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The VoIP Buzz: A Progress Report

March 28, 2006

What’s the biggest technology buzz on campus? Voice-over Internet Protocol (VoIP) communication services of course, but when is it coming to Northwestern?

Last fall, NUIT announced a new multi-year plan for communication services at Northwestern University. Tremendous progress has been made by NUIT’s Telecommunications Network Services to upgrade the University communication infrastructure to enable Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) architecture, a key component to VoIP communication services.

Involvement throughout the University is high, as NUIT has been working with technology leaders on campus to identify early adopters and pilot users for the first stage of the conversion. Beginning this month, selected pilot users on the Evanston campus will be issued new VoIP telephone sets and given the chance to experience some of the early capabilities and features of the new technology. Users won’t see a great difference over their conventional phone until University telecommunications “closets” (router stations) and telephone switches have been upgraded to fully take advantage of all available features and functionality.

NUIT’s converged communications Web site (http://www.it.northwestern.edu/telephone/converge/voip.html) provides additional information about this multi-year conversion plan for SIP and VoIP at Northwestern as well as an up-to-date list of the building upgrade schedule (http://www.it.northwestern.edu/telephone/converge/voip.html#bldg), so you can easily track our progress.
‘De-stressing’ Main Mail Servers Radically Reduces Junk

March 28, 2006

If you think your job is stressful, imagine handling thousands of e-mail messages on a 24 x 7 schedule with no time off, as NU’s main mail servers (casbah, hecky, lulu, and merle) do. Adding to the stress, some very determined spammers have been bombarding the servers with junk e-mail.

Fortunately, the E-mail Defense System (EDS) has been working just as hard. Over 2,000,000 pieces of junk e-mail have been quarantined each week since NUIT launched the EDS last fall, and more are being caught every day. If you need proof besides a noticeable lack of junk in your inbox, you can check your daily EDS quarantine digest. It’s become much shorter, in many cases down from two or three dozen messages quarantined per user to fewer than ten.

If you don’t read your quarantine digest, we recommend that you opt out of receiving it. Delivering fewer digest messages will lessen the load on the mail servers. To opt out, log into the E-mail Defense System (https://eds.northwestern.edu:28080/options.cgi) and uncheck the box labeled “E-mail me the EDS Quarantine Digest, a daily notification of junk e-mail blocked by EDS.”

Recently, NUIT took action to further de-stress the mail servers and keep things running smoothly:

- All e-mail with an EDS junk probability rating greater than “99” is now deleted before reaching the servers, reducing the number of quarantined junk e-mail messages.

- Anonymous off-campus LDAP (Lightweight Directory Access Protocol) queries of the NU Online Directory are being blocked to help prevent the harvesting of northwestern.edu e-mail addresses by known spammers, which has contributed to the increase in junk e-mail.

When anonymous queries are allowed, the directory cannot tell whether an e-mail client such as Outlook, or harvesting software, is making the query. Users on the NU Network are allowed to perform anonymous LDAP queries, but this capability is not available from an off-campus IP address. Find more detailed information on NUIT’s “Get Control” site at http://www.it.northwestern.edu/security/spam/directory.html.
‘De-stressing’ Main Mail Servers Radically Reduces Junk (continued)

Off-campus University users can use Virtual Private Network (VPN) to connect to the NU Network to enable access to the LDAP database.

To enable access to the LDAP database, and to ensure safe and secure access to all NU networked resources, use Virtual Private Network (VPN) when you connect to the NU Network from off-campus. If you need instructions for downloading and configuring VPN, visit http://www.it.northwestern.edu/oncampus/vpn/index.html.

For details about NUIT’s recent anti-junk mail initiatives, visit “What’s New & Changing With Technology @ NU?” at http://www.it.northwestern.edu/transitions/2006/eds-security.html.
Datacenter Preparation Pays Off During Power Outage

March 28, 2006

Although much of the Evanston campus was without power for nearly an hour and a half on February 22, critical University functions such as e-mail, the Web, and student registration operated without interruption—thanks to last summer’s utility upgrade at the NUIT Datacenter. NUIT, with the help of Facilities Management, installed a backup power generator and upgraded UPS (uninterruptible power supply) system to protect the Datacenter in the event of an outage.

“We're very pleased that everything went so well,” said Dana Nielsen, director of NUIT Computing Services. “The transition to emergency power was almost seamless. I think everyone here appreciated just how effectively our upgraded UPS functioned under very difficult conditions.”

The redundant Com Ed electrical feeds to the central Datacenter failed shortly after 3:00 p.m. February 22, but no one needed as much as a flashlight. By design, power was automatically switched over to the generator and the UPS, and all computer and HVAC systems remained operational. The Datacenter was back on regular power later that evening.

Congratulations to NUIT Datacenter staff, and to the other NUIT staff who supported them, for “keeping their cool” during the outage.
UNITS Reps - Thank You for Helping Improve Campus Computing

March 28, 2006

Thank you, thank you, thank you! UNITS Representatives, your service is an essential part of improving information technology on campus and we appreciate it.

Sure, the job description sounds simple — the University Network of Information Technology Specialists (UNITS) Reps serve as the computer and technical contacts within a department or school. But the roles you play are invaluable: trusted advisors, ears on the ground, collaborative team members, test groups, and technology experts, all rolled into one.

Your service is fundamental for testing new programs and services, offering feedback, and assisting with making decisions. NUIT greatly appreciates your efforts to improve the way technology works for all Northwestern users.

Learn more about becoming a UNITS Rep, or view a list of representatives by department, on the UNITS page at http://www.it.northwestern.edu/dss/units/.

One of the benefits of being a UNITS Rep is the opportunity to discuss technology issues with peers at the Third Thursdays Club. If you are a UNITS Rep and you haven’t attended, don’t miss out on these timely, informative discussions — and free coffee. The next Third Thursday Club meets April 20 from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. For details, visit the Events page at http://www.it.northwestern.edu/calendar/.
Speed Up Your Software Shopping With a P-Card

March 28, 2006

If you’re in the market for Acrobat, Dreamweaver, Photoshop, or other popular site-licensed Adobe products, use a University Procurement Card (P-Card) for quick, easy shopping at great discounts! Choose from the full line of Adobe site-licensed software—including software from Macromedia, recently acquired by Adobe.

Through NUIT’s partnership with TRC Solutions, you can use your P-Card (a University-issued MasterCard) at TRC’s online store with no need to wait for purchase order approvals. The easy-to-use site, with a familiar “shopping cart” feature, streamlines the process of ordering software licenses, media, and documentation.

Another plus: TRC offers you the choice of purchasing media along with your site license. Having your own software CD in hand eliminates the time-consuming process of downloading software from the NUIT server and makes subsequent installation quick and easy.

Save time and money -- get a P-Card and buy your Adobe software from the TRC online store!

How can I get a P-Card?
The P-Card is a MasterCard issued by JPMorgan Chase and is available through NU's Procurement Card Program (https://snap.it.northwestern.edu/p/p.cgi/nuinf1/accounting-services/menu3.html). Departments and schools can contact NU Accounting Services regarding participation in the Procurement Card Program.

Where can I buy site-licensed Adobe software?
Be among the faculty and staff taking advantage of deep discounts on Dreamweaver, Photoshop, and many more Adobe products offered by NUIT through TRC Solutions. By dealing directly with TRC, you’ll receive your orders more quickly.
Speed Up Your Software Shopping (continued)

More software offerings from NUIT:

**Eudora v. 7.0**
- **Use:** Upgrade includes enhanced features such as SpamWatch, content concentrator, virus protection, and enhanced filters
- **Cost:** Free to download
- **Version:** Eudora v. 7.0 for Windows or Mac
- **Details:** Eudora (http://www.it.northwestern.edu/software/staff/free/eud/index.html)

* Prices are subject to change.
** Eudora users are encouraged to upgrade to v. 7.0. Future versions of Eudora will not be made available by NUIT after September 1, 2006, and NUIT will support only the current version.

**Symantec/Norton AntiVirus**
- **Use:** Protect your computer from harmful viruses; essential for any personal computer connecting to the NU Network
- **Cost:** Free to download
- **Versions:** Symantec/Norton AntiVirus 10.0 for Windows or Mac
- **Details:** Symantec/Norton (http://www.it.northwestern.edu/software/staff/free/antivirus/index.html)

**EndNote**
- **Use:** Search and organize bibliographic references and images; integrates with Microsoft Word
- **Cost:** Free to download
- **Version:** Endnote v. 9.0 with NU Toolkit for searching University Library resources, for Windows or Mac
- **Details:** Endnote (http://www.it.northwestern.edu/software/staff/free/staff-endnote/index.html)

**Autodesk**
- **Use:** Architectural, mechanical, civil, and animation design
- **Cost:** Annual licenses – $99 per product; perpetual licenses – $199*
- **Versions:**
  - AutoCAD 2006 Student Version (SV)
  - Autodesk 2006
  - 3ds Max 7
  - Media and Entertainment Division Superpack
- **Details:** Autodesk (http://www.it.northwestern.edu/software/staff/dept/autodesksoftware/index.html)
NUIT Announces New Incident Response Protocol

March 28, 2006

I imagine your first response to hearing this latest bit of new is somewhere between “Great!” and “Huh?” Granted, it’s not like hearing you’ve just won the Big Game Lottery, but it’s a significant step towards protection of your personal data.

Why a protocol is required
In addition to being a truly nifty security practice, there are several regulations that require the University to have a defined set of activities (a.k.a, a protocol) to address the potential or actual loss or exposure of “sensitive” data.

Sensitive data can include combinations of items such as name, social security number (SSN), credit card numbers, NetID/password, etc. Additionally, recently enacted legislation (Illinois’ Personal Information Privacy Act, 2005) requires anyone handling personal data (including universities) to notify individuals if their personal data has been subject to unauthorized acquisition through a breach of security measures.

Here are a few examples of a breach:

- The theft or loss of a laptop holding unencrypted files containing names and SSNs.
- A computer holding medical research data (including personally-identifiable information) that is accessed or otherwise compromised by an unauthorized party (e.g., hacker).
- Printed copies of student loan applications are discovered in a publicly accessible dumpster.

What NUIT has done
To demonstrate that the University is “sensitive about your sensitive data” and to address these regulations and corresponding issues, NUIT’s Information and Systems Security/Compliance (ISS/C) department established the Information Security Incident Response Protocol (IRP), located at http://www.it.northwestern.edu/policies/index.html#guidelines. The IRP defines tasks and identifies personnel...
NUIIT Announces New Incident Response Protocol *(continued)*

required to conduct “damage control” activities whenever a security incident occurs.

The primary focus of the IRP is those incidents of high severity, where sensitive data is involved or where there is significant adverse impact to you or the University in general. Though recently published as a formal practice, a working version of the protocol has undergone revision and improvement over the past year.

**What you can do**
You (and your diligence) are the key to this process. The University’s protocol is a response to a stimulus; that stimulus could be your phone call notifying us of an incident. NUIIT’s staff is trained to assist you, gather information about the event, and help make a determination if a security incident has occurred. If we have an incident, the protocol is executed.

Reporting an incident is easy. Simply call NUIIT’s Network Operations Center (NNOC) at 847-467-NNOC (6662) or the NUIIT Support Center at 847-491-HELP (4357).

If you prefer e-mail, send one to noc@northwestern.edu or security@northwestern.edu with your contact information, name and telephone number at a minimum, and a brief description of your incident. A staff member will respond and follow-up on your report. You’re the Key to Information Security!
What’s New & Changing at Northwestern

March 28, 2006

Simplify Your Scheduling with Meeting Maker 8.5.3
If you feel as though there’s just not enough time in the day, you’ll be glad to know that tracking meetings and other daily activities will become even easier thanks to the newest version of Meeting Maker (MM) scheduling software. You will be able to download and use the new software, version 8.5.3, as of Monday, March 27.

You’ll notice the colorful new “look and feel” right away, but there’s much more:

• View meetings “penciled in” on your calendar, awaiting your approval--no need to open a separate window to view proposals.
• Display a proxy’s calendar in a side-by-side view with your own, so you can easily compare schedules before proposing meetings.
• Use enhanced click-and-drag functions for greater productivity.
• Access your schedule from any networked location with a fully featured Web interface.

For more information about Meeting Maker 8.5.3, please visit “What’s New & Changing with Technology @ Northwestern” (http://www.it.northwestern.edu/transitions/2006/mm853.html).

Pubweb Users Find New Tools with Web Hosting Services
Thank you Pubweb users: more than 200 of you have already closed your Pubweb account and found how easy it is to move your Web site to an alternative service.

Although Pubweb served as Northwestern’s Web hosting service for experimental or personal Web pages, its use has declined significantly with advances in Web-related technologies and the increasing availability of hosting services. As a result, Pubweb will be retired on December 31, 2006. (See http://www.it.northwestern.edu/transitions/2006/pubwebretirement.html)

Some faculty have used their Pubweb accounts to publish syllabi and other course-related information for student access and other academic uses. If you are using Pubweb for purposes which support the academic mission of the University, please contact Brian Nielsen in NUII Academic Technologies at 847-491-2170 or b-nielsen@northwestern.edu for assistance identifying suitable alternatives.
What’s New & Changing at Northwestern (continued)

Pubweb account holders can continue to use the service until the end of 2006, but if you haven’t used your account recently, take a few minutes to its contents and close it permanently. Alternatively, moving your content to an external provider is quick and easy, and you can find out more about file transfers and hosting services on the NUIT Pubweb pages at http://www.it.northwestern.edu/webpub/publish-pubweb/.

Please direct additional questions to the NUIT Support Center at 847-491-HELP (4357) or consultant@northwestern.edu.

A Bad Harvest for Them, Safer E-mail for You

You might notice any changes to University resources online, but e-mail harvesters will. The NU Network and your e-mail inbox got a little safer this month with a new layer of security added to the University Online Directory.

Starting in March, the Online Directory displays image files of e-mail addresses instead of active, clickable links. The change only applies to off-campus use of the Directory, making it difficult for harvesters to collect address links with automated programs. This practice, called e-mail obscuring, still allows addresses to be viewed by human users.

You won’t notice any change to the Online Directory if you are on campus or using Virtual Private Network (VPN), so you will continue to see active, clickable e-mail addresses for Directory listings. Even if you use the Online Directory from off campus and without VPN, you can also log into the Directory to view active links.

The Northwestern Directory is not the only target for harvesters. It is easy for harvesting tools to capture active addresses from any Web site, so it is a good practice to obscure your e-mail address yourself when you post it online. It is easy to do-just add something obvious to your address. For example, if your address is test@testschool.edu, it can be safely posted as “test ATSYMBOL test school DOT edu.” Learn more about safe e-mail practices on NUIT’s “Controlling Junk E-mail” page at http://www.it.northwestern.edu/security/spam/.

Find out more about the change to the University Directory at “What’s New & Changing with Technology @ Northwestern” (http://www.it.northwestern.edu/transitions/2006/obscuring.html). Please direct questions to the NUIT Support Center at 847-491-HELP (4357) or consultant@northwestern.edu.