

Sunday, May 29, 2005

### **If only the President had access to the Internet**

I know certain people get a little pissy when I post about things that aren't the A's or sports or something, but here it is anyway.

From Slashdot, I get the story that a bunch of business schools are using admissions software (fill out your application online, etc.) that people could manipulate to get their decisions earlier than they were intended to. These schools, claiming a breach of ethics, then reject all candidates who accessed their information early. Some, like Carnegie Mellon and Harvard, do it outright; others, like Stanford, are a little more patient and allow applicants to explain their actions. In the end, though, out of the schools affected, only Dartmouth admitted anybody involved, and even they considered the "break-in" as a large negative factor.

Except where's the negative factor? What ethics were breached? A computer system was not cracked. Rather, a system that claimed to be secure made the mistake of putting files in a public space and figuring that by not linking to them, they'd be safe, which is, of course, ridiculous. I have files on this webspace that aren't linked that access-log spammers try to get at all the time. Is that unethical? I think it's annoying, but if I'm going to have the file available, I have to accept the consequences.

Besides which, it's not like people were accessing other people's information, or were able to change their status. They simply wanted to know whether a decision had been made. If Harvard decides to reject me from their Business School but doesn't inform me until two months after they make the decision (because that's the notification date), don't I have a right to be a little upset?

I don't claim that there's an ethical challenge to be made against the school, because they don't have a responsibility to me to make their information known, but I also expect that they can't make ethical claims against me for trying to find out the information that they're hiding.

Posted by jason in News at 16:21