



Is Our Information Assured?



I don't trust computers. I never have. Online catalogs, automatic teller machines (ATMs), e-bills ... computers have become a necessary part of our everyday lives and the need for information assurance is all around us, but the confidence that information assurance exists is not. I got an ATM card soon after they became available. However, I have only used it to withdraw money – I don't trust it enough to hand over my deposit. I also refuse to buy anything over the Internet. I'll browse the Internet but will only place an order if there is a phone number so I can call and talk with a person. I don't like the idea of putting my credit card number into an area that can be hacked.

I understand that all the new automated customer sites are intended to give us faster service at lower prices, but I still prefer dealing with people. However, I find myself being drawn more and more into the computer age and the benefits it provides. Within the Department of Defense (DoD), computing is fundamental to the defense of our country. Dr. Margaret E. Myers, principal director, deputy assistant secretary of defense, made one of several good points during May's Software Technology Conference in Salt Lake City when she quoted Vice Admiral Art Cebrowski: "If you are not interoperable, you are not on the net, not contributing, not benefiting, and you are not part of the information age."

This month's **CROSSTALK** focuses on sharing some of the progress being made in information assurance. We start with an overview of information assurance with Dr. Walter L. McKnight's, *What Is Information Assurance?* This is a good introduction for our readers trying to get familiar with the different security issues.

We get a little more advanced with Julia H. Allen and Dr. Carol A. Sledge's article, *Information Survivability: Required Shifts in Perspective*. These authors share a paradigm shift from merely considering security to a more encompassing focus on survivability. Next is the CERT's Survivable Systems Engineering team's article, *Foundations for Survivable Systems Engineering*, which discusses a methodology developed by the Software Engineering Institute to assess the survivability of a system and make suggestions for improvement. Jim Clune and Dr. Adam Kolawa give more specific advice in *Security Issues with SOAP*. In this article, the authors discuss potential security issues associated with many protocols – while focusing on SOAP as an example – and provide suggestions to overcome these issues.

Peter Baxter then continues our lineup with *Focusing Measurement on Managers' Informational Needs*. Baxter is a recognized leader in the measurement community, and this article provides some back-to-basic ideas when starting or improving a measurement program. Dr. Mario J. Spina and John A. Rolando also share practical advice in *JAD on a Shoestring Budget*. In this article, the authors share their experience when implementing a large Joint Application Development effort.

This issue of **CROSSTALK** would not be complete without reminding our readers of the National Information Assurance Acquisition Policy. The policy goes into full effect this month, requiring acquisition and implementation of only those information assurance products that have been evaluated and validated in accordance with this policy. Readers can learn more about these products by accessing the Validated Products Section of the National Information Assurance Partnership Web site at <niap.nist.gov>.

I still don't like handing out personal information over the Web, but it is reassuring to see the progress being made to compete with hackers. This progress is evident most recently in Afghanistan, where our success thus far is largely because of our informational capabilities to know the enemy's location, our location, and how to proceed accordingly. Obviously, our adversaries have not been able to access this same information. While researching our success with information assurance, I learned that even information about our successes is mostly confidential. However, I have learned enough to realize that even though the proliferation of DoD information capabilities is on a steep upward slope, the compromises to this information continue to be reduced. Our military has the information it needs in the right place at the right time while continually securing and managing that information.

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