

CLASS DISCLOSURE SCRIPT:

I am Richard Conlan and as some of you may know I wrote and administered the Dropbox Online homework system this semester. Throughout the semester you have been using the system to submit homework assignments, view class announcements, and receive feedback on your submissions.

At three points this semester there were set mandatory password changes. The first was at the beginning of the semester when Dropbox came online in late January, the second was the first time you logged in after February 14th, and the third was the first time you logged in after March 14th. These passwords changes were required for two reasons. The first is that it is good practice to change your passwords frequently. The industry standard is supposed to be to change passwords monthly. Many systems neglect this requirement because of tradeoffs with support costs, etc., but especially since Dropbox has been under development I felt this was necessary. The second is that I was testing four password selection applets for the purposes of an HCI study.

These applets were designed to test different user interface designs for the password selection interface. Approximately one-fourth of you were given Applet1, which served as a control and looked like a normal password selection interface. Another fourth of you were given Applet2, which had a progress bar that grew and shrank to indicate password quality as you entered your new password. Another fourth of you were given Applet3, which had a smiley face that got happier or sadder to indicate password quality as you entered your new password. The final fourth of you were given Applet4, which changed its estimate of how long it would take to break your password to indicate password quality as you entered your new password.

In addition to submitting your new password each applet also submitted whether or not you clicked the Help button and a Password Quality Score providing an estimate of the quality of your password. These values were all stored in the database, with your passwords encrypted under a 4096-bit RSA key.

HCISEC is the study of how the design of the user interface affects the security of a system. Given that we have data about the applets and the passwords that went with them, we have the opportunity to see if one the user interface design affects the quality of the passwords chosen. We decided that it might be beneficial to examine this relationship, so we got permission to run a study from Institutional Research. Now we are looking for your permission to use your data to form an aggregated set to analyze.

I have handed around copies of consent forms concerning this study. These forms are basically asking for your permission to look at your password data. There are two levels of participation – one is to let me access your Password Quality Score data and the other is to grant me full access to all of your password data. I will only look at the data for the purposes of analyzing whether the password applet you used affected the quality of the password that was chosen, and any reported results will be aggregated across everybody that used that applet. Your password data will be handled very carefully and encrypted throughout the analysis period whenever I am not directly examining it. When we are done analyzing the data it will be securely deleted.

You do not have to participate in this study. If you do not want to participate then feel free to keep the consent form, turn it back in, or throw it away. Whether or not you participate in the study will have no affect on your grades or class standing.

I will now give you a few minutes to read the consent form and will take any questions that you have concerning the study.