

**D**oor-to-door salesmen, postal junk mail, and telephone solicitors interrupting your dinner are just a few of the regrettably famous ancestors of spam e-mail.

## What Is Spam E-mail?

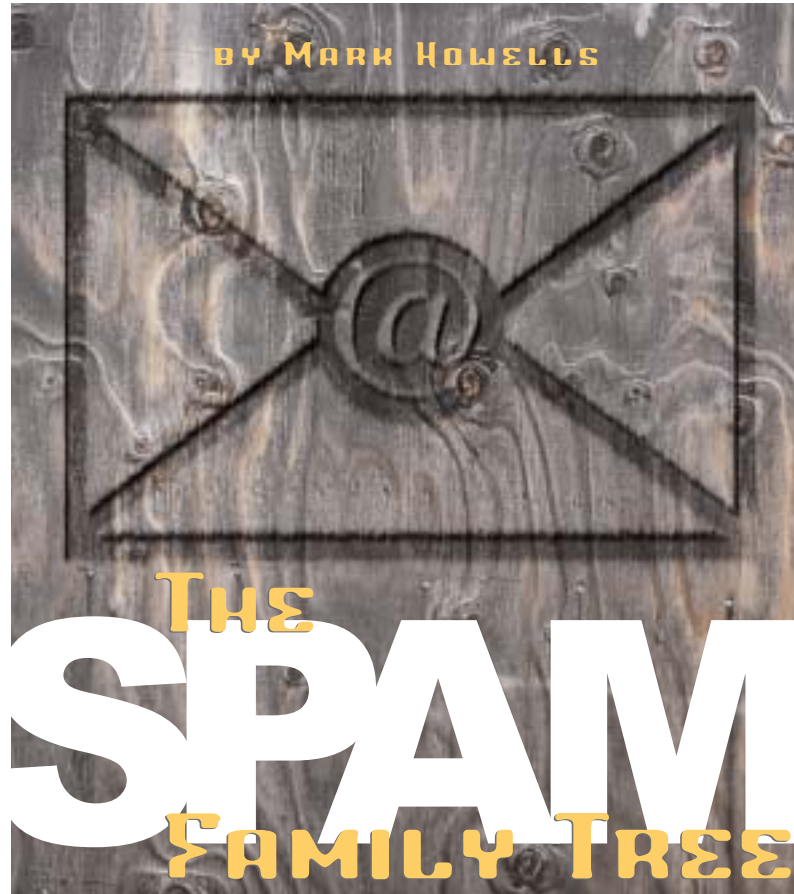
Spam e-mail is generally defined as unwanted, and usually commercial, e-mail. Unwanted is of course in the mind of the receiver; you might not be interested in the world's smallest digital camera, but I might. None of us are interested in a fraudulent Nigerian money laundering scheme.

There is nothing new about spam. It has been around for years. Media reports and personal experience indicate that spam is becoming more and more prevalent now. Estimates indicate that spam takes up as much as 40 percent of all e-mail traffic, and that percentage continues to grow. My personal mailbox does not yet bear out that statistic, but I do seem to be getting more spam lately.

Another indication that spam is more of a problem these days is that America Online is now blocking around more than 700 million pieces of spam e-mail each day. That's 100 million more e-mails than it actually delivers to intended recipients each day. Besides the nuisance factor to hundreds of millions of Internet users, the fear is that spam e-mail may completely overwhelm the Internet itself. Users will give up on e-mail as spam "crowds out" legitimate e-mail. Is a communications resource of any value when 99 out of every 100 messages are not of interest to their receiver? This hasn't happened yet, but it is a possibility.

## There Ought to Be a Law

Some twenty-seven states now have laws against spam. Definitions of what constitutes spam differ between states



and the remedies against spam are different in each state as well. There is hope of a national law against spam in the United States but as the common Nigerian money transfer fraud shows, spam knows no national borders. Legislation and international agreements against spam would be helpful but not a perfect solution.

Spam is simple to generate. With almost no entry costs, millions of pieces of spam can be churned out in minutes. Spam software is freely downloadable from the Internet, target "customers" are cheap at a few dollars per million addresses, and finding a compliant Internet Service Provider who doesn't care what you send out is easy. One estimate puts the level of successful return on an investment in

a spam mass mailing as requiring only one positive response per 100,000 e-mails. Postal junk mailers usually require a response rate of one in 100 to cover costs. Aside from the costs being negligible, the decentralized nature of the Internet means that even if national laws and international agreements prohibited spam, enforcement would be problematic. Obscurity techniques such as anonymous routing and forged message headers can make anti-spam efforts a needle-in-a-haystack exercise.

## How Did the Spammers Find Me?

In the summer of 2002, researchers at the Center for Democracy and Technology set out to determine how

# GeneWeaver

## New Version 1.1!

Health is a Family Affair.  
Your Health History can  
be a Life-saver.

The American Medical Association recommends every family maintain some kind of health history. This history is an important tool your doctor needs for creating your medical care plan.



### GeneWeaver 1.1:

- \* Tracks important health events through 4 generations
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P.O. Box 5402 Drawer A  
Plymouth, MI 48170-5402  
www.geneweaveronline.com  
geneweaver@geneweaveronline.com  
714-970-7040  
Fax: 714-970-6573

spammers get target addresses. They set up 250 new, valid e-mail addresses and posted them on websites, mailing lists, newsgroups, etc. The e-mail addresses were submitted to job posting sites, online auctions, and other common locations for the use of an e-mail address. After six months of running the experiment, the researchers had received more than 10,000 pieces of spam. Of these, 97 percent were to e-mail addresses that were "harvested" off websites. The more popular the website, the more likely the e-mail address was to receive spam. The researchers received only twenty-five spam e-mails that resulted from sharing or selling e-mail addresses. They also noted that some spammers tried every possible combination of e-mail address to send out spam in a shotgun-like effect.

So ultimately most spam comes from posting your e-mail address to public websites where the spammers automatically harvest the e-mail addresses using software robots that roam the Internet.

These results are particularly troubling for family historians. We want our e-mail addresses to be available to others. We simply must use the Internet to leave our e-mail addresses on high-traffic websites. How else is our fourth cousin twice removed going to find us? Genealogy mailing lists on which we depend to interact with our fellow researchers are usually archived in web form. These archives can be harvested for e-mail addresses as well. What are family historians to do since they can't stop posting their e-mail addresses?

### Technology Fixes

Internet Service Providers, software vendors, and other service vendors have recognized spam as a prof-

itable problem to solve. There are now various services and products available that will attempt to filter spam out of incoming e-mail. The problem with such a technological fix is that it is not perfect. Most function based on a known "black list" of spammer source addresses or they filter keywords of common spam such as "Viagara." Neither of these filtering approaches can keep up with new or forged source addresses for spam or the creative permutations that spammers use to avoid the standard spelling of common spam topics.

The anti-spam technology that shows some promise of getting a few steps ahead of the spammers will actually monitor your e-mail activity and attempt to learn your interests. It then applies filtering rules to eliminate e-mails on subjects you're not likely to be interested in. This technology is not yet mature but could turn out to be a solution in the future.

If you are going to use a spam filter, it is very important that you keep control of it. This means that you understand exactly what it is filtering and that you are checking up on what it throws away. It is up to you to ensure that your spam filter is not discarding legitimate messages misidentified as spam. This is a particular concern when you are first fine tuning your anti-spam filter. Don't send the suspected spam directly to electron heaven. Send it to a temporary holding file first and inspect it before permanently deleting it. You don't want your favorite genealogy mailing list to suddenly be considered spam due to your overzealous filters. Also, if you subscribe to an anti-spam service where the filters are not under your control, you will want to check your discards before deleting them. If the service suddenly changes the filtering on your e-



mail, Cousin Judy's e-mails may no longer be getting through to you.

I use my e-mail software to filter a good deal of the spam I get each day. My e-mail address has been very publicly exposed for eight years now and approximately 20 percent of my incoming daily e-mail is spam. My e-mail software filters—the same ones I use to sort my desired mail into appropriate mail boxes—simply filters e-mails with spam characteristics to a holding mail box until I review them and trash them. I don't have to see my spam unless I choose to.

### Good on Sandwiches

Spam doesn't have to be made into a big deal. Your delete key is ideal for handling the problem. One method of avoiding spam that I have seen is by obscuring your e-mail address so it is not readable by the software robots that harvest e-mail addresses. For example, "markhow@oz.net" would become "markhow at oz dot net." This works so long as you have the ability to explain what you've done to your address. If you don't have the space

or opportunity to describe your obscuring technique, Cousin Judy might be just as confused as the harvesting software robot. That defeats the purpose of using your address on the Internet. An extreme form of this behavior is when people put in an obscured e-mail address in their "Reply To" section of their e-mail headers. This prevents successfully sending a reply without changing the e-mail address and makes the solution more painful than the problem it purports to solve. I would never burden my correspondents with having to decode my e-mail address merely because I was tired of hitting the delete key. That's not how we genealogists treat one another.

And yes, there is actually a Spam family tree online at <www.spam.com/sp.htm>. It is, however, of the meat product variety of Spam® which unwillingly lent its name to unwanted commercial e-mail. ☞

*Mark Howells prefers his Spam® fried at markhow@oz.net.*

## PASSENGER LISTS

Searches are now available of the following ports for your ancestor's arrival in America.

	<u>Indexes to lists</u>	<u>Pass. Lists</u>
New York City	1820-1948	1820-1940
Philadelphia	1727-1948	1727-1945
Baltimore	1820-1952	1820-1909
Boston	1848-91,1902-20	1820-1943
New Orleans	1813-1952	1820-1903
Misc. Atlantic & Gulf Ports	1820-1874	most avail.
San Francisco	1850-75,1893-1934	1850-1875
Galveston, TX	1896-1951	1896-1948
Gulfport, MS	1904-1954	-
New Bedford, MA	1875-99,1902-54	1902-1942
Portland, ME	1893-1954	1893-1943
Providence, RI	1911-1954	1911-1931
AL, FL, GA, SC	1890-1924	-
Charleston, SC	1820-1829	1820-1829
Savannah, GA	1890-1924	1906-1945
New England	1600's	1600's

Information given on lists generally includes ship's name, arrival date, passenger's names, age, sex, occupation, nationality, and sometimes literacy, destination, class of travel (first class, steerage, etc.), embarkation port, and on 1880's lists, sometimes place of birth!

Beginning about 1890: generally all of the above plus departure date, marital status, race, last residence, name and address of close relative or friend in homeland, how much money carried, whether ever in U.S. before, name and address of a relative or contact in the U.S., health, height, weight, hair and eye color, and from about 1920, planned length of stay and citizenship intentions!

**Search fees:** Index search: **\$19.00** (one passenger / one port) or 3 ports for **\$45.00**  
Pass. List search **\$17.00** (one list)

#### IMPORTANT:

Index search AND List search BOTH needed unless you already know name of ship and EXACT arrival date AND port. (If not found in index, List search fee will be refunded.) If port is unknown, I suggest a 3-port search beginning with the (larger) ports at the top of the list. Indexes are generally everyname (not just head of household).

If found on list, photocopies of pages from list showing passenger's name and ship's name will be provided along with cost quote for copy of entire list and for history of ship and shipping line, often including a picture of the ship!

Please provide passenger's name and approximate birth year, port(s) of entry to be searched, approximate arrival date, and any other identifying info., such as homeland, occupation, and names of family members accompanying the passenger.

**"We have found many passengers missed by the new Ellis Island index. Please give us a try."**

ACCURACY the top priority.  
25 years research experience.  
Send fees, plus long SASE please.

**Paul Douglas Schweikle**  
142 E. Maple Ave. (K), Van Wert, OH 45891