

DynIP mail blocking considered harmful (was: Re: My email is rejected by some sites)

Source: <http://linux.derkeiler.com/Mailing-Lists/Debian/2003-12/3772.html>

From: Karsten M. Self (*kmsself_at_ix.netcom.com*)

Date: 12/17/03

Date: Tue, 16 Dec 2003 16:21:23 -0800

To: debian-user@lists.debian.org

on Tue, Dec 16, 2003 at 09:09:18PM +0000, Colin Watson (*cjwatson@debian.org*) wrote:

> *On Tue, Dec 16, 2003 at 01:34:03PM -0700, Wesley J Landaker wrote:*

> > *On Tuesday 16 December 2003 1:08 pm, Joerg Rossdeutscher wrote:*

> > > *A mailserv can harm _others_.*

> >

> > *I totally agree. Which is why I'm all for only allowing arbitrary*

> > *entities to determine who can and can not run a mail server. What we*

> > *need is more control, more censorship, more penalties, and less*

> > *interference from subvertive terrorists who try to route their mail*

> > *around the system. The only reason they have to be doing something like*

> > *this would be if they had something to hide. I believe that their*

> > *computers should be confiscated and their citizenship revoked.*

>

> *Let's turn this around: why should *I* be forced to accept mail coming*

> *from a dynamic IP, when statistically such mail appears much more likely*

> *to be spam or viruses? Who are you to tell me that I have to accept such*

> *mail?*

Statistically, mail from any arbitrary source is more likely to be spam or viruses, than not.

Statistically, mail from the US is more likely to be spam or viruses than not.

> *(If it's not obvious why direct mail from dynamic IP addresses is a
> favourite tool of spammers, it should be.)*

Spammers will abuse what they can get their hands on.

My own response is:

- IP-based discrimination is at best a blunt instrument. Where applied against specific netblocks based on known history, it's at least actionable. Even whole-country blocking works as a goad to encourage countries to start getting serious about securing their

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domain — or downward–delegating such responsibilities. These days, you can expect to find abuse@ and postmaster@ addresses to work for many domains in China, Korean, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Vastly improved over a couple of years ago.

- Dynamic IP blocking is per se unaccountable. There's nothing the owner of a particular address can do to secure the address which impacts the listing. This isn't a listing based on behavior of the address. It's a listing based on an independent attribute of the address. Some users may be able to get their provider to remove IPs from residential/dialup lists, but not all.
- There are highly specific filters and methods which can effectively discriminate between spam and non–spam content. Activity–based lists, Bayesian and content–based filters, reputation systems, teergrubbing, rate–limiting, and the like.

> *This is *not* censorship, by the way.*

No. It's arbitrary discrimination.

And for your own personal email configuration, it's your call.

This isn't acceptable for general–purpose communications, however. And I'd suggest you look into common carrier laws as well (I'm somewhat familiar with US statutes) as to showing preferences by customer. I see little distinction between this practice and the illegal real–estate and insurance underwriting practice of redlining neighborhoods.

> *Censorship is when the government represses your speech.*

NB: Not strictly true.

- > > *Oh yes, and blacks to the back of the bus, please; just be happy we*
- > > *let you on at all.*
- >
- > *It's a weak argument that requires a comparison to racism to be heard,*
- > *not to mention that it demeans the plight of those affected by racism.*

The similarity is this: a secondary indicator is being used to establish an absolute preference for or against a specific activity. Despite the known invalidity of this indicator in a large number of cases. And the existence of more specific, accurate discriminators.

Peace.

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Karsten M. Self <kmsself@ix.netcom.com> <http://kmsself.home.netcom.com/>
What Part of "Gestalt" don't you understand?
Backgrounder on the Caldera/SCO vs. IBM and Linux dispute.
<http://sco.iwethey.org/>

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with a subject of "unsubscribe". Trouble? Contact listmaster@lists.debian.org

- application/pgp-signature attachment: [stored](#)