

Information Technology Services Updates

ITS Update – 07/10/06

SPAMalot

You've certainly noticed an apparent uptick in spam that has managed to circumvent our spam filtering system. It is real and it's due to two new innovations in spam strategy. The first is the ability to force or "spoof" an originating address that appears to be from our own domain (i.e., @hamline.edu). Spammers have learned that institutional spam filters that might otherwise exclude a message, generally have a "whitelist" rule that allows through anything that comes from their own institution, regardless of content. The other group seems to be among a growing number of "moving-target" spams that arrive in large batches. The on-line spam tracking databases add them, but the spammers never use the same URLs again. So the "rules" that would ordinarily exclude these based on a URL pattern are worthless.

Our anti-spam expert, Unix administrator Steve Bachman, is working diligently to stay ahead of all of this, but it is definitely a never ending "arms race".

Did you know?

Our online "Learning Management System" or LMS, Blackboard, does not reside here at Hamline. Rather it is "hosted" by Blackboard (along with many other institutions) at their service in Virginia. This arrangement allows for a higher level of redundancy and reliability for a very reasonable cost than we could provide here at Hamline. It means that, even if the Hamline network is experiencing problems, as long as a student can access the web from any computer, their Blackboard courses are available to them at all times.

If you have questions or need more information about this or any other ITS Update, please contact Harry Pontiff, CIO (2860; hpontiff@hamline.edu).