Canning Spam

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Canning Spam

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A persistent metaphor for the Internet has been the “frontier.” The frontier is that space where the new and the old, the known and the unknown meet. Part of the attraction of the metaphor, and of the frontier itself, was the sense of limitless possibility. In the electronic frontier, anything might be discovered: a means for revitalizing democracy, a harmonious blending of civic cultures transcending the old antagonisms of the nation state, new economic models, etc, etc, and etc.

But unfortunately, another key element of the enduring romance of the frontier is also appropriate for the Internet: the possibility of encountering violence, including robbery, and worse. The most common crime is deceptive email, which might be simply offensive ads for products we neither want nor need, or even a means of transmitting an electronic attack such as a worm or virus into our personal computer.

Generally categorized in geek-speak as “Spam” such email has turned out to be that element of the electronic frontier that anyone who ventures into it is bound to experience. A quick google search on “spam” gives us a good reading of the emotions this topic produces. [1] Among the early entries are those entitled “Spam Assassin” (an ad for a program to protect us against spam) and the wonderfully entitled “Death to Spam.” [2]

Spam produces rage for many of us, but unfortunately, big bucks for others. These profits keep the spammers as tirelessly inventive at getting at the flock of Internet users as are those trying to protect we wooly sheep from being endlessly sheared. Federal legislation is currently receiving mixed reviews and has not yet done much if anything to slow the growth of this noxious phenomenon.

There are many books offering a useful introduction to spam. One of the best we have
encountered recently is Jeremy Poteet’s *Canning Spam. You’ve Got Mail (That You Don’t Want)*. Published by SAMS Publishing, a house with much experience in producing useful introductory works, *Canning Spam* should be very useful to almost all of our readers.

An unfortunate element of almost all works on electronic security is that they deliberately induce fright in the reader. If you weren’t at least mildly concerned before reading this book, you will probably close it in downright terror. Its organization consists of introducing one by one the many common email-based threats (often via presumably real-world case studies) lurking out there, and then closing with reassuring advise on what to do about them.

But because of Poteet’s experience in the security industry and his expertise, including winning a hacking contest, the work emerges from its many competitors as clearly written, well organized, and inclusive.

If you were to begin reading in some of the intermediate chapters, you might well find this work intimidating. But if you allow the author to lead you gently into an otherwise confusing world, you will find *Canning Spam* worthwhile. It is both a sort of brief encyclopedia of e-mail based threats and a pragmatic approach to reducing them.

If you have sent or received email, you will be able to understand, and should read, *Canning Spam*.

**Footnotes:**


[2] This latter site is actually a very useful one for those wanting to know more about this phenomenon. It is found at:
http://www.mindworkshop.com/alchemy/nospam.html

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