

Spam, spam, spam, spam...



Kerry Webb

I continue to be surprised that the Internet keeps working, knowing how fragile it is and how easy it would be to seriously disrupt it. This was reinforced recently when hundreds or maybe thousands of people around the world received offers of child pornography through e-mail messages.

It appears that it was not a serious offer, but a case of revenge against a person who had been behaving obnoxiously in a number of newsgroups. That person's name was given as the contact point for the objectionable material, and he was investigated thoroughly by American authorities. The matter received wide press coverage over a few days, but then disappeared from the public view. Meanwhile, law enforcement agencies around the world were contacted by many irate and concerned 'net citizens who had received the offending e-mail. Many of these persons acted in haste, and when (not if) such a thing happens again it would be better for those affected to think before they spring into action.

First, you should assume that you are not alone. It's likely that any spam (slang for unsolicited and annoying mail sent to a large number of people) is not directed at one person, and that it is being discussed elsewhere on the 'net. Have a look at the news.admin.net-abuse.misc newsgroup to see what other people are saying about it. Or you could search news on DejaNews or AltaVista using keywords from the subject line of the spam. If it appears that yours is an isolated instance, you may try to reply to the e-mail at its return address but this will probably be bogus, so there's not much point. You should not reply if the problem appears to be widespread as your message will be added to the thousands of others making the system administrators at that address even more angry.

Your best course of action is to notify the postmaster for your system (postmaster@address). You could notify the law enforcement authorities (if the spam appears to be involved with illegal activities) but make sure that you tell your local system administrators first, as they'd like some warning if the police are coming to make further enquiries.

This particular spam indicated that the recipients' e-mail addresses were obtained from a listserv. This is unlikely, but from listservs you can get thousands of addresses. If you want to hide your e-mail address from casual observers, you can do it using a command such as CONCEAL so that it can't be displayed. To do this, check the instructions that you got when you joined your lists.

Help with passwords

A couple of months ago, I complained

about how hard it was to keep track of passwords. Well, Angela Winter from Central Queensland University sent me a note about Passkeeper, a package that does just that. I've tried it and it works quite well. Unfortunately, it's only available in a 32-bit Windows version. You can get it from <http://www.apnpc.com.au/familypc/1996/9610/passkeeper.html>.

Management of government information

The Information Management Steering Committee of the Government Information Services Policy Board has released the final draft of *Management of government information as a national strategic resource*, its preliminary report on information management in the Commonwealth government. It's at <http://www.ogit.gov.au/imsrpt.html>. The report consists of an executive summary, 154 pages of text, and extensive appendices providing links to information management activities relating to the Commonwealth government, including information in the Australian States, and some other government jurisdictions. Although the deadline for feedback is 30 November, it's an interesting document and provides a useful outline of what government information is about.

Coincidentally, the UK Government has released a Green Paper on *The electronic delivery of government services* and it is now available at <http://www.open.gov.uk/citu/gdirect/ind1.htm>.

... and information on the management of government


The Australian Government Publishing Service, famous for its printed Commonwealth Government Directory, has released the Internet version of its former GOLD (Government On-line Directory) service. In it, you can now search for government employees (at a senior level only) by name, location, agency, or function, and have information such as address, postal address, phone, fax, and e-mail address returned. The service can be accessed at <http://www.agps.gov.au/>. It's a beta system at present, and the people at AGPS are looking for suggestions on how to improve it.

If you can discover what it is

MISQ Discovery, is an e-journal, or a resource, or a living electronic publication, or something. Decide for yourself by reading it at <http://www.misq.org/discovery/about.html>. In the first issue, there's an interesting article entitled 'Teledemocracy: using information technology to enhance political work'. In such a dynamic environment as the Web, we can expect that people will tinker with all sorts of publication methods. Some will succeed and some won't, but it's going to be fun.

New South Wales Parliament

The New South Wales Parliament is now online at <http://www.nsw.gov.au/parliament/>. The information at the site includes lists of members of both houses, the work of parliamentary commit-



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tees, an explanation of the role of private members, and ways that citizens can influence the Parliament. It's a good site with lots of useful ideas.

Medical literature

WebMedLit at <http://www.webmedlit.com/> is a resource which tracks updates to eighteen medical journals on the web and builds topical views from the combined tables of contents. The journals are scanned daily and the site is updated as new content appears. The links point back to the original articles or abstracts at the publishers' web sites and all the sources provide at least some abstracts to the full-text articles. Some of the sources are the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, the *New England Journal of Medicine*, and the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*.

The topic views currently available include AIDS/virology, cancer/oncology, medical economics, and women's health. You can perform a search of all journals tracked using the Excite search engine.

APEC

The International Branch of the Department of Primary Industries and Energy has a collection of APEC material on a number of agriculture-related topics at <http://www.dpie.gov.au/dpie/apec/home.html>. The Department's APEC home page also contains links to related international and Australian APEC Internet sites.

Computer Science resources

The New Zealand Digital Library at <http://www.cs.waikato.ac.nz/~nzdl/> is a publicly-accessible system that provides full-text indexes to 30 000 Computer Science research reports (over 700 000 pages) from 300 sites worldwide. It also has indexes to over 3000 FAQ lists, and to the *Computists' Communique*, a computer science research newsletter. All of the indexes are full-text, giving users the option of searching for terms appearing anywhere within the documents.

Webtools

There's a quite attractive site with plenty of information about creating Web pages at <http://rodent.lib.rochester.edu/webtools/>. It's called Webtools and it has links to three main groups of resources. The first has information on how to create tables, forms, frames, and counters. The next is a series of HTML guides and manuals. The third features image archives for colours, backgrounds, icons and animated GIFs.

It's a good collection of information for both novice and advanced web page authors, with the sources having been carefully selected and organised to ensure direct and quick access.

Oh, that old stuff

A test version of an experimental search engine dedicated to the parts of the Internet relating to ancient and medieval studies is now on-line.

Argos is a co-operative effort from the editors of ABZU, *Byzantium*, *Diotima*, *Exploring Ancient World Cultures*, *Kirke*, *Perseus* and *Romarch* and claims to be the first peer-reviewed search engine on the internet. As such, it attempts to filter out portions of the Internet which are not relevant to ancient and medieval interests. See it at <http://argos.evansville.edu>.

Electronic text

The Electronic Text Center at the University of Virginia combines an online archive of thousands of SGML-encoded electronic texts (in English, French, German and Japanese) with a library-based Center housing hardware and software suitable for the creation and analysis of text. You'll find it at <http://www.lib.virginia.edu/etext/ETC.html>.

Special edition on Digital Libraries

The European Research Consortium for Informatics and Mathematics (ERCIM) has published a special theme issue of the ERCIM News on 'Digital Libraries'. ERCIM News N° 27 — October 1996 at http://www-ercim.inria.fr/publication/Ercim_News/en.html has more than a dozen articles describing initiatives from around the world, including an update on the G7 Electronic Libraries Project. There's also a call for papers for the First European Conference on Research and Advanced Technology for Digital Libraries to be held in Pisa in September 1997.

Gateway to LIS resources

The Thomas Parry Library at the University of Wales Aberystwyth has a service called PICK, with links the best resources in library and information science on the Internet. The PICK home page is at <http://www.aber.ac.uk/~tplwww/e/>. It has a number of interesting features including a list of more than 30 major e-journals dealing with LIS.

The library Web page also has details of LIBEX, the library staff exchange scheme run by Thomas Parry in association with the International Group of the (UK) Library Association. It's at <http://www.aber.ac.uk/~tplwww/parry.html>.

Electronic Recordkeeping

The US Center for Technology in Government at SUNY Albany is running a number of co-operative activities. One of them is the Electronic Recordkeeping Project which aims to create practical tools by combining best practices in business process analysis, system design and development, and electronic recordkeeping and archiving. The details are at <http://www.ctg.albany.edu/projects/er/ermn.html>. ■

The ALIA home pages and the ALIA web service, ALIANet, can be found at the following URL:

<http://www.alia.org.au/>

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Contributions and suggestions for this column are always welcome. Please e-mail Kerry Webb at kerry.webb@alianet.alia.org.au or via the ALIA National Office, incite@alia.org.au



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