Get Ready for a Leaner, Cleaner Inbox with Northwestern's New E-mail Defense System

If your DELETE key is getting a daily workout from the mountain of unsolicited commercial or junk e-mail, take heart. Soon, your inbox will be lighter and healthier as those annoying “need a 3.25% mortgage rate,” “this pill will fix everything,” or “take your business worldwide” messages begin to disappear. The reason: Northwestern’s new University-wide E-mail Defense System (EDS).

The E-mail Defense System is an enterprise e-mail filtering system powered by Sophos PureMessage. It will scan all incoming Northwestern e-mail for junk e-mail, virus, and malicious spyware threats before they are delivered to the University’s central e-mail servers (casbah, hecy, lulu, and merle).

How will the E-mail Defense System work?

Using a combination of anti-virus, anti-junk e-mail and threat reduction technology, each incoming e-mail is analyzed and assigned a junk e-mail probability rating between 0% and 100%. The higher the rating, the more likely the e-mail is identified as junk and is safely quarantined in a separate location on the network.

Each user will receive a daily e-mail digest with a list of quarantined messages and will have the opportunity to access, review, and retrieve any messages falsely identified as junk. Users also have the benefit of managing their quarantined messages, ensuring that desired e-mails are properly delivered. Most importantly, virus-infected e-mail is now automatically blocked, posing no threat to the network or individual computer systems.

How did Northwestern choose this system?

An evaluation team with University-wide representation was involved in testing the new system. Benchmarking also took place with several peer institutions, such as the University of Chicago and Purdue University, who are currently using this technology with great success.

“It was important for us in the testing phase to identify and address University-wide priorities relating to the new E-mail Defense System,” said Wendy Woodward, director of NUIT Technology Support Services. “The end results were overwhelmingly high. Nearly 95% of those who participated in the evaluation saw this system as a benefit to the University.”

When will the E-mail Defense System be implemented?

NUIT has already begun scanning all incoming Northwestern e-mail for virus threats, mass mailer worms, and other forms of malicious code, before it is delivered to the University’s central e-mail servers (casbah, hecy, lulu, and merle). Full implementation of the EDS will be an opt-out service launched early fall quarter; however, users who do not wish to participate in the junk e-mail filtering will be able to remove themselves by using easy-to-follow instructions that will be made available closer to implementation.

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Chicago's History Comes to Life Online

Chicago’s legendary history has been captured in an exciting, comprehensive resource that not only brings the past to life, but goes beyond any previous work in detail, scope, and accessibility.

The Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago <www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org>, a collaboration between the Chicago Historical Society (CHS), the Newberry Library, and Northwestern University, represents nearly three years of work by specialists from NUIT Academic Technologies and their CHS counterparts.

Although it owes much to the recently released print Encyclopedia of Chicago developed by the Newberry and CHS, the Electronic Encyclopedia “takes the information to new levels previously unavailable in any form,” said Bob Taylor, director of NUIT Academic Technologies. In fact, material in the print Encyclopedia accounts for a relative fraction of what is contained within the Web version.

The Electronic Encyclopedia seamlessly integrates thousands of authored entries, historic documents, photographs, video, maps, letters, newspapers and more, for virtually unlimited browsing without ever reaching a “dead end.” “There’s always a new direction ahead,” said Taylor.

Behind that overwhelming volume of information is a supporting structure engineered as skillfully as that of any Chicago skyscraper. A team of NUIT Web applications developers and media specialists led by Bill Parod, scholarly technologies architect; Jonathan Smith, distributed learning architect; and Harlan Wallach, media services architect, worked in close collaboration throughout the project.

Among the site’s outstanding features is an online bound volume viewer that allows you to browse original archival documents page by page in high-resolution detail, including Daniel Burnham’s complete 1909 Plan of Chicago. “This is the nicest example we’ve seen to date of a historical document viewer for the Web that pays full respect to the print original,” Taylor said.

There are custom-designed tools for viewing the site’s thousands of zoomable, high-resolution images, and a unique “breadcrumb trail” with sequential thumbnails of recently viewed pages.

Each of the site’s 1,400 authored entries is cross-indexed to generate “see also” references—a challenging task, considering the amount of information available. “We considered each reference very carefully,” Taylor said. “It took an amazing amount of work by the Academic Technologies team led by Harlan, Bill, and Jonathan. I cannot say enough about their effort and their determination to meet the goals of CHS, the Newberry, and Northwestern on this project.”

The Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago is a “living” history of the city, according to Taylor. The Chicago Historical Society plans to continue to build content on the site during the coming years, with the assistance of NUIT Academic Technologies.
Keeping Your Portable Data Safe
David Kovarik, Director
NUIT Information & Systems Security/Compliance

Handheld devices such as PDAs, Blackberrys, smartphones, and the more recent “converged devices” that combine various functions of the first three, continue to become more prevalent in their use and more powerful in their ability to provide services. Convergence of services has unfortunately resulted in expanded exposure to risk. The expanded capabilities (e.g., wireless, Instant Messaging) offered by handhelds present increased opportunities for infection by viruses, worms, etc. and provide active, portable platforms for propagation. The Cabir worm and “Skulls” program are examples of malicious code specifically directed towards handheld devices.

With the increasing number of highly portable handhelds, the threat of theft has increased significantly. Theft of a device could have drastic consequences to the individual (loss of personal data) and employers (unauthorized disclosure of business-related e-mail, patient research data, intellectual property). Unfortunately, the desirable characteristics of portability and compact size make them easy targets of theft.

But don’t worry, there are measures you can take to protect your handheld from theft and Internet adversity:

• Treat your device as you would a wallet containing credit cards and cash. Keep it in a safe place when not in use and always be aware of your surroundings. Also, take notice of where your cradle or charging unit is located.

• Many vendors provide operating system software that offers a “power on” password mechanism; enable the option and select a strong passphrase/password to protect the device. For suggestions on a strong passphrase, reference NUIT’s Web site at <www.it.northwestern.edu/accounts/password/>.

• The best advice is not to store confidential data on your handheld or smartphone. However, if you must store personal information, use data encryption to protect it. Consult the manufacturer of your handheld device for OS-compatible encryption security solutions. Select an encryption key that is of significant length and complexity that it can’t be guessed, and store your key in a secure place. If you synchronize your handheld with a desktop, you may need to have the encryption software installed on both the handheld and desktop.

• Use of antivirus software is highly recommended. Many popular security software vendors offer products that will keep your data protected with virus protection updates, features, and OS compatibility upgrades. Be aware that handheld versions of antivirus software may have limited features due to memory constraints.

• To ensure your connections are secure, use a Virtual Private Network (VPN). Find VPN software recommendations and instructions on NUIT’s Web site: <www.it.northwestern.edu/oncampus/wireless/pda/index.html>.

Finally, keep your handheld’s OS and applications patched and your antivirus software up to date. If the software has no automatic update feature, obtaining patches and updates will require increased diligence on your part. However, considering the flexibility and convenience offered by handheld devices, it’s a small price to pay to ensure and enjoy safe mobile computing.
Management Systems Team Streamlines E-Billing Procedures for Fall

The convenience of online billing will become the default method of delivery for student tuition and fees bills this fall, thanks to the ongoing efforts of NUIT Management Systems (ITMS).

In partnership with NU Student Accounts and Infinet, a service provider, ITMS has streamlined the e-billing procedure (and helped deter potential identity theft) by removing Social Security numbers from billing statements, and has enhanced the system to permit the collection of admissions and housing deposits. “These changes demonstrate how effective partnerships between ITMS and enterprise system owners can positively impact the business of the University,” said ITMS director Betty Brugger.

CONDUITS Gears Up for Online Billing Statements

In anticipation of fall quarter and the beginning of Fiscal Year 2006, the CONDUITS team is gearing up for the release of online department billing statements. Online statements are anticipated to be available during the first quarter of FY06. Work has been progressing smoothly, and the team is continuing to refine back-end functions in the interest of ensuring optimum customer services.

CONDUITS (Customer-Oriented Network Delivering University Information Technology Services) integrates ordering, processing, tracking and billing in a Web-based environment for NUIT customers. General information about CONDUITS, including a departmental contacts list, is available at <www.it.northwestern.edu/transitions/>.

Featured Web site: E-mail at Northwestern

NUIT's updated E-mail at Northwestern Web site has the information and tools you need to manage your e-mail.

Are you interested in using one of the many next-generation e-mail clients? We have posted helpful step-by-step instructions for migrating your messages from Eudora to Microsoft Outlook, Outlook Express, and Entourage, and Apple's Mail application for Max OS X.

Do you check your e-mail regularly from more than one computer? You may be a candidate for an IMAP e-mail account, with which your server-based Inbox can be accessed from anywhere. More information about IMAP, including configuration instructions for many popular e-mail clients, is also available on the site.

There's also handy information and instructions for setting up a vacation message, e-mail forwarding, or acquiring a departmental e-mail address. Visit NUIT's E-mail Web site at <www.it.northwestern.edu/accounts/email/>.
Go Wireless This Summer!

Whether you’re working over lunch at Norris University Center, attending a meeting across campus, or just need to check your e-mail away from your desk, it’s easier than ever to get online at Northwestern. NUIT’s popular wireless network continues to grow, now with more than 300 access points across both campuses.

Recent additions include access points at Northwestern’s newest spaces: the 1800 Sherman building on the Evanston campus and the Lurie Cancer Center on the Chicago campus. Additional access has been added to more than a dozen campus buildings, such as Fisk Hall in Evanston and the Ward Building in Chicago.

Many new access points utilize the 802.11g or "wireless g" standard, up to five times faster than traditional 802.11b wireless. To maximize accessibility, the standards are backwards-compatible, meaning a network card for either standard will function with all NU wireless locations. For network security purposes, all NU Wireless Zone connections still require NetID authentication through VPN (Virtual Private Networking).

NUIIT wireless locations are marked by a “Wireless Zone” sign (see illustration). A complete list of locations across both campuses and more information about wireless networking is available on NUIT’s Wireless Access Web site, <www.it.northwestern.edu/oncampus/wireless/>.

A special note for Pocket PC users: NUIT is testing VPN technology that would allow Pocket PC devices to connect to the NU Wireless network without Movian VPN software. We expect to implement these capabilities before August, 2005. Please note this before purchasing Movian VPN software for Pocket PC.

E-mail Defense System (continued from page 1)

Northwestern University Information Technology (NUIT) will be offering training and information sessions to help the University community become more familiar with the features, including the on-demand Web interface allowing users to identify their own block-lists and safe-lists.

An early adoption phase is scheduled for this summer and interested users will be able to opt-in to the E-mail Defense System, prior to the official launch in the fall. For more detailed information about the E-mail Defense System, including implementation schedules, visit <www.it.northwestern.edu/eds.html> or <www.it.northwestern.edu/transitions/2005/eds_intro.html>.

NU’s E-mail Defense System features:
• Safeguards against junk e-mail and viruses in multiple language message streams
• Detects up to 98% of junk e-mail
• Protects against scams, including “phishing” attacks
• Easy-to-use online user customization

What’s New & Changing: Technology @ NU

For more information on the following items, please visit the NUIT Web site at <www.it.northwestern.edu/transitions/>.

mtvu added to NUTV lineup
All aspects of university life for students—from music, to news, to general student issues and activities—are the focus of mtvu, a new addition to the NUTV channel lineup. mtvu is the largest television network devoted to university students, broadcasting to over 700 campuses nationwide. NUIT and NU Student Affairs partnered with VideoFurnace and MTV to bring mtvu to Northwestern in the interest of continually evaluating and adding quality content to NUTV. If you have access to a multicast-enabled, switched network connection on campus, you can watch mtvu as part of the “Basic NUTV” lineup. Visit the NUTV site at <www.northwestern.edu/nutv/> and click on your appropriate service offering.

Modem Pool Retirement
In just two more months, Northwestern’s modem pool will fade into University history. On August 1 (two years after the initial announcement), NUIT will shut down the central modem pool. Some things to consider:
• Not sure what your best options are? Many Internet Service Providers offer low-cost dialup service on a per-usage and monthly basis. For information on local dial-up Internet access alternatives, see <www.it.northwestern.edu/offcampus/offcampus-dialup/>.
• If you spend lots of time on the Internet, download large files, or view multimedia-rich Internet content, try a high-speed DSL or cable modem connection. For provider information and comparisons, visit <www.it.northwestern.edu/offcampus/offcampus-highspeed>.

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What's New & Changing (continued from page 5)

Upgrade to Windows XP!
Are you still running Windows 2000? We recommend upgrading to Windows XP as soon as possible to help ensure continued functionality and security. Windows 2000 reaches the end of its supported lifecycle at Northwestern on August 31, which means NUIT Support Center staff will no longer provide troubleshooting or configuration assistance for that platform. Although workstations running Windows 2000 will still function after August 31 and Microsoft will extend its critical, security-related patch support, new software implemented within the University will not be tested for serviceability under Windows 2000. Get information about obtaining the Windows XP Professional Upgrade at <www.it.northwestern.edu/software/staff/dept/windows/>.

Have you heard the news about Eudora?
For optimal computer performance and compatibility on the NU network, NUIT recently announced its decision to encourage the University community to explore flexible and more reliable industry-standard e-mail options as a replacement for Eudora. For the full story, go to <www.it.northwestern.edu/transitions/2005/email_eudora.html>.

NUIT's No-Nonsense Look at Identity Theft

We know the drill: “It won’t happen to me.” Unfortunately, identity theft is becoming such a mainstream problem that no one can afford to ignore it. Through no fault of your own, your identity may already be for sale – and it’s up to you to be vigilant in securing your vital information and reducing your chance of being duped.

Perhaps the most worrisome results of identity theft are its long-term effects. Victims may be left with a tainted reputation, poor credit, and the complicated task of restoring their credibility. Federal officials recently testified that more than 10 million people were victims of identity theft over a recent 12-month period – nearly 5% of the adult population.

Your identity can be compromised through no carelessness of your own. Thieves use a variety of methods to obtain personal information, from physically stealing documents (such as credit card statements) to luring people into fraudulent, spoofed “pharming” Web sites seeking account numbers and passwords. Even mobile phones with digital cameras have become a tool for identity thieves, as criminals can quickly snap a photograph of your credit card in line at the grocery store.

You can’t stop identity theft, but you can reduce your risk by taking a proactive stance and being vigilant with your personal and financial information.

NUIT has recently added detailed information about preventing identity theft to our “Get Control” Web site on Privacy and Identity Theft, located at <www.it.northwestern.edu/security/privacy/>. You’ll find more information about online privacy, links to other security resources, and tips on what to do if you think you’re a victim of identity theft.

The most important advice we can give is to check your credit report at least once a year. A recent amendment to the Fair Credit Reporting Act requires that each of the three major credit reporting companies (Experian, Trans Union, and Equifax) provide you with a free copy of your credit report once every 12 months. Web addresses and phone numbers for these companies are located on our Web site.

If you notice strange charges on your credit cards, bills you’re not used to seeing, or any other suspicious activity linked to your name, report it immediately to your local police department. For incidents originating on campus, call University Police at extension 456 from any campus phone.

Identity theft is a complex and ever-changing problem that continues to rise. It’s in your hands to reduce your risk.