

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF CRYPTOGRAPHY AND SECURITY

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 Springer

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A C.I.P. Catalogue record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

Encyclopedia of Cryptography and Security, Edited by Henk C. A. van Tilborg

p. cm.

ISBN-10: (HB) 0-387-23473-X

ISBN-13: (HB) 978-0387-23473-1

ISBN-10: (eBook) 0-387-23483-7

ISBN-13: (eBook) 978-0387-23483-0

Printed on acid-free paper.

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Printed in the United States of America

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 SPIN 11327875 (HC) / 151464 (eBook)

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Preface

The need to protect valuable information is as old as history. As far back as Roman times, Julius Caesar saw the need to encrypt messages by means of cryptographic tools. Even before then, people tried to hide their messages by making them “invisible.” These hiding techniques, in an interesting twist of history, have resurfaced quite recently in the context of digital rights management. To control access or usage of digital contents like audio, video, or software, information is secretly embedded in the data!

Cryptology has developed over the centuries from an art, in which only few were skillful, into a science. Many people regard the “Communication Theory and Secrecy Systems” paper, by Claude Shannon in 1949, as the foundation of modern cryptology. However, at that time, cryptographic research was mostly restricted to government agencies and the military. That situation gradually changed with the expanding telecommunication industry. Communication systems that were completely controlled by computers demanded new techniques to protect the information flowing through the network.

In 1976, the paper “New Directions in Cryptography,” by Whitfield Diffie and Martin Hellman, caused a shock in the academic community. This seminal paper showed that people who are communicating with each other over an insecure line can do so in a secure way with no need for a common secret key. In Shannon’s world of secret key cryptography this was impossible, but in fact there was another cryptologic world of public-key cryptography, which turned out to have exciting applications in the real world. The 1976 paper and the subsequent paper on the RSA cryptosystem in 1978 also showed something else: mathematicians and computer scientists had found an extremely interesting new area of research, which was fueled by the ever-increasing social and scientific need for the tools that they were developing. From the notion of public-key cryptography, information security was born as a new

discipline and it now affects almost every aspect of life.

As a consequence, information security, and even cryptology, is no longer the exclusive domain of research laboratories and the academic community. It first moved to specialized consultancy firms, and from there on to the many places in the world that deal with sensitive or valuable data; for example the financial world, the health care sector, public institutions, nongovernmental agencies, human rights groups, and the entertainment industry.

A rich stream of papers and many good books have been written on information security, but most of them assume a scholarly reader who has the time to start at the beginning and work his way through the entire text. The time has come to make important notions of cryptography accessible to readers who have an interest in a particular keyword related to computer security or cryptology, but who lack the time to study one of the many books on computer and information security or cryptology. At the end of 2001, the idea to write an easily accessible encyclopedia on cryptography and information security was proposed. The goal was to make it possible to become familiar with a particular notion, but with minimal effort. Now, 4 years later, the project is finished, thanks to the help of many contributors, people who are all very busy in their professional life. On behalf of the Advisory Board, I would like to thank each of those contributors for their work. I would also like to acknowledge the feedback and help given by Mihir Bellare, Ran Canetti, Oded Goldreich, Bill Heelan, Carl Pomerance, and Samuel S. Wagstaff, Jr. A person who was truly instrumental for the success of this project is Jennifer Evans at Springer Verlag. Her ideas and constant support are greatly appreciated. Great help has been given locally by Anita Klooster and Wil Kortzmit. Thank you very much, all of you.

Henk van Tilborg