IT Security and the Economic Recession

Ask any criminologist about downturn economies and they will tell you that crime rates increase during times of economic strife. Financial desperation leads some people to commit desperate acts. Unfortunately, this spills over into electronic life where identity theft, credit-card fraud, and computer break-ins seem to increase as more people struggle to pay their bills, keep their jobs, and stay in their homes.

E-crime has noticeably and steadily increased in the last six months, according to DoIT’s Information Security Analyst Eric Johnfelt.

“Identity theft and credit-card fraud are on the rise, but more disturbingly, organized extortion and blackmail plots against enterprises are now taking place in ever-increasing numbers,” said Johnfelt.

He cited the brazen example of a former city employee holding San Francisco’s city computer network hostage last July.

“People try to hold systems, data, or bandwidth hostage until a demand is met — usually for money,” said Johnfelt.

Hopefully, Stony Brook University never experiences an incident as drastic as this, but employees need to be aware that there will be more attempts by hackers to penetrate campus computer systems in light of the current economic climate.

There are some things we all can do to lessen the likelihood of becoming a victim of e-crime, both here at work and at home. For those of us who work at home, this is an important point to make because if you are logging in to a shared campus resource from a home machine that has not been properly patched, you could be giving a hacker access to your credentials and a back door into one of SB’s systems.

(continued on page 3)

Survey to Assess Risks and Inventory

Faculty and staff will be sent a link to a survey in an e-mail message in the next few weeks to help the Information Security Team assess the use and control of the University’s information assets. Responses will help the team develop a comprehensive awareness and compliance program that will protect employees and the information assets that they use.

The survey is being administered to determine which types of computers and portable devices are being used to collect, access, and store private information at the University. Private information as defined by the NYS Personal Privacy Protection Law is that personal information such as name, address, or date of birth in combination with any one or more of the following data elements:

- Social Security Number
- Government issued driver’s license number or non-driver identification number
- Bank account number, credit or debit card number, in combination with any required security code or password which would permit access to the individual’s financial account
- Student grades
- Medical information

The questions in the survey deal with the ways employees collect, access, process, and/or store private data. The intent of the survey is to understand the risks in order to help departments mitigate them.

Related Link: http://it.cc.stonybrook.edu/news/331

Helpful Tidbit for BlackBerry Users

Have you noticed that your Lotus Notes e-mail messages are not always being sent to your BlackBerry device? Are you failing to see your calendar entries? Does the device seem slow?

You may need to perform a “soft reset.” Simply remove the battery from the back of your BlackBerry and then put it back in. This will reset the device and you should notice improved performance.

For more information about using a BlackBerry at Stony Brook, including how to synchronize your Lotus Notes contacts, please visit the link below.

Related Link: http://it.cc.stonybrook.edu/get_help/blackberry

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TLT Faculty Center Open for Business

Meet the New Staff: Dr. David Ametrano (right) serves as director of TLT’s Faculty Center, while Nancy Wozniak (center) is the department’s learning architect and Ying Xiong (left) holds the position of assessment specialist.

The TLT Faculty Center is a resource instructors can consult for support, guidance, and assistance when it comes to pedagogy, technology or course design. The center’s three staff members arrived at Stony Brook this fall and have hit the ground running by getting out to meet faculty members, attending their classes, working directly with some departments on assessment projects, and creating an ambitious spring schedule of faculty enrichment workshops.

Dr. David Ametrano serves as the center’s director. He taught at the University of Michigan (where he earned his doctorate degree in psychology), and has worked at Northwestern University Medical School and Northern Kentucky University. He is excited about his new role.

“There’s a lot of good energy here,” said Ametrano. “A lot of the faculty are very focused on their research, but many seem to be equally focused on the quality of their teaching and that is gratifying. Our Faculty Center is focused on pedagogy, but it will connect to technology wherever technology can enhance the pedagogy. Ultimately, we’re all about teaching and learning, so we are constantly thinking about how students are learning. That is our touchstone. How can we help students learn better?”

Nancy Wozniak is the Faculty Center’s learning architect and Web 2.0 expert. She brings more than 11 years worth of experience as an instructional designer, educational technologist and online learning coordinator into her new role. She has taught both online and in the classroom, specializing in broadcasting and business communications, Web design, and instructional design courses.

“Everyone is looking at me and asking ‘what is a learning architect?’” says Wozniak. “An architect is not just a building architect. It is someone who takes materials and builds a structure or an environment. As educators, that’s what we do. We create learning environments and learning modules for our students that are proactive and geared towards their learning styles and preferences.”

Wozniak has added a Stony Brook Faculty Center presence on both Facebook and Twitter. She thinks it is important for faculty to understand that today’s students are learning and communicating in small groups or pods through microblogging.

“They’re global learners,” said Wozniak. “They don’t have limits or boundaries. I’ve seen very creative, pedagogical uses of Web 2.0 in the classroom - using groups and events.”

Completing the Faculty Center’s triad is assessment specialist Ying Xiong. A PhD student from the University of Illinois-Chicago, Xiong has wasted little time diving in and offering her expertise in data analysis, survey design, and statistics to several departments on campus.

“The major part of my job is to provide consultation in how to select and develop instruments that measure learning outcomes,” said Xiong. “The whole purpose of assessment is to improve student learning. There are misperceptions that assessment is evaluation, judgement or punishment. We’re not using data to compare faculty members or take away their resources. The faculty maintains ownership of the data throughout the whole process. It is for their use. They determine the goals and objectives of the assessment.”

More than 50 faculty enrichment workshops are being offered by the Faculty Center this semester. Instructors can register online through the TLT Web site. A.T.A. teaching certificate is in the works and the first annual Educational Assessment Conference will be held at Stony Brook’s Wang Center on March 27.

“We’d like to try and change the culture to value teaching as much as research and that’s difficult at a research University,” said Ametrano. “To the extent we can move in that direction - that is worth doing.”

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Upgrade to Symantec 11

Symantec Endpoint Protection 11 is the latest version of Symantec AntiVirus software available. West campus employees with Symantec 10 or below should go to Softweb and upgrade.

Related Links:
https://softweb.cc.stonybrook.edu/?tv
http://tlcc.stonybrook.edu/news/251

New Location for MultiMedia Lab

The Teaching, Learning + Technology MultiMedia Lab has moved from the Life Sciences Library to the Social and Behavioral Sciences Building, room N604. The lab is a resource for instructors wishing to add multimedia into their classrooms and online teaching materials. Paul St. Denis, who runs the lab, can be reached at 2-1033.

Related Link:
https://tlt.stonybrook.edu/FacultyServices/Multimedia/MultimediaLab/Pages/default.aspx

Lotus Notes 8.5 Up on Softweb

DoIT recommends that faculty and staff use the latest version of Lotus Notes. The new version is Lotus Notes 8.5 Basic and is available through the University’s software distribution Web site, Softweb. Windows and Mac users can download Notes 8.5 Basic from Softweb. Mac users need to be running Mac OS 10.5.x (Leopard). If the computer does not meet this requirement, the latest version available is Notes 7.0.3.

Mac users with Notes 8.5 will have no trouble accessing their Notes e-mail, calendars and contacts from an iPhone or the Notes client. Mac users who cannot upgrade to Notes 8.5, but want to access their Notes e-mail on an iPhone, will need to have their mail template upgraded to version 8.x by the campus Notes administrators.

Related Links:
https://softweb.cc.stonybrook.edu/?ln
http://client.blog.stonybrook.edu/category/iphone/
Six Ways to Increase Your Computing Security

1. Stay on the Beaten Path When Browsing the Internet

By now, most of us know what the big-name Web sites are - CNN.com, ABC.com, Google.com, MSN.com, Facebook.com, etc. We get into trouble when we visit obscure links provided by unknown or untrusted sources. It is never a good idea to download open files from untrusted Web sites. Popular sites have a vested interest in keeping your data private because if they leak this information, it will tarnish their reputation and cost them dollars. There is little incentive for a small Web site doing business that is only pulling in a couple thousand dollars a month to actually try and protect you if they get broken into, they are going out of business anyway.

2. Be Careful What You Download

A pirated piece of the Mac software iWorks recently had a trojan packaged inside of it. Unsuspecting individuals may have initially been pleased to download $79 software for free, until they realized they had a malicious threat on their machine. Eliminate this risk by steering clear of open source software for free, until they realized they had a malicious threat on their machine. Users of this software have been known to accidentally share files that contain enterprise data. Television shows, music, and movies are copyrighted material that actually have a stake in protecting your personal data than straying off the beaten path.

3. Do Not Trust Phone or E-Mail Solicitors

It is never a good idea to provide any of your personal information to someone who calls you on the telephone unsolicited. The same goes for e-mail. Do not respond to e-mail messages or click on links that ask you for personal information such as your usernames and passwords. The Stony Brook e-mail systems have been recent targets of phishing scams. Please be aware that no one from DoIT will ever ask you for your username and password through e-mail.

4. Keep Your Software and Servers Up to Date

It does not matter what your computer system is – Macintosh, Windows, Linux, SOLARIS – if it’s a computer system and it is running software, then it can be cracked. You should run your software updates based on the company’s patch cycle. If an update comes out tomorrow and you do not patch the machine for a month, then in that month, you could be exposed to threats. Anti-virus software is incredibly important to have and you only need one. If you have multiple anti-virus software programs installed on your computer, they can severely interfere with one another and essentially cancel each other out.

Symantec Endpoint Protection is available at no additional cost to all Stony Brook students, faculty and staff through Softweb. Patches are provided through LiveUpdate every three days. OpenSSH servers that go unpatched are also vulnerable targets. At Stony Brook, these servers are typically run by professors or departments who rely on students to maintain them and unfortunately, a number of these systems have recently been compromised. Be sure to get on the OpenSSH (preferred) or OpenSSL mailing lists to stay on top of security updates. E-mail openssh-announce@mindrot.org or securessh-subscribe@securityfocus.com to be added to these lists.

5. Use Complex Passwords and Change Them Frequently

You should have a different username and password for each account, both at work and in your personal life. The problem for most of us is remembering the password we have selected! Johnfelt suggests picking a phrase and condensing it into a password by selecting letters, usually from the beginning of each word in the phrase and then adding in upper case, lower case, punctuation and numbers (if the system you are using allows for these). Pass-phrases are more random and more secure. They are moderately easy to remember since you already know the underlying pattern for the password. If you have to change your password, don’t change the base phrase. Change the arrangement of the numbers and the symbols. Changing your password four times a year would be nice. Every six months is OK, but once a year is not enough.

Do not write passwords down on pieces of paper and stick them to your monitor or leave them underneath your keyboard. Do not save your passwords on your computer. Physical security is something to be aware of, too. Thieves walk off with hard drives, steal computers, and even engage in dumpster diving.

6. Encrypt Wireless Transactions

Wireless technology is convenient for being mobile, but it is incredibly insecure says Johnfelt. “Unless you’re actually using something like a VPN or some form of encrypted telecommunications like https or SSL, you should not send any valuable data across a wireless network,” said Johnfelt. Take the time to secure your wireless routers at home. If you have the ability to use encryption (WEP, WPA2, TKIP or Wireless Equivalency), turn it on. IPSEC is more solid, but unfortunately is complex to set up. You may have to hire someone to set it up for you.

Related Links:
http://www.microsoft.com/security/default.mspx
http://www.apple.com/support/security/
http://www.redhat.com/security/
https://help.ubuntu.com/community/Security
http://www.openssl.org/support/
Campus Data Warehouse Project Enters Second Phase

Kim Berlin is a developer in the Department of Information Systems. She develops and manages SBU Reporting, the campus data warehouse, and recently sat down to answer questions about the system.

Q. What exactly is SBU Reporting?
A. SBU Reporting is the new University system that provides a single source for all analytical and operational reporting. It provides the latest Stony Brook statistics so that administrators and managers can make better decisions, check progress points, and compare data over time.

Q. Who is using it on campus?
A. Mostly administrators and managers. In the past month, we’ve had more than 150 people accessing the system. Admissions is using it. Finance is using it heavily and Student Records is using it for enrollment data and class roster reports.

Access to the system is restricted and requires approval. Data custodians have been designated from Admissions, Student Records and Finance to grant permission to users within those departments, but we will be looking to expand the user community.

Q. Where does the data come from?
A. We pull data from the main PeopleSoft system on campus into what’s called the data warehouse. And that’s what it is. It’s like a giant storage facility for data. We then take the data and reconfigure it so that it’s faster and more efficient at answering questions. The system is really designed specifically to answer almost any question that anybody could have and it’s designed to do it quickly.

Q. How does SBU Reporting help campus managers and administrators?
A. It really gives managers a way of checking how things are going. Not only does it provide high-level statistical trends, but it can also be used to set benchmarks. A department might have some targets that they’re trying to achieve. These targets can be loaded into the system and it will tell them how they are doing. With all of this data, you can drill down into deeper levels of detail.

The whole idea is that we want people to spend less time collecting data and defining business rules, and more time analyzing the data. They don’t have to rely on the IT department to provide reports for them. They can go in and design their own reports. They can look at the data however they like and feel confident that it is accurate, consistent, and up to date. If somebody is pulling in an enrolled percentage, it is the same enrolled percentage that everyone else uses.

Q. How many people work on this project?
A. There are four people from Information Systems working on this. We have very important database administrators in the Computing Center who we work closely with and we get terrific cooperation from the Office of Institutional Research (OIR), the Registrar’s Office, Admissions and Finance.

Really, those are the people who we rely on to define the business rules and calculations that the University uses.

Q. What software do you use?
A. We use Microsoft Business Intelligence tools. The data we pull from PeopleSoft is brought into SQL Server which is a Microsoft database. From there, the data gets reconfigured into what’s called STAR schema and then put into yet another type of storage called a cube. This cube is actually really fast. It’s very responsive for reporting and it’s used to slice and dice the data. We feed all our reports through Microsoft SharePoint which allows us to manage document libraries and offers excellent search capabilities.

SharePoint gives everyone a single access point to all reports, documentation, and analysis tools, so it is perfect for this set-up.

Q. This is an on-going project. What is the next phase you are about to embark on?
A. Our next phase on this will be to expand what we’ve done on Student Records, moving into areas of faculty instruction, student retention, and graduation rates. We are also going to add new areas that will include Financial Aid and Human Resources, and other sources outside of PeopleSoft.

Related Link: http://it.cc.stonybrook.edu/get_help/sbu_reporting

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