

the **Availability Digest**

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@availabilitydig – Our May Twitter Feed of Outages

May 2015

A challenge every issue for the Availability Digest is to determine which of the many availability topics out there win coveted status as Digest articles. We always regret not focusing our attention on the topics we bypass. With our new Twitter presence, we don't have to feel guilty. This article highlights some of the @availabilitydig tweets that made headlines in recent days.



Verizon hit by an 8-hour email outage

A lot of Verizon's email customers woke up on the morning of 21 May to find that their service was down. And for many, the problem lasted for about 8 hours. While neither Verizon nor Verizon Support acknowledged on Twitter that there even was a problem, Verizon Support did reach out to some users and asked them to send direct messages about the situation.

<http://t.co/6T9d4zIPR1>

Availability Digest Oldie but Goodie: "Hacked AP Tweet Crashes Markets"

From 2013: On Tuesday, April 23, 2013, an Associated Press (AP) tweet reported that President Obama had been injured in an explosion at the White House. It sent the U.S. financial markets into an instant tailspin. Fortunately, the tweet was false. The AP Twitter account had been hacked. However, what does this mean for "flash crashes" in the future when unverified and perhaps malicious information is disseminated via social media?

<http://t.co/RSGJlek9W0>

Google Pays Almost \$40,000 for Security Bug Reports in Chrome 43

External security researchers who contributed to Chrome browser's increased security received \$38,337 / €34,550 from Google for responsible disclosure of bugs fixed in version 43 of the browser.

<http://t.co/OyLuR8mXDh>

FAA upgrades air traffic control to reduce delays, save fuel

The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration officially has switched to a new air traffic control system for the 20 regional centers that direct high-altitude planes between airports. The nearly \$2.5 billion system, called En Route Automation Modernization (ERAM), has three times as many sensors to track planes more precisely, which enables planes to fly safely while closer together.

<http://t.co/BLLB4Mp7cK>

Who's flying the plane? The latest reason to never ignore security holes

Last month, a security researcher tweeted from a United Airlines plane that security controls were so lax that he could hack into the system and make the oxygen masks fall. At the time, Airbus, the plane's manufacturer, said there wasn't any real security issue. Surprise! During an earlier flight, the security researcher actually *did* seize control of the aircraft and caused it to briefly fly sideways, according to an FBI search warrant application.

<http://t.co/2ueneFSQWG>

Gmail outage illustrates the importance of tape backups

The 2011 email disaster Google suffered showed why redundancy is woefully inadequate for DR and demonstrated the importance of tape backups.

<http://t.co/S2mvKs3TUA>

The 'Power Attack': how to take down a data centre with practically no hacking

The central premise of the Power Attack is that data centres are augmented ad hoc over a period of years according to demand and other market factors and that the modularity and scalability designed into racking and other commercial facets of the operation is not similarly applied to power provisioning – leaving scope for attackers to cause damaging power crises without any special access privileges or tools beyond malicious intent.

<http://t.co/xNbX38CMZu>

How AT&T Is Virtualizing Security

AT&T Inc. is rethinking how it approaches security as it upgrades its data centers and network to better handle growing data and video traffic. The heart of AT&T's new architecture is a plan to virtualize its infrastructure. That means replacing complex pieces of hardware with software that runs on standard, off-the-shelf hardware. As it virtualizes the servers and switches that funnel traffic in its network, AT&T is also virtualizing security.

<http://t.co/JwKoLFp6Lk>

Penn State University network sacked by China malware blitz

Penn State University has had to take networks in its school of engineering offline after falling victim to a malware attack traced partially to China. Acting on an FBI tip, the school found that PCs on the network of its College of Engineering were infected with malware that appeared to be trying to harvest research data and personal information.

<http://t.co/XPpMfufwre>

Airline launches bug bounty contest

United Airlines has launched a reward programme for security experts who find bugs in the software on its websites. Programmers can earn up to one million air miles for finding the most serious vulnerabilities. The reward programme comes soon after the US government warned about the security of software used on in-flight systems.

<http://t.co/rKuWfaMFR2>

Hackers are draining bank accounts via the Starbucks app

The Starbucks app lets you pay at checkout with your phone. It can also reload Starbucks gift cards by automatically drawing funds from your bank account, credit card or PayPal. That's how criminals are siphoning money away from victims. They break into a victim's Starbucks account online, add a new gift card, transfer funds over -- and repeat the process every time the original card reloads.

<http://t.co/JjykW939Ag>

Availability Digest Oldie but Still Goodie: "Anti-Virus – A Single Point of Failure?"

What do active/active systems, clusters, fault-tolerant systems, and standby systems have in common? They all avoid a single point of failure. True, fault-tolerant systems and clusters will not survive a site failure; and standby systems have been known not to come up when needed. But active/active systems are immune, right? On April 21, 2010, McAfee, one of the leading antivirus vendors, proved this conjecture to be wrong.

<http://t.co/azdGwJoOt6>

Third-Party Software Was Entry Point for Background-Check System Hack

Hackers broke into third-party software in 2013 to open personal records on federal employees and contractors with access to classified intelligence, according to the U.S. government's largest private employee investigation provider. That software apparently was an SAP enterprise resource planning application.

<http://t.co/pjDDulaeqt>

7 Common Misconceptions About Security Threats In Cloud Computing

It's time to eliminate the misunderstandings and focus on the truths of security threats in cloud computing. Misconception #1: The public cloud is more easily breached.

<http://t.co/S7lrF9vYw0>

The Government Doubles Down on Cybersecurity Leadership (Industry Perspective)

For the U.S. Federal Government, 2015 is quickly turning into the year of cybersecurity. Though heralded with less fanfare, it's also the year of cybersecurity for the state and local market. That's because the feds are pushing cyberthreat information-sharing among companies and among governments spanning the public and private sectors.

<http://t.co/ESWqrUlcYO>

Outage at Amsterdam internet hub affects much of Netherlands

A technical fault at the internet hub AMS-IX in Amsterdam caused online problems in several places in the Netherlands for about an hour on Wednesday, May 13th. The internet hub is one of the most used internet exchanges in the world.

<http://t.co/0fC37k6m9Z>

Not Bigger Than Heartbleed But Venom Vulnerability Could Have Opened Door To Cloud Kingdoms

It has a more terrifying name than Heartbleed. But don't panic, it's not going to cause as much trouble. The Venom vulnerability, as dubbed by security intelligence firm CrowdStrike after Virtualized Environment Neglected Operations Manipulation, may reside in the virtual floppy drive code used by many computer virtualization platforms and therefore by many cloud providers.

<http://t.co/jirBJutAgk>

Verizon buys AOL for \$4.4bn

US telecommunications giant Verizon has agreed to buy AOL in a deal worth \$4.4bn (£2.8bn). Buying AOL will broaden the amount of advertising Verizon can sell and will increase video production. AOL owns websites such as the Huffington Post, Techcrunch, Engadget, Makers and AOL.com. Verizon, like UK peers BT and Vodafone, is trying to become more of a one-stop shop for internet services and entertainment.

<http://t.co/NlzGP9YFiP>

Microsoft to 'end' Windows versions

Windows 10 is going to be the last major revision of the operating system, and Windows in the future will be updated in an "ongoing manner." Instead of new stand-alone versions, Windows 10 will be improved in regular installments.

<http://t.co/EjHwmaosqY>

Los Angeles becomes the first city in the nation to enact earthquake safety standards for new cellphone towers

There has not been a major quake in California since cellphones, smartphones and WiFi became ubiquitous. When the destructive Northridge quake hit in 1994, landlines still ruled; and the Internet wasn't yet a central part of people's lives. Recently, Los Angeles became the first city in the U.S. to approve seismic standards for new cellphone towers, part of an effort to strengthen communications infrastructure in preparation for the next big quake. The initiative takes aim at one of the great unknowns in earthquake country: How will mobile technology fare?

<http://t.co/Vg8Ei68Vze>

HP Updates HP-UX And NonStop With More Virtualisation

The HP-UX Unix version and NonStop systems could go on forever, as RISC and fault-tolerant systems share tech with the mainstream, says HP. For the last several years, HP's Project Odyssey has attempted to reassure users that the older mission-critical Unix and NonStop environments have a future by sharing technology developments from the mainstream x86 servers. The new version of HP-UX increases availability by booting quicker and adds virtualization to HP-UX in the CloudSystem Matrix product. Meanwhile, new entry-level NonStop systems bring total reliability within the reach of smaller businesses.

<http://t.co/qJVfhVg2fK>

Major MTN Gallo Manor data centre outage

A power outage at MTN's data centre in Gallo Manor, Johannesburg has brought the operator's hosting infrastructure to its knees. According to reports, the data centre started experiencing problems with its power feeds just after 18:00 on 3 May. The backup generators did not kick in, causing the centre to go offline.

<http://t.co/utsGRyulPm>

Why major banks and financial institutions are growing their use of mainframes

There are many arguments that the mainframe is on its way out, and they all have one thing in common: they are all wrong. And nowhere is this truer than in the financial services industry, which is dominated by mainframes.

<http://t.co/6KpyiyrcMG>

Amazon details drone delivery plans

Details about how Amazon's proposed delivery drones may work have been published by the US Patent Office. According to the patent, the drones will be able to track the location of the person it is delivering to by pulling data from their smartphone. The unmanned vehicles will also be able to talk to each other about weather and traffic conditions.

<http://t.co/gXsHIRMplf>

Lenovo: 'massive security risk' found

Chinese PC manufacturer Lenovo has been accused of running a "massive security risk" after researchers found flaws in its software. Three vulnerabilities could be exploited to install malware on users' systems or to hand attackers a measure of control over them. Lenovo acknowledged the findings and urged users to download a patch to resolve the issues. The vulnerabilities were discovered by researchers at security firm IOActive, who alerted Lenovo to them in February. The patch was released in April, but the researchers' findings were only made public this week.

<http://t.co/GzVyoeWjJC>

Step forward for quantum computing

Quantum computers could offer a massive performance boost over conventional types, but progress toward commercially useful machines has been slow. Now, scientists from IBM's Watson Research Center have successfully demonstrated a new method for correcting errors on a quantum circuit.

<http://t.co/GzPFRkfHnc>

Major blackout left 100,000 in Belfast and parts of Co Down without power

Chaos hit large parts of Northern Ireland on 30 April when 100,000 were left without power in a major blackout.

<http://t.co/SXvPy4omoS>

F.A.A. Orders Fix for Possible Power Loss in Boeing 787

U.S. federal regulators will order operators of Boeing 787 Dreamliners to shut down the plane's electrical power periodically after Boeing discovered a software error that could result in a total loss of power.

<http://t.co/pFogUkcb7x>

Starbucks made lemonade from lemons during POS outage

Starbucks earned a lot of love recently as stores gave free drinks to customers after an internal glitch caused the chain's POS terminals to go down in the U.S. and Canada.

<http://t.co/uSnx5zCeS5>

Confidential information exposed over 300 times in ICANN security snafu

Two months after claiming there was "no indication" that confidential information was exposed in a security cock-up, domain name overseer ICANN has admitted it happened on at least 330 occasions. Following an audit of its main customer portal, the organization confirmed that misconfigured Salesforce software had given every user access to every other user's information, including financial projections, launch plans and confidential exchanges.

<http://t.co/ZIMOT94iwh>

What third-party app crashed American Airlines pilots' iPads and caused flight delays?

About two dozen American Airlines flights were delayed after a faulty third-party app glitched out and crashed pilots' iPads. But what app caused it and why? Could a compatibility issue with iOS 8.3 and a navigation app crash an iPad?

<http://t.co/H3vzB1QfXG>

Russian Space Station Resupply Mission In Jeopardy

Russian flight controllers have been working to establish control of the rotating, unpiloted Progress cargo spacecraft that failed to deploy navigation antennas and pressurize its rendezvous propulsion system following liftoff on its way to deliver supplies to the space station.

<http://t.co/QyRnc1CXQU>

Grid disruption plunges Zambia into darkness

Eight out of ten provinces in Zambia were plunged into darkness for hours following a disturbance in the electricity supply network that triggered a protective shut down of most of the system.

<http://t.co/FSfrEv4Ik0>

Starbucks breakdown shows how registers have evolved

The register malfunction that forced Starbucks to close stores on 24 April was surprisingly large. It affected all company-owned stores, or more than 60 percent of roughly 13,500 locations in the U.S. and Canada. That's enormous because registers that once merely rang up tabs and stored cash have evolved into hubs that collect enormous volumes of data and carry out many tasks.

<http://t.co/Slm0HN2SoB>

Amazon CTO dealths to throw light on AWS data centre design

Ask Amazon about its AWS data centres, and you'll get this response: 'Amazon doesn't talk about its data centres.' Until its chief technology officer pitches in, that is. Werner Vogels closed London's AWS Summit Wednesday by cracking open by a little the black curtain that hides Amazon's data centres from the world during a session called *AWS Innovation in the Datacenter*.

<http://t.co/kw9GgVWRst>

A Simple Explanation of 'The Internet Of Things'

Simply put, "The Internet of Things" is the concept of connecting any device with an on/off switch to the Internet (and/or to each other). This includes everything from cell phones, coffee makers, washing machines, headphones, lamps, wearable devices and almost anything else.

<http://t.co/reDkD7BBln>

Tesla's home batteries could be leased similarly to SolarCity scheme

Tesla recently introduced a pair of new battery technologies: battery for the home and a "very large scale utility battery." The home battery will power a house during an outage.

<http://t.co/cfNy6PS2q6>

Starbucks free drinks over: Computer glitch fixed

Starbucks stores across the U.S. and Canada were back up and running after being hit on 24 April by a computer glitch that impacted their Point-of-Sale registers. Some stores closed early, others gave free coffee to customers. The computer glitch came on a day that Starbucks reported robust sales for its fiscal second-quarter, up 20% from the year before.

<http://t.co/qH80PV2wP3>

What links the global Internet? Wires inside tubes no bigger than a garden hose

With cell phone, Wi-Fi and Bluetooth almost everywhere, it sometimes seems like we've finally ditched the cumbersome cords that are tethering us and our gadgets to Earth. But in reality, we live in a world that's more wired than ever before — it's just that those wires can be found at the bottom of the world's oceans. The wires are strung along the ocean bed by large tankers, but the cables themselves aren't that big.

<http://t.co/lxN2RjmfQS>

The Plan to Build an Undersea Cable Around the US — and Why We Need It

There's a new undersea cable in the works, unlike any system that's been built before. It winds under the Arctic Ocean, from the United Kingdom, over Canada, and down to Japan, offering the fastest possible route between London and Tokyo. It stops on icy Canadian shores along the way, providing internet access to small communities entirely dependent on spotty satellite connection. And what's really new: the cable is made possible only by climate change. Melting Arctic ice is making way for giant cable ships. Or so this is the business case Arctic Fibre has pitched.

<http://t.co/898eMR22de>

Spark believes 'congestion' triggered fault after earthquake

Spark's mobile network is gradually returning to full operations after it suffered an outage on Friday 24 April. It had initially attributed problems to congestion on its network after Friday's 6.2 magnitude earthquake near Kaikoura in New Zealand. However, more than three hours after the outage began, some customers were still having problems texting, calling and using mobile data.

<http://t.co/hElgMikPRU>

Wink's Outage Shows Us How Frustrating Smart Homes Could Be

In mid-April, one in four people who had come to rely on Wink as the brains behind their smart home set-up found their connected devices suddenly lobotomized. Wink confirmed that the cause of the outage was a "misconfiguration" of a security measure it had implemented previously.

<http://t.co/nAFbcHRI6x>

Trader Charged in 'Flash Crash' Case to Fight Extradition to U.S.

A 36-year-old futures trader who operated from his London-area home indicated that he would oppose extradition to the United States on criminal fraud charges, including claims that he had helped set off a huge crash in the United States stock market, known as the flash crash, in 2010.

<http://t.co/HaTAnMcvIq>

Check out April Availability Digest - ISIS Turns to Cyber Warfare, BoE Major Outage, Mng Private Cloud, & VMTurbo

The Availability Digest is a review of current topics on Continuous Availability. More than Business Continuity Planning, which tells you how to *recover* from the effects of downtime. Continuous availability tells you how to *avoid* the effects of downtime.

<http://t.co/QZtjWoZkzK>

Bloomberg global trading outage a risk to users' confidence, says trading software CEO

A repeat of Bloomberg's recent outage – when terminals failed, leaving traders unable to conduct business – could leave users looking for plan B.

<http://t.co/7FZWDjHqLc>

Check out this LinkedIn discussion on Continuous Availability Forum. "Can banks replace their legacy core systems?"

Join the conversation. "I am sure that many of you work for banks and other financial institutions. In my recent Availability Digest article entitled "Bank of England Suffers Significant Outage" (<http://bit.ly/1CSyB2w>), I point out the challenges that such enterprises face in replacing their decades-old legacy core systems. As an alternative to replacement, they are adding front-ends via middleware to provide new functionality such as online banking and mobile banking. What is your take on this?"

<http://t.co/JU4RcQkz1h>

Thx to [@ianopenvmsorg](#) for this story. Tesco's internet service is experiencing outages throughout the UK

On 21 April, Tesco broadband users were hit by some serious downtime. Roughly one in seven Tesco customers lost internet services. The BBC noted that this was the tenth network failure in April, with customers in London, the south-east of England, and in the West Midlands having all suffered outages in the last two weeks. However, a spokesperson for Tesco told the BBC that the operator's fault rate is in line with the UK telecoms industry average, noting that the firm has "high customer satisfaction ratings."

<http://bit.ly/1z5K0RH>