Steganography and other strategies from the real world

THE SECURITY CHALLENGE

This month we look at hidden data, dastardly PDFs, safer surfing, and tools for better password control. **BY JOE CASAD**

The problem of Internet security is much wider and deeper than the issues of file permissions and intrusion detection. Vigilance requires patience – and lots of energy to anticipate problems and find solutions before the crisis. This month we examine some pertinent and largely unexplored corners of the security field.

If you want to hide your data from the prying eyes of authorities, or if you are worried about someone slipping some hidden data past your network defenses, you might be ready for steganography – the art of concealing information in plain sight. In our leadoff article, security columnist Kurt Seifried shows how to stash hidden data inside an ordinary image file, and he offers some hints on how to look for steganographic effects.

What other kinds of insidious payloads might be lurking inside an innocent-looking email attachment? Our next article dissects a real PDF-style attack. You'll learn how intruders embedded malicious code in an innocuous PDF file – so subtly that it circulated around the whole world – even into well-protected government networks in Europe, Asia, and North America.

Also in this month's security set is an article on SELinux Sandbox, a new policy system that protects your computer from attacks launched through browsers and desktop apps. And Marcel Gagné concludes our security collection with a study of some of the top password management applications.

Read on for some great security strategies and tools. ■

COVER STORY