SRCF Sysadmins' Report 2018

April 2017: Launch of Ubuntu 16.04 webserver "sinkhole"

Following our report at the previous AGM, we launched a new webserver and asked all users and societies to test their sites still worked ahead of the upgrade. The new server introduced Apache 2.4 and PHP 7, which unfortunately brought in a number of backwards-incompatible changes for websites, but we hope that website owners had sufficient time to prepare their sites.

May 2017: Ubuntu 16.04 upgrade for pip

Taking the best part of a day, pip was successfully upgraded from Ubuntu 12.04, to 14.04, to 16.04. We made the switch to serving all websites from sinkhole before starting the upgrade, meaning sites remained up for most of the day whilst we worked to get any broken software fixed up. As a result of the upgrade, many packages on the system have seen significant version bumps.

July 2017: Server donation from Peterhouse

We are grateful to Peterhouse IT for donating three of their retired Dell servers -- these have been integrated into our XenServer pool, and have been instrumental in giving sinkhole a much-needed boost to handle our Apache load.

July 2017: HTTPS certificates via Let's Encrypt

Due to the distrust of StartCom, our wildcard certificate for srcf.net and subdomains became untrusted. As such, we integrated with Let's Encrypt to issue HTTPS certificates for both in-house domains (subdomains of user.srcf.net and soc.srcf.net) as well as users' custom domains.

Because of rate limits imposed by Let's Encrypt, we're unable to bulk enrol all sites. Instead, we initially contacted any users and societies whose websites had seen traffic over HTTPS over the last few months, asking them to opt their sites in for the new certificates.

October 2017: srcf.ucam.org deprecation reminder

We sent out reminders to all users and societies who haven't yet migrated their sites from our legacy domain (www.srcf.ucam.org) to their subdomains of user.srcf.net and soc.srcf.net. We hope to retire serving sites from srcf.ucam.org within the next year, serving only redirects. We can't just go ahead and do this because many sites hardcode their path in resource URLs, which isn't compatible with the subdomains without changes.

November 2017: DEScrypt password changes

A number of users were found to have relatively insecure password hashes, due to an unfortunate default in Ubuntu. We contacted all affected users and asked them to change or re-enter their passwords (either would cause them to be stored as a more secure hash).

November 2017 & February 2018: Hack days

Similar to previous hack days, most of our efforts went into polishing and bug-fixing the control panel. We had a handful of new faces join us over the two afternoons.

February 2018: Website redesign and control panel release

The SRCF website at www.srcf.net was given a refreshed design, bringing in a mobile-friendly layout and aiming to improve general access and readability.

The user control panel at control.srcf.net was quietly released alongside the website redesign. Notably, all signups and society creation requests are now handled by the control panel. A little over 100 jobs from users have been processed so far, with no major failures. A few bug fixes have been made as a result of support requests.

March 2018: Opt-in HTTPS required

Further to the introduction of Let's Encrypt certificates, we've stopped serving non-opted-in sites over HTTPS. Previously, they'd use the untrusted certificate and cause unskippable browser security warnings. Now, they're served using the default webserver certificate, but bypassing the security warning (not that you'd ever do that, right?) now causes a non-existent site page to appear.