;login:

Special Focus Issue: Security
Guest Editor: Rik Farrow

inside:

USENIX & SAGE

USENIX news

Criticality and USENIX

by Daniel Geer

President, USENIX
Board of Directors

geer@usenix.org

September 11th hit close to home. I write this as a patriot of civilization. I hope that's possible, because that is my premise. I don't want to argue, which I mean in the deeply emotional sense of the word "want."

Harris Miller, President of the Information Technology Association of America, testifying before the US House Government Subcommittee on Government Efficiency, Financial Management, and Information Technology, very eloquently said: "Many people are unsure what homeland defense means and unclear on how they can participate. I would like to suggest an immediate action: safeguard US computer assets by adopting much more widely sound information security practices."

I'd like to endorse that but as a citizen of civilization more than of the United States, which you should not misinterpret as a diminution of my first allegiance.

All of us in USENIX like to say that the Net has no borders. Some of us call themselves Netizens. A few think that no borders means that they are outside of every (and hence subject to no) civil authority; more know that no borders instead means that they are inside every civil authority, that everyone's rules

apply rather than no one's. In that sense, the Net is now the carrier of civilization and you can no more roll that back than command the wind. It is not a digital divide; it is a civilization divide.

In the United States, business in aggregate spent \$100 billion (10^{11}) on the Y2K issue, and business did it as a risk management activity goosed along by civil authority. On a worldwide basis, the figure was somewhere between \$300 billion and \$800 billion. Compare that, if you will, with a total worldwide spend in calendar 2001 for cyber security that is estimated to be no more than \$10 billion. Civilization has yet to comprehend that on the Internet it is still September 10th.

Speaking for security people everywhere, we have gotten what we asked for (the spotlight) and now the real work begins. We are faced with fantastic demand pull and an expectation of miracle-working. Side effects are likely. A hard design requirement (inescapable) plus a hard design constraint (indetectable) will challenge us, but economic trade-offs favor broad implementation for the first time in our careers. "Lead, follow, or get out of the way" has never meant as much. If you, as do I, think of security as a proper subset of reliability, then getting the Net from September 10 to September 12 means attention to the matters that USENIX people are all about, whether that is systems management, operating system resilience, programming languages more likely to help than hurt, and so forth. We are the crème de la crème of what it takes. We, that is You, have to lead, follow, or get out of the way; I recommend lead.

Wealth comes from productivity and nowhere else. Our productivity is ever more dependent on our electronic infrastructure. More to the point, our productivity gains have to come from or through our electronic infrastructure or

they are not going to come. If you like wealth, then act like you do and pay real attention to the one central fly in the ointment: On the Internet, every sociopath is your next door neighbor. That makes attacks inevitable unless, of course, the uncivilized cannot grasp the centrality of the Net and thus overlook it as the target of choice. Not a bet I would take. Not something we can treat as a wait-and-see experiment either since, unlike in a tank battle, in the electronic sphere the cost for the defense is 100x the cost for the offense and it is that magnification of the hostile and the insignificant that make the Net, and our role in and around it, the critical playing field.

Your patriotic duty is to act in proportion to the extent that the computer systems and technologies you influence are of any value beyond personal playthings. Wanna be thought part of the global economy? Smell the global coffee. Want the citizenry to depend on you as an integral part of a global infrastructure? Act like it matters and lock the damned door. Think risk management is a game for cool heads and ruthless assessment? Take a deep breath of discipline.

If the genie were standing here asking me for my wish, then I'd wish for the word USENIX to be always used in this sentence: "When it matters you find a USENIX member," sweetening that with "and it matters more than ever." In some sense, our biggest ally is the insurance industry who will, you can be assured, start rating digital risks as closely as they rate flame-front spread speeds in draperies.

All this requires knowledge and I am asking you to help me review if not revise how to pick and choose both the knowledge that we need and the knowledge that we need to propagete. In some sense, USENIX has always done a better job of intellectual property detection than Patent Offices have done at protection, but just because something is novel and non-obvious does not mean it is valuable. Our first forays into distance learning have just begun which now seems prescient as travel permissions start to tighten. We will have to shrink some meetings to make others work. What can we do to make that genie unnecessary? Help us think. Help us help you do. Lead.

IETF Network Management People Meet LISA Network/System Administrators

by Bert Wijnen

Area Director for IETF Operations and Management Area

bwijnen@lucent.com

[The note below is, in my mind, what conferences are all about. If you're a network manager going to LISA, please consider attending this BOF. The Editor]

There will be a BOF at LISA 2001 on Wednesday evening running from 7pm-11pm, the purpose of which is to start a dialog between the Internet Engineering Task Force people working on network management technologies and network/system administrators who actually run enterprise networks. The goal is to better understand the needs of the network/system administrators and to evaluate how IETF technologies can help to get the job done and to identify what is missing. The IETF is especially interested to receive input from people who are running large enterprise networks.

The IETF NM folk have already had sessions with NANOG (North America) and RIPE (Europe) ISP operators. From these meetings, a set of requirements have been gathered and described in: *http://www.ietf.org/internet-drafts/ draft-ops-operator-req-mgmt-00.txt* (By the time you read this, there may be a revision 01).

Some people think that the Enterprise network operators have different requirments. So it would be good to read the above document and evaluate if your requirements are included, and if not, then to make sure that we (IETF NM protocol folk) get your input.