Message from the CIO

Fall is here and we are elated with our record enrollment! Please join the TTU IT Division in welcoming two new senior IT staff members: Don Click, IT Project Manager, and Jeff Barrington, Assistant Managing Director for Technology Support. Based on recent support calls, we developed three articles to address recurring faculty and staff questions: Understanding Undelivered E-mail; Protecting Institutional Information; and Safe Computing Tips for Social Networking. In addition, we provide an update on Ad Astra (classroom scheduling), a collaborative project with Academic Support & Facilities Resources. Enjoy the cooler weather and bustling energy of October – GO TECH! -Sam Segran
Associate Vice President for IT and Chief Information Officer

Coming Attractions: Ad Astra 7

In partnership with Academic Support & Facilities Resources, the TTU IT Division is pleased to announce that campus classroom scheduling will be migrating to the newest version of Ad Astra, version 7, at the end of this semester. After a comprehensive project review, intensive planning, and detailed project management, TTU will move to web-based room scheduling for 2011. On August 19th, Academic Support & Facilities Resources and the TTU Office of the CIO held a working luncheon to unveil the new project plan and timeline to campus course schedulers. Topics included:

- Introduction of the new project management team;
- Overview of the new project plan, management approach, and project management methodology;
- Overview of the new systems architecture that is dedicated to Ad Astra V7;
- Announcement of a pilot for those desiring an early preview of Ad Astra V7; and
- Review the implementation timeline.

The new architecture for classroom scheduling will double the current processing power and provide six times more system memory. The new system is scheduled to go live on December 13, 2010, pursuant to rigorous testing and piloting with the TTU scheduling community. Training will be offered December 20th – January 14th for all patrons to prepare for the new, feature-rich, and robust version of Ad Astra. If you have questions about the project timeline or upcoming events, please contact Academic Support & Facilities Resources at (806)742-3658, or on the web at http://www.depts.ttu.edu/asfr.

Protecting Institutional Information Resources & Data

As employees of a state institution, we all have a responsibility to protect institutional information resources and data, especially confidential information, such as social security numbers, grades, home addresses, or financial data. Information technology resources include hardware, software, and data, including the information posted to University websites (where our published information should be accurate, timely, and consistent with TTU IT Security policies.)

Please review the relevant TTU IT Security policies at http://www.infotech.ttu.edu/security, specifically, the policies on Acceptable Use, Information/Data Classification, and Privacy that address individuals’ responsibility to safeguard confidential data.

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Hot Topic: Understanding Undelivered E-mails

We have received a number of calls from the TTU Community concerned about “blocked” or “bounced” e-mail messages. The reason for the non-delivered message has a multitude of explanations. Because of the technical complexities surrounding spam and hacker prevention strategies, the reason may be:

- the e-mail server attempting to send the message;
- the e-mail server attempting to receive the message; and/or
- the computing practices of the sender/receiver.

When an e-mail is bounced, people sometimes assume that the intended recipient’s e-mail server has “blacklisted” them, or is preventing any TTU mail from reaching its recipients. TTU e-mail servers periodically block other e-mail servers when those servers are actively sending spam. External parties also periodically block TTU e-mail servers, as a result of spam generated by a compromised TechMail account or TTU computer. As a reminder, providing your eRaider credentials to anyone for any reason violates TTU Operating Policy and the TTU IT Security Policies.

However, “blacklisting” is one of many possible root causes to a failed message delivery or receipt. If you have difficulty sending or receiving a message, review the non-delivered receipt (NDR) message that was returned to the sender. In the text of that message, you will find the specific reason(s) for the failure. If after reading the NDR you are unable to determine the problem, we suggest that you review the following:

E-mail Address Accuracy
It’s common for the number “1” to be mistaken for a lowercase “l”, or the number “0” to be mistaken for an uppercase “O”, for example. It is also possible that the recipient’s e-mail address has changed since the last time you contacted them.

Attachment Details
Many corporate and public organizations regulate e-mail server traffic, such as restricting file types and limiting attachment sizes. Potentially dangerous file types (such as executable programs, screensavers, or some databases) may be blocked by either e-mail server. For TechMail, the attachment size limit is set at 20 MB per message.

Message Subject or Text
Some e-mail servers will incorrectly categorize a message as junk e-mail and reject it based on content. Messages that are very short, contain multiple spelling errors, or contain words commonly associated with junk mail are especially susceptible to this. Unfortunately, the industry does not publish exact guidelines for content that trigger junk mail filters. Obviously, publishing such standards would make it easier for spammers to circumvent.

Recipient Mailbox Full
If the recipient’s mailbox is full, the message cannot be delivered.

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If after examining these items, you are still unable to determine the problem, please contact IT Help Central at (806)742-HELP or ithelpcentral@ttu.edu, and reference the NDR message you have received.

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Welcome: Don Click

The TTU Office of the CIO welcomes Don Click as the IT Project Manager in the Office of the CIO. Don joined us on July 1 and will be working on numerous projects across the TTU IT Division. With heightened criticality of resource management introduced by constrained budgets, Don will be working with our IT departments to formalize and enhance our project management. In addition, the Texas Administrative Code requires formal project management for initiatives that exceed a certain threshold and Don will be working to ensure our compliance.

He recently retired from IBM; at IBM he was assigned to Texas Tech University for many years, so joining our team was a natural step. Before retiring, he was a Project Manager assigned to projects worldwide across multiple divisions within IBM. Don is a native West Texan and a TTU alumnus. He and his wife Sheila, who works at LCU, have two daughters. Their oldest, Allyson, recently married Stuart Joy and the couple enjoy traveling and are very involved in their church. Don says he came to TTU with plans to leave as soon as he graduated, but he quickly discovered Lubbock is a great place to live and raise a family. Please join us in welcoming Don to our Red Raider family.

Welcome: Jeff Barrington

The TTU Office of the CIO welcomes Jeff Barrington as the Assistant Managing Director of Technology Support. Jeff joined the TTU IT Division in early September and will be responsible for the server support group, the web team, the facilities group, as well as departmental administration duties. In his new role, Jeff will be helping to integrate formal project management practices, and to lead a number of strategically important initiatives.

Jeff joins us from Mandry Technology Solutions, a Lubbock-based networking and computer support company, where he was a Senior Network Engineer. He brings to us vast experience in a variety of platforms and solutions, as well as seasoned managerial and communication skills. Prior to that, Jeff was employed at the AT&T call center, where he sharpened his technical skills, and gained a wealth of customer service experience. He began his career serving in the United States Army; an experience that he indicates taught him discipline and the importance of communication. Jeff is a Lubbock native, a graduate of Lubbock High School, and a TTU fan. Jeff and his wife Lori, a Special Education teacher at Lubbock Independent School District, have four children. His favorite past time is spending time with family and he enjoys playing golf. Please join us in extending Jeff a spirit-filled Red Raider welcome.

Contributions by: Katherine Austin Beltz, Ph.D., Jeff Barrington, Shannon Cepica, Don Click, Kevin Crockett, Mark Holwerda, Yung Ng, J Stalcup, Britta Tye, Janessa Walls, Laura Webb, and Allen Young.

Safe Computing Practices Committee: Sam Segran, Katherine Austin Beltz, Ph.D., Jeff Barrington, Derral Hateman, Pulin Bhatt, Shannon Cepica, Paco Diaz, Scott Hall, Mark Holwerda, Michael Horton, Danny Mar, Alvin Mills, Yung Ng, Mike Simmons, Phil Smith, Ph.D., J Stalcup, Britta Tye, John Vandygriff, Allen Young, and assistance from IT Division leadership and staff.

Social Networking: A Few Tips to Consider

People using social networking tools such as Facebook and Twitter have become more comfortable sharing information online. In many cases, people invite grave risks by sharing their personal details on a public forum. We suggest you consider a few key items:

- If you participate in foursquare, Gowalla, or Facebook Places, be judicious about the information you share. Take advantage of privacy settings available to you;
- Avoid sharing specific information about when you will be at home or traveling and away. Thieves monitor social networking sites looking for vacant premises;
- Carefully consider the size of your “friends” list; scrutinize additions, as they will have personal information about you. Your “friends” are not necessarily your “friends”;
- When posting pictures that include a child, be aware that pedophiles routinely use social networking sites to locate their next victim; and
- Avoid posting anything that you regard as private or sensitive. Location-sharing applications and social network tools create a sense of community, but remember that a little discretion online can go a long way.

IT Web Site: http://www.infotech.ttu.edu
Texas Tech University Web Site: http://www.ttu.edu
Computer-Based Training (CBT): http://cbt.ttu.edu
Safe Computing Practices: http://safecomputing.ttu.edu

Past copies of TTU IT Division Bulletins may be found online at http://www.infotech.ttu.edu/itbulletin

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