

MUUGLines

The Manitoba UNIX User Group Newsletter

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Next Meeting: October 14th, 2008

Got Spam? Fight Back!

Presented by Gilbert Detillieux.



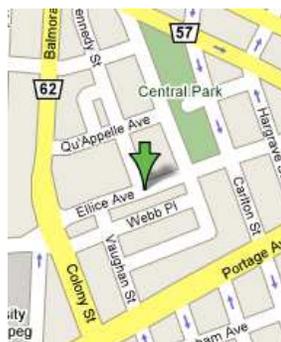
This month, MUUG regular Gilbert Detillieux will talk about spam, why it's a problem, and how to fight back. His

presentation will focus on how he's configured **sendmail**'s built-in features for blocking spam, as well as a few external mail filters (**milters**) that allow for more elaborate filtering. **Milter-greylist**, **SpamAssassin** and **ClamAV** will be featured.

It's also election night in Canada, so make sure you go out and vote! Polls close at 8pm, so you should have plenty of time to vote before you come to the meeting. It's also potentially election night for the new MUUG board, depending on how many nominees we'll have.

Where to Find the Meeting

Meetings are held at 7:30pm at the IBM offices, at 400 Ellice Ave. (between Edmonton and Kennedy). For more information, please check the MUUG web site (www.muug.mb.ca/meetings/).



Upcoming Meetings:

November 11th, 2008:

What's new in OpenSUSE 11

John Lange will demo the recently released **OpenSUSE 11** running the **Gnome** desktop, highlighting the major changes from the OpenSUSE 10.X series and focusing on its rich desktop features, especially things that go "whizz-bang!" such as the 3D Desktop Effects.

MUUG Board Elections 2008-2009

As part of the October 2008 meeting, we will be holding an election for the positions of directors to the MUUG board. The following nominees are candidates for election. Since the number of candidates (7) is less than the number of vacancies as last set by the board (8), in accordance with MUUG By-laws 5.(c) and 10.(d), the nominees shall be deemed to be elected by acclamation.

Nominee: Sean Cody, Senior System Administrator, Prime Focus VFX Services

Sean Cody is the Senior Systems Administrator for Prime Focus VFX Services (formerly Frantic Films) where he oversees all IT services and support for the Winnipeg and Vancouver offices. He has a B.Sc. in Computer Science (minored in Geology) and has been working in IT in various positions for tad over ten years. On the side he provides subsistent web hosting and consults with small businesses looking to improve their work flow, secure their data and expand their IT capabilities on small budgets. He spends most

of his free time dabbling in gadgets, OpenBSD and is professionally focused on system performance and security.

Nominee: Gilbert Detillieux, Systems Analyst, University of Manitoba

Gilbert Detillieux has been working with UNIX as a programmer, system administrator, and trainer since 1980. He worked as a computer consultant specializing in UNIX, from 1983 to 1989, and is currently working as a Systems Analyst for the University of Manitoba's Department of Computer Science, where's he's worked since 1989, installing, supporting and upgrading the department's network and UNIX server infrastructure. He was co-founder and past president of the Technical UNIX User Group (now MUUG), and has been an active member of the MUUG board ever since. He also contributed to the implementation of the initial MUUG Online system, in 1992, which he's since maintained through three complete replacements and numerous upgrades over the years.

Nominee: Michael Doob, Professor, University of Manitoba

Michael Doob is a member of the Mathematics Department at the University of Manitoba. He has been using UNIX since 1990, primarily as a working environment for mathematical publishing. He has been a member of MUUG for the last decade and has given a number of presentations for that group.

Nominee: Kevin McGregor, Network Analyst, City of Winnipeg

Kevin McGregor provides network administration and system support services for the City of Winnipeg. After having briefly used UTS on an Amdahl mainframe in university in the mid-80s, he dabbled in Coherent and then converted to Linux and OpenBSD. He has been a member of MUUG since the early 90s, edited the group's newsletter for a number of years, presented various topics at MUUG meetings and has served on the board for the majority of his membership.

Nominee: Montana Quiring, Systems Administrator, University of Manitoba

Montana Quiring is the IT and Systems Administrator for Housing and Student Life at the University of Manitoba. He has been using UNIX and Linux for almost 10 years. At first it was something to play with but is now part of his everyday home and work life. He has training in Linux, networking, writing and speaking. He has experience in IT training, administering, managing, consulting, servicing and publishing. He takes pride in making many older computers usable and more secure for friends and students by installing lightweight Linux distros on them. He also maintains a Linux PDA website and co-produces some Linux podcasts.

Nominee: Doug Shewfelt, Systems Specialist, City of Winnipeg

Doug Shewfelt first encountered UNIX in 1980 at the University of Manitoba. He has been worked in various IT positions for the City of Winnipeg since 1985, and currently provides system and database administration support for the City. He has been a member of the MUUG board for the past several years.

Nominee: Adam Thompson

Adam has over 15 years' experience in the IT field, ranging from Programmer to Network Administrator to Chief Technology Officer & VP. He has developed several UNIX/Linux courses, and has also taught in other IT fields. Adam has been a member of MUUG since 1995, and a board member for most of the last six years.

The End of Bill C-61 ... Or Is It?...

With the Canadian federal election being called, Bill C-61, the controversial new copyright reform bill, died without being passed in parliament. However, as Michael Geist points out on a blog entry about the bill (faircopyrightforcanada.ca), "regardless of who forms the next government, copyright will almost certainly be on the agenda."

Geist, a vocal critic of the bill, is the Canada Research Chair in Internet and E-Commerce Law at the University of Ottawa. He has an impressive portfolio of law degrees and has served on various task forces, boards and organizations dealing with Internet policy. Geist has said the proposed legislation would likely “mirror the (U.S.) DMCA with strong anti-circumvention legislation - far beyond what is needed to comply with the WIPO Internet treaties.”

Although other election issues seem to have left this pending piece of legislation in the shadows, Geist has been keeping busy with his fight. Some politicians are also not letting the issue drop. According to IT World Canada, the NDP’s Charlie Angus (Timmins-James Bay riding) acknowledges the copyright act still needs to be changed: “We actually need to get some legislation in place. I think Bill C-61 was the wrong legislation but certainly when Parliament gets back, we’ve got to get the job done.” Angus also wonders about the government’s commitment to this particular bill: “Bringing it in in the dying days of June when they had the entire year to bring that legislation forward had my spider sense tingling.”

In case you want to find out more about Bill C-61 before the upcoming election, you can find a fairly comprehensive article about it on Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_C-61). The Centre for Innovation Law and Policy also has a good summary of responses to the bill on their web site (<http://www.innovationlaw.org/projects/dcr/reform/c61/c61response.htm>). Geist also blogs fairly regularly on his own web site (michaelgeist.ca).

Do-Not-Call Registry Overloaded

September 30th marked the first day the CRTC’s new “Do Not Call” registry was open to receive requests from the Canadian public to have their phone numbers listed. Telemarketers, except those in exempt categories, would be required to exclude from their call lists any numbers listed on the registry. Unfortunately, the huge public response overloaded both their phone lines (1-866-580-3625) and their web site (www.lnnte-dncl.gc.ca).

By early afternoon on the launch day, over 156,000 people had managed to register via the web site, and over 61,000 by phone. Apparently, over a million callers couldn’t get through, and the web site was unavailable for most of the afternoon. By evening, registering via the web site was possible for those that were persistent enough.

Michael Geist, who has been a vocal critic of the government’s failed Bill C-61 (see previous article), was also critical of the CRTC’s regulations surrounding the registry, and particularly with the large number of exempt organizations, which includes charities, political parties, polling companies and (most curiously) a number of commercial enterprises. In response to that, Geist has set up (wait for it...) his own web site called **iOptOut.ca**, which allows you to register your name and phone number there, and choose from a list of organizations exempt from the CRTC’s list those from which you wish to not be contacted. His service then sends out “do not call” request by e-mail to each of those organizations. (The CRTC does require that exempt organizations maintain their own private “do not call” lists, and honour all requests to be listed.)

Although some have cried foul at Geist’s service, the CRTC ruled in June that requests generated by his site are valid and comply with the CRTC’s regulations. When we checked recently, Geist’s site boasted “6,516,297 Opt Outs Sent,” which apparently are the result of approximately 50,000 people registered.

On the Changing Face of E-Mail: An Interview with Gilbert Detillieux

After being a domain postmaster for almost two decades, Gilbert Detillieux has picked up a trick or two about dealing with spam. (He’ll share some of those at the October meeting.) MUUG Lines caught up with him for a brief interview.

ML: Your bio states that you’ve been in your current job since 1989. I guess you’ve seen a lot of changes in the industry since then?

GD: That’s for sure! I started my job at the U of M with an ASCII terminal on my desk, managing 2 DEC MicroVAX system, one running VMS and one run-

ning Ultrix. Most of the department's faculty either had a PC, a Mac or an ASCII terminal on their desk. They would use telnet to get to our servers.

ML: What about E-mail and Internet services?

GD: Well, at the start, we had an Ethernet LAN, but no direct connection to the Internet. E-mail was available to the rest of the world through gateway hosts and networks, like UUCP and BITNET. One of my first big tasks was getting our LAN and hosts Internet ready, since the campus got an actual, live Internet feed around the summer of 1990.

ML: I'm assuming the mail software was pretty crude... no fancy GUI's?

GD: It was pretty much all text-based, and only on the servers. And each platform had its own software and interface. And, of course, everyone had their own favourite. Eventually, we mostly moved to a UNIX-based solution, including support for POP-based mail clients. IMAP and the slick GUI's came later.

ML: And what about spam?

GD: That came in a while after we got the Internet connection. Actually, a couple years later, as commercial access started to become more common. Of course, we were seeing it on Usenet news groups at first, not on e-mail. I guess once spammers realized they could harvest e-mail addresses from Usenet archives, they expanded their territory.

ML: How bad was it?

GD: Well, at first it was very sporadic, and kind of amusing. It started to get annoying only once it became more common. You have to remember that up until then, there was this sort of basic trust on the Internet. Our main priority was in getting connected and making it easier to transfer data.

ML: So security was pretty weak?

GD: Most people hadn't given much thought to it. Passwords tended to be weak, there was no data encryption and many protocols – like SMTP – had no security mechanisms built in. It was all collaborative; you trusted the messages you got, even anonymously, and you happily passed them along to the destination. With the ad-hoc networking a lot of us had to work

with then, open mail relays were an important part of getting the mail delivered.

ML: But not anymore...

GD: Now, just about everyone has direct access to the Internet, so the old trust models don't work. You also don't need the same sort of peer collaboration. So now we have to lock things down, and decide whom we trust to send and receive mail. But we're still using the same old protocols, more or less, only with a lot of extra stuff patched in, like basic integrity checks, content-based filters and access control lists.

ML: The use of blocklists and even greylisting is controversial. What are your thoughts?

GD: I can appreciate the problems with these solutions, and why some people don't like them, but my experience has been that these are some of our most effective tools in fighting spam. They work a lot better than content-based filtering, and bog down your server a lot less. Now, with blocklists, the quality and effectiveness can vary a lot, so you want to know what you're getting and pick carefully. Review services like **dnsbl.com** are useful for that reason, 'cause there are some *bad* lists out there! You also have to keep on top of things, since some of these services come and go. With greylisting, the configuration can be tricky to get right. I'll deal with that at the meeting.

ML: What do you think of the anti-spam legislation the Tories have proposed as part of their campaign?

GD: Don't get me started!

Share Your Thoughts

E-mail us with your comments on the newsletter, and continue to send in articles or ideas for the same. Specifically, what sort of material you would rather see: Announcements, technical articles, new products, or...? Send it to editor@muug.mb.ca.

