

Biometrics Now?

Andrew Phillips

Are enterprises, and society at large, ready for biometric controls for user access, public safety and other applications? Privacy and user acceptance issues remain problematic, as does technology readiness.

ANALYSIS

With iris biometric trials at international airports, low-cost fingertip readers built into PCs and face-recognition systems in urban areas and at public events, biometric adoption certainly is growing. However, there are limits to biometric technologies. Using this issue of the Security and Privacy Spotlight as a guide, enterprises must decide which biometrics will work best for their individual requirements.

Anthony "Ant" Allan's "Biometrics: How Do They Measure Up?" (COM-15-1727) defines the biometric authentication process and explains why there is no single "best" biometric — different biometrics vary widely in cost and suit different applications.

End users often view some biometrics as inconvenient or intrusive; most consumers just don't understand the technology, which causes fear and distrust. Laura Behrens explores consumer attitudes toward biometrics in "Consumers Aren't Ready For Biometrics" (www.gartner2.com/research/rpt-0102-0008.asp) and recommends several routes enterprises can take for more-successful biometrics implementation.

Securing physical access to a facility has become relevant to IT security managers as a layer of physical defense. In "Sorting the Crowds: Biometrics for Mass Access Control," (SPA-15-2610), Rich Mogull defines appropriate authentication and identification applications. He explores the possibilities for use of biometrics at sports/music events, in airports and for access to large facilities/buildings in "Biometrics for Mass Access Control: Scenarios" (SPA-15-5290).

Among the array of options and biometric possibilities, fingerprint recognition has become the most widely supported technology. Martin Reynolds explains why in "Fingerprint Technology Is Ready to Go" (T-15-2912) and provides advice regarding privacy and "spoofing" issues. Beyond IT, the adoption of fingerprint biometrics is anticipated in the automotive industry. Mike Williams analyzes the longer-term trend toward two-factor authentication in automobiles in "Automotive Keyless Ignition: Going Biometric" (SEMC-WW-DP-0103).

Compared to fingerprint technology, iris scanning is more expensive; however, it offers the opportunity for higher-resolution biometric images. Iridian Technologies has a strong position in the iris scan market and has extended its capabilities to provide authentication software to third-party hardware vendors. Jackie Fenn examines Iridian's new strategy in "Peripheral Vision: Iridian Eyes Authentication Market" (COM-14-8280).

Finally, we investigate the technical issues behind biometric technology, list vendors and projects, and explore why biometrics sometimes work and sometimes don't in "Pointing the Finger at Biometric Technology" (SEMC-WW-DP-0024).

In summary, some biometric technologies provide compelling security solutions; however, only certain scenarios are ready for biometrics now.

Features

"Biometrics: How Do They Measure Up?" (COM-15-1727). Defines biometrics, examines fundamental issues and compares major biometric technologies. **By Anthony Allan**

"Consumers Aren't Ready For Biometrics" (www.gartner2.com/research/rpt-0102-0008.asp). Explores consumer views of biometrics based on recent Gartner surveys. **By Laura Behrens**

"Sorting the Crowds: Biometrics for Mass Access Control" (SPA-15-2610). Examines the decision drivers that determine preferred biometric technologies for mass access control. **By Rich Mogull**

"Biometrics for Mass Access Control: Scenarios" (SPA-15-5290). Identifies situations where biometrics can and should be implemented. **By Rich Mogull**

"Fingerprint Technology Is Ready to Go" (T-15-2912). When and how to implement fingerprint biometric systems. **By Martin Reynolds**

"Automotive Keyless Ignition: Going Biometric" (SEMC-WW-DP-0103). Using biometrics as car keys. **By Mike Williams and Andrew Phillips**

"Peripheral Vision: Iridian Eyes Authentication Market" (COM-14-8280). Repositioning Iridian from a hardware provider to an authentication software vendor. **By Jackie Fenn**

"Pointing the Finger at Biometric Technology" (SEMC-WW-DP-0024). Technical and vendor issues with biometrics. **By Andrew Phillips**

This research is part of a set of related research pieces. See "Biometrics: Question Mark or Exclamation Point?" for an overview.

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