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Phil Bertolini, Director, Information Technology

WHAT TO DO ABOUT UNSOLICITED ELECTRONIC MAIL (SPAM)

by Romel Llarena, Data Security Specialist

Spam is unsolicited email on the Internet. From the sender's point-of-view, it's a form of bulk mail, often to a list culled from subscribers to a **Usenet** discussion group, intercepted chain-letter style emails, or obtained by companies that specialize in creating email distribution lists. To the receiver, it usually seems like junk email. In general, it's not considered good **netiquette** to send spam. It's generally equivalent to unsolicited phone marketing calls except that the user pays for part of the message since everyone shares the cost of maintaining the Internet.

Some apparently unsolicited email is, in fact, email people agreed to receive when they registered with a site and checked a box agreeing to receive postings about particular products or interests. This is known as both **opt-in email** and **permission-based email**.

A first-hand report indicates that the term is derived from a famous Monty Python sketch ("Well, we have Spam; tomato & Spam; egg & Spam; egg, bacon & Spam...") that was current when spam first began arriving on the Internet.

As it applies to Oakland County, no one in the County that uses the Internet email system is safe from getting spam, especially employees whose email addresses are public knowledge and are published on the Internet. The reason is an email address, any valid email address, is worth money. There are companies out there willing to pay a few cents per valid email address. Likewise, there are entrepreneurs that have written software with the express purpose and ability of collecting hundreds of thousands of email addresses from electronic newspapers, newsgroups, Internet phone books, etc.

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Spam taxes email systems and communication infrastructures. In some areas, transmitting spam can even be illegal. At the least, many Internet Service Providers (ISP) such as AOL or Compuserve will terminate customer accounts if the customer is found to be the source of spam. Both of Oakland County's ISPs follow this rule.

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But spamming companies have proven to be resourceful. First, there are more and more bulk emails (emails containing hundreds if not thousands of addresses) originating from Internet accounts in countries that have no spam laws. Second, spamming companies find ways to exploit Internet email systems and use those exploits to reflect or bounce spam from that system, thus using the other companies Internet resources and making it appear that the exploited email system was the originator of the unsolicited email.

Users are not entirely helpless. In an effort to combat unsolicited emails, organizations such as mail-abuse.org were formed to collect data on spam sources and to work with ISPs to block those sites from accessing the Internet.

In order for the County to contact the appropriate individuals, a bit of detective work is needed to locate the source of the unsolicited email. The <http://www.co.oakland.mi.us/ittrain/assets/docs/spam.pdf> link provides instructions on extracting the "Internet Header" or the path that the email message took to get to your mailbox. The header information changes as it is forwarded, so simply forwarding the message on to Information Technology, for example, removes the previous path that the email message contained. To investigate the email and preserve the header, follow the instructions mentioned above before forwarding the message on to IT for further attention.

Once the message is received by IT, the header information is examined as well as the contents of the email. If there is an option to "opt-out" of further email messages, the company is notified immediately. Even if an "opt-out" option is offered or if one does not exit, anti-spamming organizations will be contacted and given the information necessary for them to:

1. Investigate the source.
2. Build a case to service providers to terminate the abusive account and/or block any and all transmissions from the offending host network.

Expect notification that your initial email was received. Due to potential volume of cases, individual updates regarding your message may not be possible. Thank you for assisting in the identification and elimination of a spam site. If you have questions regarding spam email, please contact the Software Help Desk at (248) 858-8812.

Those Email Glyphs

Ever wonder how people come up with the quirky symbols and cryptic codes they use in emails (symbols and codes, like :-8 and LOL, that baffle you)? Well, you can blame Scott Fahlman, now a Principle Research Scientist in the School of Computer Science at Carnegie Mellon University, who in 1981 devised a scheme for encoding and conveying one's feelings as small text "glyphs."

Fahlman was the first to use "emoticons" and email shorthand in emails and posts to message boards and Internet newsgroups to convey emotional content such as sarcasm, laughter and other feelings.

—Adapted from *Uselessknowledge.com*

Video Arraignment Project *by Robert Pence, CLEMIS Video Arraignment Project Manager*

The Video Arraignment Project involves the design and implementation of video conferencing equipment and associated peripherals in order to connect District, Circuit and Probate Courts, the Prosecutor's Office, County Jail, Community Corrections, local jail booking facilities and law enforcement agencies across the county. The goal is to minimize the transport of offenders, improve court security and reduce the costs of law enforcement. This system will be unique to any system presently in use today. The County's system will be a multi-point system (able to connect multiple sites simultaneously) with full document retrieval over the existing OAKNet system. OAKNet is the fiber optic network that connects the County's local area network to all cities, villages and townships within Oakland County.

There are three basic component configurations. A desktop based unit, which will be used at the Prosecutor's office, Community Corrections, and at law enforcement sites as a replacement of the existing video warrant systems. The law enforcement community, as well as the prosecutors, will not only be able to see and hear each other, but using a web browser and integrated signature capture and scanners, be able to share pertinent documents in live time. The second unit is a self-contained remote controlled system for holding cells, similar to the unit shown. In the courtrooms, judges and / or court administrators will use a DTSD (digital touch screen) to connect the sites, control camera, audio, and room lighting functionality at the far end units in holding cells, as well as view all case documents at the same time.



The system is augmented with a "video queuing" system as well. The judge or court administrator will see which locations have defendants ready for arraignment, and the order in which they connected to the system. He will also see a status of the arraignment as "active", "complete", "being researched", etc. By simply touching the location name, he will be prompted to connect the appropriate sites, or review the associated documents from the police department, prosecutor, or community corrections offices.

At any time before or during an arraignment, the judge can initiate a "side bar" conversation. A single button will facilitate a private conversation between the judge and prosecutor, or an attorney in a remote location and his client in a holding cell at another site. During a side bar, the audio and video recording is stopped and muted to assure privacy.

When an arraignment is complete, the video and documents are stored on a centralized server. A web browser interface will allow users to review documents or download video files for review.

Rather than create cumbersome input screens, our goal was to make data entry as simple as possible. Prosecutors, law enforcement agencies, jails and courts will use their existing forms as input. Electronic forms such as word processing templates, with electronic signatures, will be copied to the central server. Handwritten reports can be entered through the system's integrated scanner, and stored as well.

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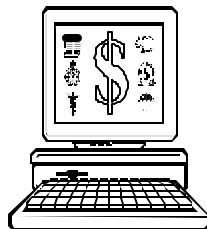
The project is a partnership between Oakland County and SBC Ameritech which kicked off in mid-June and is moving along rapidly. The early adopters of the system are the Ferndale 43rd District Court, Ferndale Police Department, Troy 52nd District Court, Troy Police Department, Oakland County Jail, the Prosecutor's Office and Community Corrections. On July 30 and August 1, the early adopters met with the project teams for Business Process re-engineering. During these meetings, the information flows, security concerns, and the look and feel of the touch screens and web browser interfaces were finalized.

The schedule is to have all of the early adopter's sites operational by November 1, 2002. Shortly after the pilot sites are operational, the remainder of the project will begin. The present schedule calls for a County-wide project completion of December 30, 2003. With the level of excitement about the project, Information Technology is confident this very aggressive schedule will be met.

If you would like more information about the project, please feel free to contact Bob Pence, Video Arraignment Project Manager, at (248) 975-9626 or pencer@co.oakland.mi.us.

A Quote For The Lighter Side

Experts agree that the best type of computer for your individual needs is one that comes on the market about two days after you actually purchase some other computer.



—Dave Barry

Learn Just About Anything

The Web is replete with all kinds of sites that help you learn how to do just about anything. But sometimes it takes time and research skills to find the best of tutorial sites. Tutorialfind, however, makes the search much easier. It is a site that gathers more than 2,500 tutorial sites, most of which are free, from around the globe. Whether you want to learn a new program language or how to shingle a roof, it's likely you'll find it at Tutorialfind. You can search by keyword or subject and the site will provide a list of tutorials sorted by the date they were created. Type **www.tutorialfind.com** and if it doesn't come up with the tutorial you want, you can request it – and the site will find it for you eventually.

—Adapted from *Computer User*

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This newsletter is designed to share useful technology news and information with Oakland County Employees!

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