

Autumn 2004 newsletter

Hello, and welcome to the first ever blazingfibre.net newsletter! There's a lot of ground to cover here, so we shall keep it brief. In later newsletters we'll revisit key services and technologies in depth. If you're interested in something we mention, please, contact us to discuss it.

1. **Service developments**
2. **Security developments**
3. **Regulatory developments**
4. **Contacting us**

Service developments

If your website is hosted with us you can make use of two new services: **Webalizer** and **Squirrelmail**. Webalizer shows you graphical statistics, and more, about the traffic on your site. Squirrelmail lets you login to your mailbox over the web (and thus from anywhere in the world). These new services are free! Contact us to activate them.

Want to update your OWN website? A new program called **webedit** might do the trick. It's perfect for updating a list of somethings, or a table of something elses. It can even manage raw text files, and whole paragraphs of text. You just login over the web, click on the item to change and type the new text - no knowledge of FTP, HTML or unix needed. It's not a substitute for a webmaster ... but for simple updates at least, this program means a webmaster is Not Required.

Mailouts: Want to send an email to hundreds or thousands of people? Have issues doing it yourself? We have the technology ... we can send your mailout to as many addresses as you want, with the email fully customised how you like it. You can even add an attachment! We can also process the "bounces" that inevitably follow (copies of your mailout returned because the recipient has left, or because the mailbox was full, etc) so your mailing list remains clean. And, we have software to automatically build a mailing list, from a special signup form you place on your website.

Want to regularly, automatically ship a large quantity of data from A to B, over the internet, in a secure manner? **XGP** is for you. This program can duplicate a directory from computer A to computer B, via email. The directory is compressed and encrypted before it's sent, and decrypted and decompressed at the other end. XGP uses the best-in-class tool GPG to encrypt and decrypt, and is designed for unattended operation.

Got a spam and/or virus problem in your inbox? **Spampal** what you need. This software, which is free, has virtually cleaned our inbox, which was heavily spammed and received many viruses. We highly recommend it. New filtering technology also allows Spampal to identify many viruses before they hit your inbox, although it's not 100% effective (yet). Spampal can filter just one inbox, or it can provide filtering for a whole LAN.

Got a server? It's undoubtedly churning out logfiles, even as you read this. But do you read them? Our new **remote monitoring** software does that for you. Your server is simply configured to send a copy of its logfiles to our system; our system then checks them for errors and flags any it finds. We simply look at our error report each morning and we can immediately see most kinds of errors your system has encountered.

We operate an **extranet**, whereby key customers can see all their invoices, outstanding jobs, contact information, and (for subscribing customers) their high-res webstats. Please contact us to request access to this.

Need to email us securely? Use our **crypto key!** You'll need an OpenPGP-compatible encryption application such as GPG to use it though. Our key is here: <http://www.blazingfibre.net/fibre.key>

We recently developed and installed an **account monitoring** robot. It will automatically send you alerts when your domainname registration or webhosting account is approaching expiry. It's our hope that this will reduce the need for us all to be on the lookout for expiring accounts. Please note - we can only provide alerts for websites hosted on our server.

Looking for a **new homepage**? Try this one: <http://www.blazingfibre.net/index.htm?page=launcher.htm>

Please take a moment to read our **Terms of Service** and Acceptable Use Policy:
<http://www.blazingfibre.net/tos.htm>

Security developments

Be aware of scams doing the rounds relating to the re-registration of your domainname(s). Companies using names such as the "Domain Registry Of America", "Domain Registry of Europe", "Domain Registry Services" or "EU Registry" are writing to domainname-holders informing them of impending expiry, and demanding a quantity of cash and a signature. These companies do not speak for your domainname registrar and by signing and paying, you are authorising them to transfer the name away from your current registrar and to themselves. Do not sign and pay. Renewing a domainname does not require a signature, and usually costs a maximum of GBP 30 for TWO years. In most cases, we are able to handle re-registration of your domainname ourselves.

Also be aware of third-party websites amassing private information. These sites, which seem innocuous enough, request personal information belonging to the visitors' friends and associates. For example, on astrology.com, you can compute your friend's horoscope - but you must first enter their birthdate. Once this is done, there is no telling what will happen to this information, which may well have been provided without the owner's consent. Some websites, such as plaxo.com, then set about emailing the people they have been told about and request even more personal information. It's clear databases are being built. Please think twice before you give away your friend's privacy.

We can report that incidence of spyware drops dramatically when the default web browser is set to something other than Internet Explorer. If you have a spyware problem, consider using Opera as the web browser on that machine. Alternative browsers are also suitable for addressing the spyware issue, however most of them are not as fast, as feature-laden or as reliable as Opera.

Finally, it's been in the news a lot recently but it's worth mentioning again - watch out for "phishing" emails which ask you for your personal information. These emails usually appear to be from your bank or ISP and make some case for you having to "log in". You click the link and a login page appears - but it's not on the bank's website at all, it's usually on a website in a remote village in Eastern Europe, and if you enter your login details into that page, you should be cancelling your cards in your next breath

Regulatory developments

We haven't had time to research these in much detail so we'll just mention a few important items and give a link to some more info.

- ➔ The Disability Discrimination Act requires that websites must be accessible to people with impaired vision, hearing and movement (among others):
http://www.theregister.co.uk/2004/04/14/websites_fail_disabled/
- ➔ The Data Protection Act requires careful data stewardship: <http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk/>
- ➔ The upcoming EU Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive will soon require the careful disposal of old computers, printers and the like:
http://www.theregister.co.uk/2004/09/28/dell_does_recycling/
- ➔ The upcoming Companies (Audit, Investigations and Community Enterprise) Bill will soon mandate standards for document retention and destruction (including emails):
http://www.theregister.co.uk/2004/09/08/companies_bill_it_costs/

Contacting us

We'd love to hear your suggestions and comments. Our contact details are as follows:

- web: <http://www.blazingfibre.net/>
- email: support@blazingfibre.net
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