

Peter Sommer

Peter Sommer is Visiting Research Fellow and established expert on computer security advising stock exchanges and insurance companies on systems risk. As a trained lawyer he is especially well placed to develop his current research interest in the legal admissibility of computer related evidence, especially in the context of computer crime. In December 1998 he was appointed Special Adviser in Electronic Commerce to the House of Commons Trade & Industry Select Committee.

Contacts

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Details

Peter Sommer read law at Oxford and spent thirteen years as a book publisher with Harrap and Granada where he was responsible for paperback non-fiction. He has always had a subsidiary career as author and journalist. His interest in computing dates from the late 1960s when he was a guinea pig in work carried out by the late Dr Christopher Evans at the National Physical Laboratory. He was among the first generation of writers on micro-computers in the mid-1970s and entered professional computing via electronic publishing.

As an electronic publisher he set up a variety of services on Prestel, the pioneering public access database run by British Telecom, and on TOPIC, the information system of the London Stock Exchange and has also been an external Information provider for Reuters and Extel. In the run-up to the Big Bang changes in the London markets he set up a prototype investment exchange for over-the-counter securities. He has also carried out a wide range of consultancy assignments involving the commercial exploitation of new technologies and system assessment. The projects included a database for doctors on the BT public access service, Prestel, a technical, commercial and regulatory study of private teletext services (such as BBC Data cast), the commercial exploitation of some of the Financial Times's editorial resources and support work on behalf of the International Commodities Clearing House's LondonClear venture in paperless trading and securities confirmation.

The most extended work was devoted to building an electronic securities exchange, outside the London Stock Exchange, for what, prior to 1987 was called the OTC or over-the-counter market. The ambition of the exchange's promoters

was to create a share market in venture capital shares. The particular scheme failed when the Stock Exchange decided to open up the Third Market. Mr Sommer's role initially was to set up a price and official news service on Prestel, Reuters and eventually TOPIC. Thereafter he designed a built a full working prototype exchange according to the draft regulations of the Securities and Investment Board. The prototype permitted market makers to enter prices and bargains, provided a price information service in viewdata format with feeds to the Stock Exchange, Reuters and Extel (and from there to newspapers). The prototype generated audit trails for regulatory purposes and, despite its main function as a selling demonstration, had considerable security facilities.

In 1985 he wrote, under the pseudonym, Hugo Cornwall, the best-selling *Hacker's Handbook* which was in the Sunday Times list for seven weeks and finally went into four editions, of which Mr Sommer wrote the first three. The book was about accessing the online world from personal computers and computer security. From then on Mr Sommer moved into computer security consultancy, initially as a freelance for two leading UK security companies and then as a founder-director of Data Integrity.

At Data Integrity he was Technical Director responsible for surveys and to provide the technical input to the development of what has become the Lloyds Systems Perils Policy (SPP). To this end he worked both on the policy wording and the development of the approved survey format. He helped in presentations to and negotiations with underwriters and executed and wrote the sample surveys upon which the line slip was signed.

He left Data Integrity in March 1989 and since then has worked principally for leading loss adjusters and corporate security companies, and under the umbrella of his own company, a specialist London-based computer security consultancy [Virtual City Associates](#) which provides services to insurers, lawyers and corporate security companies world-wide. Virtual City Associates now exclusively provides the surveys for the SPP, which is a computer-related consequential loss/business interruption cover, and also carries out surveys for the Bankers Blanket Bond and Computer Crime policies as well as computer-related special covers. Recent survey subjects have included a major international payment system, a major global securities trading system, a large securities settlement service, an Internet-only bank and two fast-growing Stock Exchanges, advising insurers initially on formats for cover as well as later carrying out the risk analysis for the policy selected. More routine assignments have included insurance surveys / loss adjustment support on many large commercial and state-owned financial institutions in Europe, South America and South East Asia.

Non-insurance assignments have included advising a major UK-based international conglomerate operating in nearly sixty countries and about to install a series of complex local and wide areas networks, a large UK retailer with a suspected unwanted intruder on its internal computer networks, and an extended risk management survey for European-based securities settlement service.

Legal expert witness activity has included computer forensics and contract analysis of a failed nationally-based central station alarm system, a wrongful dismissal claim where the client had been accused of planting a logic bomb in his employer's computer system, allegations of software piracy via BBSs, the Internet on CD-ROMs, charges of international computer intrusions into US military sites, hacking charges involving multiple attacks on a number of UK universities and compromised web-sites (R v Pryce), a number of narcotics trafficking cases, computer-related forgeries, evidence analysis in various

"Internet paedophilia" and "computer porn" charges (including R v Waddon, and R v Atkins), fraud on a National Lottery terminal, fraud via cloned credit cards, telecommunications fraud via cloned cellular phones, alleged offences under the Representation of the People Act, a series of Internet defamation cases (including the leading one of Godfrey v Demon) and evidence analysis in an Official Secrets case. A recent instruction has been the W0nderland Club, a large-scale conspiracy to distribute paedophile images (the original raid was the world's most extensive simultaneous execution of warrants in multiple jurisdictions). Current instructions include an alleged theft of a large quantity of credit card numbers from hacked e-commerce sites and an alleged conspiracy to facilitate illegal immigration. Other civil instructions have included allegations of stolen data and computer programs and industrial espionage. The company also provides risk analysis, survey and forensics services to leading loss adjusters, to a well-known disaster recovery company, and to two international corporate investigation firms.

The *Hackers' Handbook* was followed in 1988 by *DataTheft* and *The Industrial Espionage Handbook* was published in October 1991.

Mr Sommer regularly appears in television and radio programs and at conferences for the commercial, academic, law enforcement and government communities.

Mr Sommer has been a Member of the British Computer Society since 1988 and has served on its Legal Affairs Committee. He is on the Editorial Boards of *Computer Fraud and Security Bulletin* and *Secure Computing* and on the program committees of [RAID 2000](#) at Toulouse and the [FIRST2000 Conference, Chicago](#).

Peter Sommer has been on the Advisory Board of the LSE's Computer Security Research Centre since its inception and began his PhD in 1994 and teaches a Master's course half-module "Aspects of Information Security." He runs the Centre's well regarded Information Security Public Colloquia series. Together with LSE colleagues he has provided "Best Practice" consultancy to a syndicate of central government departments and UK clearing banks and to APACS. He is at the LSE between one and two days a week during term time.

In December 1998 he was appointed Specialist Advisor to the House of Commons Select Committee on Trade and Industry to support their inquiry into e-commerce. So far this has produced four published Reports. [Seventh Report \(HC 187\): "Building confidence in Electronic Commerce"](#) . [Tenth Report of Session \(HC 648\), "Electronic Commerce"](#), [Fourteenth Report of Session \(HC 862\), "Draft Electronic Communications Bill"](#) . [Eighth Report of Session \(HC66\):](#) [Uk Online Reviewed: The First Annual Report Of The E-Minister And E-Envoy](#)

In September 2000 a LSE team headed by Mr Sommer was awarded a contract by the UK's Financial Services Authority to provide advice on consumer use of e-commerce facilities in the purchase of financial products such as banking, insurance, pensions, savings, and share-dealing to assist in the development of a suitable regulatory regime.

In October 2000 Mr Sommer was part of the UK delegation to the G8 Government-Industry Dialogue on Security and Confidence in Cyberspace Workshops in Berlin.

In December 2000 Mr Sommer and colleagues were awarded a European Commission contract to carry out the Intermediate Evaluation of the EC Internet Action Plan (on illegal and harmful content on the Internet) .

Mr Sommer is a member of the Advisory Council of the Foundation of Information Policy Research.

In January 2002 he was appointed by the Royal Military College of Science (Cranfield University) as an external examiner to their MSc course in Forensic Computing. In April 2002 he became an advisor to the UK's National High Tech Crime Training Centre.

Interests, Academic or Otherwise

Computer-related Crime, Computer Misuse, White Collar Crime, Frauds, Industrial Espionage, Methods of Information Security research including case material collection and evaluation, Legal Implications of Information Security, Methods of Risk Analysis, Insurance of Computer-related risks, E-Commerce, Digital Signatures, Issues of Contingency Planning / Disaster Recovery, Electronic Publishing, Internet control issues, Intellectual Property. My PhD work is on the Legal Reliability of Information Systems and in particular, Forensic Computing, the issues and implications of collecting evidence from computers and networks so that they may be used in litigation. [Forensic Computing Project](#). Commentary on Internet Control issues. A further practical issue within the Legal Reliability of Information Systems is the problem of how to demonstrate that an e-commerce transaction has taken place.

Publications

Under the pseudonym "Hugo Cornwall": *The Hacker's Handbook*, Random-Century, 1985, 1986, 1988, 1989. *DataTheft*, Heinemann Professional, 1987, Mandarin Paperbacks, 1990. *The Industrial Espionage Handbook*, Century 1991, Ebury Press, 1992. Various articles. 1985-present, in the *Guardian* - some available via [Guardian OnLine](#). Other national newspaper and magazine articles available via FT Profile and Dialog.

Under own name: *The PC Security Guide 1993-1994*, Elsevier, 1993. *Why Legislation is the not the answer; the limits of the Law* Compacs 91, 15th International Conference on Computer Audit, Control and Security, IAA. *Computer Forensics: an Introduction* Compsec '92, Elsevier. *Computer-Aided Industrial Espionage* Compsec '93, Elsevier. *Industrial Espionage: Analysing the Risk* Compsec '94, Elsevier. Various practitioner-orientated articles appear *passim* in *Computer Fraud and Security Bulletin*, published by Elsevier and *Virus News International* and *Secure Computing*, published by West Coast Publishing. The computer security sections of *Handbook of Security* and *Purchasing and Supply Guide to Guide to IT* both published by Croner.

Imaged documents code,. *Computer Fraud & Security*, Apr 1996. England ponders trade secrets law, *Computer Fraud & Security*, Jan 1998 Investigating Computer Crime (book review) *Computer Fraud & Security*, Sep 1997. Fraud Watch: A Guide for Business - Ian Huntington and David Davies(book review). *Computer Fraud & Security*, Apr 1995. Information Warfare: Chaos on the Electronic Superhighway - Author: Winn Schwartau (book review). *Computer Fraud & Security*, Jun 1995. Computer-Related Risks - Author: Peter G Neumann. (book review) *Computer Fraud & Security*, Jul 1995

Downloads, Logs and Captures: Evidence from Cyberspace Journal of Financial Crime, October, 1997, 5JFC2 138-152; [Intrusion Detection Systems as Evidence](#) RAID 98 Conference, [Louvain-la-Neuve](#), Belgium; also in *Intrusion detection systems as*

evidence, *Computer Networks, Volume 31, Issues 23-24, 14 December 1999, Pages 2477-2487. Legal Reliability in Large Scale Distributed Systems* IEEE Symposium on Reliable Information Systems, COAST/Purdue University, 1998; *Digital Footprints: Assessing Computer Evidence* Criminal Law Review (Special Edition, December 1998, pp 61-78)

Sommer P., 'Digital Footprints: Assessing Computer Evidence', *Criminal Law Review*. Special Edition. December 1998

Sommer, P: [Evidence in Internet Paedophilia Cases](#), *Computer and Telecommunications Law Review*, Vol 8 Issue 7; [2002] CTRL, pp 176-184

Co-author: CyberCrime: Risk and Response. International Chamber of Commerce ICC Publication 621, 1999

Peter Sommer, [Evidence in Internet Paedophilia Cases: a case for the Defence](#). in "Policing Paedophiles on the Internet, edited by MaVean and Spindler, New Police Bookshop, 2003

Alec Yasinac, Robert F Erbacher, Donald G Marks, Mark M Pollitt, Peter M Sommer, [Computer Forensics Education](#), IEEE Security and Privacy, IEEE August 2003

Other

Museum of Garden History

In a private capacity Peter Sommer is the designer of the World Wide Web facilities of the world's only [Museum of Garden History](#). Please feel free to visit!