The Risks Digest

Will Holcomb

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The Risks Forum is a moderated e-mail digest maintained by the ACM Committee on Computers and Public Policy. It details current happenings in the area of computer security and the ways that the integration of computers into society is affecting life.

The list has a very long standing history in Internet terms, with the digests beginning in 1985 and averaging about 180 issues a year to the present day. The summary in particular deals with the most recent issue at the time of writing Volume 22, Issue 23.

One article that was particularly interesting dealt with voting machines in Brazil and how they managed to change the time. Apparently Brazil's most recent election was a close one requiring a runoff election and a second round of voting. The date for the runoff however happened after the usual date for Brazil to recognize daylight savings time. Unfortunately the voting machines that were being used did not allow the internal time to be changed. This meant that either they had to change the time of the election, not use the machines, recompute all the times recorded by the machines, or move daylight savings time. In the end they simply moved daylight savings time to make the times recorded by the machines match the real times of the election.

Another interesting story described how in Germany several people were finding anomalous entries on their bills. Eventually someone complained and upon closer examination it turns out that the people had been charged for the phone usage of government eavesdropping on their accounts. Apparently only about 50 people were affected, but it was almost certainly an eye-opener for them.