E-mail Investigations

Objectives

- Explain the role of e-mail in investigations
- Describe client and server roles in e-mail
- Describe tasks in investigating e-mail crimes and violations
- Explain the use of e-mail server logs
- Describe some available e-mail computer forensics tools

Exploring the Role of E-mail in Investigations

Exploring the Role of E-mail in Investigations

- E-mail evidence has become an important part of many computing investigations
- With the increase in e-mail scams and fraud attempts with phishing or spoofing
  - Investigators need to know how to examine and interpret the unique content of e-mail messages
- **Phishing** e-mails are in HTML format
  - Which allows creating links to text on a Web page
- One of the most noteworthy e-mail scams was 419, or the Nigerian Scam
- **Spoofing** e-mail can be used to commit fraud

Munshani v. Signal Lake Venture Fund

- Munshani received an email and altered it
- But he failed to alter the ESMTP numbers which uniquely identify each message an SMTP server transmits
- Comparing ESMTP numbers from the server and the spoofed email revealed the fraud
  - Link Ch 12a

Exploring the Roles of the Client and Server in E-mail

Exploring the Roles of the Client and Server in E-mail

- Send and receive e-mail in two environments
  - Internet
  - Controlled LAN, MAN, or WAN
- **Client/server architecture**
  - Server OS and e-mail software differs from those on the client side
- Protected accounts
  - Require usernames and passwords

Exploring the Roles of the Client and Server in E-mail (continued)

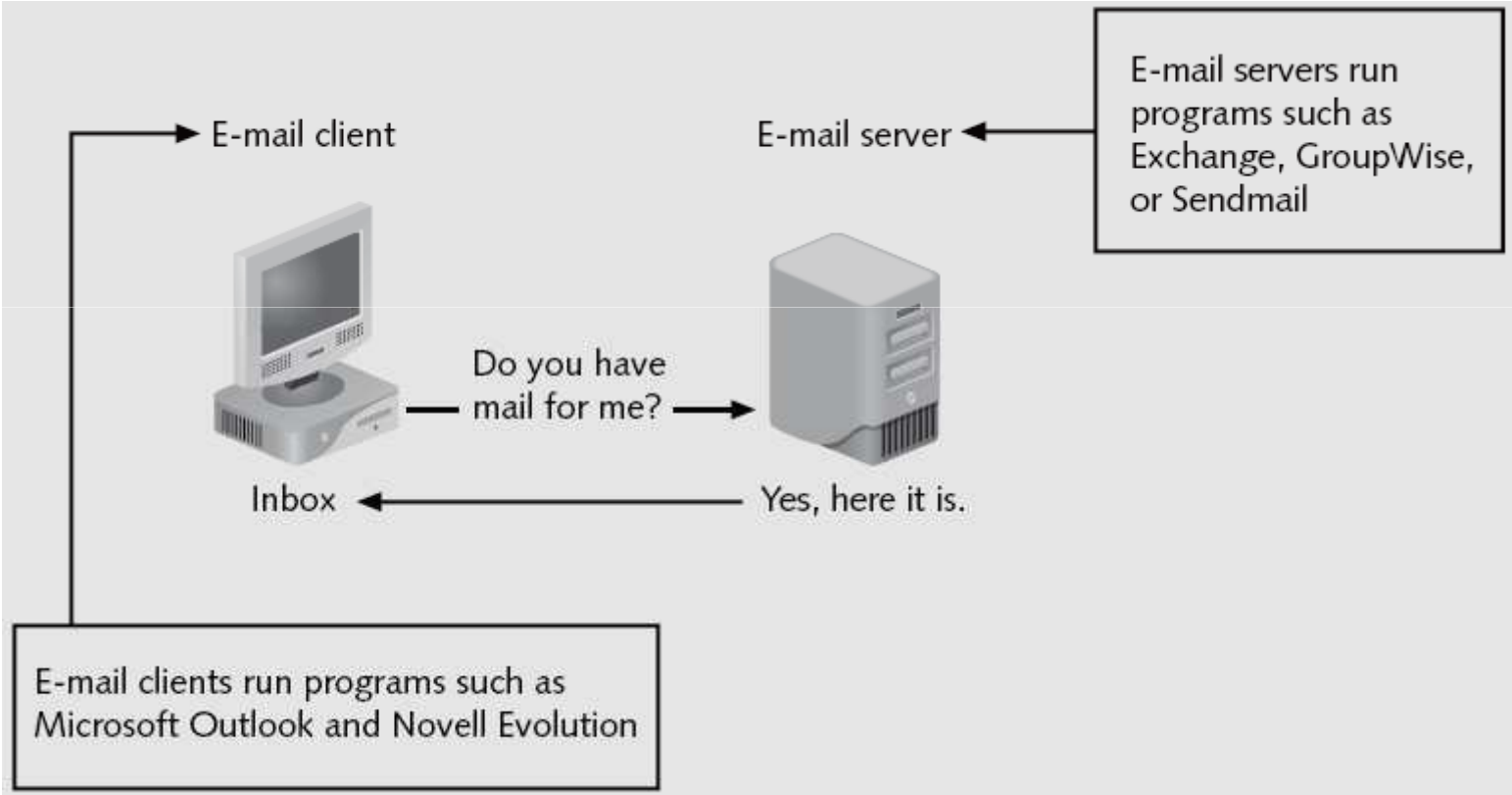


Figure 12-1 E-mail in a client/server architecture

Exploring the Roles of the Client and Server in E-mail (continued)

- Name conventions
  - Corporate: john.smith@somecompany.com
  - Public: whatever@hotmail.com
  - Everything after @ belongs to the domain name
- Tracing corporate e-mails is easier
  - Because accounts use standard names the administrator establishes

Investigating E-mail Crimes and Violations

Investigating E-mail Crimes and Violations

- Similar to other types of investigations
- Goals
  - Find who is behind the crime
  - Collect the evidence
  - Present your findings
  - Build a case

Investigating E-mail Crimes and Violations (continued)

- Depend on the city, state, or country
  - Example: spam
  - Always consult with an attorney
- Becoming commonplace
- Examples of crimes involving e-mails
  - Narcotics trafficking
  - Extortion
  - Sexual harassment
  - Child abductions and pornography

Examining E-mail Messages

- Access victim’s computer to recover the evidence
- Using the victim’s e-mail client
  - Find and copy evidence in the e-mail
  - Access protected or encrypted material
  - Print e-mails
- Guide victim on the phone
  - Open and copy e-mail including headers
- Sometimes you will deal with deleted e-mails

Examining E-mail Messages (continued)

- Copying an e-mail message
  - Before you start an e-mail investigation
    - You need to copy and print the e-mail involved in the crime or policy violation
  - You might also want to forward the message as an attachment to another e-mail address
- With many GUI e-mail programs, you can copy an e-mail by dragging it to a storage medium
  - Or by saving it in a different location

Examining E-mail Messages (continued)

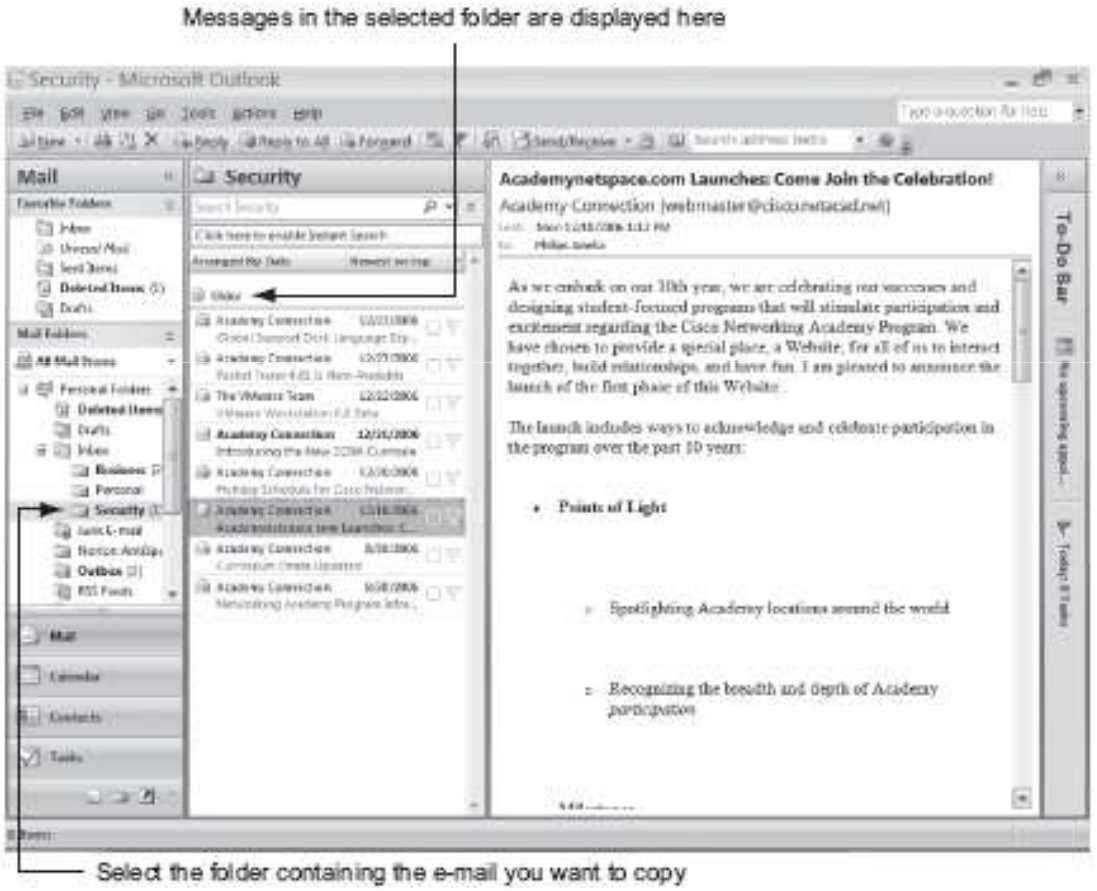


Figure 12-2 Selecting an e-mail to copy

Viewing E-mail Headers

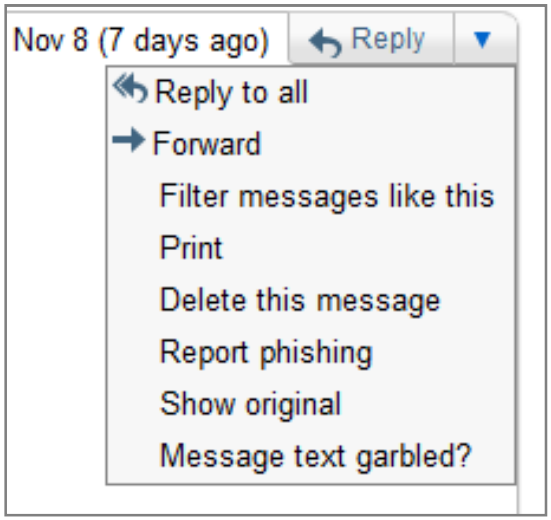
- Learn how to find e-mail headers
  - GUI clients
  - Command-line clients
  - Web-based clients
- After you open e-mail headers, copy and paste them into a text document
  - So that you can read them with a text editor
- Headers contain useful information
  - Unique identifying numbers, IP address of sending server, and sending time

Viewing E-mail Headers (continued)

- Outlook
  - Open the Message Options dialog box
  - Copy headers
  - Paste them to any text editor
- Outlook Express
  - Open the message Properties dialog box
  - Select Message Source
  - Copy and paste the headers to any text editor

Email Headers in Gmail

- Click “Reply” drop-down arrow, “Show original”




```
Delivered-To: sam.bowne@gmail.com
Received: by 10.220.199.195 with SMTP id et3cs9078vcb;
        Mon, 8 Nov 2010 17:50:42 -0800 (PST)
Return-Path: <ccsf_hackers+bncCMrI05G0FxDn0eLmBBoEmBaGPQ@googlegroups.com>
Received-SPF: pass (google.com: domain of ccsf_hackers+bncCMrI05G0FxDn0eLmBBoEmBaGPQ@
10.142.149.8 as permitted sender) client-ip=10.142.149.8;
Authentication-Results: mr.google.com; spf=pass (google.com: domain of
ccsf_hackers+bncCMrI05G0FxDn0eLmBBoEmBaGPQ@googlegroups.com designates 10.142.149.8 a
smtp.mail=ccsf_hackers+bncCMrI05G0FxDn0eLmBBoEmBaGPQ@googlegroups.com; dkim=pass
header.i=ccsf_hackers+bncCMrI05G0FxDn0eLmBBoEmBaGPQ@googlegroups.com
Received: from mr.google.com ([10.142.149.8])
        by 10.142.149.8 with SMTP id w8mr1776030wfd.45.1289267441901 (num_hops = 1);
        Mon, 08 Nov 2010 17:50:41 -0800 (PST)
DKIM-Signature: v=1; a=rsa-sha256; c=relaxed/relaxed;
```

Viewing E-mail Headers (continued)

Figure 12-3 An Outlook e-mail header

Examining E-mail Headers

- Gather supporting evidence and track suspect
  - Return path
  - Recipient’s e-mail address
  - Type of sending e-mail service
  - IP address of sending server
  - Name of the e-mail server
  - Unique message number
  - Date and time e-mail was sent
  - Attachment files information
    - See link Ch 12b for an example—tracing the source of spam

Examining Additional E-mail Files

- E-mail messages are saved on the client side or left at the server
- Microsoft Outlook uses .pst and .ost files
- Most e-mail programs also include an electronic address book
- In Web-based e-mail
  - Messages are displayed and saved as Web pages in the browser's cache folders
  - Many Web-based e-mail providers also offer instant messaging (IM) services

Tracing an E-mail Message

- Contact the administrator responsible for the sending server
- Finding domain name's point of contact
  - www.arin.net
  - www.internic.com
  - www.freeality.com
  - www.google.com
- Find suspect's contact information
- Verify your findings by checking network e-mail logs against e-mail addresses

Using Network E-mail Logs

- Router logs
  - Record all incoming and outgoing traffic
  - Have rules to allow or disallow traffic
  - You can resolve the path a transmitted e-mail has taken
- Firewall logs
  - Filter e-mail traffic
  - Verify whether the e-mail passed through
- You can use any text editor or specialized tools

Using Network E-mail Logs (continued)

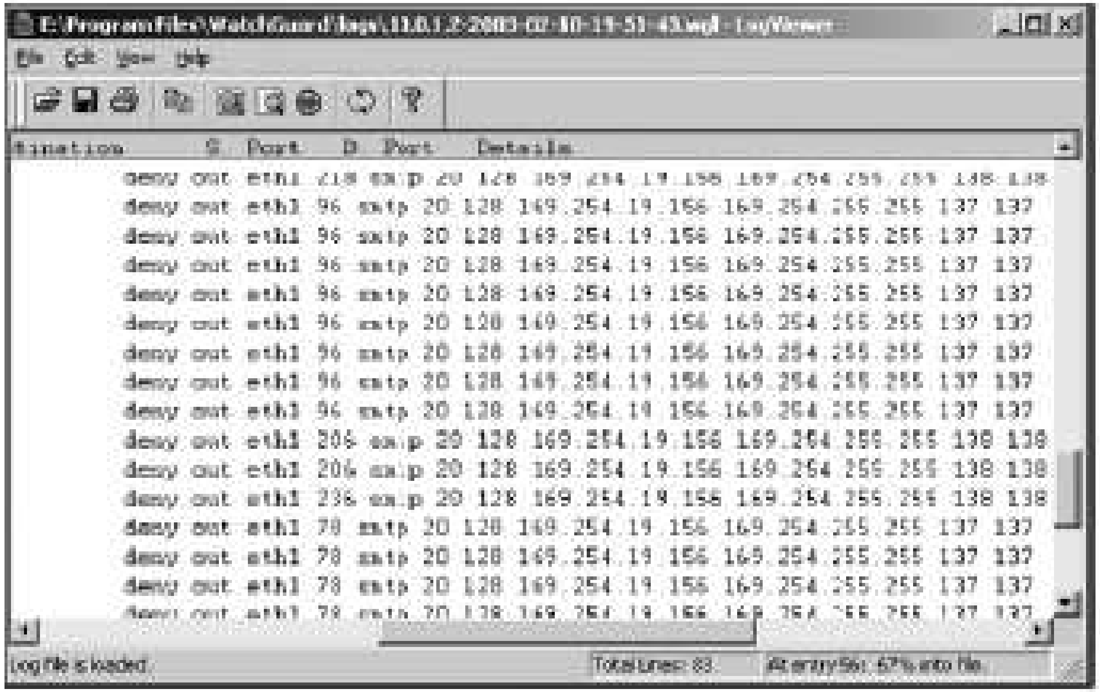


Figure 12-13 A firewall log

Understanding E-mail Servers

Understanding E-mail Servers

- Computer loaded with software that uses e-mail protocols for its services
  - And maintains logs you can examine and use in your investigation
- E-mail storage
  - Database
  - Flat file
- Logs
  - Default or manual
  - Continuous and circular

Understanding E-mail Servers (continued)

- Log information
  - E-mail content
  - Sending IP address
  - Receiving and reading date and time
  - System-specific information
- Contact suspect’s network e-mail administrator as soon as possible
- Servers can recover deleted e-mails
  - Similar to deletion of files on a hard drive

Understanding E-mail Servers (continued)

Figure 12-14 An e-mail server log file

Examining UNIX E-mail Server Logs

- /etc/sendmail.cf
  - Configuration information for Sendmail
- /etc/syslog.conf
  - Specifies how and which events Sendmail logs
- /var/log/maillog
  - **SMTP** and **POP3** communications
    - IP address and time stamp
- Check UNIX man pages for more information

Examining UNIX E-mail Server Logs (continued)

```
# The following line will send all mail logs to the /var/log/maillog
directory
mail.*                          /var/log/maillog
# Log all emergency messages in the same place
*.emerg                         *
*.emerg                         @superiorbicycles.biz
# This line will put all news and e-mail encoded with uucp with
Critical errors in the #/var/log/spooler
uucp, news.crit
```

Figure 12-15 A typical syslog.conf file

Examining UNIX E-mail Server Logs (continued)

```
May 21 10:10:32 poser sendmail[5365]: NOQUEUE: "wiz" command from
[10.0.1.1] (10.0.1.1)
May 21 10:10:32 poser sendmail[5365]: NOQUEUE: "debug" command from
[10.0.1.1] (10.0.1.1)
```

Figure 12-16 A maillog file with SMTP information

```
May 21 10:12:44 poser ipop3d[5373]: port 110 service init from 10.0.1.1
May 21 10:12:44 poser ipop3d[5373]: Login failure user=rich
host=[10.0.1.1]
```

Figure 12-17 A maillog file with POP3 information

Examining Microsoft E-mail Server Logs

- Microsoft Exchange Server (Exchange)
  - Uses a database
  - Based on Microsoft Extensible Storage Engine
- Messaging Application Programming Interface (MAPI)
  - A Microsoft system that enables different e- mail applications to work together

Examining Microsoft E-mail Server Logs

- The “Information Store” is made of tw0 files
  - Database files *.edb
    - Responsible for MAPI information
  - Database files *.stm
    - Responsible for non-MAPI information

Examining Microsoft E-mail Server Logs (continued)

- Administrators can recover lost or deleted emails from these files:
  - Transaction log
    - Keep track of e-mail databases
  - Checkpoints
    - Marks the place in the transaction log where the last backup was made

Examining Microsoft E-mail Server Logs (continued)

- Other useful files
  - Temporary files
  - E-mail communication logs
    - res#.log
  - Tracking.log
    - Tracks messages

Examining Microsoft E-mail Server Logs (continued)

Figure 12-18 A message tracking log in verbose mode

Examining Microsoft E-mail Server Logs (continued)

- Troubleshooting or diagnostic log
  - Logs events
  - Use Windows Event Viewer
  - Open the Event Properties dialog box for more details about an event

Examining Microsoft E-mail Server Logs (continued)

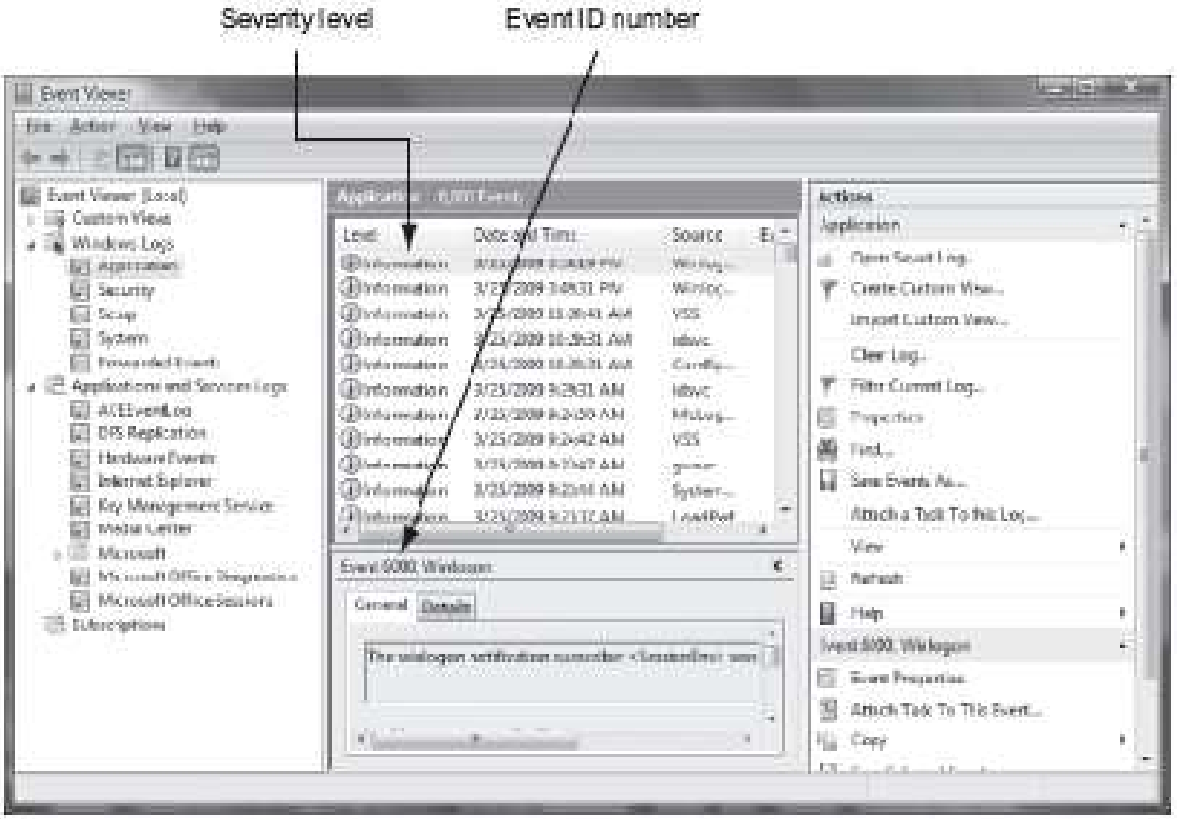


Figure 12-19 Viewing a log in Event Viewer

Examining Microsoft E-mail Server Logs (continued)

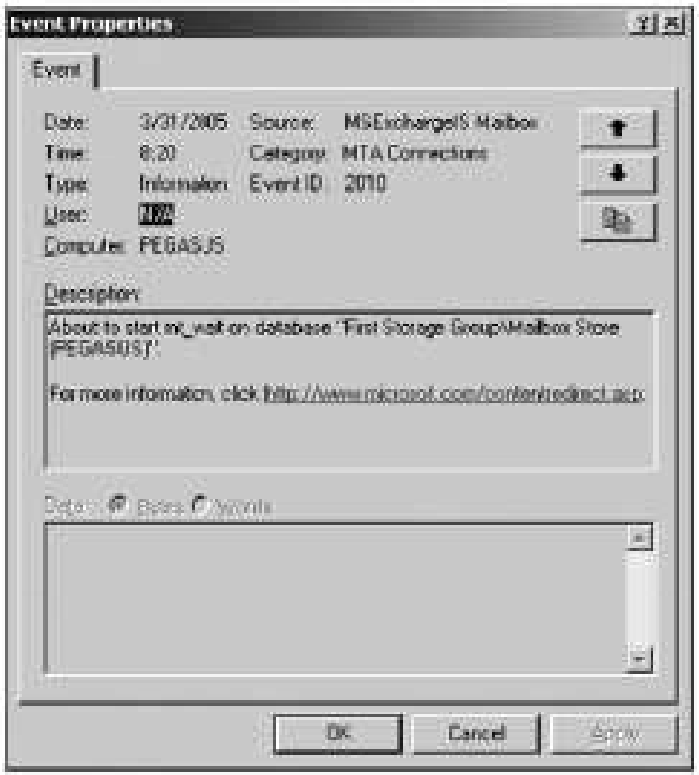


Figure 12-20 The Event Properties dialog box

Examining Novell GroupWise E-mail Logs

- Up to 25 databases for e-mail users
  - Stored on the Ofuser directory object
  - Referenced by a username, an unique identifier, and .db extension
- Shares resources with e-mail server databases
- Mailboxes organizations
  - Permanent index files
  - QuickFinder

Examining Novell GroupWise E-mail Logs (continued)

- Folder and file structure can be complex
  - It uses Novell directory structure
- Guardian
  - Directory of every database
  - Tracks changes in the GroupWise environment
  - Considered a single point of failure
- Log files
  - GroupWise generates log files (.log extension) maintained in a standard log format in GroupWise folders

Using Specialized E-mail Forensics Tools

Using Specialized E-mail Forensics Tools

- Tools include:
  - AccessData's Forensic Toolkit (FTK)
  - ProDiscover Basic
  - FINALeMAIL
  - Sawmill-GroupWise
  - DBXtract
  - Fookes Aid4Mail and MailBag Assistant
  - Paraben E-Mail Examiner
  - Ontrack Easy Recovery EmailRepair
  - R-Tools R-Mail

Using Specialized E-mail Forensics Tools (continued)

- Tools allow you to find:
  - E-mail database files
  - Personal e-mail files
  - Offline storage files
  - Log files
- Advantage
  - Do not need to know how e-mail servers and clients work

Using Specialized E-mail Forensics Tools (continued)

- FINALeMAIL
  - Scans e-mail database files
  - Recovers deleted e-mails
  - Searches computer for other files associated with e-mail

Using Specialized E-mail Forensics Tools (continued)

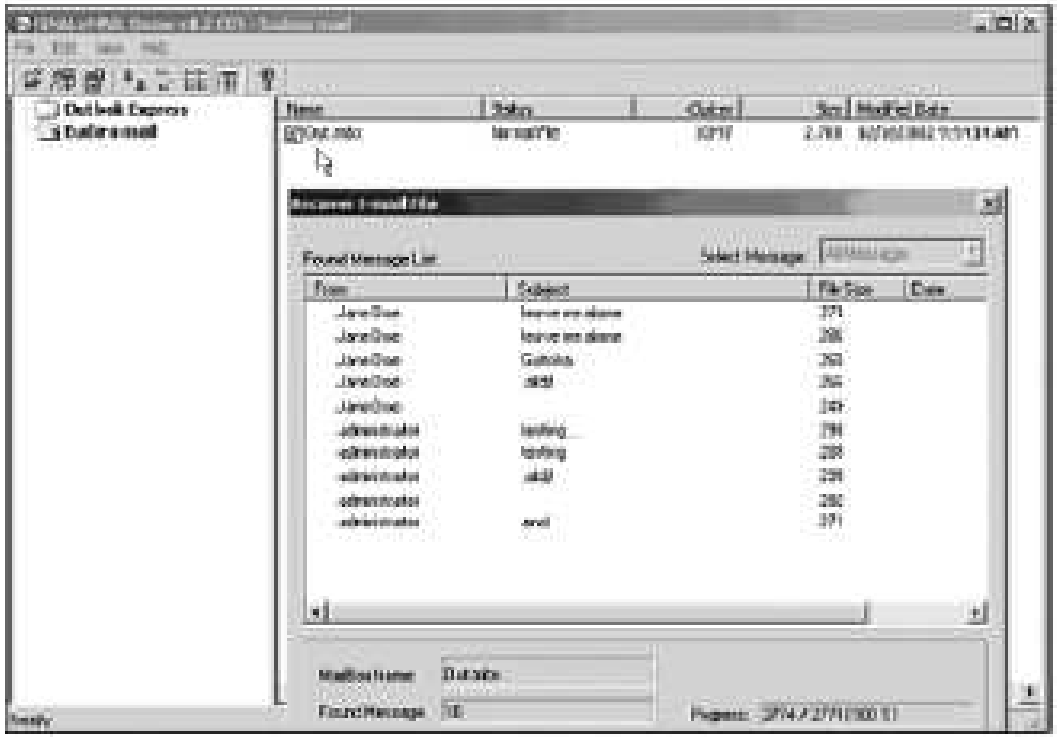


Figure 12-21 E-mail search results in FINAL eMAIL

Using Specialized E-mail Forensics Tools (continued)

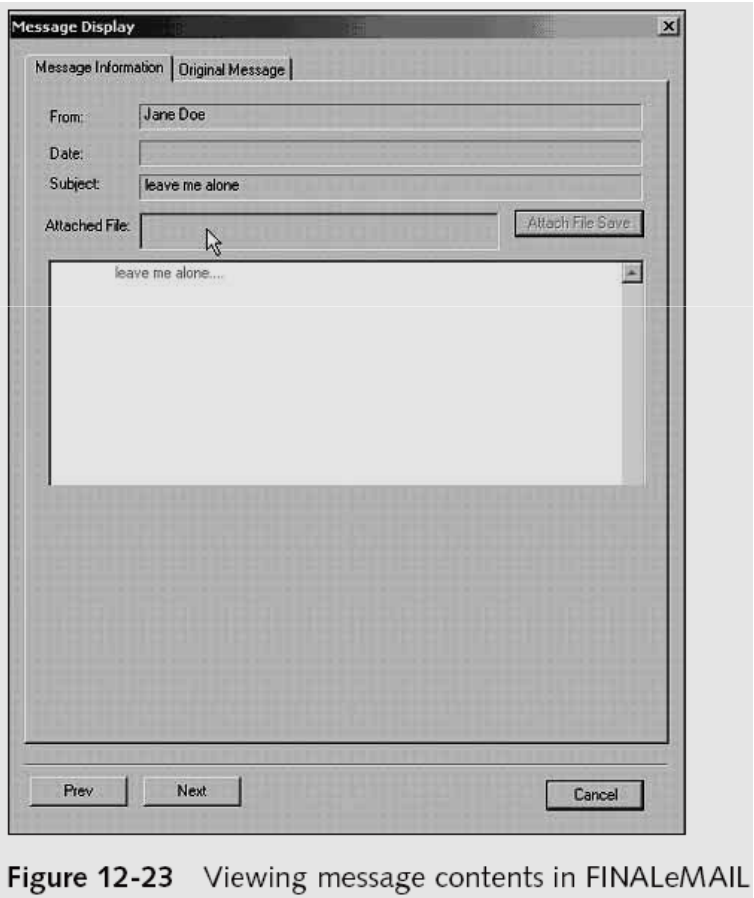


Figure 12-23 Viewing message contents in FINALeMAIL

Using AccessData FTK to Recover E-mail

- FTK
  - Can index data on a disk image or an entire drive for faster data retrieval
  - Filters and finds files specific to e-mail clients and servers
- To recover e-mail from Outlook and Outlook Express
  - AccessData integrated dtSearch
    - dtSearch builds a b-tree index of all text data in a drive, an image file, or a group of files

Using AccessData FTK to Recover E-mail (continued)

Figure 12-24 KFF warning and AccessData's evaluation notice

Using AccessData FTK to Recover E-mail (continued)

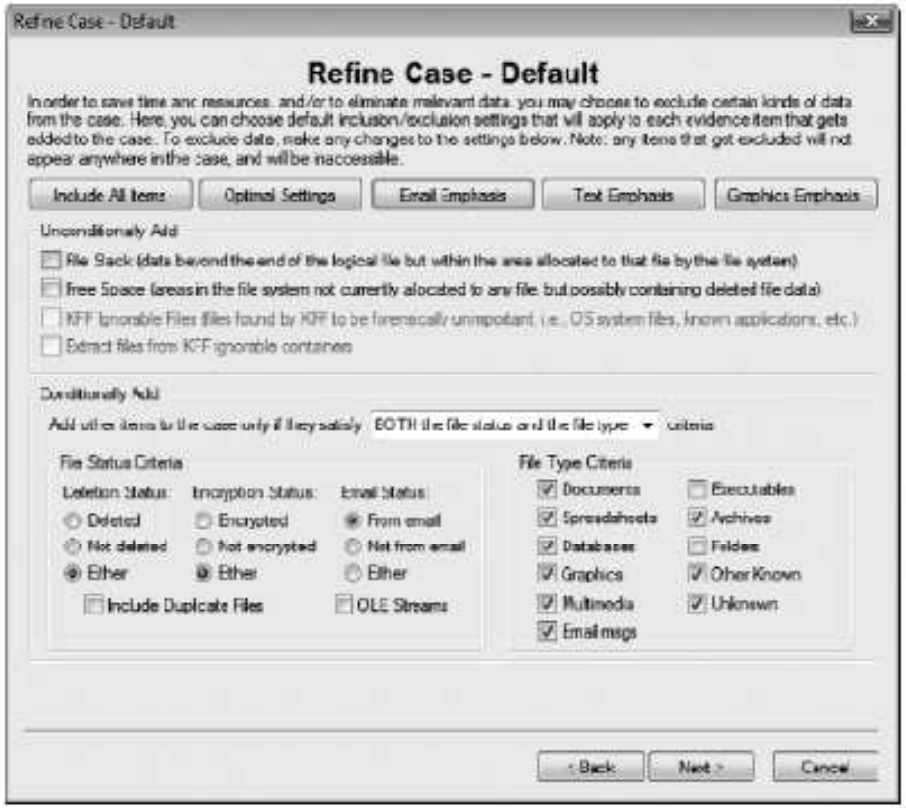


Figure 12-25 The Refine Case - Default dialog box

Using AccessData FTK to Recover E-mail (continued)

Figure 12-28 The E-Mail tab showing all messages

Using a Hexadecimal Editor to Carve E-mail Messages

- Very few vendors have products for analyzing e-mail in systems other than Microsoft
- **mbox** format
  - Stores e-mails in flat plaintext files
- **Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions (MIME)** format
  - Used by vendor-unique e-mail file systems, such as Microsoft .pst or .ost
- Example: carve e-mail messages from Evolution

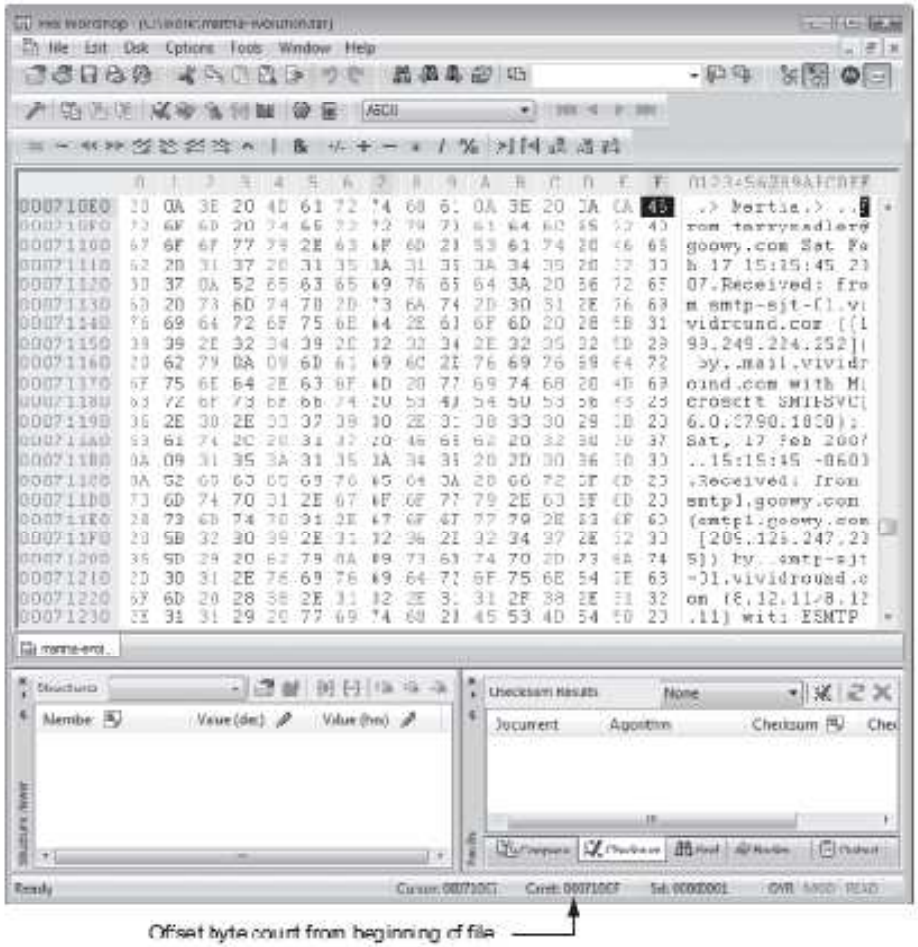


Figure 12-29 Hex Workshop displaying the beginning of the e-mail from Terry Sadler

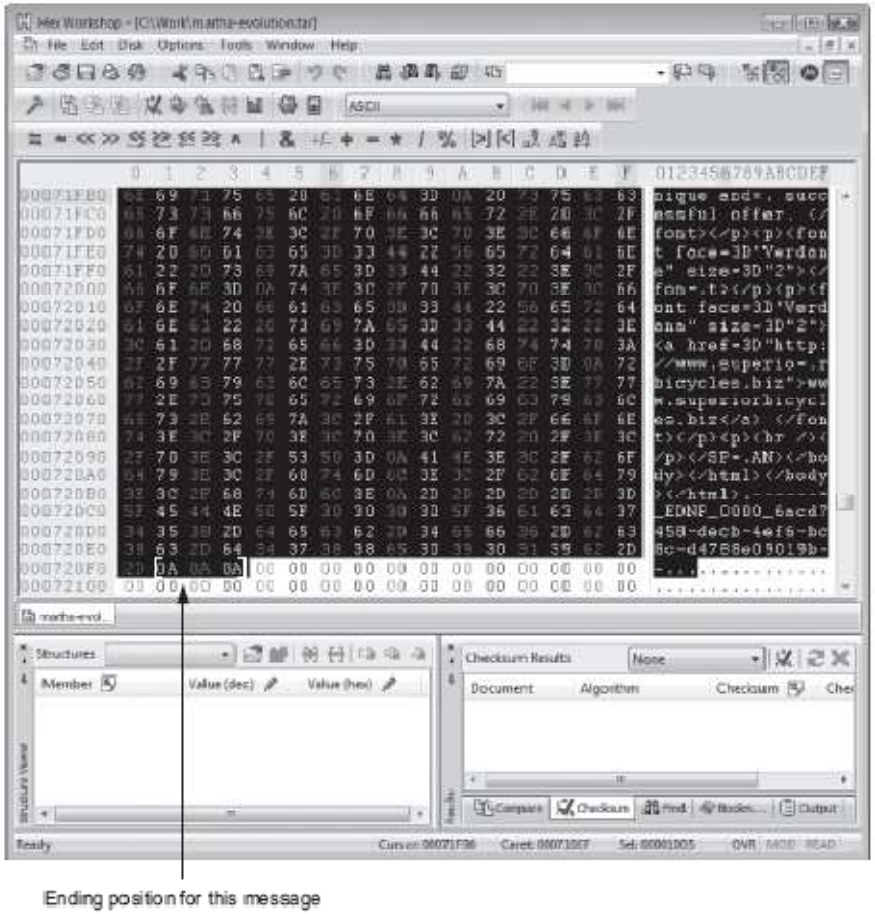


Figure 12-30 Hex Workshop displaying the ending position of the e-mail from Terry Sadler

Using a Hexadecimal Editor to Carve E-mail Messages (continued)

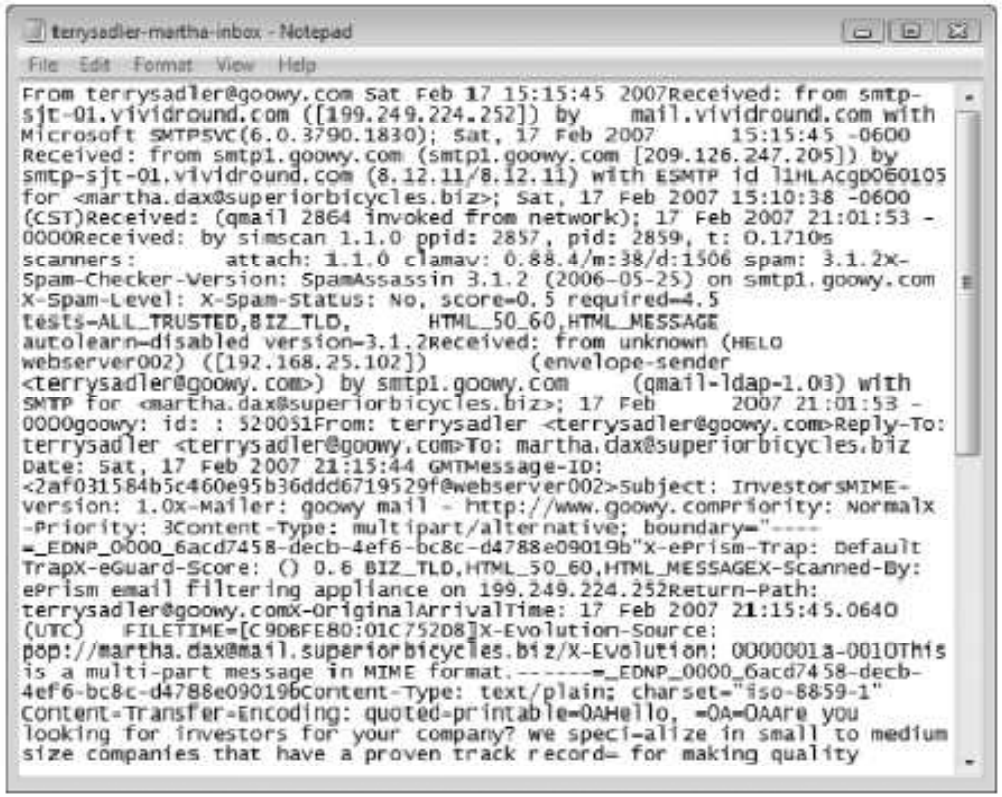


Figure 12-31 Carved e-mail message in Notepad

Using a Hexadecimal Editor to Carve E-mail Messages (continued)

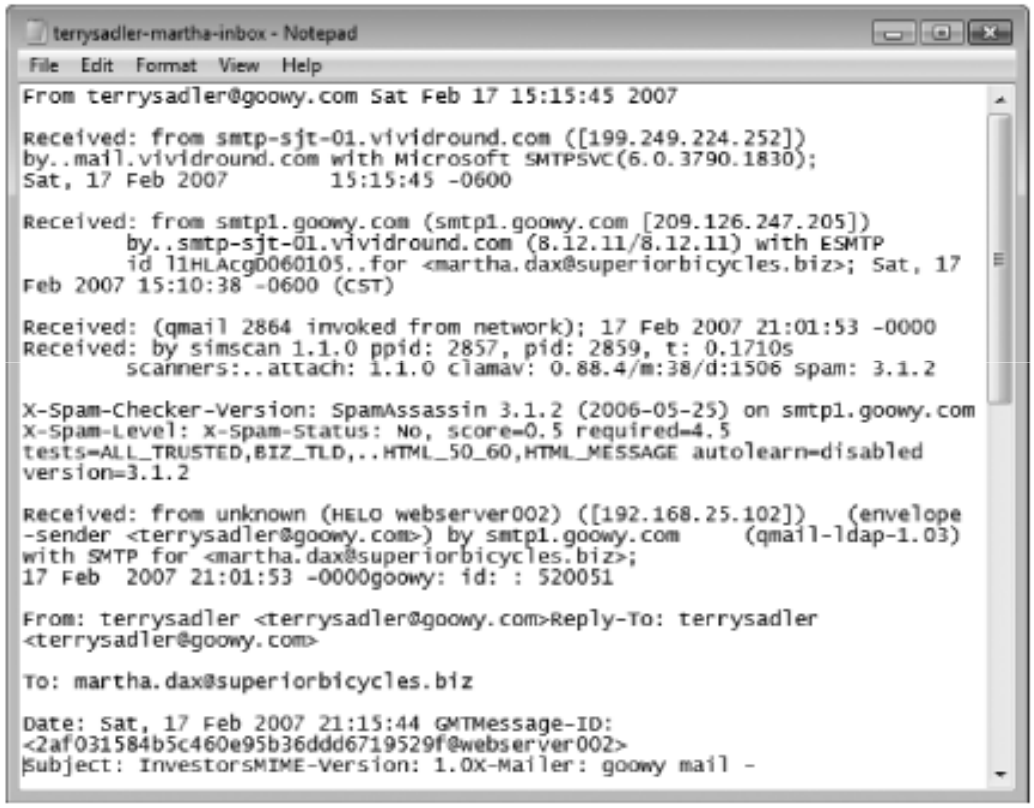


Figure 12-32 After formatting the e-mail message in Notepad

Recovering Deleted Outlook Files

- Microsoft's Inbox Repair Tool (scanpst)
  - Link Ch 12d
- EnCase
- Advanced Outlook Repair from DataNumen, Inc.
  - Link Ch 12e