Web Security

CS 161: Computer Security

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Some content adapted from materials by David Wagner or Dan Boneh
What is the Web?

A platform for deploying applications and sharing information, *portably and securely*
HTTP
(Hypertext Transfer Protocol)
A common data communication protocol on the web

HTTP REQUEST:
GET /account.html HTTP/1.1
Host: www.safebank.com

HTTP RESPONSE:
HTTP/1.0 200 OK
<HTML> . . . </HTML>
URLs

Global identifiers of network-retrievable resources

Example:

http://safebank.com:81/account?id=10#statement
HTTP

HTTP REQUEST:
GET /account.html HTTP/1.1
Host: www.safebank.com

HTTP RESPONSE:
HTTP/1.0 200 OK
<HTML> . . . </HTML>
HTTP Request

GET: no side effect
POST: possible side effect

GET /index.html HTTP/1.1
Accept: image/gif, image/x-bitmap, image/jpeg, */*
Accept-Language: en
Connection: Keep-Alive
User-Agent: Chrome/21.0.1180.75 (Macintosh; Intel Mac OS X 10_7_4)
Host: www.safebank.com
Referer: http://www.google.com?q=dingbats

Data – none for GET
Blank line

Headers

Method Path HTTP version

GET /index.html HTTP/1.1
Accept: image/gif, image/x-bitmap, image/jpeg, */*
Accept-Language: en
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Data – none for GET
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Headers
HTTP

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<HTML> . . . </HTML>
HTTP Response

HTTP version: HTTP/1.0
Status code: 200
Reason phrase: OK

Date: Sun, 12 Aug 2012 02:20:42 GMT
Server: Microsoft-Internet-Information-Server/5.0
Connection: keep-alive
Content-Type: text/html
Last-Modified: Thu, 9 Aug 2012 17:39:05 GMT
Set-Cookie: ...
Content-Length: 2543

<html>
  This is web content formatted using html
</html>

Can be a webpage
HTML

A language to create structured documents
One can embed images, objects, or create interactive forms

```html
<html>
  <body>
    <div>
      foo
      <a href="http://google.com">Go to Google!</a>
    </div>
    <form>
      <input type="text" />
      <input type="radio" />
      <input type="checkbox" />
    </form>
  </body>
</html>
```
CSS (Cascading Style Sheets)

Style sheet language used for describing the presentation of a document

```css
index.css

p.serif {
  font-family: "Times New Roman", Times, serif;
}
p.sans-serif {
  font-family: Arial, Helvetica, sans-serif;
}
```
Javascript

Programming language used to manipulate web pages. It is a high-level, untyped and interpreted language with support for objects.

Supported by all web browsers

```javascript
function myFunction() {
    document.getElementById("demo").innerHTML = "Text changed.";
}
</script>

Very powerful!
HTTP REQUEST:
GET /account.html HTTP/1.1
Host: www.safebank.com

HTTP RESPONSE:
HTTP/1.0 200 OK
<HTML> . . . </HTML>

webpage
DOM (Document Object Model)

A cross-platform model for representing and interacting with objects in HTML.

**HTML**

```html
<html>
  <body>
    <div>
      foo
    </div>
    <form>
      <input type="text" />
      <input type="radio" />
      <input type="checkbox" />
    </form>
  </body>
</html>
```

**DOM Tree**

```
|-> Document
  |-> Element (html)
    |-> Element (body)
      |-> Element (div)
        |-> text node
        |-> Form
          |-> Text-box
          |-> Radio Button
          |-> Check Box
```
Web & HTTP 101

HTTP REQUEST:
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The power of Javascript

Get familiarized with it so that you can think of all the attacks one can do with it
What can you do with Javascript?

Almost anything you want to the DOM!

A JS script embedded on a page can modify in almost arbitrary ways the DOM of the page. The same happens if an attacker manages to get you load a script into your page.

w3schools.com has nice interactive tutorials: https://www.w3schools.com/w3css/tryit.asp
Example of what Javascript can do...

Can change HTML content:

```html
<p id="demo">JavaScript can change HTML content.</p>

<button type="button"
onclick="document.getElementById('demo').innerHTML = 'Hello JavaScript!';">
  Click Me!
</button>

DEMO from w3schools.com
Other examples

Can change images
Can change style of elements
Can hide elements
Can unhide elements
Can change cursor
Other example: can access cookies

Will learn later that cookies are useful for authentication.

JS can read cookie:

```
var x = document.cookie;
```

Change cookie with JS:

```
document.cookie = "username=John Smith; expires=Thu, 18 Dec 2013 12:00:00 UTC; path=/";
```
Frames
Frames

- Enable embedding a page within a page

<iframe src="URL"></iframe>
Frames

- Modularity
  - Brings together content from multiple sources
  - Client-side aggregation

- Delegation
  - Frame can draw only on its own rectangle

Slide from Dan Boneh
Frames

• Outer page can specify only sizing and placement of the frame in the outer page
  • demo

• Frame isolation: Our page cannot change contents of inner page, inner page cannot change contents of outer page
Web security

ONE DOES NOT SIMPLY

HACK MY COMPUTER
A historical perspective

• The web is an example of “bolt-on security”
• Originally, the web was invented to allow physicists to share their research papers
  – Only textual web pages + links to other pages; no security model to speak of
The web became complex and adversarial quickly

• Then we added embedded images
  – Crucial decision: a page can embed images loaded from another web server
• Then, Javascript, dynamic HTML, AJAX, CSS, frames, audio, video, …
• Today, a web site is a distributed application
• Attackers have various motivations

Web security is a challenge!
Desirable security goals

• **Integrity**: malicious web sites should not be able to tamper with integrity of my computer or my information on other web sites

• **Confidentiality**: malicious web sites should not be able to learn confidential information from my computer or other web sites

• **Privacy**: malicious web sites should not be able to spy on me or my activities online

• **Availability**: attacker cannot make site unavailable
Security on the web

• Risk #1: we don’t want a malicious site to be able to trash my files/programs on my computer
  – Browsing to awesomevids.com (or evil.com) should not infect my computer with malware, read or write files on my computer, etc.
Security on the web

• Risk #1: we don’t want a malicious site to be able to trash my files/programs on my computer
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• Defense: Javascript is sandboxed; try to avoid security bugs in browser code; privilege separation; automatic updates; etc.
Security on the web

• Risk #2: we don’t want a malicious site to be able to spy on or tamper with my information or interactions with other websites
  – Browsing to evil.com should not let evil.com spy on my emails in Gmail or buy stuff with my Amazon account
Security on the web

• Risk #2: we don’t want a malicious site to be able to spy on or tamper with my information or interactions with other websites
  – Browsing to evil.com should not let evil.com spy on my emails in Gmail or buy stuff with my Amazon account

• Defense: the same-origin policy
  – A security policy grafted on after-the-fact, and enforced by web browsers
Security on the web

• Risk #3: we want data stored on a web server to be protected from unauthorized access
Security on the web

• Risk #3: we want data stored on a web server to be protected from unauthorized access
• Defense: server-side security
Same-origin policy
Same-origin policy

- Each site in the browser is isolated from all others
Same-origin policy

- Multiple pages from the same site are not isolated.

browser:

No security barrier

wikipedia.org

wikipedia.org
Origin

- Granularity of protection for same origin policy
- Origin = protocol + hostname + port

```
http://coolsite.com:81/tools/info.html
```

- It is **string matching**! If these match, it is same origin, else it is not. Even though in some cases, it is logically the same origin, if there is no match, it is not
Same-origin policy

One origin should not be able to access the resources of another origin.

Javascript on one page cannot read or modify pages from different origins.
Same-origin policy

- The origin of a page is derived from the URL it was loaded from.
The origin of a page is derived from the URL it was loaded from.

Special case: Javascript runs with the origin of the page that loaded it.
Origins of other components

- `<img src=""">` the image is “copied” from the remote server into the new page so it has the origin of the embedding page (like JS) and not of the remote origin

- `iframe`: origin of the URL from which the `iframe` is served, and not the loading website.
# Exercises

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Originating document</th>
<th>Accessed document</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*except*
Cross-origin communication

• Allowed through a narrow API: `postMessage`

• Receiving origin decides if to accept the message based on origin (whose correctness is enforced by browser)

```javascript
postMessage("run this script", script)
```

Check origin, and request!
Chromodo
Private Internet Browser

Fast and versatile Internet Browser based on Chromium, with highest levels of speed, security and privacy!

Issue 704: Comodo: Comodo" Browser disables same origin policy. Effectively turning off web security.
13 people starred this issue and may be notified of changes.

Reported by tav...@google.com, Jan 21, 2016

When you install Comodo Internet Security, by default a new browser called Chromodo is installed and set as the default browser. Additionally, all shortcuts are replaced with Chromodo links and all settings, cookies, etc are imported from Chrome. They also hijack DNS settings, among other shady practices.


Chromodo is described as "highest levels of speed, security and privacy", but actually disables all web security. Let me repeat that, they ***disable the same origin policy***... ?!?
Coming up:
attacks on web servers!