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Information and Communication

Government Documents

**China, Russia, U.S. Jointly Build, Manage Fiber-optic Network, April 15, 2005
(Links in Northern Hemisphere promote cooperation in science, education)
By Cheryl Pellerin, Washington File Staff Writer**

Washington -- China, Russia and the United States have joined forces to build and manage a fiber-optic network that circles the Northern Hemisphere, creating a high-bandwidth Internet-like system that links scientists, educators and students worldwide.

The Global Ring Network for Advanced Applications (GLORIAD) is funded by government agencies in all three countries. The network also has industry partners in Korea, the Netherlands and Canada.

“At its simplest level, just think about fiber-optic cable around the Northern Hemisphere,” said Greg Cole, research director at the Joint Institute for Computation Science in the Department of Energy's Oak Ridge National Laboratory. “We’re under the ocean in the Atlantic and the Pacific and across the tundra.”

The emphasis is on connecting science communities, particularly those that do not have a long tradition of working well together.

“It’s not as much about networking as it is about getting our scientists, educators and students working openly and together,” Cole added. “The network is something we leverage to bring people to the table so we can open new areas of cooperation.”

http://www.usembassy.it/file2005_04/alia/a5041506.htm

Think Tank Publications

Do ISPs have a duty to protect the world?

TELECOMMUNICATIONS & TECHNOLOGY

Against ISP Liability

BY JIM HARPER, Cato Institute

REGULATION SPRING 2005

A signal benefit of tort rules developed at common law is how efficiently they apportion responsibility for protections from harm. But efficiency alone does not qualify a proposed rule to be law. In “Holding Internet Service Providers Accountable” (Winter 2004), Douglas Lichtman argues for making Internet Service Providers (ISPs) liable for the propagation of Internet pathologies like worms, viruses, and other malicious computer code. His hope is that placing liability on ISPs will give them the incentive to protect Internet users. Protecting Internet users is a noble goal and Lichtman has given this problem a good deal of thought. But his argument for ISP liability has a fundamental flaw: it places efficiency ahead of justice.

The Internet is a medium, not a thing, and the supply of access to it is peculiarly unsuited to a liability rule like Lichtman proposes.

http://www.cato.org/pubs/regulation/regulation_currentissue.html

05AD427 THE UNINTENDED AUDIENCE: BALANCING OPENNESS AND SECRECY. CRAFTING AN INFORMATION POLICY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY.

Jacques S. Gansler and William Lucyshyn.

University of Maryland, School of Public Policy. Center for Public Policy and Private Enterprise. September 2004; Web-posted March 2005.

[Note: This research was conducted with the support of the National Defense University’s Center for Technology and National Security Policy.]

Certain public, private, and academic/scientific information exists outside the scope of security classification even though it poses threats to national security and public safety—for example, medical research on vaccines can unexpectedly yield new, deadly pathogens. It is in this ill-defined area that some forms of controls are most needed, yet most controversial. This paper first reviews the many and varied legislative and executive department and agency policies that have evolved to control this information. With the goal of defining a comprehensive policy to govern truly sensitive information—yet with a preference for maximizing openness—the authors argue for a system of Controlled Unclassified Security Information (CUSI), where a mixture of regulation, cooperation, and review, balanced with sector-specific values, optimally unite to manage highly-selective and well-defined sensitive areas. Beyond these specific, sector-level mechanisms, three overarching elements—namely, educational campaigns, an appeals process, and international control of sensitive information—help bring the CUSI system to a cohesive whole. The paper concludes by proposing metrics for assessing the overall effectiveness of the policy.

http://www.cpppe.umd.edu/Bookstore/Documents/UnintendedAudience_3.05.pdf [pdf format, 76 pages]

Email Users Get More Spam, But The Harmful Impact Of Unsolicited Messages Is Diminishing For Them
PEW, April 2005

A year after the CAN-SPAM Act became law, email users say they are receiving slightly more spam than before, but they are minding it less. More than half of Internet users still consider spam to be a big problem, yet the ill effects of spam on email habits and the overall internet experience have declined, according to the Pew Internet & American Life Project.

Compared to a year ago, fewer email users now say that spam is undermining their trust in email, eroding their email use, or making life online unpleasant or annoying. These findings suggest that at least for now, the worst case scenario – that spam will seriously degrade or even destroy email – is not happening, and that users are settling in to a level of discomfort with spam that is tolerable to them.

Users also report that their greatest spam irritant, pornographic email, has declined. On the other hand, 35% of email users now report they have received unsolicited email requesting personal financial information, a spamming technique known as “phishing.”

These are the general findings of a nationwide phone survey of 1,421 internet users by the Pew Internet & American Life Project between January 13 and February 9, 2005. The margin of error in the survey is plus or minus three points. Here are some of the statistical highlights:

- 52% of Internet users consider spam a big problem.
- 28% of users with a personal email account say they are getting more spam than a year ago, while 22% say they are getting less.
- 21% of users with a work email account say they are getting more spam than a year ago, while 16% say they are getting less.
- 53% of email users say spam has made them less trusting of email, compared to 62% a year ago.
- 22% of email users say that spam has reduced their overall use of email, compared to 29% a year ago.
- 67% of email users say spam has made being online unpleasant or annoying, compared to 77% a year ago.
- 63% of email users say they have received porn spam, compared to 71% who said that a year ago.
- 35% of email users say they have received unsolicited email requesting personal financial information.

http://www.pewtrusts.com/pdf/PIP_Spam_Ap05.pdf

Articles from U.S. Journals

AA05114 THE INFINITE LIBRARY

Roush, Wade

Technology Review vol. 108, no. 5, May 2005, pp. 54-59

Summary: The decision by search engine leader Google to digitize millions of books offers the promise of boundless access to the world's knowledge. Library experts welcome the conversion of full texts into searchable web pages, but some are concerned that the project undertaken by the for-profit Google has the potential to undercut the free public access to information that has long been a core library principle. The copyright protections of publishers and authors in the new format are another potentially thorny dilemma. The author wonders if the portability offered by web-based retrieval will render libraries obsolete, and examines the promises and pitfalls wrought by the new era of mass digitization.

(contact the IRC for a copy)

AA05097 BLOGGING: WHAT IS IT? HOW HAS IT AFFECTED THE MEDIA?

Beeson, Patrick

Quill vol. 93, no. 2, March 2005, pp. 16-19

Summary: The author writes that web logs -- known as "blogs" -- have become ubiquitous on the Internet, providing information and opinion on every imaginable topic. Blogs are easier to set up than web sites, and individuals who create and write for blogs -- known as "bloggers" -- can broadcast their raw, unedited material to a potentially unlimited audience on the World Wide Web. Beeson believes that bloggers generally don't aspire to be journalists in the traditional sense, but simply want to put forth their opinions on issues covered in the conventional media. Blogs proved their value in supplementing the traditional media, when they were among the first to cover the devastation caused by the Dec. 26 earthquake and tsunami that struck the Indian Ocean region; many bloggers in the region provided immediate first-hand accounts of the destruction and loss of life.

(contact the IRC for a copy)

E - G o v e r n m e n t

Government Documents

**05AD434 INFORMATION SECURITY: SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION NEEDS TO ADDRESS WEAK CONTROLS OVER FINANCIAL AND SENSITIVE DATA. [GAO-05-262]
United States Government Accountability Office (GAO). March 23, 2005; Web-posted March 24, 2005.**

Under the authority of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) enforces U.S. securities laws, regulates the securities markets, and protects investors. The SEC relies extensively on computerized systems to support its financial and mission-related operations. As part of the audit of SEC's fiscal year 2004 financial statements, GAO assessed the effectiveness of the Commission's information system controls in protecting the integrity, confidentiality, and availability of its financial and sensitive information.

In this report GAO concludes that SEC has not effectively implemented information system controls to protect the integrity, confidentiality, and availability of its financial and sensitive data. Specifically, the commission had not consistently implemented effective electronic access controls, including user accounts and passwords, access rights and permissions, network security, or audit and monitoring of security-relevant events to prevent, limit, and detect access to its critical financial and sensitive systems. In addition, weaknesses in other information system controls, including physical security, segregation of computer functions, application change controls, and service continuity, further increase risk to SEC's information systems. As a result, sensitive data—including payroll and financial transactions, personnel data, regulatory, and other mission-critical information—were at increased risk of unauthorized disclosure, modification, or loss, possibly without detection. GAO recommends that the SEC Chairman direct the Chief Information Officer to take several actions to fully develop and implement an effective agency-wide information security program, with priority on the establish and implementation of comprehensive information security policies and procedures.

<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05262.pdf> [pdf format, 29 pages]

**05AD425 TELECOMMUNICATIONS: GREATER INVOLVEMENT NEEDED BY FCC IN THE MANAGEMENT AND OVERSIGHT OF THE E-RATE PROGRAM. [GAO-05-151]
United States Government Accountability Office (GAO). February 9, 2005; Web-posted March 16, 2005.**

Since 1998, the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) E-rate program has committed more than \$13 billion to help schools and libraries acquire Internet and telecommunications services at affordable rates. Recently, however, there have been allegations of fraud, waste, and abuse by some E-rate program participants. GAO reviewed (1) the effect of the current structure of the E-rate program on FCC's management of the program, (2) FCC's development and use of E-rate performance goals and measures, and (3) the effectiveness of FCC's oversight mechanisms in managing the program.

Research for this report revealed that FCC has not developed useful performance goals and measures for assessing and managing the E-rate program. According to GAO, the goals established for fiscal years 2000

through 2002 focused on the percentage of public schools connected to the Internet, but the data used to measure performance did not isolate the impact of E-rate funding from other sources of funding, such as state and local government. A key unanswered question, therefore, is the extent to which increases in connectivity can be attributed to E-rate. GAO urges greater effort to determine actual impact.

However, GAO cautions that “schools and libraries across the country use E-rate funds for their purchases of telecommunications services. Any reassessment of the program must take the needs of the beneficiaries into account. It is particularly important that efforts to protect the program from fraud, waste, and abuse do not result in a program that is excessively burdensome on program participants.”

<http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05151.pdf> [pdf format, 75pages]

Think Tank Publications

05AD417 THE INTERNET AND CAMPAIGN 2004.

Pew Internet & American Life Project and Pew Research Center for The People & The Press. March 6, 2005.

The internet was a key force in politics last year as 75 million Americans used it to get news, discuss candidates in emails, and participate directly in the political process. The online political news consumer population grew dramatically from 18% of the U.S. population in 2000 to 29% in 2004. For campaign 2004, some of the overall figures related to uses of the internet for politics are these:

* 52% of internet users, or about 63 million people, said they went online to get news or information about the 2004 elections.

* 35% of internet users, or about 43 million people, said they used email to discuss politics, and one of the most popular email subjects was jokes about the candidates and the election.

* 11% of internet users, or more than 13 million people, went online to engage directly in campaign activities such as donating money, volunteering, or learning about political events to attend.

* 34 million people went online to research candidate positions on issues – a 42% increase from 2000.

* 14 million people got information via the internet on where to vote – a 180% increase from 2000.

http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_2004_Campaign.pdf [pdf format, 33 pages]

E - C o m m e r c e

Government Documents

The Truth about Cell Phones and the National Do Not Call Registry Federal Trade Commission April 15, 2005

If you've received an e-mail telling you that your cell phone is about to be assaulted by telemarketing calls as a result of a new cell phone number database, rest assured that this is not the case. Telemarketing to cell phone numbers has always been illegal in most cases and will continue to be so. In response to recent e-mail campaigns urging consumers to place their cell phone numbers on the National Do Not Call Registry, the Federal Trade Commission and Federal Communications Commission issue this advisory to give consumers the facts.

<http://www.ftc.gov/opa/2005/04/dnc.htm>

Internet Service Provider Settles FTC Privacy Charges *Company Disclosed Personal Information of Nearly One Million Consumers* March 10, 2005

An Internet company that provides shopping cart software to online merchants has agreed to settle Federal Trade Commission charges that it rented personal information about merchants' customers to marketers, knowing that such disclosure contradicted merchant privacy policies. The settlement will bar use of the personal data the company has already collected, as well as future misrepresentations about the collection, use, or disclosure of personally identifiable information. The settlement also requires the company to ensure that consumers receive a clear and conspicuous notice before their personal information is disclosed to other companies for marketing purposes. Finally, the settlement requires that the company give up the fees it made renting the consumer information.

<http://www.ftc.gov/opa/2005/03/cartmanager.htm>

QUARTERLY RETAIL E-COMMERCE SALES 4th QUARTER 2004 Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce, February 24, 2005

Intention to Revise. Quarterly retail e-commerce estimates will be revised based on the results of the 2003 Annual Retail Trade Survey. Unadjusted and adjusted estimates will be revised for fourth quarter 1999 through fourth quarter 2004. Revised data are scheduled for release on May 20, 2005.

The Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce announced today that the estimate of U.S. retail e-commerce sales for the fourth quarter of 2004, adjusted for seasonal variation and holiday and trading-day differences, but not for price changes, was \$18.4 billion, an increase of 4.7 percent ($\pm 3.1\%$) from the third quarter of 2004. Total retail sales for the fourth quarter of 2004 were estimated at \$938.5 billion, an increase of 2.4

percent ($\pm 0.3\%$) from the third quarter of 2004. The fourth quarter 2004 e-commerce estimate increased 22.1 percent ($\pm 2.6\%$) from the fourth quarter of 2003 while total retail sales increased 8.2 percent ($\pm 0.5\%$) in the same period. E-commerce sales in the fourth quarter accounted for 2.0 percent of total sales.

On a not adjusted basis, the estimate of U.S. retail e-commerce sales for the fourth quarter of 2004 totaled \$21.4 billion, an increase of 29.4 percent ($\pm 3.1\%$) from the third quarter of 2004. The fourth quarter 2004 e-commerce estimate increased 22.3 percent ($\pm 2.6\%$) from the fourth quarter of 2003 while total retail sales increased 8.3 percent ($\pm 0.5\%$) in the same period. E-commerce sales in the fourth quarter of 2004 accounted for 2.2 percent of total sales.

Total e-commerce sales for 2004 were estimated at \$69.2 billion, an increase of 23.5 percent ($\pm 2.1\%$) from 2003. Total retail sales in 2004 increased 7.8 percent ($\pm 0.3\%$) from 2003. E-commerce sales in 2004 accounted for 1.9 percent of total sales. E-commerce sales in 2003 accounted for 1.6 percent of total sales.

<http://www.census.gov/mrts/www/data/html/04Q4.html>

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Szilágyi Ágota
475-4442

Keve Ildikó
475-4478

Bíró Katalin
475-4514

Staff of the Information Resource Center

e-mail: infousa@usembassy.hu
FAX: 475-47-08