the Availability Digest

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@availabilitydig – Our October Twitter Feed of Outages

October 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.

Power outage disrupts Fox telecast of World Series

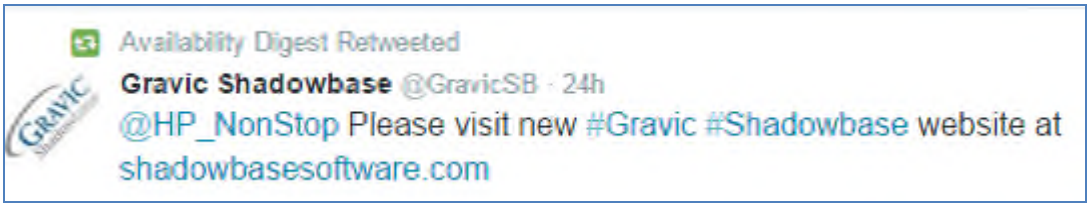
The Fox Sports telecast of Game One of the World Series in Kansas City was knocked off the air due to a "rare electronics failure." The roughly 20-minute outage happened when a broadcast truck lost power. "Before the start of the bottom of the fourth inning ... a rare electronics failure caused both the primary and backup generators inside the Fox Sports production compound to lose power," Fox Sports said in a statement. The glitch caused a seven-minute delay on the field as Major League Baseball officials waited for it to be fixed in order to deliver the telecast to replay officials in New York.

https://t.co/9NOlHwLtir

Why Apple Pay Is Our Best Hope to Stop Online Fraud

Apple Pay is an incredibly secure system that has serious potential to reduce online fraud — but that won't matter if no one is using it.

https://t.co/LFwhy14wss



Florida Power & Light tapped as nation's most reliable utility

Florida Power & Light is the United States' most reliable electric utility, according to PA Consulting Group, which annually issues its ReliabilityOne Awards to North American power providers. The award is considered one of the most prestigious in the industry. The firm cited FP&L's investments in new technologies and innovation as well as a focus on "all aspects of reliability including momentary outages, power quality, sustained outages and storm response."

https://t.co/S12avGFhKf

McDonald's has made quite a large 'fat finger' accounting blunder

McDonald's has admitted to a ‘fat-finger’ blunder worth £133 million. The fast-food giant stated in its published accounts for 2013 that its UK turnover was worth just under £1.5 billion. That was up a hefty £133m on the previous year, the world’s biggest burger chain reported at the time. But it has now admitted the claimed increase should have been a more modest £1.3m. As a result, the 2013 turnover figure should have been reported as being around £1.37bn.

https://t.co/2DNyZcoPbC

Banker's 'Fat Finger' Error Mistakenly Pays Client $6 Billion

We’ve all been there. You mean to type “thing” and you type “thong.” Or you try to affirm that you’ve “got it” and instead you wind up exclaiming, “Go tit!” The worst is when you’re a junior banker at one of the top financial institutions in the world and you press the wrong button and send $6 billion whizzing through cyberspace and into a client’s account by mistake.

https://t.co/g5ioHjeJrA

Deutsche Bank accidentally sent hedge fund $6 billion in ‘fat finger’ mistake

A mistake by a green employee nearly cost Deutsche Bank billions of dollars earlier this year, according to a news report. In June, a junior banker accidentally sent $6 billion USD to a U.S.-based hedge fund client after mistakenly processing the order as a “gross figure” instead of as a “net value.” Germany’s largest bank recovered the money the next day. Mistakes like these are often referred to as “fat finger” trades, a reference to when an input mistake like accidentally typing in an extra digit causes traders to buy or sell a much larger position than they intended.

https://t.co/URLFwnBOGa

First squirrels, now drones attack power lines

Squirrels chew through power lines all the time. Now prepare for drones to do the same. An unmanned aerial vehicle flew into power lines in West Hollywood, California, on 26 October. The crash reportedly caused hundreds of residents to lose power.

https://t.co/b68bYNL5ef

Immersion Cooling Finds its Second Big Application: Bitcoin Mining Data Centers

A data center being built in Georgia (the former Soviet republic) is one of the world’s biggest showcases for the most unusual of approaches to liquid cooling: submerging servers in fluid completely. The facility is being built by the bitcoin mining giant BitFury; and the cooling system was designed by Allied Control, a Hong Kong-based engineering company BitFury recently acquired.

https://t.co/Jv3xrPsJvM

Level 3 serves up wireless-based managed backup service, targets retail to start

Level 3 has introduced a new wireless-based backup service, enabling retail and other security-centric verticals the option to bypass traditional landline-based DSL services to maintain uptime.

https://t.co/cTrWeGh9MH

Power Grid Remains Ill Prepared for Future Hurricanes, Study Shows

Three years after Hurricane Sandy devastated the East Coast, key electrical infrastructure remains vulnerable to flooding in major storms. A recent study by the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) says millions of Americans living along the East and Gulf coasts would likely lose power in a Category 3 hurricane. Sandy left more than 8 million people across 21 states without power and caused billions of dollars in damage when power plants and major electrical substations were inundated by its storm surge.

https://t.co/sfgA4sDdmx

Outdated Technology Likely Culprit in Southwest Airlines Outage

A computer glitch that prevented passengers from checking in for their Southwest Airlines flights and caused widespread delays around the U.S. on Sunday 11 October was likely caused by a failure of a legacy technology asked to do too much. Southwest has provided few details about the source of the problem, which resulted in 836 delays out of 3,355 scheduled flights and created long lines at numerous U.S. airports. The problem forced the airline staff to manually issue tickets and use backup systems to check travelers into their flights.

https://t.co/lBtaNUg7Ww

The Staggering Impact of IT Systems Gone Wrong

The world has relied on large-scale IT systems for decades, but we still haven't learned how to prevent and avoid major glitches and failures. At *IEEE Spectrum*, they've been writing about such failures for 10 years. Now they are taking a step back to look at the bigger picture by scouring their archives to create a rogues' gallery of the most notable, interesting, and emblematic failures from the past decade.

https://t.co/bq57dWiUtC

Clock change adds to Barclay's glitch

Barclay's customers reported difficulties access their bank accounts on the weekend of 24/25 October. The problem began on Saturday and continued into Monday because of routine maintenance that was taking place with the clocks moving back to standard time.

https://t.co/YiRAAOt4mb

San Francisco braces for the Big One with microgrids

In 2008, the U.S. Geological Survey reported that California has a 99 percent chance of a magnitude 6.7 or larger earthquake in the next 30 years. So the city of San Francisco is not taking any chances — it's preparing for the (next) big one with microgrids.

https://t.co/ef9KWIlo7F

Russian Ships Near Data Cables Are Too Close for U.S. Comfort

Russian submarines and spy ships are aggressively operating near the vital undersea cables that carry almost all global Internet communications, raising concerns among some American military and intelligence officials that the Russians might be planning to attack those lines in times of tension or conflict.

https://t.co/IP3cmqMVVE

Hewlett-Packard Pulls Plug on Helion Public Cloud

Hewlett-Packard, which has been backing off on ambitious public cloud plans for a year, is now calling it quits, sunsetting HP Helion Public cloud in January 2016.

https://t.co/llgYFErXVQ

Power shortages could leave you with blank TVs and computers

British households are facing the prospect of 'brown-outs' this autumn – a reduction in electricity supply that could lead to appliances not working. The National Grid is warning that it may have to reduce the power supplied to homes to prevent total black-outs.

https://t.co/812IcSr03a

Digest Managing Editor Dr. Bill Highleyman met up with Tandem Computer founder Jimmy Treybig at the Canadian Tandem Users Group

One of the Availability Digest's Most Popular Articles: Fire Suppression Suppresses WestHost for Days.

Saturday, February 20, 2010 - It's not a good idea to test a fire-suppression system by triggering it. But that's what happened to WestHost, a major web-hosting provider headquartered in Utah. The accidental release of a blast of fire-suppressant gas severely damaged most of its servers and data stores. Hardware repair and database recovery efforts put WestHost's customers out of commission for up to six days.

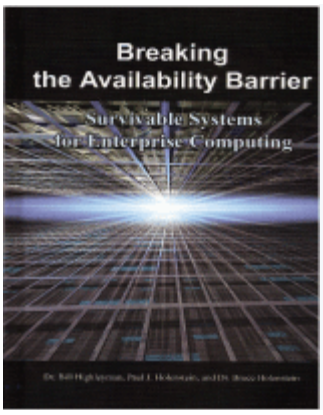
https://t.co/iHGhxc2Kp1

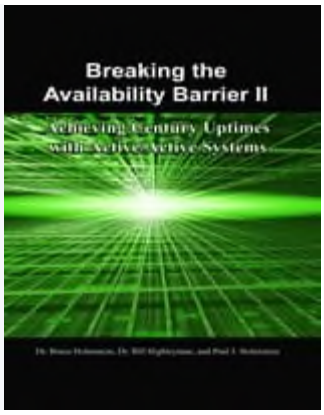
Security Architecture Builds Bridges to a Secure Network

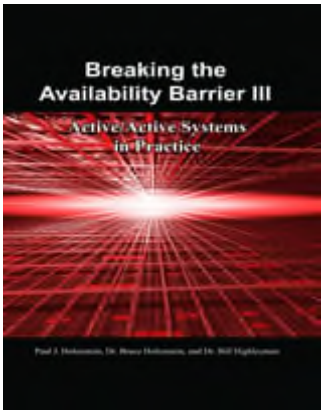
Manufacturers know that you can't build on a weak foundation and expect a product to stand up over time, but many don't realize the same principle applies to computer networks. To ensure yours is built and running on a stable structure, you need to look at your security architecture.

https://t.co/I1ufWy3bqn

Breaking the Availability Barrier: Extend the time between your system failures from years to centuries - Written by Dr. Bill Highleyman, Paul J. Holenstein, and Dr. Bruce Holenstein







https://t.co/HWR3ylqKyf

Rail passengers to arrive at work 50 years early as 'computer glitch' takes them back to the future

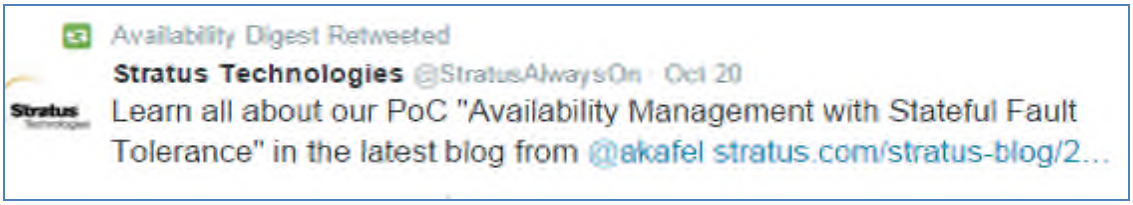
There was mixed news for commuters arriving at rail stations across south London this morning. One the one hand, many trains appear to be running ahead of schedule for once. On the other, some workers may be facing an extra five decades in the office.

https://t.co/83kzOG9xUg

Faulty cash deposit machines accepting counterfeit notes

From India: The circulation of counterfeit currency has become easy due to faulty cash deposit machines (CDMs) failing to detect fake notes. Racketeers have identified faulty CDMs and are taking advantage of the situation.

https://t.co/exmbZxgPph



RushCard is locking people out of accounts

Users of RushCard, the prepaid debit card founded by hip-hop mogul and DefJam co-founder Russell Simmons, have been complaining all across Twitter that they've been locked out of their accounts, that their accounts are suddenly showing $0 balances, and that they aren't getting any answers from customer service.

https://t.co/K8hfVffzpf

RushCard users were promised easier access to their money, but a glitch left many locked out of accounts

The final few days before a paycheck can be nerve-wracking. That's especially true for poorer Americans who generally have little wealth, no emergency cash, and limited access to credit to help them bridge the gap during a difficult time. And for those who rely on the alternative financing of RushCards—prepaid debit cards aimed specifically at underbanked Americans—things have gotten much more stressful after their cards stopped working in October.

https://t.co/9JJSLpHnKU

Twitter goes down as social networking site goes offline due to tech problems

Hundreds of thousands of Twitter users were affected on October 15th as the social network once again went down due to technical problems.

http://t.co/Q41Ej15PnZ

Passengers are reporting a massive system outage at airport customs lines across the U.S.

On 14 October, a malfunction with computer systems at U.S. airports nationwide caused frustrated travelers to spend hours stuck in customs lines.

http://t.co/nkULoqRR1o

The self-driving car is ready for prime time, but you still can't have one

In September, Google (or Alphabet) held a press event to show off the latest data from the company's formerly secretive self-driving car project. Media members got to take rides in two self-driving prototypes. Everyone in attendance was impressed, but there was just one problem: nobody at Google could say when the cars would be available to the public, how much they would cost, or even what car manufacturers were going to make them.

http://t.co/cuCHmUUbIy

The cloud isn't as robust as we think

The lesson is not to trust cloud providers to store and provide backups for your data. Your backups need backups, too.

http://t.co/Et0ooPhw52

SQL FAQ – Preparing For the Retirement Of Microsoft SQL Server 2005

Mainstream support for Microsoft SQL Server 2005 ends in half a year – April 2016. This provides plenty of time for CTOs and DBAs to prepare a Microsoft SQL Server upgrade or migration plan, but what are the options open to them?

http://t.co/NeiFJTLWT5

Beyond Redundancy: Why Last Month's AT&T Outage Sucked So Bad

It's been more than a month since vandals severed AT&T's fiber optic line in a remote area south of Ukiah, sending untold tens of thousands of customers into an information blackout. Said one local resident, "Imagine the millions of dollars of productivity we lost yesterday on the North Coast due to a lack of redundancy."

http://t.co/XqJDbVJyey

From the Availability Digest - How does multifactor authentication strengthen application security?

Multifactor authentication brings a great deal of additional security to applications. It can drastically reduce the incidence of online fraud because stealing a victim's password will no longer be enough to support a malicious logon.

http://t.co/fPt3JsuDFl

Southwest Airlines Fixes Tech Problem that Caused Delays

Southwest Airlines has fixed a technical issue that caused hundreds of flights to be delayed on Sunday, bringing service back to normal by Monday morning, October 12th. The glitch caused the delay of over 800 flights, equivalent to a quarter of 3,355 flights scheduled that day, causing problems on the website and mobile application of the carrier as well.

http://t.co/pZ9IN4yN9v

St. George, Bank of Melbourne and BankSA outage to be fixed on Monday night, St. George says

St George customers were due to regain access to their accounts from Monday evening 5 October after a system outage left St George, Bank of Melbourne and BankSA customers unable to access their savings over the long weekend. A simple task of turning the computer off and on while performing scheduled maintenance all went wrong in the early hours of Sunday morning, when data on the mainframe computer powering Westpac-owned St George Bank, Bank of Melbourne, and BankSA's core banking system became corrupt.

http://t.co/EOMoHOCblW

Unprotected keys and certificates losing customers for businesses

A whopping 59 percent of businesses report losing online customers due to certificate errors that cause website outages and generate certificate warning messages.

https://t.co/LUOFmK6aPW

Six Facts in High-Availability Data Center Design

As the data center increasingly becomes the heart of the enterprise, data center reliability needs increase. But data center design isn't simply about infrastructure redundancy.

https://t.co/zF5kYIyqfM

Michigan sues HP over $49 million project that's still not done after 10 years

In September, Hewlett-Packard was hit with a lawsuit filed by the state of Michigan over a $49 million project. The contract dates back to 2005 and called for HP to replace a legacy mainframe-based system built in the 1960s. HP was given a 2010 deadline, but it failed to deliver a replacement. That left the Michigan Department of Technology, Management and Budget and SOS staff dependent on the old technology for functions such as vehicle registration. Michigan has paid HP a total of roughly $33 million.

http://t.co/aAYrVh7pLL

Apple pulls infected apps after malware strikes App Store

Apple just pulled a slew of iOS apps from the App Store after security researchers discovered malware in some of the store's top apps. The malware worked its way into the App Store through an unauthorized version of Xcode, the code developers use to build iOS apps. Developers downloaded the sham version of Xcode from a Chinese server because it was faster than downloading it from Apple's U.S.-based server. Only developers who had shut off Apple's safety warnings could install the bad code, which just goes to show that trying to find a shortcut can go horribly awry.

http://t.co/Rq6sJDvqoY

Skype grounded for hours for most non-business users

Microsoft's attempt to hold itself out as a platform for the world's most demanding, large-scale online applications suffered a dent on 21 September as its Skype communications service experienced a widespread failure. The glitch, which made Skype unusable for most non-business users for several hours, is one of the most severe since Microsoft paid $8.5bn for the company four years ago.

http://t.co/eagWZUK072

AWS Back in Business, but Enterprises Can Learn from Outage

Amazon Web Services appears to have recovered from an outage that disrupted customers including Tinder, Netflix, and IMDb on September 20th. The company's oldest public cloud datacenter, located in Ashburn, Va. (USA), initially reported DynamoDB issues. Troubles increased when the database reported increased error rates responding to API calls, leading to a domino effect for other services. In response, Amazon throttled APIs to recover the service.

http://t.co/c1eXt8BThR

American Airlines working to recover from flight delays

American Airlines on Thursday, 17 September, said it was working to get customers in the air after technical problems caused it to halt flights to three of its hub airports. American, the world's largest airline, experienced hundreds of delays as it stopped takeoffs to Dallas-Fort Worth, Chicago O'Hare and Miami international airports for nearly two hours.

http://t.co/E4HRizKLCi

Tape isn't dying -- it's getting healthier and smarter

Tape storage leaders say their favorite technology isn't dead and is actually getting healthier. Pause for Monty Python jokes, but a recent wave of engineering may give the stalwart technology many more years of real-world usefulness.

http://t.co/OepT7BQvB6

Now arriving: airport control towers with no humans inside

Passengers landing at remote Ornskoldsvik Airport in northern Sweden might catch a glimpse of the control tower — likely unaware there is nobody inside. The dozen commercial planes landing there each day are instead watched by cameras, guided in by controllers viewing the video at another airport 90 miles away. Ornskoldsvik is the first airport in the world to use such technology. Others in Europe are testing the idea as is one airport in the United States.

http://t.co/5OHDHRkn77

NATS climbs into the cloud to fight legacy software snafus

The National Air Traffic Service (United Kingdom) is shifting its software onto a bespoke cloud infrastructure, which it says will help reduce delays the next time it is hit by a systems outage similar to the one it suffered last year. NATS is spending tens of millions of pounds on its "aviation cloud" in order to improve "resilience and operational flexibility." It is hoped the cloud platform will allow NATS to junk some of its legacy software.

http://t.co/oIeuHgI6r7