CNS /Update Newsletter Feature

New Spam Scoring/Sorting Tool Coming Soon

UF Information Technology

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If you're like most computer e-mail users on campus, it seems like spam mail is taking over your INBOX and outnumbering "real" messages. The Open Systems Group (OSG) at UF Computing & Networking Services is taking a multi-pronged approach to helping users reclaim their INBOXes.

The volume of spam mail, also known as Unsolicited Bulk E-mail or UBE, has increased significantly as have end-user complaints, according to Steve Ulmer, the UF e-mail postmaster.

To help combat the junk e-mail deluge on campus, one of the steps the OSG is taking is the implementation of a "spam scoring" engine at the server level. It is expected to be put into production May 2004.

When messages come through the ufl.edu gateway (this includes both GatorLink and NERSP e-mail), this engine will give the message a score, like a grade, indicated by a number of stars (asterisks *). The engine uses an algorithm which runs each message against a number of tests to see whether or not the message is spam. One component of the spam-scoring filters uses the Bayes statistical model. Other spam-checking tests are applied as well.

"The higher the score, the more confident we are that it's spam," Ulmer said.

Once the message is scored, a header is added to the message. The header contains the score. An additional header is included that shows a list of tests that the message passed to be considered as spam. If the message gets a score higher than 5 stars (*****), then an explanation is added to the body text of the message explaining what the tests are.

For users, the biggest noticeable change will be the star scores' presence in their INBOX. Users can then use their e-mail client to sort based on that score. OSG is going to add different "views" to the GatorLink Webmail client so that Webmail users can also take advantage of the spam scores.

If you need assistance configuring your e-mail client, please contact the UF Computing Help Desk at helpdesk@ufl.edu [mailto:helpdesk@ufl.edu] or (352) 392-HELP.

Your Comments are Welcome

We welcome your comments and suggestions on this and all UFIT documentation. Please send your comments to:

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