Aaron Johnson and Florian Kerschbaum

Editors' Introduction

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It is our great pleasure to introduce Issue 3 of Volume 2021 of the Proceedings on Privacy Enhancing Technologies (PoPETs). PoPETs is a journal that publishes articles accepted to the annual Privacy Enhancing Technologies Symposium (PETS). To contribute to the free availability of scientific publications, PoPETs is published under the open-access Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs license.

PoPETS/PETS uses a hybrid conference-journal model, one that has since been adopted by many other conferences in the field. In this model, articles are published throughout the year at regular intervals, and the papers for the year are then presented at an annual conference. Reviewers can request revisions of submitted articles, which may then be revised and resubmitted in the same year. PoPETs publishes four issues per year. By enabling resubmission across these issues, PoPETS provides a high-quality peer-review process that enables authors and reviewers to work together to produce and recognize significant scholarly contributions.

The PoPETS double-blind peer-review process is similar to other top-tier computer security publications. The process includes initial review by the Editors-in-Chief for rules compliance and in-scope content, written reviews by multiple independent reviewers, author rebuttal, discussion among reviewers, and consensus decisions with disagreements resolved by the Editors-in-Chief. The output of the review process is a set of reviews, a meta-review summarizing the reviewers' opinions after discussion, and one of the following decisions: Accept, Accept with Minor Revisions, Major Revisions, Reject and Resubmit, and Reject.

Reviewing by the Editorial Board is performed in two rounds. In the first round, the Editors-in-Chief assign two reviewers to all papers, and at the end of the round early decisions are made to reject papers that have two reject scores (Reject or Reject and Resubmit). The remaining papers receive additional reviews in the second round for a total of four reviews (in a few cases, submissions received fewer or more reviews).

Many articles had an external review drawn from a pool of junior experts nominated by the community[1]. Further external experts were invited to review certain articles. All reviews were sent to the authors of papers that proceeded to the second round of review, and those authors were invited to provide a written rebuttal to the reviews. After the rebuttal period there was a discussion among the reviewers, other members of the Editorial Board, and the Editors-in-Chief to reach a consensus decision for each paper. One of the reviewers was then selected to write a meta-review that summarized the discussion and the justification for the decision.

Articles submitted to this issue were reviewed by the 94 members of the Editorial Board and 76 external reviewers. The submitted articles, reviews, and discussion were available to all members of the Editorial Board that did not have a conflict of interest with the authors of the article. To identify conflicts of interest, the membership of the Editorial Board was published before submissions were opened, and authors were asked to indicate members with whom any of the authors had a conflict. In addition, Editorial Board members were asked to list the authors and institutions with which they have conflicts of interest. Finally, the Editors-in-Chief also checked for missed conflicts. Editorial Board members were welcome to submit articles, while the Editors-in-Chief were precluded from doing so.

There were 124 submissions to this issue of PoPETs. 13 of the 124 submissions had been invited during a previous issue to resubmit after major revision, and these were reassigned to the Editorial Board members that had reviewed the previous version. Additionally, 17 articles that had been rejected from a previous issue were resubmitted to the journal, and they were reassigned to some of the same reviewers. For all these resubmissions, the authors provided a summary of changes made to the prior version that explained how review concerns had been addressed.

Of the 124 submissions, 11 papers were accepted, and 10 were conditionally accepted subject to minor revisions. For the latter, a reviewer was assigned as a shepherd to ensure that the important points from the

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1 Nomination form: https://forms.gle/MFWa5yDgKZHz44F69

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meta-review were addressed. 21 articles were ultimately accepted for publication in this issue. These 21 and 1 article revised after being conditionally accepted for issue 2 form the articles published in this issue. These articles will be presented at PETS 2021.

The authors of 83 other articles were invited to resubmit to a future issue of PoPETs. For 23 of them, specific major revisions were requested, to be reviewed by the same reviewers when submitted to one of the following two PoPETs submission deadlines. The remaining 60 articles received a decision of Reject and Resubmit (15 of them during the first round of review), as reviewers identified needed revisions that were unlikely to be successfully addressed in a short time. 16 papers received a decision of Reject (5 of them during the first round), either due to serious deficiencies or to being on topics out of scope for PoPETs. Finally, 2 submissions were rejected by the Editors-in-Chief without review by the Editorial Board for being out of scope, over the page limit, or non-anonymous and 2 submissions were withdrawn by the authors during the reviewing process.

For the 2021 volume, we continue an artifact-review procedure to collect, evaluate, and distribute any artifacts related to accepted papers (e.g. source code, datasets, machine-generated proofs, formal specifications, and build environments)[2]. Authors of accepted papers are encouraged (but not obliged) to submit their artifacts for review by an artifact-review committee. The committee performs some checks on artifact quality (e.g. documentation, licensing, and compilation); once approved, artifacts accompany the corresponding papers on the PETS website.

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2 https://petsymposium.org/artifacts.php

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Sincerely,

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