

Editorial

This is the final issue [November 2004]* put together by me as Editor-in-Chief of TISSEC. This issue completes the seventh volume of TISSEC and is the twenty-fifth issue. TISSEC has grown and flourished since the first issue was published in November 1998. I would like to personally thank the editors, referees, ACM staff, and most of all the authors for the sustained effort and interest that has brought TISSEC to its current standing as the premier forum for high-quality original research of archival significance.

The information security discipline has undergone tremendous change since TISSEC was created. On the practical side, the importance of security is recognized at the highest levels of management even as confusion and uncertainty remains regarding what security means and how it can be achieved. The average Internet user has been hammered by viruses, worms, spyware, spam, and phishing attacks to the point where claims of security in existing systems look extremely hollow. Nevertheless web commerce, on-line banking, and similar consumer applications continue to grow and thrive as the benefits outweigh the security risks. Designers of these systems must be doing something right to continue their popularity and increasing penetration with the consumer population. Our understanding of how to engineer the appropriate mix of security, convenience, and cost remains rudimentary at best but the real practical success of these systems gives us strong empirical evidence of what works. Many security purists continue to blast the security of these systems, but perhaps our profession needs to learn from real-world success instead of berating it.

On the research front the amount of activity and the size of our community have increased substantially. Security has also become a topic of interest in other established research circles. There is hardly any computer science or engineering conference without some discussion of security. Security has become a mainstream concern of leading hardware and software vendors. At the same time, security has become such a big topic that it has slowly begun to spin off as a separate discipline. A truly broad and deep education in information security requires multiple advanced courses, and we are beginning to see a few departments worldwide that provide this kind of education.

I am personally optimistic about prospects for achieving effective information security. We all recognize that absolute security is never possible so we cannot declare failure if our systems fail this impossible goal. Instead our criterion for success has to be realistic. Indeed much of our challenge is to formulate success criteria that are achievable and useful in practice.

In closing, I am confident that TISSEC will continue to be a comprehensive and broad forum for presenting the best security research results. It is a pleasure to hand over to Michael Reiter, the new Editor-in-Chief, who I am confident will lead TISSEC to continued success.

RAVI SANDHU

*[*Editor's note:* This editorial should have appeared in the November 2004 issue of *Transactions on Information and Systems Security*.]