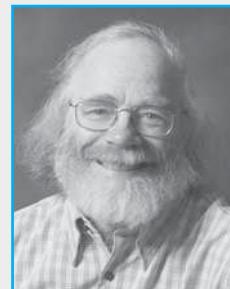


## AN INTERVIEW WITH . . .

### Steven M. Bellovin

Steven M. Bellovin joined the faculty at Columbia University after many years at the Network Services Research Lab at AT&T Labs Research in Florham Park, New Jersey. His focus is on networks, security, and why the two are incompatible. In 1995, he was awarded the Usenix Lifetime Achievement Award for his work in the creation of Usenet, the first newsgroup exchange network that linked two or more computers and allowed users to share information and join in discussions. Steve is also an elected member of the National Academy of Engineering. He received his BA from Columbia University and his PhD from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



#### What led you to specialize in the networking security area?

This is going to sound odd, but the answer is simple: It was fun. My background was in systems programming and systems administration, which leads fairly naturally to security. And I've always been interested in communications, ranging back to part-time systems programming jobs when I was in college.

My work on security continues to be motivated by two things—a desire to keep computers useful, which means that their function can't be corrupted by attackers, and a desire to protect privacy.

#### What was your vision for Usenet at the time that you were developing it? And now?

We originally viewed it as a way to talk about computer science and computer programming around the country, with a lot of local use for administrative matters, for-sale ads, and so on. In fact, my original prediction was one to two messages per day, from 50–100 sites at the most—ever. But the real growth was in people-related topics, including—but not limited to—human interactions with computers. My favorite newsgroups, over the years, have been things like *rec.woodworking*, as well as *sci.crypt*.

To some extent, netnews has been displaced by the Web. Were I to start designing it today, it would look very different. But it still excels as a way to reach a very broad audience that is interested in the topic, without having to rely on particular Web sites.

#### Has anyone inspired you professionally? In what ways?

Professor Fred Brooks—the founder and original chair of the computer science department at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the manager of the team that developed the IBM S/360 and OS/360, and the author of *The Mythical Man-Month*—was a tremendous influence on my career. More than anything else, he taught outlook and trade-offs—how to

look at problems in the context of the real world (and how much messier the real world is than a theorist would like), and how to balance competing interests in designing a solution. Most computer work is engineering—the art of making the right trade-offs to satisfy many contradictory objectives.

#### **What is your vision for the future of networking and security?**

Thus far, much of the security we have has come from isolation. A firewall, for example, works by cutting off access to certain machines and services. But we're in an era of increasing connectivity—it's gotten harder to isolate things. Worse yet, our production systems require far more separate pieces, interconnected by networks. Securing all that is one of our biggest challenges.

#### **What would you say have been the greatest advances in security? How much further do we have to go?**

At least scientifically, we know how to do cryptography. That's been a big help. But most security problems are due to buggy code, and that's a much harder problem. In fact, it's the oldest unsolved problem in computer science, and I think it will remain that way. The challenge is figuring out how to secure systems when we have to build them out of insecure components. We can already do that for reliability in the face of hardware failures; can we do the same for security?

#### **Do you have any advice for students about the Internet and networking security?**

Learning the mechanisms is the easy part. Learning how to “think paranoid” is harder. You have to remember that probability distributions don't apply—the attackers can and will find improbable conditions. And the details matter—a lot.

# Network Management

Having made our way through the first eight chapters of this text, we're now well aware that a network consists of *many* complex, interacting pieces of hardware and software—from the links, switches, routers, hosts, and other devices that comprise the physical components of the network to the many protocols (in both hardware and software) that control and coordinate these devices. When hundreds or thousands of such components are cobbled together by an organization to form a network, it is not surprising that components will occasionally malfunction, that network elements will be misconfigured, that network resources will be overutilized, or that network components will simply “break” (for example, a cable will be cut or a can of soda will be spilled on top of a router). The network administrator, whose job it is to keep the network “up and running,” must be able to respond to (and better yet, avoid) such mishaps. With potentially thousands of network components spread out over a wide area, the network administrator in a network operations center (NOC) clearly needs tools to help monitor, manage, and control the network. In this chapter, we'll examine the architecture, protocols, and information base used by a network administrator in this task.