COMP90007 Internet Technologies
Week 10 Workshop

Semester 2, 2018

Suggested solutions

Question 1

My mail system gives me the option of setting a "vacation message", so that if someone sends me an e-mail while I'm away, they will receive an automatic reply to let them know that I am not reading my mail. Explain whether this agent should be implemented in the user agent or the message transfer agent?

Answer:
It should be implemented in the message transfer agent, since the user agent is unlikely to be left running while the user is on holidays.

Question 2

Some e-mail systems support a header field *Content Return*:. It specifies whether the body of the message is to be returned in the event of nondelivery. Does this field belong to the envelope or the header?

Answer:

It belongs to the envelope because the delivery system needs to know its value to handle e-mail that cannot be delivered.

Question 3

POP3 allows users to fetch and download e-mail from a remote mailbox. Does this mean the format of remote mailboxes has to be standardised so that any POP3 program on the client side can read the mailbox on any mail server? Discuss your answer.

Answer:
No. The POP3 program does not actually touch the remote mailbox. It sends commands to the POP3 daemon on the mail server. As long as that daemon understands the mailbox format, it can work. Thus, a mail server could change from one format to another overnight without telling its customers, as long as it simultaneously changes its POP3 daemon so it understands the new format.