COIN Technical Report 2015-6

This is by way of a rather short report, but with some fairly significant consequences.

First of all – the running of the server… This has, on the whole, been relatively pain-free with a few rather dramatic exceptions.

The first happened (as it always does) while we were away on holiday in a caravan in the middle of a field. Fortunately, a field with WiFi! It became clear that someone had found a weakness in the security of the CMS system and had trolled through all of the "PCC" systems, replacing all of the front pages with a message that the site had been hacked. Fortunately, the hacker chose to brag about how clever he had been – which made it easy to plug the hole. But there were a lot of front pages to restore! COIN's was one of the sites affected, but, I think, few people noticed.

The second problem is both more "regular" and more disturbing. The COIN lists receive a huge amount of spam. Some of these are directed straight to the list addresses and are of little problem: they just get deleted by the system. Many others (sometimes 200+ a day) are sent to [listname]-owner@lists.coin.org.uk   These, again, are little problem to me as they are all trapped in my spam systems. However not everything is trapped and there is an appreciable lot of "back scatter" – emails being returned to the supposed "sender" and the global systems pick up on this and add the server to the blacklists. This is generally classified as being relatively low level but it does impact on all of the other users of that server. I've always kept all of my list domains on a separate server for this reason – but that is not going to be possible in the longer term.

Having said all of that – we've had several months recently with no blacklisting. So that's a cue for a new listing today or tomorrow!

Tempus is fugitting. That is true for all COIN members, but next year, I shall (if spared) achieve my threescore years and ten. It seems to me that the hosting of a raft of websites (as I do) which all depend on an increasingly doddery septuagenarian makes for a bad business model. Now that my pension can replace the rather modest income provided by all of that work, it seems wise to make a steady and ordered withdrawal from my commercial hosting activities. I am therefore, moving the control of all the Sudanese sites to Salisbury Diocese (which has interesting overtones as ECSSS has blackballed Salisbury over its stance on gay relationships) and I am passing other sites on; some to Tim Vaughan and some to a more local firm that can give more physical support. Clearly, this means I shall be closing down some of my virtual servers – and equally clearly, I need to protect the one server that I shall retain from all untoward activity. You'll see that I am reluctant to run mailing list traffic on that server!

I shall continue to run some sites – and I shall continue, for example, to host the COIN website for the foreseeable future. The danger is that one day Anno Domini will take over and all will collapse about our ears.

We have talked at two or three recent COIN AGMs about "The Future of COIN" and, in true COIN style, little has actually been done. There have been limited experiments with Facebook, other social media and other mailing list platforms. The fact of the matter is that, now, we **have** to do something. This AGM and the bits of discussion that have led up to today's meeting mark the beginning of what must be a definite move towards some change. Decisions have not been made; no one's input or concerns has been ignored; no constitution has been overridden. We start here.