Pantheon's Guide to Security in Higher Education and Beyond!

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Some things I enjoy, aside from coding, are

- Biking with my wife and kids
- Board games: is.gd/davidsgames
- Volunteering in the community

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TL;DR

Minimizing Risk

What is “Risk”?

Risk is the intersection of assets, threats, and vulnerabilities

Asset

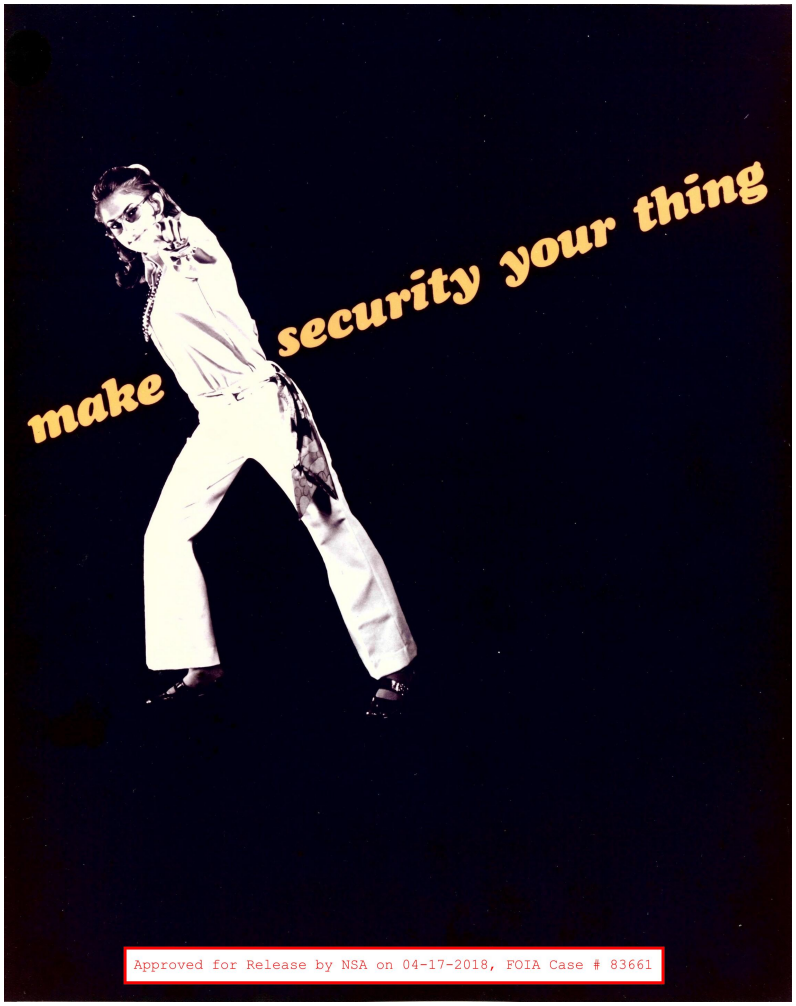
- People
- Property
- Information/Data
- An asset is what we are trying to protect

Threat

- Anything that that represents a potential danger to an asset, whether deliberately or by accident
- A threat is what we're trying to protect against
- *Threat Agent* is a group or individual who exploits a vulnerability to manifest or cause a threat to occur

Vulnerability

- Weakness or holes/ gaps in security procedures or program that can be exploited by a threat to affect assets



What is “Risk”?

- Asset = You
- Threat = Rain
- Vulnerability = Hole in your umbrella
- Risk = you getting wet

What is “Risk”?

The potential for loss, damage or destruction of
an asset(s) as a result of a threat exploiting a vulnerability
multiplied by the impact of the threat occurring

Why Education is an Attractive Target

- Network bandwidth and availability
- Rich in hardware infrastructure
- Poor in human resources
- Resistant to blacklisting
- SEO reputation

Why Education is an Attractive Target

- Personally Identifiable Information (PII) / Sensitive Personal Information (SPI)
- Protected Health Information (PHI)
- Confidential Intellectual Property
- Export Controlled Data
- National Security Interest (NSI)

Backups

- What
  - A snapshot of your
    - files that make up your site
    - database
- Why

Backups

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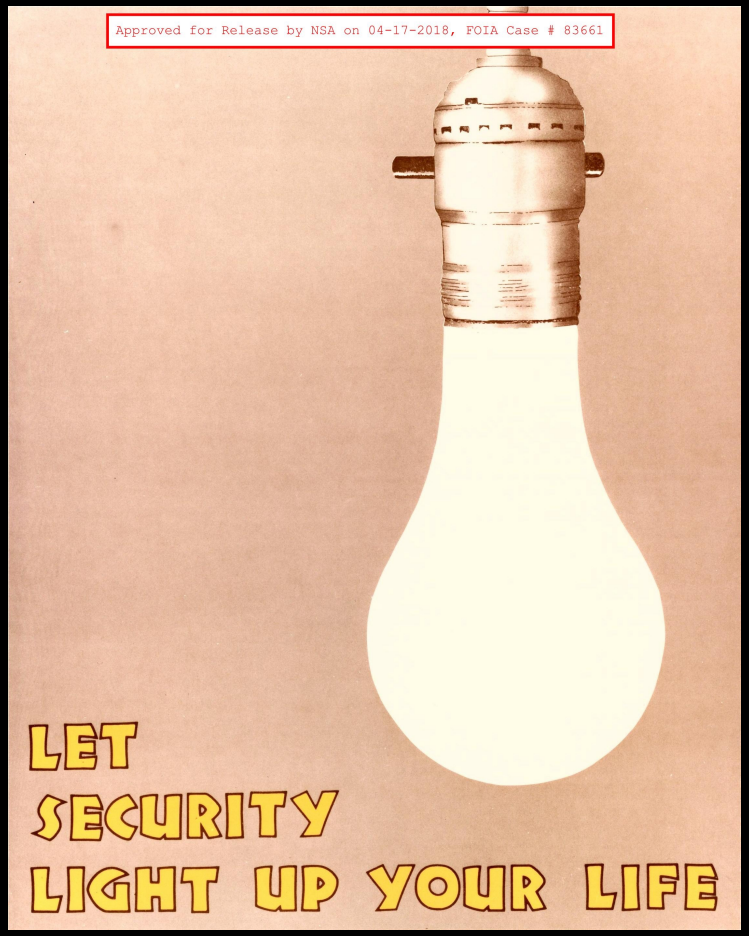
Backups

- What
  - A snapshot of your
    - the files that make up your site
    - database
- Addresses two types of threats:
  - Data loss/damage
  - Disruption in service/site downtime
- How does it reduce risk?
  - Lowers Impact

Backups

- Bonus points
  - Protect your backups
  - Don’t keep your back ups in a publicly accessible area
  - Test your backups!



Keep Drupal Up-to-date

- Why/How does it reduce risk?
  - Updates often address security issues
  - Potentially removes an exploitable vulnerability
- How
  - Subscribe to the Security Team newsletter
  - Update and stay on the latest release
  - Automate updates & testing
- Security principle : *Don't use components with known vulnerabilities*

Keep Themes/Modules Up-to-date

- Why/How does it reduce risk?
  - Similar to Drupal core updates, module and theme updates can also contain security fixes, removing potential vulnerabilities
- Bonus points
  - Know what you have installed and ***why*** you have it installed
  - Limit your module/theme use

Hosting Provider

If Drupal is the brain, and your content the heart and soul of your site…

…the hosting provider is the rest of the body

Hosting Provider

- Why
  - Doesn't matter how well you've secured Drupal, if the host is compromised
  - Remains one of the top vectors for compromised sites
- Security principles :
  - *Don't use components with known vulnerabilities*
  - *Establish Secure Defaults / Fail safely*
  - *Separation of Duties/Segmentation*
- Bonus points
  - Know what your host is running and what versions they have installed
  - Engage with the team responsible for hosting and work with them to keep the stack up-to-date

File/Directory Permissions

- What
  - Ensure that files and directories are set to the lowest access necessary
- Why/How does it reduce risk?
  - Improper permissions allow an attacker to access restricted files or directories and potentially modify or delete their contents
- Security principle : *least privilege*

Principle of Least Privilege

- Grant necessary permissions required to perform the intended activities
- For a limited time
- But with the *minimum* rights required for the task(s)
- Removing permissions when no longer needed

File/Directory Permissions

- Bonus points
  - Lock down all area of Drupal to read-only except for those areas that specifically require the ability to write
  - If your environment allows it, set files to only readable (0400) by the owner of the process that php runs under
  - Ideally, only the *files* directory is writable, and then only writeable by the php process
  - Bonus Security Principle: *Minimize Attack Surface*

What is “Attack Surface”?

- The sum of all paths for data/commands into and out of the application
- Plus all of the code that protects those paths
- Plus all of the data used in the application
- Plus all of the code that protects this data

What is “Attack Surface”?

Remove Unused Themes/Modules/Users

- What
  - Remove everything that isn't in active use
- Why/How does it reduce risk?
  - Even if a module/theme is disabled, the files are still there and are publicly accessible
  - A non-active user is one more account that can be compromised
  - Removes potential vulnerabilities
- Bonus points
  - Make module, theme and user audits a routine

Do Your Homework on Theme/Module Selection

- What
  - Research a theme/module before installing
- Why/How does it reduce risk?
  - Every piece of code you add to your system increases your attack surface
  - Every piece of code you add to your system has the potential to introduce new exploitable vulnerabilities

Do Your Homework on Theme/Module Selection

~~Jessica~~ Paul, your paranoia is exhausting

Do Your Homework on Theme/Module Selection

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  - Security principle: Be paranoid, be skeptical

Do Your Homework on Theme/Module Selection

- Security principle: *Treat all third party code/data as tainted and hostile*
- Bonus steps
  - https://security.utexas.edu/dorkbot
  - Run third party code through PHP-CS Security Audit
  - Run local static code analysis

Limit User Roles

- What
  - Give users the lowest possible role that allows them to complete their tasks
  - Only login with a higher privileged account when performing actions that require elevated privileges
- Security principle: Least privilege
- Why/How does it reduce risk?
  - Minimizes the damage if an account is compromised
  - Reduces the opportunity for a rogue user to inflict damage
  - Reduces the opportunity for someone to make a mistake

Limit User Roles

- Bonus points
  - Create or add custom roles that give you the ability to be more granular with permissions
  - Do routine account audits and remove permissions/roles from accounts that don't require them

Protect settings.php

- What
  - Add rules to prevent direct access
  - move the file somewhere not publicly accessible
- Why
  - Contains your database credentials and salts
  - Prevents accidental exposure of those assets
- Bonus points
  - Set file permissions to 0400*
  - See #4 Hosting Provider

Implement SSL

- What
  - Add a SSL/TLS certificate to your site
- Why/How does it reduce risk?
  - Encrypts the data as it is transferred between your site and the end user
- Security principle: *Minimize attack surface*
- Bonus steps
  - Enforce https over the *entire* site, not just login areas

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Strong Passwords

- What
  - Use a password that is long and contains randomized alpha characters, numbers and special characters
  - Does not contain common words in the dictionary
- Why/How does it reduce risk?
  - More difficult for attackers (threat agents) to guess, and, historically, brute force
  - Prevent unauthorized access

Strong Passwords

- Even more important than complexity is length

3 to 4 additional characters has the same entropy (number of possible combinations) as passwords using a more complex set of characters

Strong Passwords

Your new password!

MF>E,D4,C!q^m,uSwVh.[2AD+JHsM^6}

Assuming one hundred billion guesses per second will take 6.22 million trillion trillion trillion centuries to brute force

Strong Passwords

- They need to be unique, **for every account, on every site**
  - As of 2017, 7 **billion** credentials have been leaked/exposed
  - Credential stuffing

Strong Passwords

- Use a password manager
- No, really: use a password manager
- Enforce strong, unique passwords for **everyone**
  - Integrate with your institution's single-sign-on system
- Use a strong, *unique,* and **long** password **everywhere**, not just in Drupal

Limit Login Attempts

- What
  - Locks an account or blocks an IP address after so many failed attempts
- Why/How does it reduce risk?
  - Threat is unauthorized access
  - Vulnerability is a weak/common password
  - Reduces the ability of the threat agent to exploit the vulnerability
  - Security principle: *Minimize the attack surface*

Two/Multi-Factor Authentication

- What
  - Adds a secondary (or multiple) step that must be completed in order to authenticate
- Why/How does it reduce risk?
  - Adds an extra layer of defense against authentication attacks
  - Security principle: *Defense-in-depth*

Protect/Limit Access to Login/Admin Areas

- What
  - Add an extra layer of protection to the login area
    - Basic Access Authentication
    - Captcha
    - Password Policy
- Why/How does it reduce risk?
  - Similar to 2FA/MFA in that it adds an extra layer
- Security principle: *Minimize attack surface* and *Defense-in-Depth*

Miscellaneous

- Web Application Firewall
- Move/Hide changelog.txt
- Routine Security Scan
  - Droopescan
- Log actions/activities
- Secure your local machine

Items I believe should be higher in the list

- Block PHP execution (#14t)
- Logging (#11t)
- Segmentation/Isolation (separation of duties)
- Remove software/services that aren't actively used
- Limit the number of modules you use
- Monitor for file changes
- Stay informed!

Summary

- Always be thinking in terms of how you can reduce risk
- Minimize attack surface area
- Principle of least privilege
- Defense in depth
- Don’t use components with known vulnerabilities
- Be paranoid, be skeptical
  - Treat all third party code/data as tainted and hostile
- Security is a continual process; you’re never “finished”

Questions

Give us feedback:

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