

Editorial

I am often asked to review business continuity plans and over the years have noticed a regular problem with all of them. Every one that I have looked at has assumed that only their firm will be facing a disaster at a particular moment in time. There seems to be no concept of what I call a community wide disaster, where many firms are hit simultaneously, along with the associated infrastructure such as transport, power and telecommunications. The defences that are often offered falls into two categories: first, it is too complicated to cater for every scenario and second everyone else will be in the same boat anyway, so why worry? I have some sympathy with both views and I have usually found that management are usually very good at crisis management when unforeseen problems occur. On the other hand I do know of a number of people whose health has been significantly impaired when attempting to recover from a disaster without a suitable plan being available. The other problem that I notice is the assumption that all the key staff will be available for recovery purposes. This is so unlikely as to be preposterous and I have often ‘umpired’ recovery tests when as soon as I say that certain people are not available the whole thing falls apart. Where is this all leading? Well, we have two articles in this edition that deal with business continuity. The first by Alphas Hinds looks at the potential problems faced by Indian Railways if their computer systems are compromised, while the second by Andrew Cormack examines security in universities and colleges. Having worked in both the transport and the university sectors I can appreciate the problems faced by both.

Rupert Kendrick, our new events reporter provides an insight into our latest two events. The first a full day briefing on internet security and the second on the subject of the ‘subversive spreadsheet’. Both sessions were extremely well attended and perhaps Rupert’s write up will encourage you to come along to our events.

Andrew Hawker examines a cure for the ISISTS syndrome in his regular web column and Colin Thompson does his usual sterling job in keeping us up to date on matters of our parent body. Colin mentions the new code of ethics, which I intend to publish in the next edition of this Journal.

Bob Ashton, our Australian Correspondent, reports on action taken by the Australian government to bring their data protection legislation in line with that of the EU. Bob has also pointed out to me the unusual symmetry of a date/time combination on the 20 February 2002. At 20.02 on that date we had the situation where a 24 clock calendar would have read 20.02.20.02.2002. But only for those using the European date format Bob. Our American cousins will have to look elsewhere for their symmetry. According to my calculations the next symmetric European date will be 20:03 on 20 March 2003.

A reminder that our AGM is scheduled for the 14 May. This is your opportunity to grill your Committee on its stewardship of your specialist group. You will also find a nomination form for applying to join the Committee. I seriously encourage you to do so.

There were no takers for the prize of identifying the key phrases in the ‘231 Rules of Survival for Evil Overlords, or Heads of Audit’ column in the last edition, so I guess I

will just have to swig another bottle of bubbly in celebration of defeating you all once again!

Finally, back editions of the Journal can be found on our web site, along with a host of other useful information and links. I urge you to point your browser to www.bcs-irma.org.

Happy reading and I look forward to seeing many of you at our meetings.