

Claudia Diaz, Rachel Greenstadt, and Damon McCoy

Editors' Introduction

DOI 10.1515/popets-2017-0036

It is our great pleasure to introduce the fourth issue of the fourth volume of PoPETs, an open access journal that publishes articles accepted to the annual Privacy Enhancing Technologies Symposium (PETS).

Starting with PETS 2015, the PET Board, which oversees PETS, decided to follow a hybrid conference-journal model following in the footsteps of PVLDB.¹ A hybrid model brings journal-style reviewing to conferences to improve the quality of published articles as well as to provide more predictable, yet rigorously peer-reviewed, paths to acceptance for authors. PoPETs publishes four issues per year, accepting submissions every three months. PoPETs' double-blind peer review process is similar to that of top tier computer security conferences, including phases for bidding, individual reviews, author rebuttals, discussion among reviewers, and consensus recommendation. Decisions are notified to authors two months after submission. Recognizing the need to increase the free, public availability of scientific publications, PoPETs is now published under the open-access Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs license.

Articles submitted to this issue were reviewed by 83 members of the Editorial Board and 30 External Reviewers, all of whom are internationally recognized researchers in the field of computer security and privacy. The submitted articles, reviews, and discussion were available to all members of the editorial board that did not have a conflict of interest with the authors of the article. To identify conflicts of interest, the editorial board membership was published before submissions were opened and authors were asked to indicate members with whom any of the authors had a conflict of interest. In addition, editorial board members were asked to list the authors and institutions with which they have

conflicts of interest. Finally, the editorial board chairs also checked for missed conflicts. Editorial board members were welcome to submit articles, while the chairs were precluded from doing so.

There were 91 submissions to this issue of PoPETs, most of which were reviewed by four members of the editorial board (in a few cases, articles received three or more than four reviews). External experts were invited to review certain articles where necessary.

Nine of the 91 submissions had already been submitted to a previous PoPETs issue, and been invited to resubmit after major revisions. These nine revised articles were re-assigned to the editorial board members that had reviewed the previous version. Additionally, fifteen articles that had been submitted and rejected from a previous issue of the journal, were resubmitted to this issue. These revised versions were assigned the same reviewers that had evaluated it in a previous round whenever possible. Authors of resubmitted articles (either rejected or invited to do major revisions) were asked to provide a summary of changes between the prior and current version that explained how review concerns had been addressed.

Following a first phase of double-blind individual reviews, the reviews were sent to authors, who were given the opportunity to submit a rebuttal. After the rebuttal period there was a discussion among the reviewers, other members of the editorial board and the chairs, before a consensus decision on the paper was reached. One of the reviewers was then selected to write a meta-review that summarized the conclusion of the discussion and the justification for the decision.

Of the 91 submissions, two were accepted with minor changes and 18 were conditionally accepted subject to minor revisions. A reviewer was assigned as a shepherd for the articles that required minor revisions, to ensure that the important points from the meta-review were addressed in the camera-ready version, and one article was co-shepherded by two reviewers. Twenty articles were ultimately accepted and are published in this issue. We owe special thanks to all the shepherds for the effort they put into ensuring that important revisions were made.

The authors of eleven other articles were invited to resubmit to a future issue of PoPETs after having made major revisions that address the issues identified in the meta-review. Provided these articles are submitted to

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¹ <http://www.vldb.org/pvldb/index.html>

one of the next PoPETs two submission deadlines, they will be reviewed by the same editorial board members (whenever possible) and judged against how well the authors have addressed the points raised in the meta-review.

The remaining 60 articles were rejected due to flaws more serious than what could be addressed with a few concrete revisions, or due to them not being considered sufficiently close to the topics listed in the call for papers.

In all cases, the meta-review endeavored to provide constructive comments to the authors of rejected articles to allow them to improve their work. Authors are permitted to resubmit a revised version to future issues of PoPETs, and previously rejected articles are treated as new submissions. Of the 60 rejected papers, 42 were encouraged to resubmit after addressing the key points in the reviews.

The 20 accepted articles in Issue 4 of this 2017 volume, and the 32 articles published in Issues 1, 2, and 3, formed the program for PETS 2017, which was held from July 18–21, 2017 in Minneapolis, USA. For all four 2017 issues combined, there were 231 submissions (of which 30 were major revisions and 21 were resubmitted reject-and-resubmit), 52 accepted papers (of which 23 were major revisions and 5 were resubmitted reject-and-resubmit), and 32 papers were given a Major Revision decision.

We thank the following people for making the third issue of PoPETs Volume 2017 possible:

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- David Fifield, UC Berkeley
- Simone Fischer-Hübner, Karlstad University
- Bryan Ford, EPFL
- Ian Goldberg, University of Waterloo
- Thomas Groß, Newcastle University
- Jens Grossklags, Technical University of Munich
- Seda Gürses, KU Leuven
- Marit Hansen, Independent Centre for Privacy Protection Schleswig-Holstein
- Ryan Henry, Indiana University Bloomington
- Raquel Hill, Indiana University Bloomington
- Jaap-Henk Hoepman, Radboud University Nijmegen
- Yan Huang, Indiana University Bloomington
- Rob Jansen, U.S. Naval Research Laboratory
- Aaron Johnson, U.S. Naval Research Laboratory
- Apu Kapadia, Indiana University Bloomington
- Jonathan Katz, University of Maryland
- Aggelos Kiayias, University of Edinburgh
- Bart Knijnenburg, Clemson University
- Markulf Kohlweiss, Microsoft Research
- Yoshi Kohno, University of Washington
- Albert Kwon, MIT
- Susan Landau, Worcester Polytechnic Institute
- Peeter Laud, Cybernetica
- Adam J. Lee, University of Pittsburgh
- Marc Liberatore, University of Massachusetts, Amherst
- Boon Thau Loo, University of Pennsylvania
- Prateek Mittal, Princeton University
- Payman Mohassel, Visa Research
- Steven Murdoch, University College London
- Steven Myers, Indiana University Bloomington

- Arvind Narayanan, Princeton University
- Muhammad Naveed, University of Southern California
- Shirin Nilizadeh, UC Santa Barbara
- Guevara Noubir, Northeastern University
- Vern Paxson, UC Berkeley/ International Computer Science Institute
- Adrian Perrig, ETH Zurich
- Joel Reardon, University of Calgary
- Rob Reeder, Google
- Alfredo Rial, University of Luxembourg
- Thomas Roessler, Google
- Keith Ross, New York University
- Ahmad-Reza Sadeghi, Technische Universität Darmstadt
- Reihaneh Safavi-Naini, University of Calgary
- Hovav Schacham, UCSD
- Martin Schmiedecker, SBA Research
- Peter Schwabe, Radboud University
- Mohamed Shehab, University of North Carolina at Charlotte
- Reza Shokri, ETH Zurich
- Thomas Schrimpton, University of Florida
- Jessica Staddon, NC State University
- Thorsten Strufe, TU Dresden
- Carmela Troncoso, IMDEA
- Michael Tschantz, International Computer Science Institute
- Kami Vaniea, University of Edinburgh
- Eugene Vasserman, Kansas State University
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We thank the following shepherds:

- Mashael Al-Sabah
- Aaron Johnson
- Konstantinos Chatzikokolakis
- Adam Aviv
- Guevara Noubir
- Rinku Dewri
- Muhammad Naveed
- Alfredo Rial
- Tao Wang
- Damon McCoy
- Ian Goldberg
- George Danezis
- Carmela Troncoso
- Martin Schmiedecker
- Peeter Laud
- Hadi Asghari
- Aggelos Kiayias
- Prateek Mittal

We thank the following proof reviewer:

- Emmanuela Orsini

We thank the following external reviewers:

- Stefanie Roos
- Sebastian Meiser
- Rebekah Overdorf
- Steven Englehardt
- Pradeep Murukannaiah
- Sam Procter
- Amir Houmansadr
- Luke Valenta
- Nik Unger
- Paul Pearce
- Tobias Pulls
- Changchang Liu
- Konstantinos Chatzikokolakis
- Ania Piotrowska
- Sai Teja Peddinti
- Zekeriya Erkin
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- Edwin Dauber
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- Ian Miers
- Marcella Hastings
- Wouter Lueks
- Peter Roenne
- Amit Datta
- Armon Barton

We would like to thank the University of Minnesota for organizing the Privacy Enhancing Technology Symposium where paper of Volume 2017 were presented. We are grateful for the support of DeepMind for their support as Proceedings Sponsor for Volume 2017, enabling the open access of these papers without charging more to authors or conference attendees. We would also like to thank the Platinum Sponsors of the PETS event: Ford Foundation, the National Science Foundation and ZCash. We would also like to thank our silver sponsors: brave, Comcast and Google, and additional sponsor Intel.

Sincerely,

Claudia Diaz, Rachel Greenstadt, and Damon McCoy
 Program Co-Chairs of PETS 2017 and Co-Editors-in-Chief of PoPETS volume 2017.