James Davis

davisjam@vt.edu

https://davisjam.github.io/

EDUCATION

Ph.D Computer Science 2015-2020 (expected)

Virginia Tech

Advisor: Dr. Dongyoon Lee

Dissertation: *On the Impact and Defeat of Regular Expression Denial of Service*

B.S. Computer Science, B.S. Mathematics 2008-2012

Clarkson University

Research mentor: Dr. Takashi Nishikawa

Honors Thesis: *Relating Synchronizability to the Topological Properties of Networks Using a Linear Classifier*

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Assistant Professor, Electrical and Computer Engineering Fall 2020-present

Purdue University

Graduate Research Assistant 2016-2020

Virginia Tech

- **Practice-motivated systems design**: Securing regex engines based on practitioners' problems and perspectives.
- **Security in emerging paradigms**: Denial of service in GraphQL and event-driven frameworks.

Graduate Teaching Assistant Fall 2015, Fall 2017

Virginia Tech

Grader for *Multiprocessor Programming* (graduate) and *Professionalism in Computing* (undergraduate).

Intern, Microsoft Research (RiSE group: Cloud Security) Summer 2019

Microsoft Research, Redmond, WA

Project sponsor: Dr. Patrice Godefroid

- Techniques and tools for web API security testing.

Intern, IBM Research (Storage) Summer 2018

IBM Research, Almaden, CA

Project sponsor: Dr. Deepavali Bhagwat

- Provenance collection system for machine learning applications (VLDB'20).

Software Tester, IBM (GPFS) 2012-2015, Summer 2016, Summer 2017

IBM, Poughkeepsie, NY

- Developed distributed applications and tooling for cluster management and file system testing.
- Worked with and trained test teams in the US, the UK, Mexico, Germany, India, and China.
- Five patents on techniques for file system testing.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

My ambition is to improve software quality. I use qualitative and quantitative methods to identify socio/technical defects and shortcomings. I identify and resolve problems using systems and security principles. For example:

- **Troublesome tools**: I have given a strong empirical foundation to the study of regular expressions (FSE'18, FSE'19, ASE'19a, ASE'19b).
- **Emerging paradigms**: I have studied the systems and security issues that arise in event-driven programming as embodied in the Node.js framework (EuroSys'17, USENIX Security'18). I have also examined security issues in the use of the query language GraphQL (ICSOC'19).
- **Distributed systems**: I hold several patents on testing distributed storage systems, and have researched performance issues in stream processing engines (USENIX ATC'19).

CONFERENCE PAPERS

Rupprecht, **Davis**, Arnold, Gur, Bhagwat. "Improving Reproducibility of Data Science Pipelines through Transparent Provenance Capture". Proceedings of the 46th International Conference on Very Large Data Bases (**VLDB'20 Industry track**).

Cha, Wittern, Baudart, **Davis**, Mandel, Laredo. "A Principled Approach to GraphQL Query Cost Analysis". Proceedings of the 28th ACM Joint European Software Engineering Conference and Symposium on the Foundations of Software Engineering (**ESEC/FSE'20**).

Davis, Moyer, Kazerouni, and Lee. "Testing Regex Generalizability And Its Implications: A Large-Scale Many-Language Measurement Study". Proceedings of the 34th IEEE/ACM International Conference on Automated Software Engineering (**ASE'19**).

Michael, Donohue, **Davis**, Lee, and Servant. "Regexes are Hard: Decision-making, Difficulties, and Risks in Programming Regular Expressions". Proceedings of the 34th IEEE/ACM International Conference on Automated Software Engineering (**ASE'19**). ***ACM Distinguished Paper Award***.

Davis, Michael, Coghlan, Servant, and Lee. "Are Regular Expressions a Lingua Franca? An Empirical Study on the Re-use and Portability of Regular Expressions". Proceedings of the 27th ACM Joint European Software Engineering Conference and Symposium on the Foundations of Software Engineering (**ESEC/FSE'19**).

Wittern, Cha, **Davis**, Baudart, Mandel. "An Empirical Study of GraphQL Schemas". Proceedings of the 17th International Conference on Service-Oriented Computing (**ICSOC'19**).

Fu, Ghaffar, **Davis**, and Lee. "EdgeWise: A Better Stream Processing Engine for the Edge". 2019 USENIX Annual Technical Conference (**USENIX ATC'19**).

Davis, Coghlan, Servant, and Lee. "The Impact of Regular Expression Denial of Service (REDOS) in Practice: an Empirical Study at the Ecosystem Scale". Proceedings of the 26th ACM Joint European Software Engineering Conference and Symposium on the Foundations of Software Engineering (**ESEC/FSE'18**). ***ACM Distinguished Paper Award***.

Davis, Williamson, and Lee. "A Sense of Time for JavaScript and Node.js: First-Class Timeouts as a Cure for Event Handler Poisoning". Proceedings of the 27th USENIX Security Symposium (**USENIX Security'18**).

Davis, Thekumparampil, and Lee. "Node.fz: Fuzzing the Server-Side Event-Driven Architecture". Proceedings of the Twelfth European Conference on Computer Systems (**EuroSys'17**).

JOURNAL ARTICLES

Ozkan, Davis, **Davis**, James, Murzi, Knight. "Expectations and Experiences of Short-Term Study Abroad Leadership Teams". Journal of International Engineering Education (**JIEE**).

SHORT PAPERS

Davis. "On the Impact and Defeat of Regex DoS". **ACM SRC – Grand Finals**. ***Second place, graduate student division***.

Rupprecht, **Davis**, Arnold, Lubbock, Tyson, and Bhagwat. "Ursprung: Provenance for Large-Scale Analytics Environments". Proceedings of the 2019 International Conference on Management of Data (**SIGMOD'19 Demo**).

Davis, Kildow, and Lee. "The Case of the Poisoned Event Handler: Weaknesses in the Node.js Event-Driven Architecture". Proceedings of the 10th European Workshop on Systems Security (**EuroSec'17**).

PATENTS

W. Davis, **J. Davis**. "Injection of Simulated Hardware Failure(s) in a File System for Establishing File System Tolerance-to-Storage-Failure(s)". IBM, U.S. patent pending.

W. Davis, **J. Davis**. "Verification of the integrity of data files stored in copy-on-write (CoW) based file system snapshots". IBM, U.S. patent pending.

J. Davis, W. Davis. "File metadata verification in a distributed file system". IBM, U.S. patent pending.

W. Davis, **J. Davis**. "Testing of lock managers in computing environments". IBM, U.S patent 10,061,777, granted Aug. 28, 2018.

J. Davis, W. Davis, F. Knop. "Detection of file corruption in a distributed file system". IBM, U.S. patent 10,025,788, granted Jul. 17, 2018.

TEACHING

Instructor, ECE 368 Data Structures Fall 2020
Purdue University

Co-advisor, VIP: Open-Source TensorFlow Software Fall 2020
Purdue University

Instructor, Data Structures and Algorithms Fall 2019
Virginia Tech

Instructor, Introduction to Programming in Python Spring 2019
Virginia Tech

Track Leader, Rising Sophomore Abroad Program Spring 2018, Spring 2019
Virginia Tech

MENTORSHIP

I have mentored ten students on research projects. Five of them have co-authored publications with me.

Three graduate students, Virginia Tech (PhD, MSc) 2016-present

One MSc student, University of Bradford Fall 2018-Spring 2019

Four undergraduate students, Virginia Tech 2016-2019

Two high school students, Roanoke High School Fall 2018-Spring 2019

I have mentored several students in professional development

Mentor, Clarkson University Honors Program 2018-present

Mentor, VT Graduate-Undergraduate Mentorship Program 2017-2019

INVITED TALKS

Regexes are Hard: Qualitative and Quantitative Perspectives 2019
NC State research colloquium

The Dangers of Copy/Pasting Code 2019
Episode of the Podcast "The Secure Developer": `https://tinyurl.com/DavisResearchPodcast`

Regexes in the Wild 2019
Virginia Tech CS Seminar

Academic Perspectives on Node.js 2018
Node.js Collaborator Summit, Vancouver

International Engineering Annual, 2015-2019

Rising Sophomore Abroad Program, Virginia Tech

OTHER NOTABLE ACTIVITY

Disclosed DOS vectors in Python core and Node.js core
Python: CVE-2018-1060, CVE-2018-1061; Node.js: CVE-2018-7158

Guide: "Don't Block the Event Loop (or the Worker Pool)"
https://nodejs.org/en/docs/guides/dont-block-the-event-loop/

VT Intramural Racquetball Champion (Doubles) Fall 2019

VT Intramural Racquetball Champion (Singles) Spring 2019

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Outstanding Graduate Student Service Award, CS@VT 2020

Second place, Grand Finals of the ACM Graduate Student Research Competition AY2019

Winner, Graduate Student Research Competition, ESEC/FSE 2019 2019

ACM Distinguished Paper Award, ASE 2019 2019

ACM Distinguished Paper Award, ESEC/FSE 2018 2018

Microsoft Security Researcher Acknowledgments (Regex DoS) 2018

Graduate Fellow, VT Academy for Global Engineering 2019-2020

IBM Significant Contributor Award (Node.js) 2018

IBM Poughkeepsie's New hire of the month 2014

Frederica Clarkson Award 2012

Clarkson University's Outstanding Senior (x2): Mathematics, Computer science 2012

Clarkson University Phalanx Commendable Leadership 2011

SERVICE ACTIVITIES

Member, ICSE Demonstrations Track ICSE 2021

Member, ESEC/FSE Artifact Evaluation Committee ESEC/FSE 2020

Member, CGO Artifact Evaluation Committee CGO 2019

Sub-reviewer: ASPLOS'18, EuroSys'18, MASCOTS'18, HPCA'19, CGO'19, ISMM'19 2016-2019

President, VT CS Graduate Council 2018-2019

Secretary, VT CS Graduate Council 2017-2018

Organizer, VT Systems Reading Group Spring 2017-2020

Regional Judge, ACM ICPC Fall 2015

SELECTED OPEN-SOURCE PROJECTS

safe-regex	Check if your regex is super-linear. 4.7M dependents.
regexp-tree	Analysis tools for regular expressions.
marked	Regex-based Markdown parser (I consult on REDOS). 354K dependents.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Member, Association for Computing Machinery