

Re: impersonating users on usenet

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.math/2006-04/msg00286.html>

- *From:* quasi <quasi@xxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Sun, 02 Apr 2006 17:20:52 -0400
-

On 2 Apr 2006 11:22:00 -0700, "Chip Eastham" <hardmath@xxxxxxxx> wrote:

Chip Eastham wrote:

quasi wrote:

On Sun, 2 Apr 2006 04:42:57 +0000 (UTC),
magidin@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
(Arturo Magidin) wrote:

In article
<9fju22tmevpgi6grmeehvg17ibv8aj8q12@xxxxxxxx>,
quasi <quasi@xxxxxxxx> wrote:

On 02 Apr 2006 04:01:37
GMT,
Peter-Lawrence.Montgomery@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
(Peter L.
Montgomery) wrote:

If you look at the headers of
the post to which I'm
replying, you'll
see they *_don't_* match that
of the real Peter L.
Montgomery.

However, except for the
spoofed username and
email, the headers of the
above post *_do_* match the
post from this morning in
which my username

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and email were spoofed.

In other words, it's the same user, playing games by posting replies using names and emails of other users.

So far, the two such bogus posts which I've noted were verbatim copies used of a prior real reply from the real user, so no apparent harm was done.

It's happened to me three times as well; twice last November, once recently.

I don't know if it is ->someone<-, or if somehow there is a hiccup in some server that is causing this.

But since the perpetrator has done it twice now (twice that I'm aware of anyway), impersonating 2 different real users, it makes it absolutely clear that it's no accident. I guess we could complain to the user's news provider (readfreenews.net) and get the user's usenet account canceled, but I don't really have the time right now to figure out who to contact and what proof to send them.

I contacted them when the two spoofs of posts of mine (also verbatim, also with the address modified exactly as this one and as the ones you report). I never got any reponse.

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I don't think it's a "hiccup in some server" since it's being posted by a specific user from readfreenews.net.

Also note that the bogus posts all have the header field:

User-Agent: newsSync (Sci4um) 254937

which implies that the spoofed post was posted using newsSync as the news posting program as opposed to whatever application was used by the original poster. If it was just a hiccup, it seems likely that the user application field would have been left unchanged.

It's very possible that the impersonator randomly hits many usenet groups, not just sci.math, and if so, it could be a prelude to a wider attack.

Because of the uniformity with which the header fields were modified, and the fact that the content of the spoofed post, so far, has always been an exact copy of a prior real one, I believe it's probably being done by a script, rather than manually. Still, even if it's a script, I'm fairly certain that the script is being run by an actual user.

Drifting off into conspiracy theory ...

It's very possible that the power elites are aware of usenet and feel somewhat threatened by it. After all, usenet is one of the few remaining outlets for true free speech. Usenet has often been the source of key information, exposing the lies and omissions of the official propaganda. Given that the elites don't have the power (not yet) to censor usenet or suppress it, the next best thing is to destroy it from within.

Perhaps, as a training run, they have started writing low profile, essentially innocent scripts, just to test the waters.

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Anyone remember the episode from The Twilight Zone (I forget the title), where aliens arrive and by clever manipulation, lure the residents of a small town into false suspicions of each other, leading to escalating paranoia and finally chaos.

Without some way of being able to verify who is the real user, a wide scale spoofing attack could provoke similar paranoia, driving many users off usenet, effectively sabotaging it.

Fantasy? Maybe.

Ok, end of conspiracy theory speculation — back to "reality".

Well, let's keep an eye on these posts.

If anyone has the knowledge of how to search google groups for usenet headers, I'd be curious how often that particular readfreenews.net account has been used in sci.math and it would be interesting to know if it's been used in other newsgroups besides sci.math.

Hi, quasi:

I think it possible that the bulletin board in question, which tries to give a Web-based reader for various newsgroups, occasionally mistakes a post from an external feed for one posted through the site, and duplicates it innocently in sending this "new" post out to Usenet.

I wrote:

I've sent a note to the bulletin board hosting company & will share their reply when one is received.

I got a prompt response, acknowledging the (likely) bug in a script and stating that the script has been stopped while investigating and fixing it. Not bad for a Sunday morning, eh?

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regards, chip

Thanks, chip.

I appreciate your taking the trouble to resolve it.

You may have saved usenet, all in a Sunday morning.

With such a good start, why stop at that?

quasi

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