

## Message from the 27th USENIX Security Symposium Program Co-Chairs

Welcome to the USENIX Security Symposium in Baltimore, MD! We hope you enjoy the outstanding technical program and invited talks. Now in its 27th year, the symposium brings together researchers and practitioners from across the field. We encourage you to engage with the community through our events, hallway track, and questions for speakers.

The USENIX Security Symposium continues to attract a very large number of high-quality submissions. We received 524 submissions by the February 8, 2018 deadline. This is the second-highest number of submissions, although it represents an 8.4% decrease from 2017. One interpretation is that the previous rate of growth (10-20% per year) may not be indefinitely sustainable by our community. Another possible factor is that the IEEE Symposium on Security and Privacy switched to a rolling submission model last year.

The composition of the technical program committee (PC) is important for ensuring a fair and selective peer-review process. To handle the large number of submissions, we assembled the largest PC to date: 2 chairs and 86 members. We wanted to assemble a PC that was diverse in terms of geography, area of expertise, gender, race, level of seniority, and institution type. Members of the resulting program committee were 22% female, 29% junior, 12% industry, and 20% based outside of the US. We challenge future conference chairs to also share committee composition statistics, so that we may hold our community accountable to diversity. Despite our efforts, there is still significant room for improvement, particularly in gender and racial representation.

New this year, we introduced a Review Task Force (RTF) that helped to ensure review quality and encourage positive online discussion for papers advancing to Round 2. The RTF was inspired by a recent addition to the NDSS review process. We invited five senior members of the community to serve on the RTF. RTF members provided detailed feedback on the quality of reviews. Each RTF member was assigned around 60 papers to oversee, in exchange for a lightened review workload. During the PC meeting, RTF members also acted as a proxy for members not in attendance. We found significant value in the RTF and encourage other conferences to adopt this model.

As in recent years, we used a double-blind review process with two rounds of review. Of the 524 submissions, 500 were considered in Round 1 (20 papers were administratively rejected for violating the call for papers, and four were withdrawn). Following four weeks of review and one week of discussion, 188 papers were Early Rejected on March 20, 2018. A paper was rejected if it received no positive scores, had at least one confident reviewer, and neither of the reviewers saw value in additional reviews. Authors of the remaining 312 papers were given the opportunity to respond to specific questions raised by reviewers (in contrast to last year, authors of early rejected papers were not given the opportunity to appeal). We felt the authors' response was a valuable mechanism to help authors participate in the discussion of their submissions. We observed several discussions that were affected by the authors' responses. Each Round 2 paper was assigned two or more additional reviews.

The unfortunate reality of a large program is that it is impossible to discuss all Round 2 papers in a two-day meeting. We therefore encouraged reviewers to come to consensus during the three-week online discussion phase. The PC chairs reviewed and ratified online decisions to reject or accept papers. Due to the large anticipated number of accepted papers, some papers needed to be accepted without in-person discussion; the chairs discussed those papers, and committee members were able to chime in online. Before the in-person meeting, we accepted 27 and rejected 162 of the 312 Round 2 papers, with a handful of papers nearing a decision.

The PC meeting was held on April 30th and May 1st of 2018 on NC State University's Centennial campus in Raleigh, NC. Half of the PC (41 members) were invited to attend the in-person meeting. Due to vigorous online discussions, we were able to focus our time on the papers that really needed in-person discussion. This meant that we rarely needed to stop discussions due to the lack of time. We clustered papers into rough topic areas to allow papers within similar areas to be judged in close proximity. We told the PC that we hoped to accept at least half of the approximately 100 papers slated for discussion, but we hid the total number of accepted papers so that discussions could focus on the merits of individual papers.

We accepted a total of 100 papers, representing a 19% acceptance rate. Of these papers, 43 were conditionally accepted to ensure specific changes appeared in the final version. The number of accepted papers is a record for the symposium, reflecting both the large number and high quality of submissions. The symposium continues to be exceptionally competitive. We congratulate authors on their excellent work and notable achievement!

It was our honor and pleasure to witness the large community effort that brings together the USENIX Security Symposium. All PC members did an incredible amount of work, and the high quality of the program is a testament to their effort and dedication. Each member reviewed about 20 papers, for a total of over 1600 reviews and 4600 comments. We would especially like to thank the Review Task Force: Lujó Bauer, Srdjan Capkun, Nadia Heninger, Alina Oprea, and Patrick Traynor. Yoshi Kohno was our steering committee liaison and was a continual resource and sounding board. We also thank the external reviewers who were brought in due to their particular expertise to review a few specific papers. We would also like to thank the invited talks committee (Frank Chen, Kevin Fu, Casey Henderson, and Matthew Scholl), the Test of Time award committee (Matt Blaze, Dan Boneh, Kevin Fu, and David Wagner), the poster session chair Yuan Tian, and the lightning talks chair Adam Bates. The staff at USENIX ensure that everything runs smoothly behind the scenes; Casey Henderson and Michele Nelson specifically helped us in innumerable ways. Finally, we thank all of the authors of the 524 submitted papers for participating in the 27th USENIX Security Symposium.

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