Experts Risk Indigestion without RISKS DIGEST

by M. E. Kabay, PhD, CISSP-ISSMP
Professor of Information Assurance & Statistics
School of Business & Management
Norwich University, Northfield VT

In the last article, I got sidetracked into demonstrating that the number of articles published every year about security issues has been growing steadily for the last 30 years. Today I'll remind readers of (or perhaps introduce newcomers to) a valuable resource for keeping up with fundamental issues in security: The *Risks Forum*.

Peter G. Neumann, PhD,< http://www.csl.sri.com/users/neumann/neumann.html > one of the giants of computer science and information assurance, is the creator of the ACM Risks Forum< http://www.csl.sri.com/users/neumann/neumann.html#3 > which has served the security community since 1985 with serious discussions of "Risks to the Public in Computer and Related Systems" and as a source of puns (brilliant, horrible or both according to the preferences of individual readers) by the moderator. The forum has been running on the USENET (comp.risks) since its inception and is available free by e-mail subscription< http://www.csl.sri.com/users/risko/risksinfo.html >. The RISKS DIGEST compiles the contributions and Dr Lindsay Marshall< http://catless.ncl.ac.uk/Lindsay/ > formats them neatly into HTML files< http://catless.ncl.ac.uk/Risks/ > and provides a global index function.

The Risks Forum goes beyond simply pointing to published articles about security vulnerabilities, exploits and breaches: contributors often summarize key issues and comment on underlying problems that must be addressed for systematic improvement of security. Topics include any automated systems – and even human procedures – affecting information security and physical safety. There have been discussions the security of air-traffic control, aircraft navigation and flight systems, authentication methods, automobile controls, breaches of security systems, computer programming, identification, medical informatics and medical systems, privacy and personally identifiable information, specific programming languages and specific programs, operating systems theory and specific operating systems and versions, voting machines, X-rays, and even includes mention of zebra crossings (the British description of what Americans boringly call crosswalks).

Not only can you read the Risks Forum Digest, you can contribute! Dr Neumann personally vets every contribution, so there's no garbage – but accurate, documented information and thoughtful commentary are most welcome. The guidelines state that contributions "[m]ust be relevant, sound, in good taste, objective, cogent, coherent, concise, nonrepetitious, and without caveats on distribution."

With the approval of Drs Neumann and Marshall, I've created PDF versions of each complete volume (from 1 to 25) using Adobe Acrobat Pro. I must mention here that I am astonished at the number of people I have met who have no idea of the immense power of Acrobat Pro< http://acrobat.buy.na.sem.adobe.com/content/a10_pro?sdid=IAZXZ&skwcid=TC|22188|adobe%20acrobat%20pro||S|b|5937981022 >; even just the feature allowing users to compile Web pages into a single PDF file makes it invaluable to me [and no, I have no involvement with Adobe except as an ordinary user] – and turning a scanned paper document where I'm supposed to (ugh) write answers by hand into a form with controllable fields is a bonus. In addition, one can create

PDX index files for any set of PDF archives, allowing us to access large PDF collections (I have about 14,000 PDF files on my hard disks and encrypted volumes) almost instantly using words and phrases. Using "File | Create PDF | From Web Page" it was easy to generate up-to-date PDF versions of the volumes. I also created a ZIP file with all the volumes from 1 to 25 and a ZIP file with the PDX index file and its associated subdirectory. You can find the files on my Website< http://www.mekabay.com/overviews/risks/index.htm > for free access.

Don't risk being without RISKS.

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M. E. Kabay,< mailto:mekabay@gmail.com > PhD, CISSP-ISSMP, specializes in security and operations management consulting services and teaching. He is Chief Technical Officer of Adaptive Cyber Security Instruments, Inc.< http://acsi-cybersa.com/ > and Professor of Information Assurance< http://norwich.edu/academics/business/infoAssurance/index.html > & Statistics< http://www.mekabay.com/courses/academic/norwich/qm213/index.htm > in the School of Business and Management< http://norwich.edu/academics/business/faculty.html > at Norwich University.< http://www.norwich.edu > Visit his Website for white papers and course materials.< http://www.mekabay.com/ >

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