Outline

- More choices for isolation (cont’d)
- The web from a security perspective
- Announcements intermission
- SQL injection
- Cross-site scripting

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**chroot**

- Unix system call to change root directory
- Restrict/virtualize file system access
- Only available to root
- Does not isolate other namespaces

**OS-enabled containers**

- One kernel, but virtualizes all namespaces
- FreeBSD jails, Linux LXC, Solaris zones, etc.
- Quite robust, but the full, fixed, kernel is in the TCB

**Virtual machine designs**

- (Type 1) hypervisor: ‘superkernel’ underneath VMs
- Hosted: regular OS underneath VMs
- Paravirtualization: modify kernels in VMs for ease of virtualization

**Virtual machine technologies**

- Hardware based: fastest, now common
- Partial translation: e.g., original VMware
- Full emulation: e.g., QEMU proper
  - Slowest, but can be a different CPU architecture

**Modern example: Chrom(ium)**

- Separates “browser kernel” from less-trusted “rendering engine”
- Pragmatic, keeps high-risk components together
- Experimented with various Windows and Linux sandboxing techniques
- Blocked 70% of historic vulnerabilities, not all new ones
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Once upon a time: the static web

HTTP: stateless file download protocol
- TCP usually using port 80
HTML: markup language for text with formatting and links
- All pages public, so no need for authentication or encryption

Web applications

The modern web depends heavily on active software
- Static pages have ads, paywalls, or “Edit” buttons
- Many web sites are primarily forms or storefronts
- Web hosted versions of desktop apps like word processing

Server programs

Could be anything that outputs HTML
- In practice, heavy use of databases and frameworks
- Wide variety of commercial, open-source, and custom-written
- Flexible scripting languages for ease of development
  - PHP, Ruby, Perl, etc.

Client-side programming

Java: nice language, mostly moved to other uses
- ActiveX: Windows-only binaries, no sandboxing
  - Glad to see it on the way out
- Flash and Silverlight: last important use was DRM-ed video
- Core language: JavaScript

JavaScript and the DOM

JavaScript (JS) is a dynamically-typed prototype-OO language
- No real similarity with Java
- Document Object Model (DOM): lets JS interact with pages and the browser
  - Extensive security checks for untrusted-code model

Same-origin policy

Origin is a tuple (scheme, host, port)
- E.g., (http, www.umn.edu, 80)
- Basic JS rule: interaction is allowed only with the same origin
- Different sites are (mostly) isolated applications

GET, POST, and cookies

GET request loads a URL, may have parameters delimited with ?, &
- Standard: should not have side-effects
- POST request originally for forms
  - Can be larger, more hidden, have side-effects
- Cookie: small token chosen by server, sent back on subsequent requests to same domain
User and attack models

- "Web attacker" owns their own site (www.attacker.com)
  - And users sometimes visit it
  - Realistic reasons: ads, SEO
- "Network attacker" can view and sniff unencrypted data
  - Unprotected coffee shop WiFi

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Readings, old and new

- Wheeler (OS security) reading quiz is due tonight
- Next reading is the OWASP Top Ten (web security)

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Relational model and SQL

- Relational databases have tables with rows and single-typed columns
- Used in web sites (and elsewhere) to provide scalable persistent storage
- Allow complex queries in a declarative language SQL

Example SQL queries

- SELECT name, grade FROM Students WHERE grade < 60 ORDER BY name;
- UPDATE Votes SET count = count + 1 WHERE candidate = 'John';

Template: injection attacks

- Your program interacts with an interpreted language
- Untrusted data can be passed to the interpreter
- Attack data can break parsing assumptions and execute arbitrary commands

SQL + injection

- Why is this named most critical web app. risk?
- Easy mistake to make systematically
- Can be easy to exploit
- Database often has high-impact contents
  - E.g., logins or credit cards on commerce site
Strings do not respect syntax

- Key problem: assembling commands as strings
- "WHERE name = '$name';"
- Looks like $name is a string
- Try $name = "me' OR grade > 80; --"

Using tautologies

- Tautology: formula that's always true
- Often convenient for attacker to see a whole table
- Classic: OR 1=1

Non-string interfaces

- Best fix: avoid constructing queries as strings
- SQL mechanism: prepared statement
- Original motivation was performance
- Web languages/frameworks often provide other syntax

Retain functionality: escape

- Sanitizing data is transforming it to prevent an attack
- Escaped data is encoded to match language rules for literal
- E.g., "\" and \n in C
- But many pitfalls for the unwary:
  - Differences in escape syntax between servers
  - Must use right escape for context: not everything's a string

Lazy sanitization: allow-listing

- Allow only things you know to be safe/intended
- Error or delete anything else
- Short allow-list is easy and relatively easy to secure
- E.g., digits only for non-negative integer
- But, tends to break benign functionality

Poor idea: deny-listing

- Space of possible attacks is endless, don't try to think of them all
- Want to guess how many more comment formats SQL has?
- Particularly silly: deny 1=1

Attacking without the program

- Often web attacks don't get to see the program
  - Not even binary, it's on the server
- Surmountable obstacle:
  - Guess natural names for columns
  - Harvest information from error messages

Blind SQL injection

- Attacking with almost no feedback
- Common: only "error" or "no error"
- One bit channel you can make yourself: if (x) delay 10 seconds
- Trick to remember: go one character at a time
Injection beyond SQL
- Earlier: shell commands, format strings
- XPath/XQuery: queries on XML data
- LDAP: queries used for authentication
- Next up: XSS

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XSS: HTML/JS injection
- Note: CSS is “Cascading Style Sheets”
- Another instance of injection template
- Attacker supplies HTML containing JavaScript (or occasionally CSS)
- OWASP’s most prevalent weakness
  - A category unto itself
  - Easy to commit in any dynamic page construction

Why XSS is bad (and named that)
- attacker.com can send you evil JS directly
- But XSS allows access to bank.com data
- Violates same-origin policy
- Not all attacks actually involve multiple sites

Reflected XSS
- Injected data used immediately in producing a page
- Commonly supplied as query/form parameters
- Classic attack is link from evil site to victim site

Persistent XSS
- Injected data used to produce page later
- For instance, might be stored in database
- Can be used by one site user to attack another user
  - E.g., to gain administrator privilege

DOM-based XSS
- Injection occurs in client-side page construction
- Flaw at least partially in code running on client
- Many attacks involve mashups and inter-site communication

No string-free solution
- For server-side XSS, no way to avoid string concatenation
- Web page will be sent as text in the end
  - Research topic: ways to change this?
- XSS especially hard kind of injection
Danger: complex language embedding

- JS and CSS are complex languages in their own right
- Can appear in various places with HTML
  - But totally different parsing rules
- Example: "..." used for HTML attributes and JS strings
  - What happens when attribute contains JS?

Danger: forgiving parsers

- History: handwritten HTML, browser competition
- Many syntax mistakes given "likely" interpretations
- Handling of incorrect syntax was not standardized

Sanitization: plain text only

- Easiest case: no tags intended, insert at document text level
- Escape HTML special characters with entities like \&lt; for <
- OWASP recommendation: & < > " ' /

Sanitization: context matters

- An OWASP document lists 5 places in a web page you might insert text
  - For the rest, "don't do that"
- Each one needs a very different kind of escaping

Sanitization: tag allow-listing

- In some applications, want to allow benign markup like <b>
- But, even benign tags can have JS attributes
- Handling well essentially requires an HTML parser
  - But with an adversarial-oriented design

Don't deny-list

- Browser capabilities continue to evolve
- Attempts to list all bad constructs inevitably incomplete
- Even worse for XSS than other injection attacks

Filter failure: one-pass delete

- Simple idea: remove all occurrences of <script>
- What happens to <scr<script>ipt>?

Filter failure: UTF-7

- You may have heard of UTF-8
  - Encode Unicode as 8-bit bytes
- UTF-7 is similar but uses only ASCII
- Encoding can be specified in a <meta> tag, or some browsers will guess
  - &ADw-script+AD4-
Filter failure: event handlers

<IMG onmouseover="alert('xss')">
- Put this on something the user will be tempted to click on
- There are more than 100 handlers like this recognized by various browsers

Use good libraries

- Coding your own defenses will never work
- Take advantage of known good implementations
- Best case: already built into your framework
  - Disappointingly rare

Content Security Policy

- Added HTTP header, W3C recommendation
- Lets site opt-in to stricter treatment of embedded content, such as:
  - No inline JS, only loaded from separate URLs
  - Disable JS eval et al.
- Has an interesting violation-reporting mode