I'm not here to start a religious fight).

It just hasn't been that long since every incoming message rang a bell, and the Pavlovian feeling that bell evoked was like Christmas: another exciting gift to be unwrapped to be enjoyed. I know I'm sounding mawkishly AOL-ian here, but I really do like hearing from people and getting good e-mail.

As time wore on, the bells only signaled new irritation. I even turned off the bell for a while, but my life just felt so empty.

Enough pundits have already justified their spending habits, money-making habits, and adequate size of their body parts that I don't need to elaborate here on what a waste of time, energy, and bandwidth spam is. I just can't figure out who is motivating the spammers to continue their merry little game: stupid entrepreneurs? stupid consumers? I just don't get it.

But the biggest thing I don't get is this: Why is it that so little is being done by the technological community to discourage spamming in the first place? Oh, there's the occasional legislation here or there, but I really have in my mind that spammers should be treated as societal outcasts and shunned as "bad citizens."

Over and over I hear the trite responses, "Oh, we need to level the playing field with the big (read: well-funded) corporations for advertising," or my local newspaper's favorite: "Just delete the spam; how much time could it take?" ARRGH! It takes a lot of time! Important messages are buried. Messages demanding quick response are lost amid the noise.

Why aren't sysadmins circulating petitions against spam? Why aren't users screaming to get the problem solved? Why are some sites still accepting all mail on the off-chance some mis-classified spam-mail will actually be a sales-lead? Hotmail reports rejecting one BILLION spam messages per day. Of the non-rejected (and delivered) messages, 80% are spam (undetected earlier, sad to say).

Why do people put up with this?

I'd like to hear from you why you are accepting the situation, if you are. I have an idea that we're collectively spending thousands (hundreds of thousands?) of person-hours fighting this scourge (this or that spam filter, configuring mail systems, etc.) – but why? Why is it allowed to happen in the first place? Do people with small body-parts wait at their keyboards hoping someone will mail them with a solution? Are people really making money too slowly? Have I really missed the boat for transfer of the ill-gotten Oil Minister's gains from Nigeria? I think not. So why does it continue? Help!