Read IT

October 2013

From the Desk of the CIO

by Kevin O'Halla

Information Security

In each issue of *Read IT*, there is a section on security. In this issue, Mike Ahrendt (Information Security Officer) discusses security and email. Mr. Ahrendt and his team work diligently to protect the institution from external and internal threats. This work goes beyond compliance with FERPA, HIPPA, PCI, etc. Our web site and network are attacked hundreds of times a day. In fact, our web site was the target of a recent DoS (denial of service) attack that significantly degraded our web response time. This particular attack originated in Vietnam, and many of the external attacks are from foreign countries with China topping the list.

Some of you may have heard about the recent attack on Ferris State University. Their web site was down for five days as they investigated the attack and the scope of liability. They found that 36,000 of their faculty, staff, and student records were exposed. This included information such as addresses, social security numbers, birthdates, etc. As a FSU alumnus, I received a letter in the mail notifying me that I was one of the 36,000 individuals that had their privacy compromised. Mr. Ahrendt is working to reduce our risk to an attack such as this. The challenge he faces is that the hackers are always one step ahead. Once a security hole is plugged, another is open and the cycle continues.

In addition to our enterprise system data (e.g. PeopleSoft, Blackboard), we have several other areas to secure. The new HVAC system being put in through our various renovation projects is connected to our network and must be secured. We would not want a malevolent student to break into the system and ratchet up the temperature in all our classrooms. We recently replaced the lighting in the Bostwick parking ramp. Those lights are on a wireless network that also needs to be protected. We would not want to have a student entering the ramp after an evening class and have the lights turned off by someone using an iPad with nefarious purposes in mind.

What this means for all of us is that sometimes it may take a few more clicks or more secure mobile devices to access our various systems. Please know that we take security seriously, and the measures we put in place are not haphazard nor are we purposely putting up roadblocks to make access difficult. We ask for your understanding and support as we try to provide a safe and secure computing environment.

Projects& Budgets: What Do They Have in Common?
by Darcy Swope/IT Manager - Project Management Office

Every year, the college accepts numerous budget requests. The budget committee reviews them and determines where our limited funds will best be spent. There are three types of budget requests: annual, mid-year, and off-cycle. The same is true with project requests.

IT receives many project requests, and we do our best to fulfill them. However, just as the college has a limited supply of financial resources it can spend, IT has a limited supply of time and human resources that can be spent on projects. The Project Prioritization Team (PPT) reviews the project requests and determines where our limited time and resources should be spent.

Beginning this current fiscal year, IT projects are being accepted on a schedule that mirrors the budget request schedule. In other words, we accept annual, mid-year, and off-cycle project requests.

So, how does this affect you? If you are considering a project, it is essential to plan ahead and submit your project request during the annual or mid-year project request windows. Additionally, your project request must be tied to the college's strategic ends and support your department plan. By following a request cycle, we can better plan our time and resources over the next year.

The PPT's 2013/2014 project request schedule is as follows:
- Annual Project Requests: opens late December/early January with a mid-February deadline
- Mid-Year Project Requests: opens mid-October with a late November deadline
- Off-cycle

Off-cycle requests require that additional, more stringent criteria must be met before proceeding with it, such as:
- The project must not be a new initiative
- Significant impact will occur as a result of not proceeding with the project

The mid-year project request cycle is upon us. The window to submit projects will open beginning October 10th and remain open until November 15th.

Did You Know?
Michael Passer/Lead Software Architect

When logged into the PeopleSoft system you can use hot keys and access keys to move around.

For example:

Alt 1 -- Executes different buttons depending on the page type
- "Save" button on the toolbar in a page
- "OK" button on a secondary page
- "Search" or "add" button on a search or lookup page

Alt 2 -- Return to search

Alt 3 -- Next in list

Alt 4 -- Previous in list

IT STATS

March 2013
Calls Handled: 2267
Tickets Opened: 1484
Tickets Closed: 1402
Password Changes: 530

April 2013
Calls Handled: 2530
Tickets Opened: 1688
Tickets Closed: 1592
Password Changes: 611

May 2013
Calls Handled: 3132
Tickets Opened: 2039
Tickets Closed: 1959
Password Changes: 607

June 2013
Calls Handled: 2548
Tickets Opened: 1776
Tickets Closed: 1670
Password Changes: 494

July 2013
Calls Handled: 3501
Tickets Opened: 2446
Tickets Closed: 2376
Password Changes: 795

August 2013
Calls Handled: 5992
(28% Call Volume Increase from August 2012!!)
Tickets Opened: 4225
Tickets Closed: 4057
Password Changes: 1275 (33% Increase in Password Changes since August 2012!!)

September 2013
Calls Handled: 2969
Tickets Opened: 2402
Tickets Closed: 2284
Password Changes: 566 (83% Increase in Password Changes since September 2012!!)

Extended Customer Support Hours
Kurt Meinders/IT Customer Support Manager

IT Customer Support is now offering extended hours for phone support. You can expect the same level of support late at night and early in morning that you get during the day. Our extended support hours will run for fall and winter semesters.

IT phone support hours are:
- Monday through Friday - twenty-four hours a day
- Saturday and Sunday - 2:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

These hours will change for spring and summer semesters. If you need help with your technical issues, please call 234-HELP(4357).
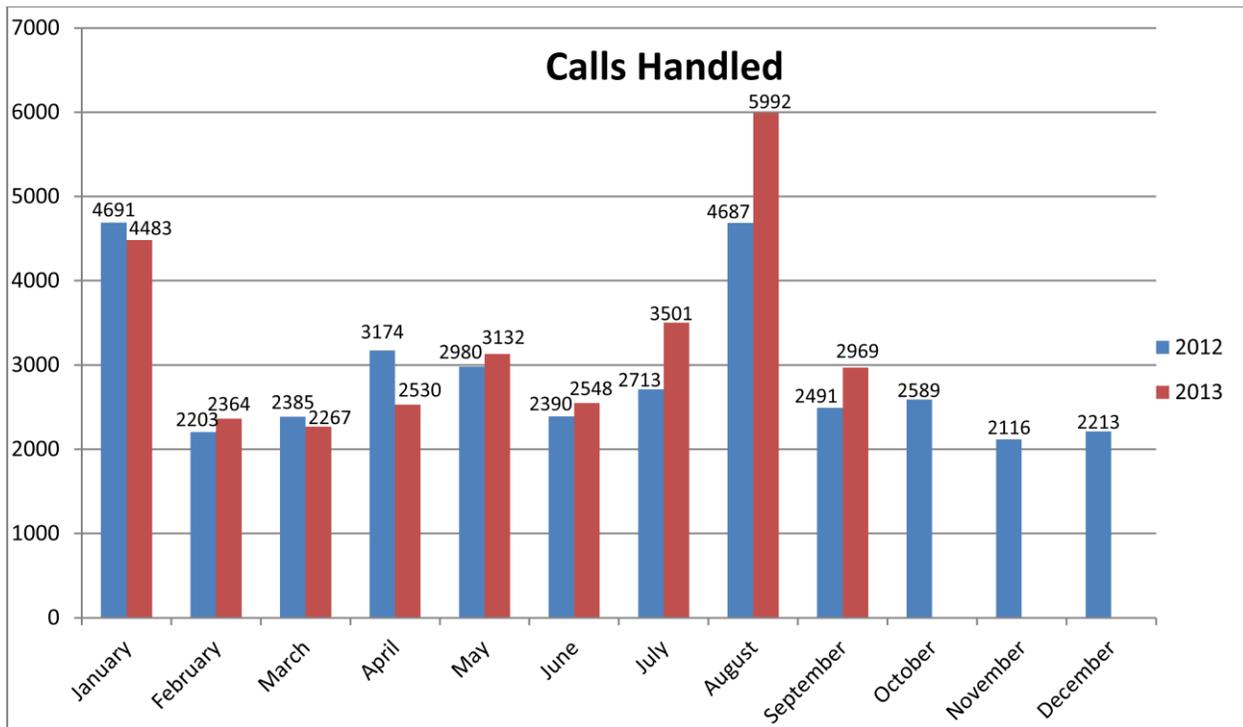
Data Warehouse Update
by David Anderson/IT Enterprise Manager

The Student Data Warehouse is up and running, and we are pulling key reports for the College Success Center. The team is working on more data validation and documenting terms and reports. We will be expanding the number of users trained in the near future.

The Financial Aid Data Warehouse has been installed, and orientation has been completed. The implementation team has begun the data validation and report exploration process.

The Financials Data Warehouse has been installed and orientation for the Financial Services staff will occur in the next few weeks. After orientation we will start the data validation.

The Learn (Blackboard) Data Warehouse is being upgraded to the latest release and a new building block is being applied that should improve the performance of the nightly load process.

Calls Handled

Month	2012	2013
January	4691	4483
February	2203	2364
March	2385	2267
April	3174	2530
May	2980	3132
June	2390	2548
July	2713	3501
August	4687	5992
September	2491	2969
October	2589	
November	2116	
December	2213	

New Classroom Multimedia Systems for 2013
by Todd Torrey/IT Media Technologies Engineer

The summer of 2013 saw many changes on campus with renovations occurring in both the Cook and Main buildings. Phase one of the Cook renovation involved the complete gutting of floors four and five. When the dust settled, twenty-seven gleaming new multimedia systems were left ready for the fall semester startup in Cook. In the Main building, a large part of the second floor was renovated to become the new Meijer Center for Business Studies. The Meijer Center holds a total of eleven classrooms, and all have new multimedia systems. The new multimedia system design is really just a refresh of the systems that have been installed around campus since 2010 with a few improvements. As analog based video fades into the sunset, digital video is now taking its place in the classroom. The new standard classroom multimedia systems now have Blu-ray DVD players and additional auxiliary HDMI input jacks to accommodate portable digital devices.

Several "non-standard" classrooms were added this summer as well. Two of the classrooms (one in Cook and one in Main) are known as "Learning Labs" and have three projector displays each. This allows a more collaborative seating arrangement while still giving students an unobstructed view of the video displays. One of the three projectors also has an interactive function that allows the instructor to annotate over the video with an electronic pen or use the pen as a mouse pointer.

The Nursing Department, now located on fourth floor Cook, has a special instructional space called the SimLab. This area has rooms designed to simulate a hospital bed room with as much realism as possible. The specialized video/audio equipment in this area allows an instructor seated in an adjacent control room to monitor and record via robotic camera all student activities in the bed lab. The video recordings can then be played back in order to review the students' performance.

The summer of 2013 proved to be a busy time for classroom technology upgrades, and Media is looking forward to making more classroom improvements in 2014 when the Cook building renovations come to a completion.

GroupWise
By IT Infrastructure

GRCC is in the process of upgrading the Enterprise email system with new hardware and software. After we upgrade, there will be a number of improvements in security, performance and reliability. We are going to incorporate some policies to secure both the user accounts and the user data. As a result of this added security, you will be required to use GroupWise client or WebAccess to view your email and appointments. Global forward rules will no longer be supported. Passwords will be connected to your "Campus User ID." You will no longer need a separate password for your email. A 20MB limit will be set for all email messages. There will also be noticeable improvements for mobile devices. iOS & Android will no longer need to use the simple view. There is full support for these devices with WebAccess now.

Highlights:
- No automatic forward rules (enforces compliance)
- GroupWise will use "Campus" password
- Maximum message size of 20MB (for internal and external)
- Web support for iOS, Android and RIM devices
- New functionality in calendars

Staff 411

New Information Security Analyst

New IT Customer Support Helpdesk Technician

Rob Marmo joined the IT team last May, as an Information Security Analyst. Rob was born in New York, but he has spent the last 15 years in the Grand Rapids area. He played football for Rockford High School, however he spent most of his time in front of a computer screen.

Rob graduated from Davenport University with a BS in Network Security.

For the past two years, Rob was a Systems & Network Administrator at Procare Systems. Along with daily support and hardware lifecycle management, he helped with EMR (Electronic Medical Records) software migrations and implemented a network monitoring solution at multiple clinics owned by Procare. His previous position included work as a Junior Systems administrator at a manufacturing plant.

Rob Marmo & Jeff VanderVeen

In his spare time, Rob enjoys passing time playing video games, although occasionally his significant other, Beth, gets him out of the house.

~~~~~~

Jeff VanderVeen's career at GRCC began in January 2012 as a student worker in IT. Since that time he has grown with the department and was hired full time as a Customer Support Helpdesk Technician in July this year.
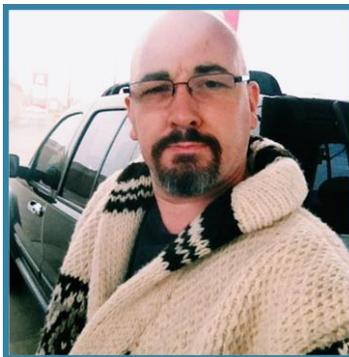
He was on both the President's and Dean's lists at GRCC for every semester since 2011. Jeff is also a member of Phi Theta Kappa honor society. He is currently continuing his pursuit for a Bachelors of Science degree in Computer Information Systems from Grand Valley State University.

Before coming to GRCC, Jeff worked as a Regional Manager for a T-Mobile dealer. He enjoys camping, hiking and anything outdoors. In his spare time he runs his own photography business.

From Customer Support to Enterprise

When **Fred Bauman** was a child, he wanted to create comics for the Sunday paper. He eventually gave that up but still went to art school. Fred never became the next Bill Watterson (of Calvin & Hobbes fame), but he still enjoys painting and sculpting from time to time.

He spent another 15 years in various forms of management and customer service; everything from stacking lumber to selling Rolex.

He joined the IT department as a student worker and for the last five years has been with the Customer Support team. This past September, he was pleased to join the Enterprise Applications team as a Blackboard Analyst and looks forward to all the new challenges.

Outside of work, Fred has three fantastic kids, is an avid reader and enjoys bicycling, brewing beer, frequent trips to Chicago, finding new ways to be productive and deleting every email possible.

Media Technologies Closed Captioner

Simon Kittok is a highly skilled closed captioner who has recently become full-time at GRCC. Simon has been working as a contingency employee for the past two years, captioning instructional and media recordings in order to make them accessible to all students who attend GRCC. Prior to working for us, Simon worked for two years at the local captioning company called Network Captioning. He also earned his degree in Media from Calvin College.

In addition to being proficient in a variety of captioning software, Simon is passionate about accessibility; he is pursuing education in sign language and is constantly improving the process we use for transcribing and captioning video content. He is also skilled in encoding and transcoding video content, which will prove extremely valuable as Media continues to digitize its video archive.

Security Corner
by Michael Ahrendt/IT Information Security Officer

Myths of Computer Security

Malware is a rampant evil that is causing an ever growing concern across the Internet. We define malware as software designed to disable, harm or provide access to a computer system. This software has become the number one resource for cybercrime and other such targeted attacks, which are growing exponentially as of late. They are growing ever more advanced and harder to spot on computer networks, which makes it hard to stop from an overall administration perspective. We have many safeguards in place, but it still slips through the cracks from time to time.

One of the reasons we see this is because of malware that is attached via email. This seems to be the most prevalent mechanism for circulating a large scale spread of malicious software. The difficulty in preventing it is due to not being able to stop files from being attached to emails or links from being embedded within. We all need to transfer documents, share photos or want to send that fun new link that's gone viral around the Internet. This is difficult because when we click that link or attachment, it makes it so much easier to run that malicious code.

So how do we prevent this? Well, that's just it. We cannot stop it fully. With a properly targeted attack, it's next to impossible to tell what the difference is. However, there are some simple things we can keep in mind to help reduce our risk of this is occurring. If you receive an email from an unknown person or one that you are not expecting, simply do not open any of the attachments or click the links. Unfortunate as it is, it is true that just clicking a button can set off a series of adverse events that lead to big trouble across the entire network and can pose a large risk to us as a college.

If you have any questions or would like us to investigate an e-mail, you can always contact me or my team at: IT_Security_Team@grcc.edu