

Gaim: Common IM interface

Follow the format from our class text for the title, author name, etc. for the white paper.

Executive Summary

"report" would be a better word choice here

Instant messaging (IM) has revolutionized internet communications. IM has many open source options, thus this research is an analysis of Gaim's features and limitations. This project discusses the growing concerns for security that surround this open source communication tool. With the expansion of many commercial instant messaging services used in the workplace Gaim provides an easy to use interface that combines accounts from the major services. There are many different age, professional, and business groups that use IM services instead of using email and the telephone. Gaim's flexibility and ease of use provides an integrated service that people of all skill levels can benefit from.

Introduction

A report by The Radicati Group projects that by 2007, the number of IM users will have reached 1.4 billion (Chu). American IM use is increasing every year. The Pew Internet study found that there are about "thirteen million people using IM on any given day" (Pew 2). One common problem in instant messaging is that there are many different services available that are not compatible with each other. According to The Radicati Group's report, "...70 percent of the corporations this consulting and market research firm interviewed are using some form of IM, but only 26 percent have standardized on a single corporate IM solution" (Chu).

Open source instant messaging, specifically Gaim, allows for a simple integration between the different commercial messaging services. IM is becoming commonly used in the workplace, and not just as a social form of communication. Instead of having to wait for an email response or spending time and money on phone calls, instant messaging gives you a free communication option that avoids these inconveniences. Gaim collaborates with many basic instant messaging services such as AIM, MSN Messenger, Yahoo Messenger, and ICQ.

History of Instant Messengers and Gaim

In July of 1996, the first instant messenger was developed by four Israeli men who had just established Mirabilis, a new Internet company. They noticed an increase in users browsing the internet and the popularity of interacting with one another. What they then realized, was that the millions of internet users were connected but were not "interconnected". The four men developed the missing technology that would enable users to communicate with one another in a fast, simple, and effective way.

Sources for all this???

In November of 1996, the first instant messenger was released. ICQ or "I Seek You" was available over the internet for millions of users to download. This new technology started off slow but then swept through the electronic community. The company had introduced a new technology that would enable users to locate and communicate with one another with just a click of the mouse.

According to the ICQ homepage, The Mirabilis Internet Company was the only vendor of such a product until the beginning of May 1997. Many users quickly adapted to this new technological development. Other companies then began to develop similar instant messengers.

History of Gaim

A newly developed common messaging program that is able to integrate many of the commonly used instant messengers is Gaim. According to the Gaim website “Gaim is a Linux based multi-protocol instant messaging program that is able to access the different messengers like MSN, AOL, AIM, ICQ, Yahoo!, and Jabber.” Gaim, originally developed by Mark Spencer, was initially used for “unix-like operating systems, it now runs on a variety of platforms, including Microsoft Windows, GNU/Linux, Mac OS X, SkyOS and Trolltech's PDA system, Qtopia,” according to the wikipedia website article comparing a list of instant messengers. According to another lead developer, Sean Egan, the exact numbers of users are uncertain because they can access and copy the software from a variety of places that are untraceable. According to Wikipedia, in the beginning, "gaim" was referred as "GAIM" or "gAIM" but has been changed. Its name was changed in order to protect the rights of AOL. Gaim's acronym might have been confused with the acronym of "AIM". "The terms "instant messenger" and "AIM" are Service Marks of AOL Time Warner, so Gaim is not allowed to use them."

The use of "According to" is getting very repetitive, but this is the right idea for citing well. Some alternatives:

explains that
notes
says
states
concludes

You can think of more.

Gaim's Features

The features Gaim offers include some of the ones commercial providers offer. Gaim offers graphical smileys, themes or skins for the screens, plugins, chatrooms, and file transfer but only with some services. Gaim however offers some features that AIM does not. Buddy pounce allows the Gaim user to send a message to a buddy that is offline that will be sent and received when the buddy comes online. Gaim does not offer the games that other services provide for a small fee. Gaim offers neither webcam conversations nor does it offer voice conversation features. Nonetheless, Gaim's features are constantly being added or adjusted because the program is open source.

There are many aspects of Gaim that allow for the successful integration of many instant messaging providers. As the developers of Gaim write more applications for their program, communication between the services of many different commercial providers will be integrated easier. With people and businesses using different instant messengers the need for a tool to integrate the different services is increasingly necessary. According to Anthony Dhanedran in an article on the *IT WEEK* website, “Gaim is compatible with AIM (Oscar and TOC protocols), ICQ, MSN Messenger, Yahoo!, IRC, Jabber, Gadu-Gadu, and Zephyr - you will still need to create an account with each service you wish to use, however.” The general consensus of the article on the *IT WEEK* website is that Gaim is an “excellent free client for chat.” As long as an active account is established with one of the compatible providers accessing and using Gaim's software download is an uncomplicated process that can be done quickly. According to Wikipedia, “Gaim users can log in to multiple accounts on multiple IM networks simultaneously. This

means that you can be chatting with friends on AOL Instant Messenger, talking to a friend on Yahoo Messenger, and sitting in an IRC channel all at the same time."

Instant Messenger Security

~~In the ever increasing popularity of instant messaging, it is becoming more important to be concerned with security when using messaging services.~~ Although growth of instant messaging has been rapid, its growth has been slowed a bit in the workplace due to the concern of security risks involved (Brenner). In the past, some enterprises have even gone as far as to enforce a "no-use" policy in their company by installing firewalls to ensure this policy is upheld (Brenner). Companies that use IM as a part of their business rely heavily on it because they like to be able to send and receive files to clients; they do not want these files to be able to fall into the wrong hands (Brenner). However, these companies have come across numerous inconveniences while keeping their messaging software secure (Brenner).

Can't you omit this sentence?

Currently, there are many different problems that can occur that cannot be easily avoided. The biggest problem is the ease at which your computer can be infected by worms and viruses. They are mostly contracted through file transfers and can easily bypass most security blocks (Perey). Also, with public IM services, users can create accounts with any user name they desire, without any kind of verification (Perey). For example, anyone could make their user name "michaeljackson" even though that is not their name. This allows them to give someone the false indication the screen name belongs to someone with this name. Other risks involve data security leaks and spim (instant messaging spam) (Perey).

Gaim Security

Gaim has numerous plug-ins that allow users to secure themselves from risks. The main website for Gaim has an index of possible problems that have been discovered. It also includes a summary and description of how they are received and what can be done to fix them.

A big concern in the instant messaging world today is that anyone can see a conversation that is taking place between two parties. In order to ensure that a conversation over Gaim is not being hacked into, users can download Gaim-Encryption, a plug-in that encrypts a conversation as the messages travel between two parties (Serge). It is possible for a hacker to see that a conversation is occurring but the content is unreadable (Serge). Gaim keeps its users away from spim by excluding any type of adware from the program (Gaim). With open source software, updates are available nearly every day which is important since new security risks can show up any day. Users can download and install these plug-ins based on what security they feel they need and it is all free!

Instant Messenger in the Workplace

Eleven million Americans use IM at work according to the Pew Internet study. These companies believe it encourages productivity and interoffice cooperation. Fifty percent believe it saves time on tasks and forty percent say it improves teamwork. According to Ted Tzirimis, a Meta Group Analyst, "We believe that by 2008, most new employees will be assigned an IM account when they start a job just as they are issued an email account today." Many companies can use IM much more efficiently than email; instead of having to wait on someone to check their email for a response, the worker can send a message in a matter of seconds and get a response just as quick.

Sounds like your opinion in these sentences. Would be good to attribute it.

Developers of IM are starting to build for the business environment. The different IM services are coming out with certain conferencing, meeting, and presentation software that can be used with the IM service. This is a great tool to use instead of having to deal with all the paper work and emails. The business world of IM is growing on a daily basis and will continue to grow, because it is a very convenient, fast, easy to use way to correspond. Nonetheless, IM "will become an effective corporate communication and collaboration medium" (Chu 1).

Usage of IM at Work

"At-work IM users report feeling positively about how instant messaging improves workflow and the quality of the work-day. But some think use of IM encourages gossip, distracts them, or even adds stress to the workplace" (Pew 7). Sixty-eight percent of people who use IM at work consider IM as a mixed blessing, but mostly a positive one. Thirty-two percent believe it encourages gossip and another twenty-nine percent found IM to be distracting while they were at work. According to a survey done by the Meta Group, "...57 percent of the people surveyed at 300 companies worldwide use IM at work for personal communications more often than job-related activities."³ Some of the other findings are: Forty percent IM only coworkers, Thirty-three percent IM friends and family, and twenty-one percent IM friends, family and coworkers equally (Pew 3). However, the only way to limit recreational usage is by monitoring every conversation, which very few companies do, but more are starting.

IM Security at Work

With IM continuing to increase in the business world, there are many concerns that go with the numerous benefits. Instead of the typical conference call or phone call to a fellow co-worker, all that is needed is typing and the click of the mouse. It is convenient in the fact that it takes only seconds, but is also very vulnerable to viruses and other security problems. Phebe Waterfield, a security analyst for the Yankee Group, said that with the increasing demands and usage of Instant Messaging, there are growing concerns with the security because it is an online form of communicating that is open to the public.

According to Lucas Mearian of Computerworld Magazine, "Many IT units are having difficulty with a plethora of IM systems installed without their knowledge that are used for both personal and important business communications."² Employees are downloading new versions of IM systems on a daily basis. While working with this type of open source technology, anybody can get into the system and cause havoc throughout the

company. With IM growing daily, there must be new security methods. According to Miss Waterfield, “There are already signs of a market convergence that will make IM more attractive to enterprises in the future.” The IM field is so large and continuing to increase, thus the market for better security is also increasing and becoming more competitive.

Gaim in the Workplace

Gaim provides an easy way to communicate throughout a company and with clients. “With instant messaging (IM) rapidly gaining popularity among internet users, its use for business purposes is becoming a practical reality,” states Timothy Butler, Editor-in-Chief of *Open For Business*. Butler said that by choosing just one of the major competing services for a means to communicate with customers business would be limited by not being able to communicate efficiently with customers not using that protocol. Butler continues, “Furthermore, having multiple clients for different protocols hogs resources on your workstations, and can cause training headaches for your employees.” Butler points out another strength saying that Gaim only has one interface; thus, no matter what instant messaging service is used employees should feel comfortable communicating with customers via this medium. Employees functions can be customized easily due to the extensive “plug-in component-based architecture” Butler concludes. With the ability to limit what employees can and cannot do while instant messaging a company can ensure the efficient use of employee time.

In the quest for efficient use of the employees internet time the feature of having no adware, or advertisements popup on the screen as happens with the use the commercial services will cut down on distractions or temptations employees face. Adware is used by the commercial providers to recoup the costs of development and to make more developments. But with Gaim, the very nature of open source coding negates the necessity of development costs to be recouped.

Source?

Conclusion

Instant messaging has come a long way since the launch of ICQ in 1996 as a recreational tool for socializing. There are many different service providers; however few are actually interconnected to one another. Gaim is an option to solve the interconnectivity problem; it connects many of the different IM service providers into one easy to use system. IM has since become a vital resource for communication in businesses, because of its ease of use within the company and with clients.

Open source instant messaging programs provide users with a simple form of communication that can be used in both business and social environments to integrate many of the commercial services together if accounts are set-up with each service. Allowing users to customize their own software program for their needs is certainly a very valuable advantage of open source. In a fast-paced business environment information needs changes constantly, so having a program that streamlines a form of communication is imperative. It is only a matter of time before the security risks and

minor inconveniences are eliminated, but until then plug-ins can be used to help offset the risks. Therefore, instant messaging has the potential to make a significant impact in the way the world communicates with one another.

Very good progress on this draft. I can hear a little difference in voice and writing style between the different sections, so make sure that everyone is working on editing different sections (multiple people is good). Also, it seems like you have a good grasp of attribution (see comments above), but still have some places to do better attribution (I noted a couple of spots).

Also, I would use the CGOS citation format we discussed in class (link in the course calendar). Listing the date of the source and then the date of access the way that you have is very confusing.

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