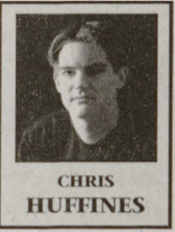


Crash and burn

Lax Internet security to blame for computer crime, hacker incidents blown out of proportion

Over 100 years ago, Mr. Hearst's War, also known as the Spanish-American War, began because of the media. Trumped-up reports of Spanish atrocities in Cuba and the sinking of the USS Maine propelled the United States into war.



CHRIS HUFFINES

In recent days and weeks, once again, the media has begun pushing the United States into war, and this time it is a war that cannot be won. The media latched onto the recent spate of attacks by hackers as evidence of a growing wave of cyber-crime, just as overblown reports of Spanish atrocities were evidence of the misuse that America used as its excuse for war. However, society is beginning to and will adapt to its cyber-fallacies before any "war against cyber-criminals" is necessary. The problem here is the media, not the hackers. Most citizens of this country are woefully uninformed about how the Internet works, Internet security and hacking. The media plays on this ignorance. Media exploitation of ignorance was also a major theme of, you guessed it, the Spanish-American War. However, Internet security has become a hot topic for good reason. Recent "denial of service" attacks knocked sites such as CNN.com and eBay offline for hours or days and cost those companies millions. Hackers broke into government Websites and left vulgar messages as calling cards. Highly-publicized (by the media) cyber-crimes hit the news every few weeks. These attacks show that the Internet just are not safe.



JEFF SMITH/THE BATTALION

The sites are not safe because the owners have not made them safe. Most sites are wide-open and hackers do not even need to break through security. Christopher Paterno, the prankster who impersonated President Clinton during a recent CNN.com online chat, is a perfect example. Due to a hardware glitch, all the participants in the forum were kicked off,

including the president (actually, his typist). Paterno logged back on, this time as "President Clinton," without any system attempts to stop him. He made a few inappropriate comments before being kicked off and banned from the forum. Paterno did what he did, not because he was some malicious techno-sociopath, but because there was a gaping hole in the system's security that allowed

anyone to logon and pretend to be someone else. There are gaping holes in much of the Internet's security. These holes are the fault of the site owners, not just the hackers who take advantage of them. It may seem silly at first, but an example clarifies the situation. Assume a bank leaves all the doors open, leaves the lights on and leaves the vault un-

locked one night. Would anyone be surprised if the money in the vault were gone the next morning? Of course not. This would not be surprising because the security was so bad. Only the unscrupulous or greedy would take the money, but they would not have the chance without the laxity of the hypothetical bank's security. Most banks are more security-conscious than this and so cannot be success-

fully robbed except by a few skilled criminals. Similarly, many companies, if they took security seriously, would be impregnable to all but the most skilled hackers. However, companies do not take security seriously and try to blame the hackers who took advantage of the companies' mistakes. The job of a security system is not to keep all interlopers out; that is missing the point. Security systems are designed to make it so difficult for unauthorized people to get past the system that it is not worth the trouble. Current Internet security not only makes it easy for the unauthorized to get in, it commonly refuses to fix existing holes. These existing, proven holes are what hackers commonly use in attacks. If the hackers can consistently break a security system, and the company in charge refuses to fix the problem, it is not the hackers' fault. It is the fault of the company who leaves the doors open and the vault unlocked. Another factor, one that is rapidly diminishing, is that the cyber-community depends on proactive attacks to prove that security is worthwhile. The online community, that part that is most involved in security, by and large will not trust a system that has not been subject to attack. A system that has not been attacked may be good, or it may be a cakewalk. The recent spate of attacks is, from the point of view of the hackers, just a security test. It does not make it right, but it does make it predictable. The current wave of cyber-attacks will only last so long as companies do not take Internet security seriously. Once that happens, the attacks will mostly stop because it will no longer be fun or interesting enough for most hackers. And, as the culture online changes, the attacks will fade away. Until then, America should place the blame where it is due, on the hackers, yes, but also on the companies who have not pulled their heads out of the sand.

Chris Huffines is a senior speech communication major.

Yakama Nation has right to tax

If the tribal council of the Yakama Nation has its way, it will become very costly to get drunk - or to enable someone else to get drunk on the Yakama Reservation in Washington. The council has decided to levy a steep tax on alcoholic beverages sold within the borders of the reservation. Proceeds from the tax are to be used to fund alcohol-treatment programs. Many non-Native Americans who live on the reservation are unhappy about the plan. The reservation is going dry as businessmen and women haggle with the council, and distributors refuse to deliver beer, wine and spirits to the reservation in protest.



ANN HART

that it hurts their business. An identical strategy, with identical reasoning, lies behind another exorbitant tax, the one imposed on tobacco products. Like the Yakama, the U.S. government decided that since smokers were a drain on the public coffers in later life when smoking's consequences begin to appear, they could pay for the privilege of destroying their lungs by paying a tax. The production cost of a pack of cigarettes is less than a dollar. The rest of the two-dollars-and-something price is tax. Americans approve of this tax and this methodology. So now when a group makes an analogous tax on a substance that causes quite as much harm in its community, it puts objectors in an unflattering light. Granted, the non-Native American population on the reservation who use alcohol will be taxed without their consent, but so is every resident alien in this country who earns income. They are equally unrepresented. They are foreigners living in this country, earning money, and the government is entitled to their cut. The situation on the Yakama reservation is identical. If a resident alien protested paying income taxes, they would likely be told that there were two choices: pay the legally imposed tax, or leave the country. Remembering that the Yakama are sovereign on their reservation, the unhappy Anglos have the same two choices. Ironically, Americans, the champions of democratic self-government in the world, oppose the notion within their own borders, if it is bad for business. If the case should end up in the Supreme Court (and it may), there is lots of support for the Yakama to come out the winners.

The tribal elders see a need for alcohol treatment within their jurisdiction and have instituted a program to finance it.

The tribal elders see a need for alcohol treatment within their jurisdiction and have instituted a program to finance it. The immediate reaction from the non-Native American community was, "Taxation without representation!" Is it so? Not really. Is it unfair? Most definitely not. Should the tax be allowed to continue? Sure. First, it is important to note that the Yakama are a sovereign nation. What they choose to do within their borders is their own business. This sovereignty was the concession of the U.S. government when it packed their ancestors off into the least-desirable land available. Their autonomy has been whittled away bit by bit over the years. The trend seems to be trying to absorb them into the American culture. What seems to have been forgotten is that they are the American culture. The protesters of the tax, almost all of whom are Anglo-Americans, derive their income largely from the sale of alcohol on the reservation. Their problem with the tax is

Ann Hart is a senior English major.

College of Liberal Arts career fair neglected

Texas A&M University is a school that has a highly developed reputation for its science and technological colleges. Yet, there is one college at A&M that lacks the attention it merits. The College of Liberal Arts has close to 5,000 undergraduate students and about 1,000 graduate students. The College of Engineering has about 7,000 undergraduates. The two colleges have roughly the same number of students which would lead one to believe that both would be well known. Yet despite its large population, when one thinks about liberal arts education, most immediately think of that "other" Texas school.



BRIENNE PORTER

A&M has on its staff a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist in the liberal arts college. Is this fact a shock to many? It should not be. To have such a prestigious prize recipient working for the University and to have few people knowing this fact is unsettling. Many would believe that fact would be well-publicized since it is such an honor. Yet, the little that has been said about this highlights two problems that hinder the progress for the liberal arts college: lack of public recognition of the college and the old stereotype of A&M as only a science school. Take, for instance, the recent career fair held by the College of Liberal Arts. While missing the Liberal Arts career fair may seem to be a non-issue for non-liberal arts students, they missed out on a great opportunity. Many companies that attend university career fairs hire students from a wide variety of colleges. This fair was a lost opportunity for students and companies. More advertising by people who were "in the know" could have made the fair a university-wide chance for learning more about companies seeking employees in the liberal arts field. These companies may not normally be accessible to students outside the liberal arts college. With a little more publicity and knowledge about the liberal arts career fair, more of the A&M student population

could have benefited from it. Compare the recent career fair of the liberal arts college to the engineering career fair and engineering week. The College of Engineering's career fair is one of the most publicized events for colleges at A&M. One can walk just about anywhere on campus and see fliers promoting the fair. The fair has close to two hundred companies courting engineering students. The fair is held in Reed Arena, and there are bus runs specifically to take prospective employees to the fair. Liberal arts college's fair was held at the Rudder Exhibition Hall, buried in the center of the Rudder Complex. Students walking by could have missed it and many did. The engineering college also has an engineering week. This event, characterized by a week of lectures, showcases professors work and games promoting engineering. The Liberal Arts college has nothing of this sort. There is no national liberal arts week; there is not even a liberal arts day. Unfair as this seems, the problem has not changed. Problem number two is common to many universities. Once a university gains prestige in one area, the other areas are soon forgotten, and that school is trapped in a stereotype that may be no longer true. This is the case for A&M. When A&M was first opened as the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, the name implied a school solely to educate students in agriculture and mechanics. But now, as the name has changed, so has A&M grown to include other areas. The liberal arts college has a highly-distinguished staff including recipients of the National Endowment for the Arts, fellowships to a winner of the American Psychological Association award for best teaching of psychology. Not only are these awards numerous, the College of Liberal Arts also has the largest tenured faculty on campus - 320 staff members. For such a recognized university, stereotypes like the one regarding liberal arts should not exist. The Department of Economics within the College of Lib-



EMILY HARRELL/THE BATTALION

eral Arts is ranked among the top 25 departments in the country. The nautical archaeology program within the department of Anthropology under the liberal arts college is world-renowned for its work. These facts alone should break down the old science-only stereotype. It seems with all these merits and awards, the rest of the nation and world has recognized a fact that many Aggies have yet to discover. A&M is no longer an "agriculture" school. It has a strong College of Liberal Arts that needs to be recognized. The inequality emphasized by the career fairs by the different colleges at A&M is a misguided representation of the campus. The College of Liberal Arts deserves the same recognition from the campus it has received from the world. The future is not only science and technology, but a balanced education that includes liberal arts.

Brienne Porter is a freshman chemical engineering major.

MAIL CALL

Mock wedding reverend responds

In response to Jessica Andrew's Feb. 17 mail call. I was the reverend who performed the symbolic weddings of Feb. 14th. Rather than being a "false prophet," I sought only to bring light to the intolerance that many TAMU students and faculty have toward same sex marriage and the GLBT "lifestyle" in general. Isn't light into the noncomprehending darkness a very important point of John, Chapter 1?

There have been some who have said that we are calling down the wrath of god. Be that as it may, we are still here. We've been here since before Christ gave temporal power to Caesar and we'll be here when the last trumpet sounds. We are here because that is how god wishes it to be. There is no desire to "corrupt" anyone else into being homosexual or to degrade any of the social and religious institutions Christians and others hold dear; merely the desire to extend the same rights and privileges everyone else has. "No special rights or guarantees, merely equity under

law," to quote my sermon. Has it ever crossed anyone's mind that homosexuality was banned for health or economic reasons? The same was true for eating pork and wearing clothing of mixed fabric, so why not extend the principle? God's purpose in making me gay is his own to ponder, I'm simply submitting to the will of god. I can't speak for others, but this is how I feel. I cannot claim to be proud for simply being who I am, but I will never be ashamed to be what God intended me to be.

Rev. Jason H. Bennett
Class of '03

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