

# Secure Information Sharing within a Collaboratory Environment

Gail-Joon Ahn, Univ. of North Carolina-Charlotte

## *Summary*

*Under collaborative environments, the information sharing tends to be very dynamic and often ad hoc. Hence, the traditional centralized management approach is not appropriate to such environments because the workload a group of their security officers will be overwhelming. Since the very goal of our research is to enable users to access and selectively share resources in distributed database systems, we assume that users can be trusted to exercise their discretions on resources. We also consider enhancing the scalability of information sharing. We have recently proposed a new role-based delegation model to resolve the above-mentioned issues. In addition, we demonstrated how our model and system architecture provide a selective information sharing, ensuring information assurance requirements in a collaboratory environment.*

## **1. Project Overview**

The Internet is uniquely and strategically positioned to address the needs of a growing segment of population in a very cost-effective way. It provides tremendous connectivity and immense information sharing capability which the organizations can use for their competitive advantage. Several organizations have transited from their old and disparate business models based on ink and paper to a new, consolidated ones based on digital information on the Internet. However, information sharing on the Internet usually occurs in broad, highly dynamic network-based environments, and formally accessing the resources in a secure manner poses a difficult challenge.

Balancing the competing goals of collaboration and security is difficult because interaction in collaborative systems is targeted towards making people, information, and resources available to all who need it, whereas information security seeks to ensure the integrity of these elements while providing it only to those

with proper authorization. Protection of contextual information and resources in such systems therefore entails addressing several requirements not raised by traditional single-user environments in part due to the unpredictability of users and the unexpected manners in which users and applications interact in collaborative sessions. Our collaborative environment includes the Internet-based infrastructure covering wired and wireless communications as shown in Figure 1.

Under collaborative environments, the information sharing tends to be very dynamic and often ad hoc. Hence, the traditional centralized management approach is not appropriate to such environments because the workload on such an officer (or a small group of security officers) will be overwhelming. Since the very goal of our research is to enable users to access and selectively share resources in distributed database systems, we assume that users can be trusted to exercise their discretions on resources. We also consider enhancing the scalability of information sharing. We believe that one of promising

approaches is through delegation. In general, it is referred to as the process whereby one active entity in a system authorizes another entity to act on behalf of the former by transferring a set of rights. Through delegation, individual user is trusted and empowered to share resources to which they have access.

## 2. Current Status and Results

We have investigated how to enhance the information sharing in collaborative environments through role-based access control and delegation and have recently proposed a new delegation model [1]. We also attempted to implement a proof-of-concept prototype of our framework (see Figure 2) [4]. In addition, we have been studying on identity management and proactive protection of collaborative environments [2,3] as well as the privacy issues in information sharing.

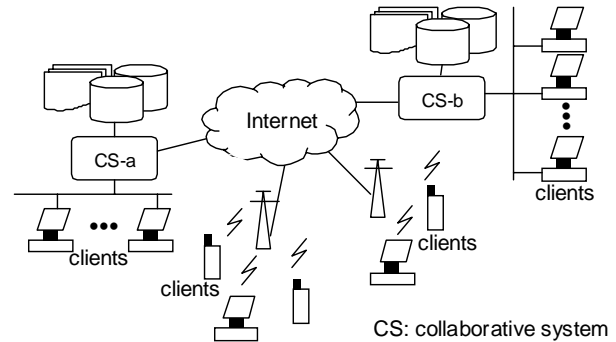
[1] Longhua Zhang, **Gail-J. Ahn** and Bill Chu, "A Rule-Based Framework for Role-Based Delegation and Revocation," ACM Transactions on Information and System Security, Vol.6, No.3, August 2003.

[2] Dongwan Shin, Prasad Shenoy and **Gail-Joon Ahn**, "Ensuring Information Assurance in Federated Identity Management," In Proceedings of Workshop on Information Assurance (WIA04) held in conjunction with the 23rd IEEE International Performance Computing and Communications Conference (IPCCC), Phoenix, Arizona, April 14-17, 2004, To appear.

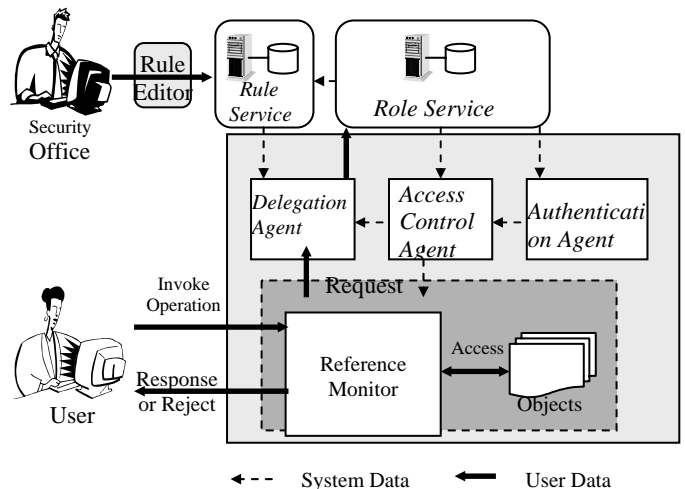
[3] Lawrence Teo, Yu-An Sun and **Gail-Joon Ahn**, "Defeating Internet Attacks Using Risk Awareness and Active Honeypots," In Proceedings of IEEE International Information Assurance

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[4] **Gail-Joon Ahn** and Badrinath, "Secure Information Sharing Using Role-based Delegation," In Proceedings of IEEE International Conference on Information Technology: Coding & Computing (ITCC), Las Vegas, NV, April 5-7, 2004, To appear.



**Figure 1. Collaborative Environment**



**Figure 2. Proposed Architecture**

**For further information on this subject contact:**

Dr. Gail-Joon Ahn  
Dept. of Software and Information Systems  
University of North Carolina at Charlotte  
Charlotte, NC 28223

Phone: 704-687-3783  
E-mail: gahn@uncc.edu