One version of networking’s future

Van Jacobson
Research Fellow, PARC

FCC Broadband Workshop
September 3, 2009
Washington, DC

Note: Opinions expressed are solely those of the speaker
• For most people, Internet ≡ Web

• But when networking was created, data didn’t live on computers:
  ▶ Networking was for resource sharing.
  ▶ Its communication model was a conversation between two machines.
Conversational communication doesn’t work for today’s zettabytes of content

• Since we get content via machine-to-machine conversation, we end up equating what we want with where it is.

• Popular content requires a very fat pipe (disenfranchises creators, encourages distribution monopoly).

• Conversation data follows a single path from source to destination (creates gatekeepers, discourages access diversity, encourages carrier monopoly, spanning tree acts as a lens to magnify attacks).

• Discriminates against mobility (need an IP identity to supply or retrieve content).
... and leads to totally ineffective, unworkable security

• Since content is opaque to the network, ‘security’ consists of wrapping armor around a conversation — we secure the container, not the content.

• This doesn’t work: Attackers get in at the seams and the attack surface increase exponentially as the system grows.

• Carriers (and an OS vendor) have sought to increase their monopoly on the (spurious) grounds that it decreases seams and, thus, attack surface.

• Consumers get marginalized and victimized: Trust decisions are delegated to a set of self-selected ‘root authorities’; producer-to-consumer integrity is impossible to assess.
Research landscape

- Today’s communication architecture has its roots in history, not the laws of nature.
- Many ‘point solutions’ (virtualization, CDNs, p2p, cloud services) indicate that what is far more important today than where.
- Some current (mostly EU) research efforts are creating content-based communications architectures (PSIRP, 4Ward, Haggle, CCN).