Conducting Usable Security Studies IT'S COMPLICATED!

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Engineering & Public Policy





Have you ever wondered...

SSL Error

->

C

×

2 https://www.kia.com/

4

The site's security certificate is not trusted!

You attempted to reach www.kia.com, but the server presented a certificate issued by an entity that is not trusted by your computer's operating system. This may mean that the server has generated its own security credentials, which Google Chrome cannot rely on for identity information, or an attacker may be trying to intercept your communications. You should not proceed, **especially** if you have never seen this warning before for this site.

Proceed anyway Back to safety

Help me understand

🖰 - 🏓







Kevin Colvin's Facebook photo that got him fired for missing work



USENIX Security 1999

Why Johnny Can't Encrypt: A Usability Evaluation of PGP 5.0

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Abstract

User errors cause or contribute to most computer security failures, yet user interfaces for security still tend to be clumsy, confusing, or near-nonexistent. Is this simply due to a failure to apply standard user interface design techniques to security? We argue that, on the contrary, effective security requires a different usability standard, and that it will not be achieved through the user interface design techniques appropriate to other types of consumer software.

To test this hypothesis, we performed a case study of a security program which does have a good user interface by general standards: PGP 5.0. Our case study used a cognitive walkthrough analysis together with a laboratory user test to evaluate whether PGP 5.0

1 Introduction

Security mechanisms are only effective when used correctly. Strong cryptography, provably correct protocols, and bug-free code will not provide security if the people who use the software forget to click on the encrypt button when they need privacy, give up on a communication protocol because they are too confused about which cryptographic keys they need to use, or accidentally configure their access control mechanisms to make their private data world-readable. Problems such as these are already quite serious: at least one researcher [2] has claimed that configuration errors are the probable cause of more than 90% of all computer security failures. Since average citizens are now



CUPS Lab 2007



CUPS passwords research team 2014



CUPS people + alumni at CHI 2014

Roadmap

- Usable security studies 101
- Evaluating security warnings
- Privacy indicators and willingness to pay for privacy
- Designing and evaluating privacy nudges
- Investigating the XKCD passphrase assertion

Usable security studies 101

Why do usable security studies?

Purpose	Useful to
Assess needs	Decide what to build
Evaluate	Determine whether system meets requirements and what needs to be improved
Understand tradeoffs	Decide which features/approaches/systems best fit particular needs
Find root causes	Determine where redesigns or new approaches are needed

Excuses for not doing usable security studies

- If people weren't so lazy/stupid/careless the system would work just fine
- I'm a cryptographer, not a usability expert
- I already know what people want
- I find the system easy to use so it must be usable
- My kids can use the system so it definitely must be usable





Your kids are not typical users



J. Shaprio, J. Vanderburgh, E. Northrup, D. Chizmadia. **Design of the EROS Trusted Window System.** USENIX Security 2004.

You are not a typical user



L. Cranor, P. Guduru and M. Arjula. User Interfaces for Privacy Agents. ACM ToCHI June 2006.

User study steps

- Identify research questions, metrics, and use cases
- Decide on type of study and design study protocol
- Develop detailed scripts, surveys, scenarios, incentives, instrumentation, prototypes, recruiting materials, etc.
- Obtain ethics approval
- Pilot and iterate on study design
- Collect data
- Analyze Results
- Repeat some or all of these steps as needed

Usable security study challenges

- Keeping it real (ecological validity)
 - Create realistic sense of risk (but not real risk)
 - Provide realistic incentives
 - Don't bias participants
- Measuring the right thing
 - Design the right protocol
 - Control the variables
 - Instrument
- Observing infrequent events and small differences
- Legal, ethical, and practical issues

Evaluating security warnings

🔿 😑 🔿 Security Error: Domain Name Mismatch

You have attempted to establish a connection with "www.whitehouse.gov". However, the security certificate presented belongs to "a248.e.akamai.net". It is possible, though unlikely, that someone may be trying to intercept your communication with this web site.

If you suspect the certificate shown does not belong to "www.whitehouse.gov", please cancel the connection and notify the site administrator.



Something happe OK to get on with	ened and you nee doing things.	ed to click
Certificate mismatch s administrator commun snotweasel foxtrot om	ication intercept lilipu	utian

Image courtesy of Johnathan Nightingale

Users swat away warning dialogs

How can we get users to pay attention?

W McAfee

🗙 Your computer is at risk

Please check your status so you can address any security issues and keep your PC protected

More v



Close

2007 Phishing warnings study



S. Egelman, L. Cranor, and J. Hong. You've Been Warned: An Empirical Study of the Effectiveness of Web Browser Phishing Warnings. CHI 2008.

Study design challenges

- Observe users interacting with warnings without them knowing we're interested in warnings
- Make users feel like they are under attack without actually putting them at risk

Required a little deception

- Lab study on online shopping
- Purchase paper clips from Amazon
- Answer questions about shopping (for another study)
- That's when we phished them
- Check email to get your receipt
- That's when they fell for it



Your Amazon.com order (#102-6801884-2225735): your approval required Inbox

😭 "Amazon.com" <order-update@amazonaccounts.net> to me show details Jun 13 🧄 Reply 🔻

Hello from Amazon.com.

We wanted to let you know that there is a delay with item(s) in the order you placed (Order# 102 6801884 2225725)

Please approve this delay so that we can continue processing your order. (Note that if we haven't received your approval by the end of business tomorrow, the item will be cancelled.

page in Your Account:

http://www.amazonaccounts.net/gp/signin/104-3310393-0927909.htm

http://www.amazonaccounts.net/gp/signin/ 104-3310393-0927909.htm

you can make changes to unshipped orders, cancel unshipped items, track shipped packages, modify your account settings, and do much more.

Please note: This e-mail was sent from a notification-only address that cannot accept incoming e-mail. Please do not reply to this message.

Thanks for shopping at Amazon.com, and we hope to see you again.

Sincerely,

Customer Service Department http://www.amazon.com

Check your order and more: Order Update

More issues to address

- Anti-phishing systems snagged our emails
- Amazon lawyers called CMU lawyers

		W McAfee
	6	X Your computer is at risk
		Please check your status so you can address any security issues and keep your PC protected
		More v
http://special-isi	m.com/before-you-call-that-attorney-what-is-due-process	Check status Close

Success!

- Most participants got phished
- Significant differences between conditions
- Observed interesting user behavior that helped us understand root cause of failures



Confused by domain names

"The address in the browser was of amazonaccounts.net which is a genuine address"

Your Amazon.com order (#102-6801884-2225735): your approval required Index

"Amazon.com" <order-update@amazonaccounts.net> to me

show details Jun 13 👆 Reply 🔻

Hello from Amazon.com.

We wanted to let you know that there is a delay with item(s) in the order you placed (Order# 102-6801884-2225735).

Trusted browser to protect them

"Since it gave me the option of still proceeding to the website, I figured it couldn't be that bad."

We recommend that you close this webpage and do not continue to this website.

- Olick here to close this webpage.
- Solution Continue to this website (not recommended).

Confused mental models

Some users repeatedly closed their browser, returned to the phishing email, and clicked on the link again



Research led to better phishing warnings



35

2008 SSL certificate warning study

- Test SSL certificate warnings
- Design a better warning



J. Sunshine, S. Egelman, H. Almuhimedi, N. Atri, L. Cranor. **Crying Wolf: An Empirical Study of SSL Warning Effectiveness.** USENIX Security 2009.
How do you know when you are actually at risk?

Some hazards are ALWAYS dangerous



Some hazards are context dependent





Computer security dialogs context dependent

- Security warning dialogs more like warnings on wine than warnings on poison
- Software developers place burden of assessing risk on users



HARDONNAY

A good warning helps users determine whether they are at risk

- Stops users from doing something dangerous in risky context
- Doesn't interfere with non-risky contexts
- Need to test warnings in both contexts

Non-risky context

- Visit CMU "Cameo" library web site
- Encounter self-signed certificate (familiar experience)



Risky context

- Put users in situation where they have something they care about at risk
 - Come to our lab and check bank account balance online
- Make users think they are actually at risk
 - Use web proxy to do man-in-the-middle attack



43

This may or may not be legal in the state of Pennsylvania



New plan

- Remove root certificate from browser
- Web site certificates can't be verified
- Visits to secure sites will trigger warnings

W McAfee	
X Your computer	is really at risk
Please, please check your security issues and keep y	status so you can address any our PC protected
More v	
	Check status Close

Lab study challenges

- Participants may feel safe
- They may think they have to do everything we tell them
- Their priority may be to finish study fast and get paid



Provide easy alternative tasks

- Framed as information-seeking study
- 4 tasks including CMU library and bank account tasks
- Instructions for completing tasks online or by phone
 - E.g. login to http://www.pnc.com or dial 1-888-762-2265 for telephone banking
- Provided lab phone and computer



So what happened?

- 100 users tested FF2, FF3, IE7 + 2 new warnings
- IE7 and FF2: Most users ignored all warnings
- **FF3:** Most users heeded all warnings, couldn't figure out 4-step override process
- **New warnings:** Most users ignored warnings at library, about half heeded warnings at bank
 - Big improvement but still failed to keep users safe half the time

More fun with warnings

 How can we focus users' attention on key information they need to make informed decisions?



C. Bravo-Lillo, L.F. Cranor, J. Downs, S. Komanduri, R.W. Reeder, S. Schechter, and M. Sleeper. **Your Attention Please: Designing security-decision UIs to make genuine risks harder to ignore**. SOUPS 2013.

Can you spot the suspicious software?



Key question: Do you trust publisher?

Name of publisher is critical information in trust decision



How can we get users to notice suspicious publishers?

- Use **attractors** to draw attention to publisher name
- Force delay before users can install
- Force interaction before users can install
- Force users to read publisher name

ANSI standard warning colors



Animated connector



Slow reveal



Obstruct install button until user swipes mouse over publisher name



Obstruct install button until user types publisher name

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		plete control
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Do any of these work?

- Do attractors and other techniques prevent suspicious installs without preventing benign installs?
- How much do attractors delay benign installs?



Methodology requirements

- Massive, inexpensive, quick
- Remote observation/recording of behavior
- Participants should feel safety/risk and behave as they would in real life
- But should not actually be at increased risk through participation in experiment

Use Amazon Mechanical Turk workers



Amazon Mechanical Turk ×/ 🔇 Carnegie Mellon University ×			
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The data captured for the research does not include any personally identifiable information about you. We will collect your IP address only to check whether you qualify for the study.

Confidentiality

Carnegie Mellon ...

By participating in this research, you understand and agree that Carnegie Mellon may be required to disclose your consent form, data and other personally identifiable information as required by law, regulation, subpoena or court order. Otherwise, your confidentiality will be maintained in the





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1. Click on the	
2. Wait for the game to load. When it's fully loaded, play the game "Colliderix Level Pack" for about 2 to 3 minutes.	
3. Return to this survey to answer the questions below.	
Assigned game #3: Colliderix Level Pack	
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Attention: The website whose URL appears above is external	
to this study. Our researchers do not control its content.	
4. Were you able to play the game? *	
© Yes	
No (you will be assigned another game to evaluate)	
Next	
Next	
Next	






Results are encouraging

- 2,227 participants encountered dialogs
- Benign scenario
 - Installation not prevented
 - But some approaches slowed people down
- Suspicious scenario
 - Our new dialogs reduced installations
 - Swipe, type, and delay were particularly effective

But what would happen if users saw these attractors repeatedly?

Habituation experiment

- Hard to expose users to same dialog repeatedly in a short period of time and keep it realistic
 - Task in which people had to dismiss a dialog as many times as they could before time ran out
 - Test whether they noticed when the dialog changed
- 9 conditions
- 872 Mturk participants completed task

→ C 🗋 surve

CMU Habituation

Your task is to respond to as many dialogs as you can before the timer goes off.

In the following page you will see a timer on the screen, and a number of consecutive dialogs (pop-up windows) asking you to click 'Yes' or 'No'. Your task is to respond to as many dialogs as you can before the timer goes off. You can increase your performance by following instructions and responding to each question quickly. Some dialogs may require you to wait or perform an action before the 'Yes' button is activated.

Those who perform well may be rewarded with opportunities to finish the study early while still receiving their full payment. After finishing the task, you will have to answer a short survey.

When you are read

Those who perform well may be rewarded with opportunities to finish the study early while still receiving their full payment.













CMU Pop-up dialogs stud 🗙



None

please type "none": *

- 0

Immediate detection rate higher for inhibitive attractors

Other conditions that previously performed well suffered under repeated exposures



Do inhibitive attractors eliminate or reduce habituation?

- We showed inhibitive attractors perform better than control under habituation
- But we only tested with habituation
- Need another experiment to compare with and without habituation
 - Exposure to irrelevant message: 1 exposure, 3 exposures, 20 exposures, 150 sec. of exposure

C. Bravo-Lillo, L. Cranor, S. Komanduri, S. Schechter, M. Sleeper. Harder to Ignore? Revisiting Pop-Up Fatigue and Approaches to Prevent It. SOUPS 2014.

Swipe and Type are resilient to habituation

 Control and ANSI compliance declines with habituation



Swipe and Type are resilient to habituation

- Control and ANSI compliance declines with habituation
- Reveal and AC+Delay have higher compliance, decline with habituation



Swipe and Type are resilient to habituation

- Control and ANSI compliance declines with habituation
- Reveal and AC+Delay have higher compliance, decline with habituation
- Swipe and Type show steady or increasing compliance rates



Could not predict difference between green and purple lines from previous experiment

Privacy indicators and willingness to pay for privacy

Will people pay to protect privacy?

- People say they want privacy
- But their behavior suggests otherwise
- What if we make privacy protection easy?



Add privacy meters to search results



90

How can we test whether privacy meters change behavior?

Hypothetical task

- Search for product
- Which site would you buy from?

Real task

- Search for product
- Make purchase with your credit card

Hypothetical

No real privacy tradeoff

Expensive

Difficult to control

2005 – 2009 Privacy Finder studies



Power strips, prophylactics, and privacy, oh my!

- "Online shopping study" in our lab
- 24 students paid \$10 plus reimbursement for purchases made with their own credit cards
- Used "Shopping Finder" search engine
 - Control condition: no privacy icons
 - Experimental condition: privacy icons



	Shopping Finder Search for: Trojan Shared Sensation 12 pack				
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Privacy icons influenced purchases



- With privacy info: more people purchased from sites with better privacy
- Larger effect for privacy-sensitive purchase

But study had significant limitations

- Participants were all students
- Reimbursement did not incentivize saving
- Price/privacy tradeoff not obvious
- Maybe people just like pretty indicators
- Privacy-sensitive item not sensitive enough

So we tried again

- 72 Pittsburgh residents
- Price/privacy tradeoff
- Fixed payment, keep the change
- New icons, new products, new conditions

J. Tsai, S. Egelman, L. Cranor, A. Acquisti. **The Effect of Online Privacy Information on Purchasing Behavior: An Experimental Study.** ISR 2011.





Merchant selection

- Selected 10 merchants for each product
- No well-known merchants
- Controlled first four search results:
 more expensive → better privacy

\$.69 privacy premium

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	DUIR	pura	BUR	Notes a	
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Merchant	Privacy score	Price w/ shipping	
ccvsoftware.com	?	\$14.45	
discountofficeitems.zoovy.com	0/4	\$14.60	
instawares.com	2/4	\$14.80	$\left(\right)$
officequarters.com	4/4	\$15.14	J

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Privacy information condition



Irrelevant information condition



No information condition



Privacy icons influenced purchases

- No privacy info: most people purchased where price was lowest
- With privacy info: more people purchased from expensive sites with better privacy
- No clear difference between products
 - Because we didn't control **privacy premium**?

Follow-up study with cooperation of vendors to control privacy premium

- Contacted 46 battery and sex toy vendors
- Convinced 8 to adjust prices for our study
 - Asked one to lower prices and promised to pay the difference
 - Sent \$140 check to The Dirty Bunny for "research project assistance"



Sure enough...

Privacy-sensitive nature of product impacts willingness to pay a premium for privacy



S. Egelman, J. Tsai, L. Cranor, A. Acquisti. **Timing is Everything? The Effects of Timing and Placement of Online Privacy Indicators.** CHI 2009.

Designing and evaluating privacy nudges
Nudge project

- Goal
 - Anticipate and exploit cognitive and behavioral biases that hamper privacy and security decision making
 - Don't limit freedom
- Approach
 - Understand biases
 - Understand problems (regrets)
 - Prototype and evaluate nudges





Bugis MRT station in Singapore

"I want to climb the stairs to fitness"

http://inudgeyou.com/ health-nudge-thestairs-to-fitness/

I regretted the minute I pressed share

- Collected hundreds of anecdotes about Facebook regret through interviews, diary studies, surveys
- Aimed to assess needs and understand root causes behind regrets

Y. Wang, S. Komanduri, P.G. Leon, G. Norcie, A. Acquisti, L.F. Cranor. "I regretted the minute I pressed share": A Qualitative Study of Regrets on Facebook. SOUPS 2011.

Underlying cause of regrets

- Not thinking
 - Very excited or angry
- Lack of awareness of how post/tweet will be perceived by others
- Lack of awareness of audience

Teenage office worker sacked for moaning on Facebook about her 'totally boring' job

By ANDREW LEVY FOR THE DAILY MAIL UPDATED: 15:09 EST, 26 February 2009



Like many teenagers, Kimberley Swann was underwhelmed by the menial tasks she was given in her new job.

But while other 16-year-olds might have confided in friends and family about the filing, stapling and hole-punching, she decided to let off steam by posting comments on the social networking website Facebook.

Three weeks later, the words 'first day at work. omg (oh my God)!! So dull!!' came back to haunt her when her boss discovered them as he surfed the net.



Nudge goals based on regrets

- Encourage people to stop and think
- Make people aware of how others might perceive their post
- Remind people of their audience





(Former) Representative Anthony Weiner

Stop and think: Timer nudge

heat in the moment	
1. Q	👷 Friends 🔻 🛛 Post
You will have 10 sec	onds to cancel after you post the update
You will have 10 sec	onds to cancel after you post the update
You will have 10 seco	
Update Status 項 Add Photo /	

Post perception: Sentiment nudge

l am angry	
2: 9	👷 Friends 👻 Post
Other people r	nay perceive your post as negative.
Your post will be publis	hed in 1 second. Post Now Edit It Cancel

Audience: Profile picture nudge

U	pdate	Status 🕕 Add Photo / Video 🚆 Ask Question
this	is a p	public post
20	9	🛞 Public 💌 Post



These people and ANYONE ON THE INTERNET can see your post.

Are nudges effective?

- 3-week, 21 participant study
- Research questions
 - Do users like nudges and find them useful and usable?
 - How do nudges impact posting behavior and do they prevent regret?
- Post-study survey and interviews

Y. Wang, P. Leon, L. Cranor, A. Acquisti, X. Chen, and K. Scott. **Privacy Nudges for Social Media: An Exploratory Facebook Study.** PSOSM '13.

Studying the effectiveness of nudges was challenging

- Difficult to find participants
- Difficult to determine whether regret was prevented
- Regretful posts are not that frequent
- Facebook changes break nudges and instrumentation

Results

- **Picture nudge** increased awareness of audience
- **Timer nudge** encouraged participants to stop and think, but some annoyed by delay
- Sentiment nudge mostly annoyed participants

Another field study

- Developed new audience+timer nudge based on previous study results
- Improved data collection and event logging
- Performed daily tests for Facebook changes
- 6-week study, 28 participants
- Still difficult to make measure significant behavior change with small sample

Y. Wang, P. Leon, A. Acquisti, L.F. Cranor, A. Forget, N. Sadeh. **A Field Trial of Privacy Nudges for Facebook.** CHI2014.

Audience+timer nudge

Passive aggressive people irritate the hell out of me, if you can't say something to my face maybe you should keep your mouth shut.





Improved awareness of audience



"It was a snide remark and then one of the pictures that popped up was one of the people I work with. It is probably not the best idea"

Encouraged people to stop and think

not excited about still being sick wtf							
1- 9 D	🗶 Friends 🔻	Post					
Your post will be published in 3 seconds.							
Post Now Edit Cancel							
~							
not excited about still being sick after spending all afternoon in bed not doing my paper or having fun.							
1. V 🖸	💄 Friends 🔻	Post					
Your post will be published in 3 seconds.							
Post Now Edit Cancel							

But some people were not fans								
	Given my current socioeconomic status, it seems disingenuous to brunch. But brunch I shall. Because, by God, I'M STILL WHITE.							
	1 - 9	٥			🗽 Friends 🔻	Post		
	Your po Post		e published in 3 seconds. Edit Cancel					
emb	arrass	sing	ay to protect pe information on ture to be stupie	line whi	le mad o	5		



Investigating the XKCD passphrase assertion

Should you believe everything you read in XKCD?



Passphrase study

- Explore usability of systemassigned passphrases
- Compare to system-assigned passwords of similar security
- System-assigned assures random selection



R. Shay, P.G. Kelley, S. Komanduri, M. Mazurek, B. Ur, T. Vidas, L. Bauer, N. Christin, L. Cranor. **Correct horse battery staple: Exploring the usability of system-assigned passphrases.** SOUPS 2012.

Methodology

- 1,476-participant Mturk study
- Participants randomly assigned password or passphrase
- Enter password/phrase, take survey, enter it again
- Emailed to come back two days later
- Enter password/phrase, take another survey

Conditions

- 8 passphrase conditions, 3 password conditions
- Varied factors:
 - Size of dictionary words are selected from
 - Whether order matters
 - Parts of speech
 - Number of words
 - Instructions



Noun verb adjective noun

plan builds sure power

end determines red drug

System-assigned passwords

@J#8x

*2LxG

Pronounceable passwords

tufritvi

vadasabi

Empirical results contradict XKCD

- No clear user favorite
- Passphrases are not easier to remember
- Passphrases slower to enter, more mistakes
- Error correction helps passphrase accuracy
- Pronounceable passwords were faster to enter with fewer mistakes than other passwords or passphrases



Usable security studies FTW

- Complicated
- Challenging
- Interesting
- Necessary



June 22-24, 2016, Denver



Conducting Usable Security Studies

necessary &

