

Computers & Security From the Editor

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October, in the words of the poet Keats, is thought of as the centre of that "season of mists and mellow fruitfulness"—at least that is so in the northern hemisphere. For Elsevier Advanced Technology it is uplifting in a different way. It is the most important month in our calendar when Compsec International takes place in London.

This year will be the seventh Compsec. It has come a long way since it was first started as a U.K. computer security event. The event now attracts speakers and delegates from all over the world.

This year there has been an emphasis on practical issues. The management aspects of computer security remain paramount but technical excellence remains a key requirement for progress in this field.

Since 1989 when the event was held in conjunction with the EDP Auditors Association's European conference it has been decided that computer audit should also be represented in the conference alongside computer security. There are still many organizations which separate these functions but there is a need for better communication between them.

The positioning of Compsec is critical to the strategy of Elsevier Advanced Technology in pursuing a one-stop shopping strategy for our consumers. What this means is that we are not so much concerned with selling individual products as in fully satisfying the information needs of computer security practitioners. You may want a journal, newsletters, books, reports, courses or conferences. For this enterprise to be to our mutual benefit I would welcome any reader's thoughts on subjects you would like to see covered. Feel free to write or telephone whenever you have an appropriate suggestion.

It would also be to our mutual advantage to spread the word to colleagues. Obviously this adds to our own viability. Fortunately in an expanding field we are well placed to develop new products, and progress to date has been excellent. However, in serving a niche market we are not producing high volumes. Our products remain exclusive and specialized. We could not operate in any single country effectively at this level. But equally our international operation enables us to cover the field properly and to help educate the world.

The aim now must be to reach beyond the relatively close fraternity of computer security into all organizations with significant computer usage. This is the same drive as that for the computer security community itself. The subject impacts upon every aspect of information value.

If we follow the thinking of such writers as Alvin Tofler and Daniel Bell we can see our society, a global one, is entering a new phase beyond the agricultural revolution and even the industrial revolution. This is the age of the information revolution and all revolutionaries recognize that to become the new order is not so difficult. The problem is to hold that position and to earn the right to govern democratically.

In the case of computer security practitioners the revolution is in progress but all that is valuable can yet be lost to nations, to economics, to all organizations simply because we may remain too insular.

It should be said that we have all to become missionaries seeking converts yet without becoming fanatics. What we are preaching is only common sense after all. Some say that time is running out. Memories of the pronouncements of the Club of Rome in the 1970s come back to haunt us in a new guise. Apart from all the environmental threats we have to consider the information threats. It is a new agenda yet to be taken seriously.