The Two Sides of the Web We Weave

Doesn't there seem to be some good and bad in almost everything we do these days? And aren't there always "two sides of the coin?" Take the World Wide Web. I'd say it has two sides, too.

There is no doubt that the Web has been a very positive influence and convenience in our everyday lives. From travel agencies to bookstores, we now have resources just a few mouse-clicks away instead of miles away as in the not so distant past. Unfortunately, the web has brought another dark side to our society. Whether it's an expensive hobby or a time sink for some, it's just another medium of vices for others.

As you will read in this month's issue, the Department of Defense is dealing with its own two sides of the web. Pam Dargan writes of the bright side in *Ideal Collaborative Environment*. In our workplace today, we enjoy many electronic collaboration capabilities such as bulletin boards and chat rooms to share information and lessons learned. And after some technical challenges are overcome, our future at work may soon include virtual teams and virtual meetings. The airlines won't be happy with these near-term ways of doing business.

On the other side, Robert Martin warns us of *The Vulnerabilities of Developing on the Net* and how through the Common Vulnerabilities and Exposures Initiative we can reduce our risks when working with vulnerable commercial software on the shelf today. In addition, Lt. Col. Alford Jr writes of the risk our nation faces in *Cyber Warfare: A New Doctrine and Taxonomy*. He explains how cyber systems can make nations vulnerable to warfare without violence, and how cyber warfare may be the greatest threat that nations have ever faced. This is a scare that not many have taken seriously yet.

Also, I was surprised to learn at an information technology seminar recently that there now exists more than 30,000 hacking oriented Web sites. Amazingly, "click and hack" programs can be downloaded from these sites. You no longer need to be a guru to be a hacker. Thus it has never been more important to safeguard your personal and workplace computers with appropriate security precautions.

Fortunately, because of the Web, most of us can say that we work in a more productive and user-friendly environment than we did just five years ago. Web technologies and applications continue to progress and enter into almost every workplace. I believe that the defense software community is just beginning to discover the benefits of the World Wide Web.

One benefit that you may not have experienced yet is CROSSTALK online at www.stsc.hill.af.mil. This month's issue and all of our back issues are available along with subscription forms, theme announcements, and author guidelines. I'd like to thank all of our online readers for coming back each month. Don't forget to drop us a line to let us know how we can better meet your on-line needs.

I am pleased to feature in this month's issue our first announcement on our search for finding successful software projects (See page 4). The Office of the Director of Defense Research and Engineering is sponsoring an effort to recognize the top five software projects in the government. This effort is one response to the recommendations of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Defense Software. CROSSTALK, is coordinating this effort, and we are looking for projects focused on quality, performance, and customer value. We are currently accepting nominations from project managers, teams, and customers.

Tracy L. Stauder

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Publisher