

Reflecting on Twenty Years of Bro

Vern Paxson

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August 4, 2015

Part I:

Origin & Technical Evolution



The Bro Network Security Monitor

Why Choose Bro? Bro is a powerful network analysis framework that is much different from the typical IDS you may know.

Adaptable

Bro's domain-specific scripting language enables site-specific monitoring policies.

Efficient

Bro targets high-performance networks and is used operationally at a variety of large sites.

Flexible

Bro is not restricted to any particular detection approach and does not rely on traditional signatures.

In-depth Analysis

Bro comes with analyzers for many protocols, enabling high-level semantic analysis at the application layer.

Highly Stateful

Bro keeps extensive application-layer state about the network it monitors.

Open Interfaces

Bro interfaces with other applications for real-time exchange of information.

QUICK LINKS

Events

- Aug 4-6: [BroCon '15](#)

[Bro YouTube channel](#)

[Try Bro in your browser](#)

TWITTER

[@BRO_IDS](#)

Tweets by [@Bro_IDS](#)

BLOG



[OpenSSL Denial of Service Impacting Bro - CVE-2015-1788](#)

6/16/2015

[Bro 2.4 released](#)

6/9/2015

[Bro Monthly #5](#)

5/18/2015

SEARCH

Loading

Bro: A System for Detecting Network Intruders in Real-Time

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Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory*
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**USENIX Technical Program - 7th USENIX Security
Symposium, 1998**

Prior to developing Bro, we had significant operational experience with a **simpler system based on off-line analysis** of `tcpdump` [JLM89] trace files. Out of this experience we formulated a number of design goals and requirements:

Growth Trends in Wide-Area TCP Connections

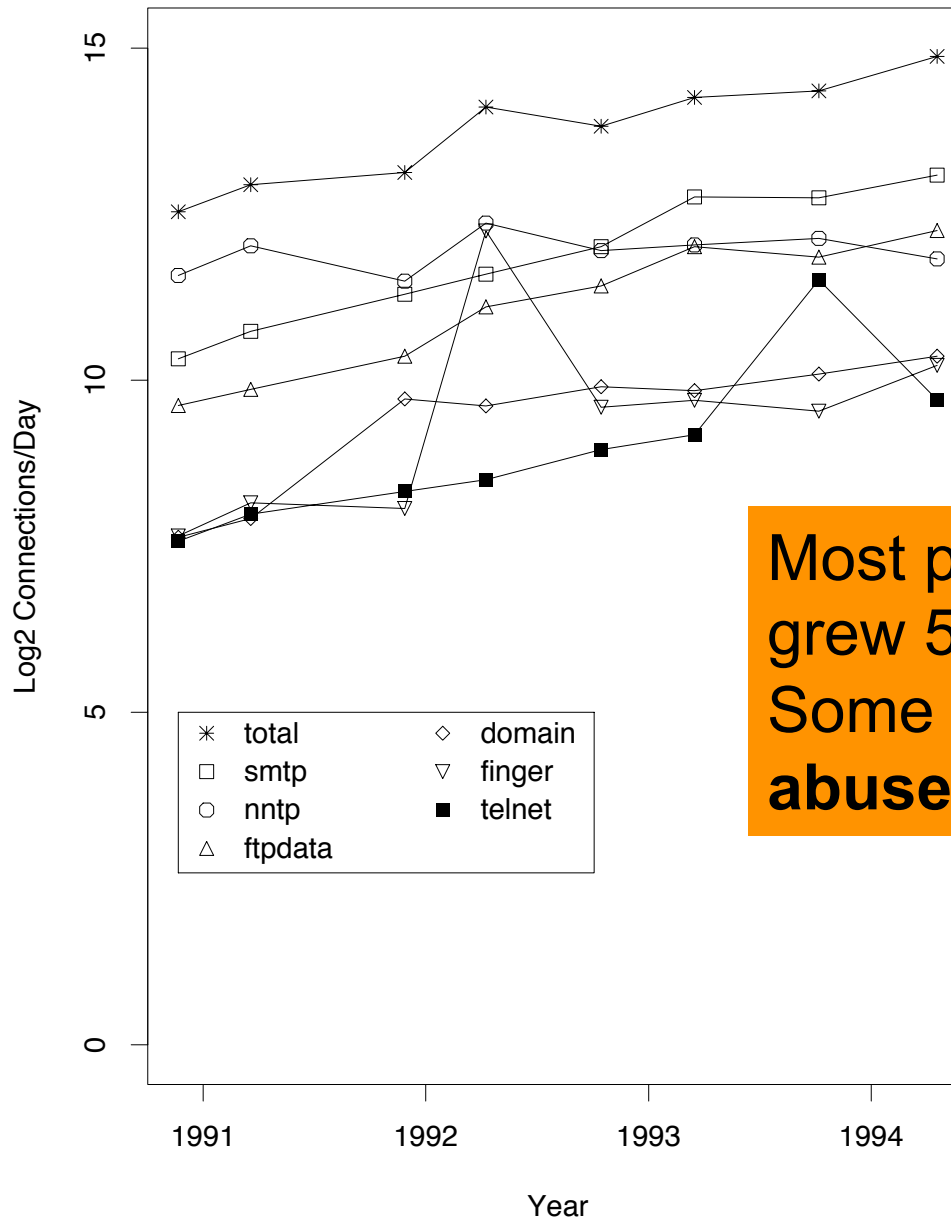
Vern Paxson

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1 Cyclotron Road
Berkeley, CA 94720
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Revised May 11, 1994

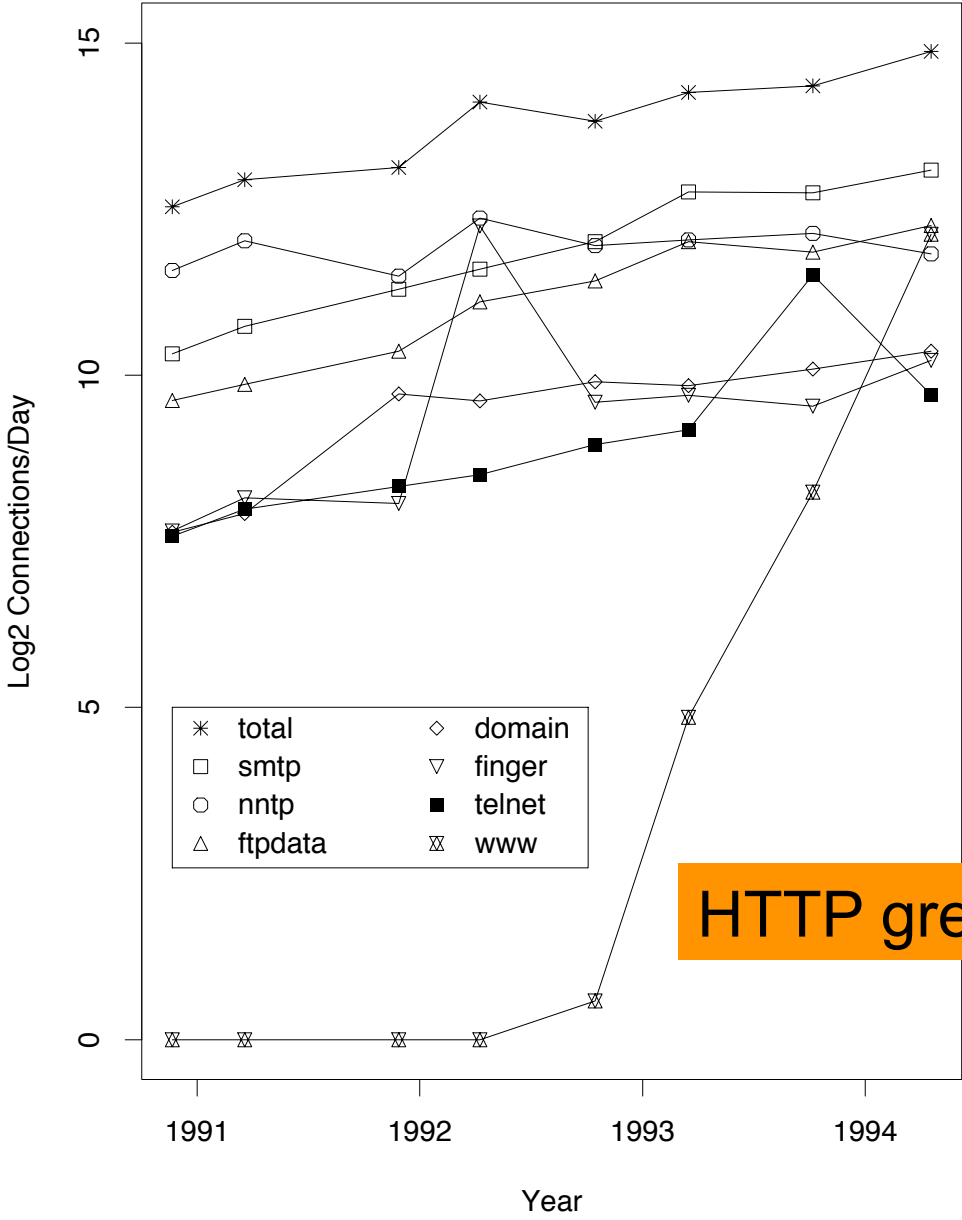


Growth in Connections/Day



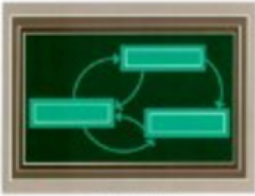
Most popular protocols grew 50-70%/year;
Some of this fueled by **abuse**

Growth in Connections/Day



HTTP grew 300x / year!

SALLY SHLAER / STEPHEN J. MELLOR
**OBJECT
LIFECYCLES**
Modeling the World in States



Object Life Cycles: Modeling the World In States Sep 11, 1991

by Stephen J. Mellor and Sally Shlaer

Paperback

\$83.00 ✓Prime

Only 1 left in stock - order soon.

More Buying Choices

\$0.01 used & new (63 offers)

Congestion Avoidance and Control

Van Jacobson*

University of California
Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory
Berkeley, CA 94720
van@helios.ee.lbl.gov

TCPDUMP(1)

NAME

tcpdump - dump traffic on a network

SYNOPSIS

```
tcpdump [ -AbDdfghHIJKLLnNOpPqRStuUvxX ] [ -B buffer_size ] [ -c count ]  
[ -C file_size ] [ -G rotate_seconds ] [ -F file ]  
[ -i interface ] [ -j tstamp_type ] [ -k (metadata_arg) ]  
[ -m module ] [ -M secret ]
```

PCAP(3PCAP)

PCAP(3PCAP)

NAME

pcap - Packet Capture library

SYNOPSIS

```
#include <pcap/pcap.h>
```

DESCRIPTION

The Packet Capture library provides a high level interface to packet capture systems. All packets on the network, even those destined for

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High-speed, large volume monitoring

No packet filter drops

Real-time notification

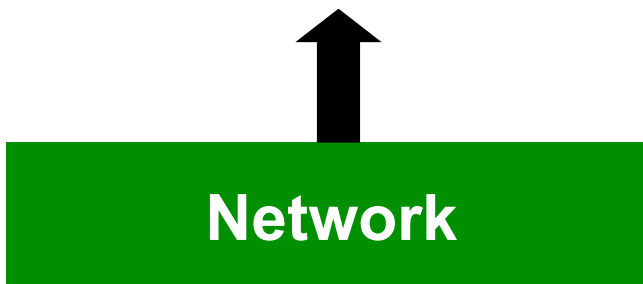
Mechanism separate from policy

Extensible

Avoid simple mistakes

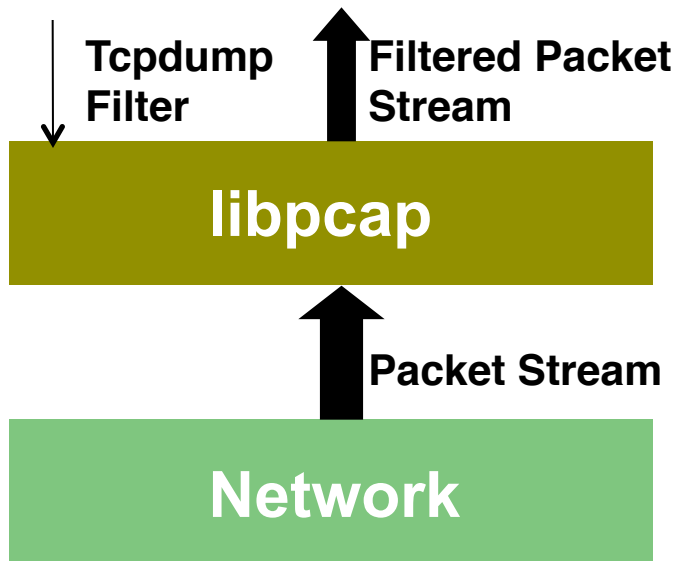
The monitor will be attacked

Original Architecture



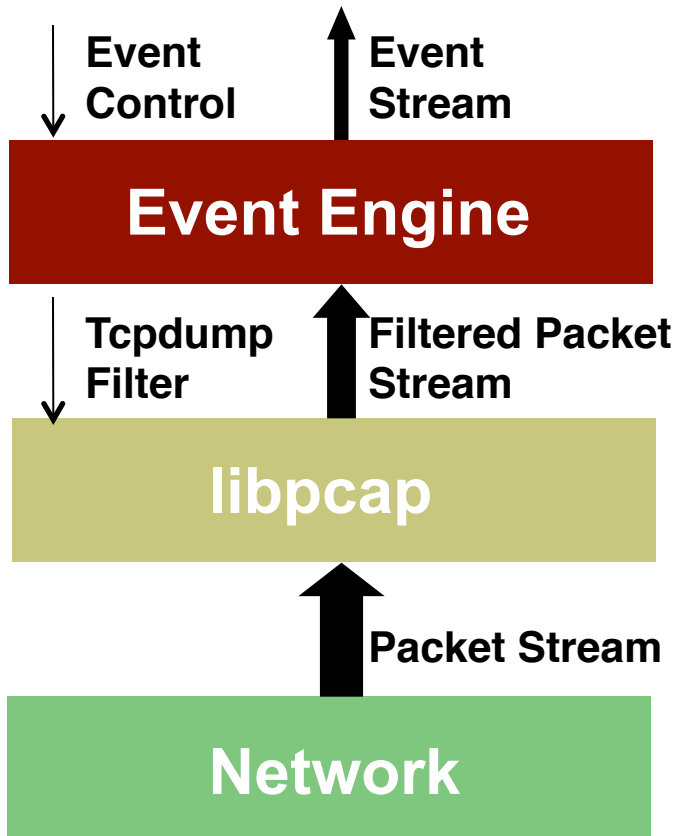
- Taps network link passively, sends up a copy of all network traffic.

Original Architecture



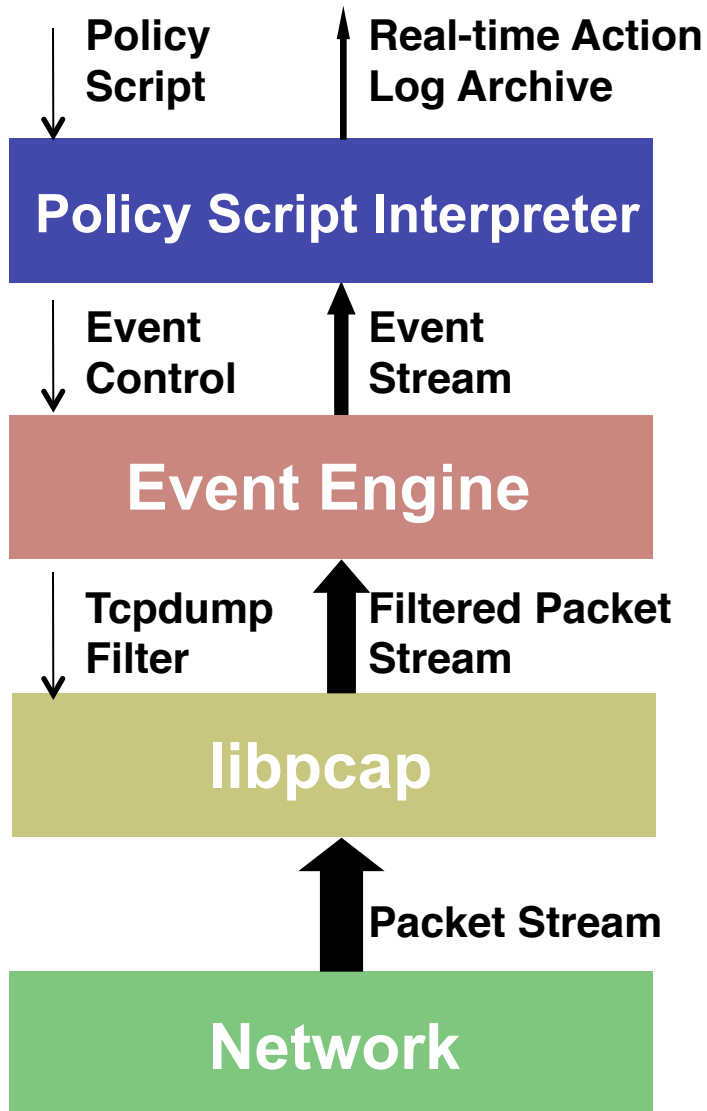
- Kernel filters down high-volume stream via standard *libpcap* packet capture library.

Original Architecture



- “Event engine” decodes protocols, distills filtered stream into high-level, *policy-neutral* events reflecting underlying network activity
 - E.g., `connection_attempt`, `http_reply`, `teredo_authentication`
 - These span a [range of semantic levels](#)
 - Currently 400+ different types

Original Architecture



- Script written in Domain Specific Language processes event stream, incorporates:

- Context/state from past events
- Additional input sources
- Site's particular policies

... and *takes action*:

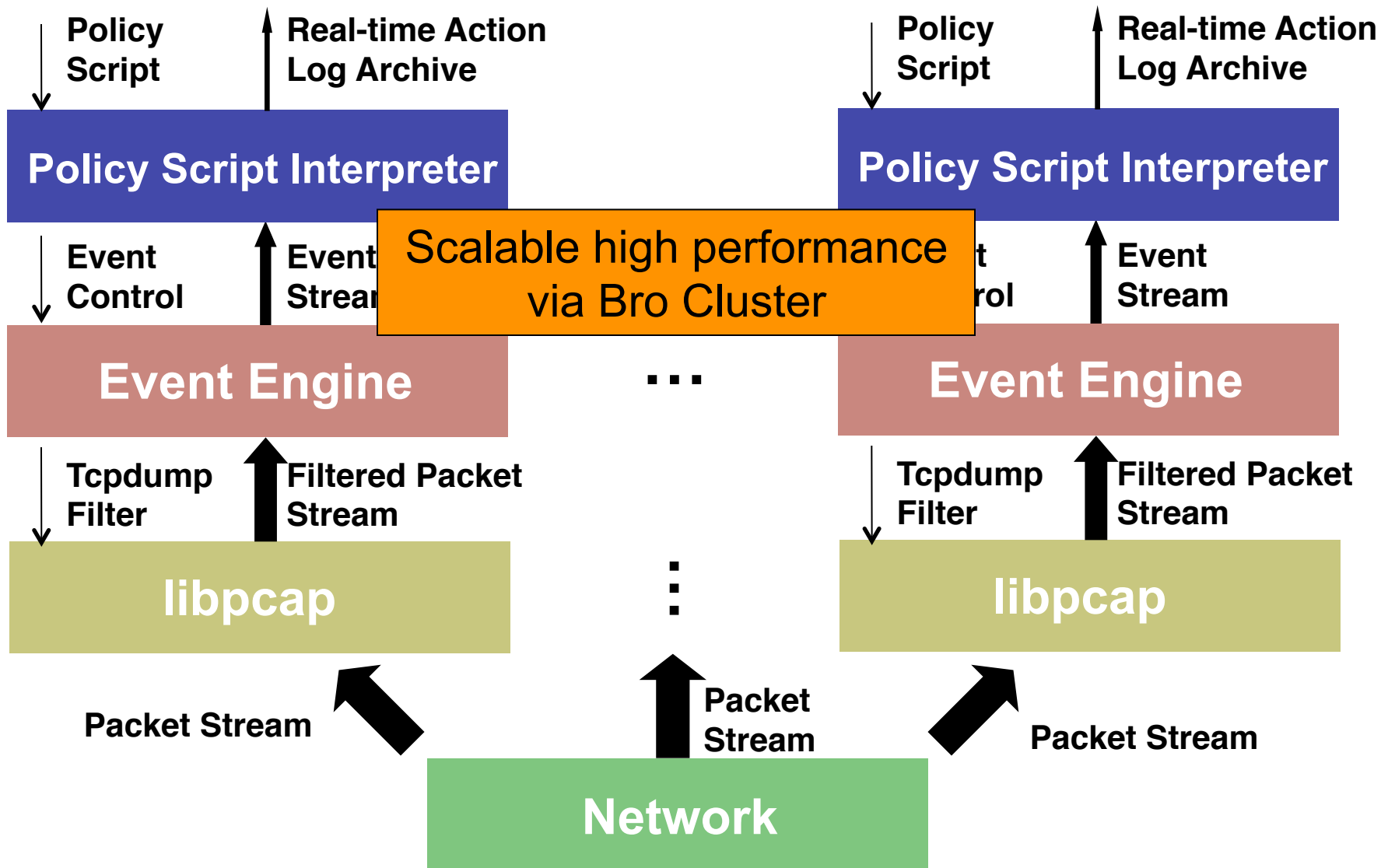
Records to disk - **extensive** logs

Generates real-time alerts

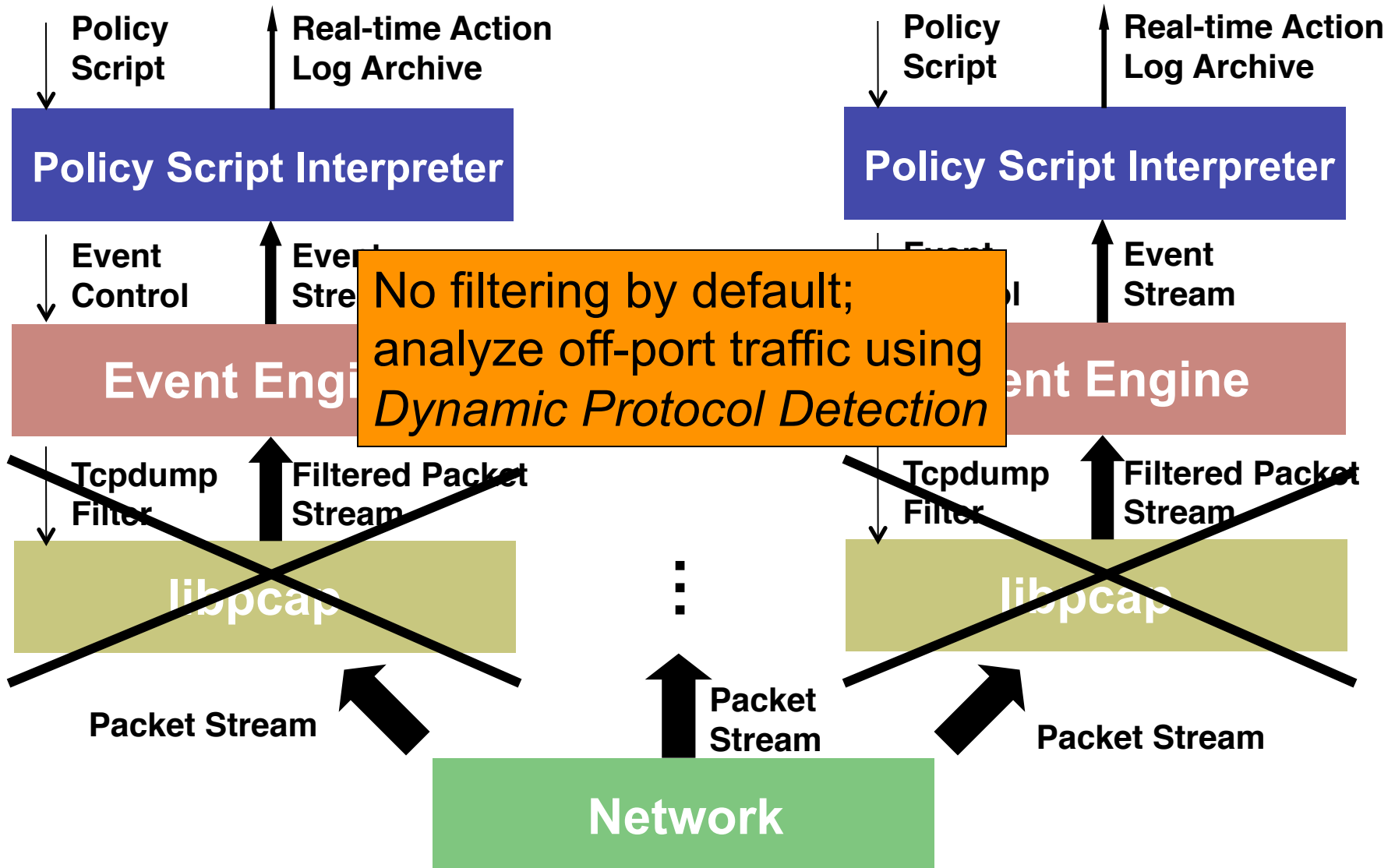
Executes programs as a form of

response

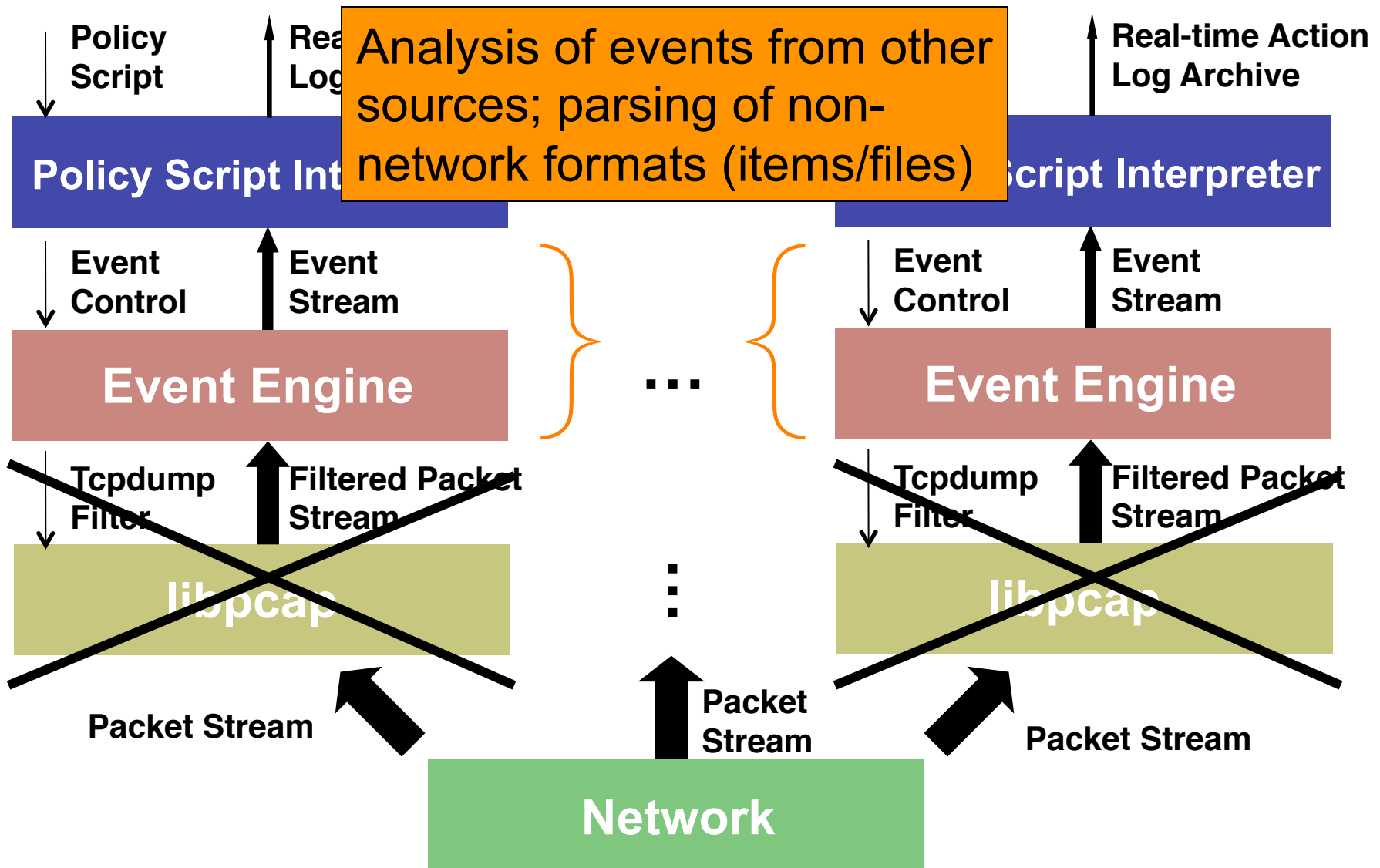
Architecture As It Has Evolved



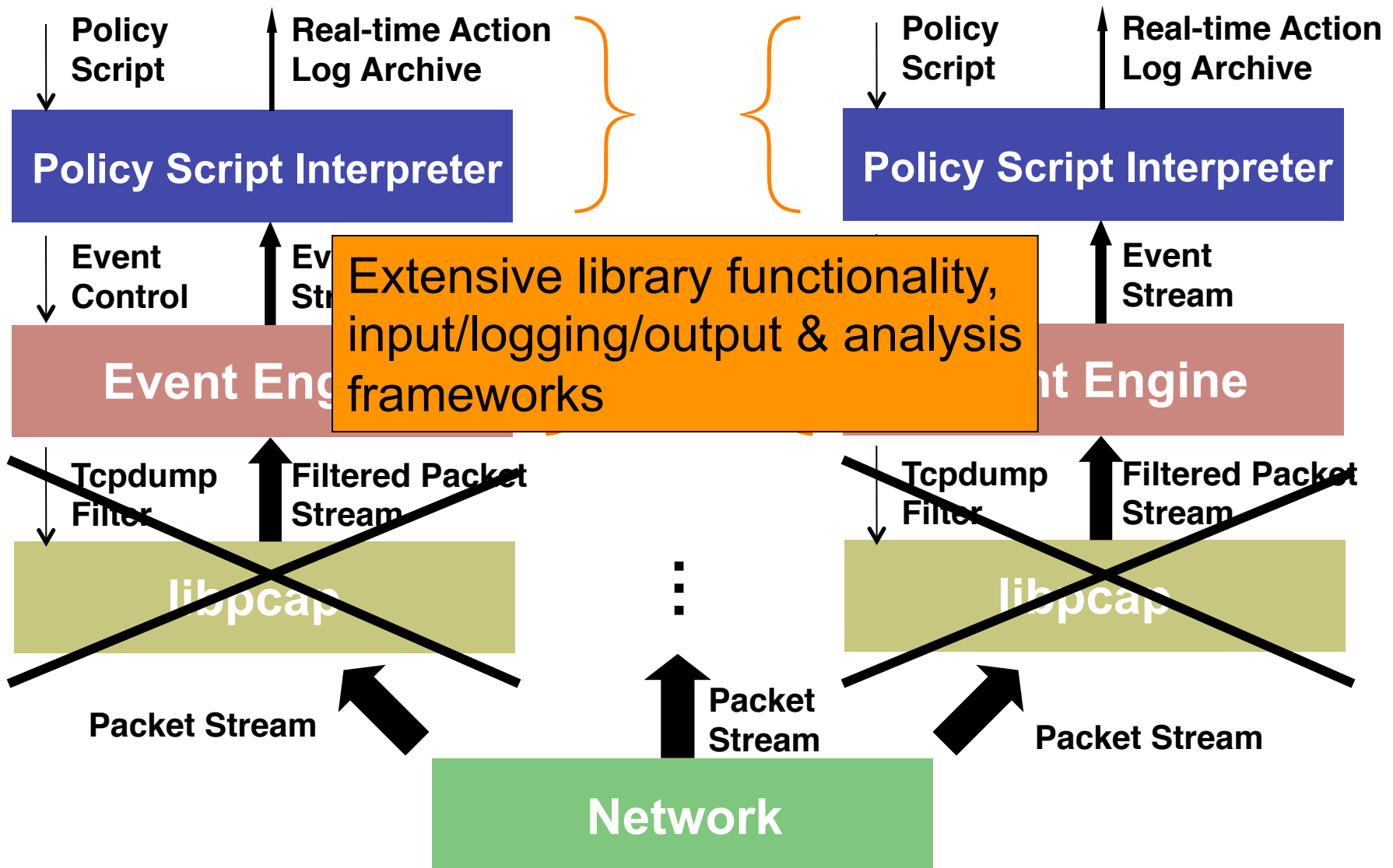
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High-speed, large volume monitoring

High-speed, large volume monitoring For our environment, we view the greatest source of threats as external hosts connecting to our hosts over the Internet. Since the network we want to protect has a single link connecting it to the remainder of the Internet (a “DMZ”), we can economically monitor our greatest potential source of attacks by passively watching the DMZ link.

Key enabler: donation of DEC Alphas (kudos Jeff Mogul)

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mistakes

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@load misc/capture-loss

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Mechanism separate from policy

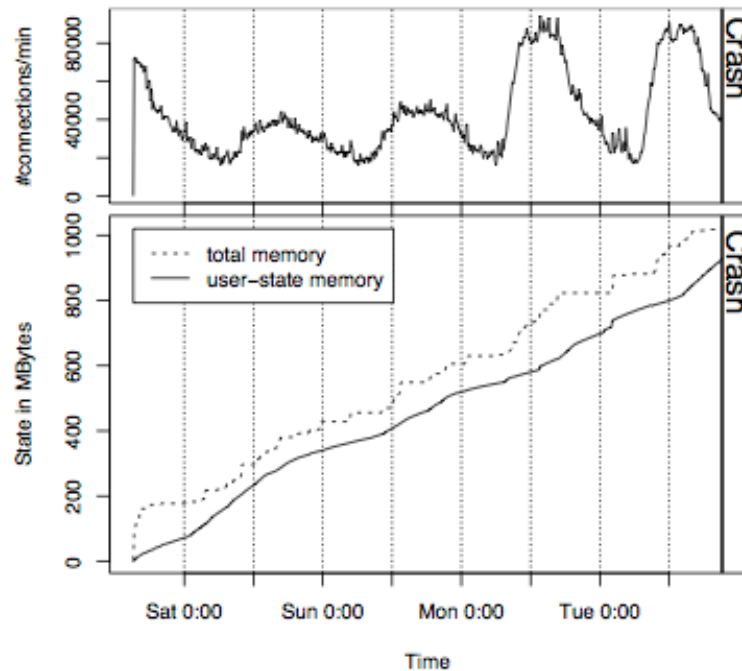
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Avoid simple mistakes

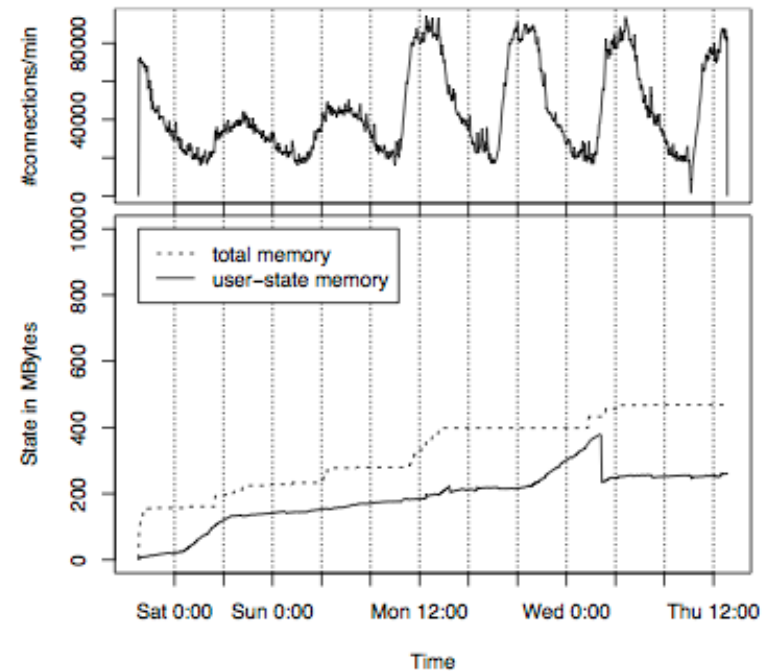
The monitor will be attacked

Operational Experiences with High-Volume Network Intrusion Detection

Figure 2: Memory required by scan detector on `mwn-week-hdr` using inactivity timeouts for connections.



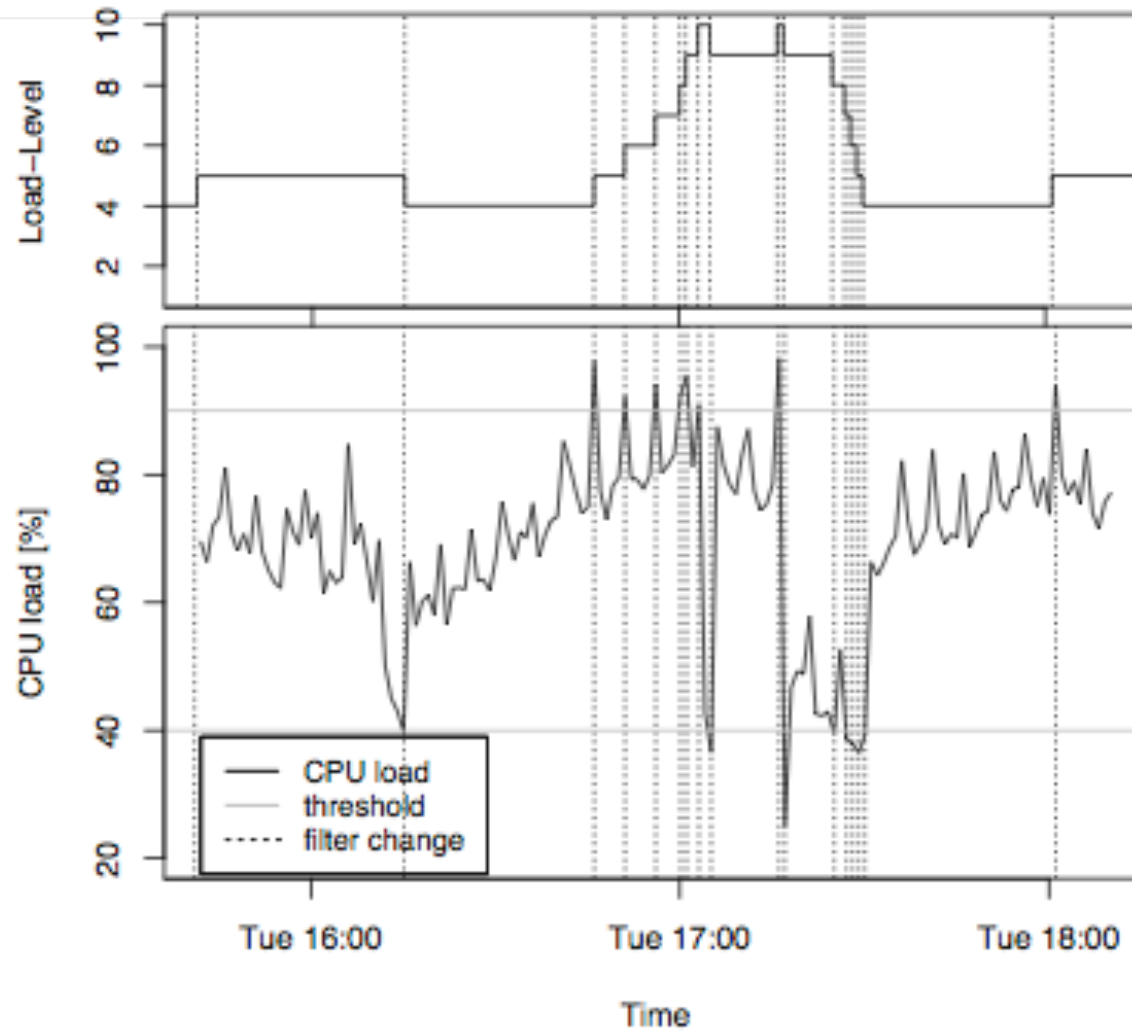
(a) Default configuration



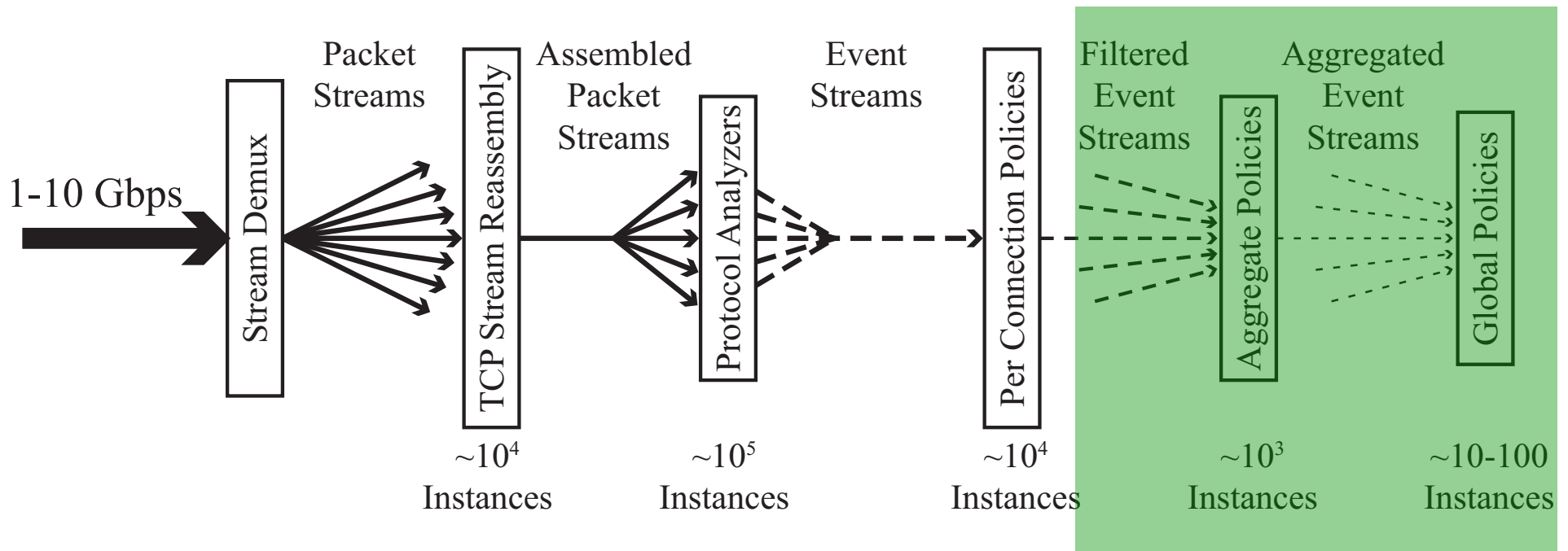
(b) With user-level timeouts

Operational Experience with High-Volume

Figure 4: Load-levels



Rethinking Hardware Support for Network Analysis and Intrusion Prevention



The NIDS Cluster: Scalable, Stateful Network Intrusion Detection on Commodity Hardware

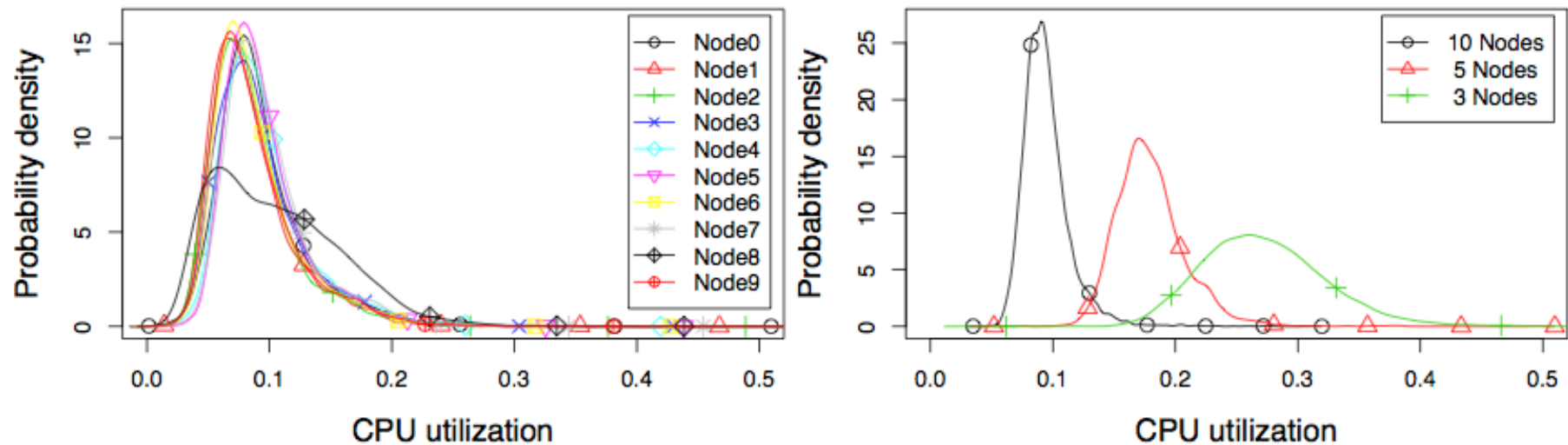


Fig. 3. Probability densities of backends' CPU load (left), and probability densities for varying numbers of backends (right).

Shunting: A Hardware/Software Architecture for Flexible, High-Performance Network Intrusion Prevention

The Shunt: An FPGA-Based Accelerator for Network Intrusion Prevention

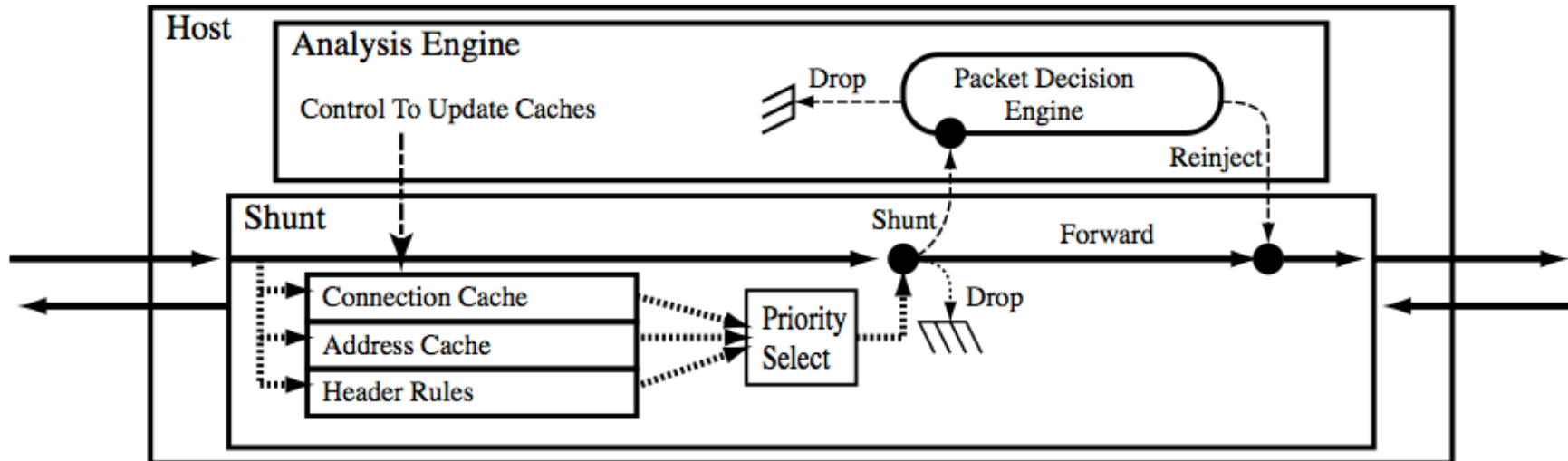
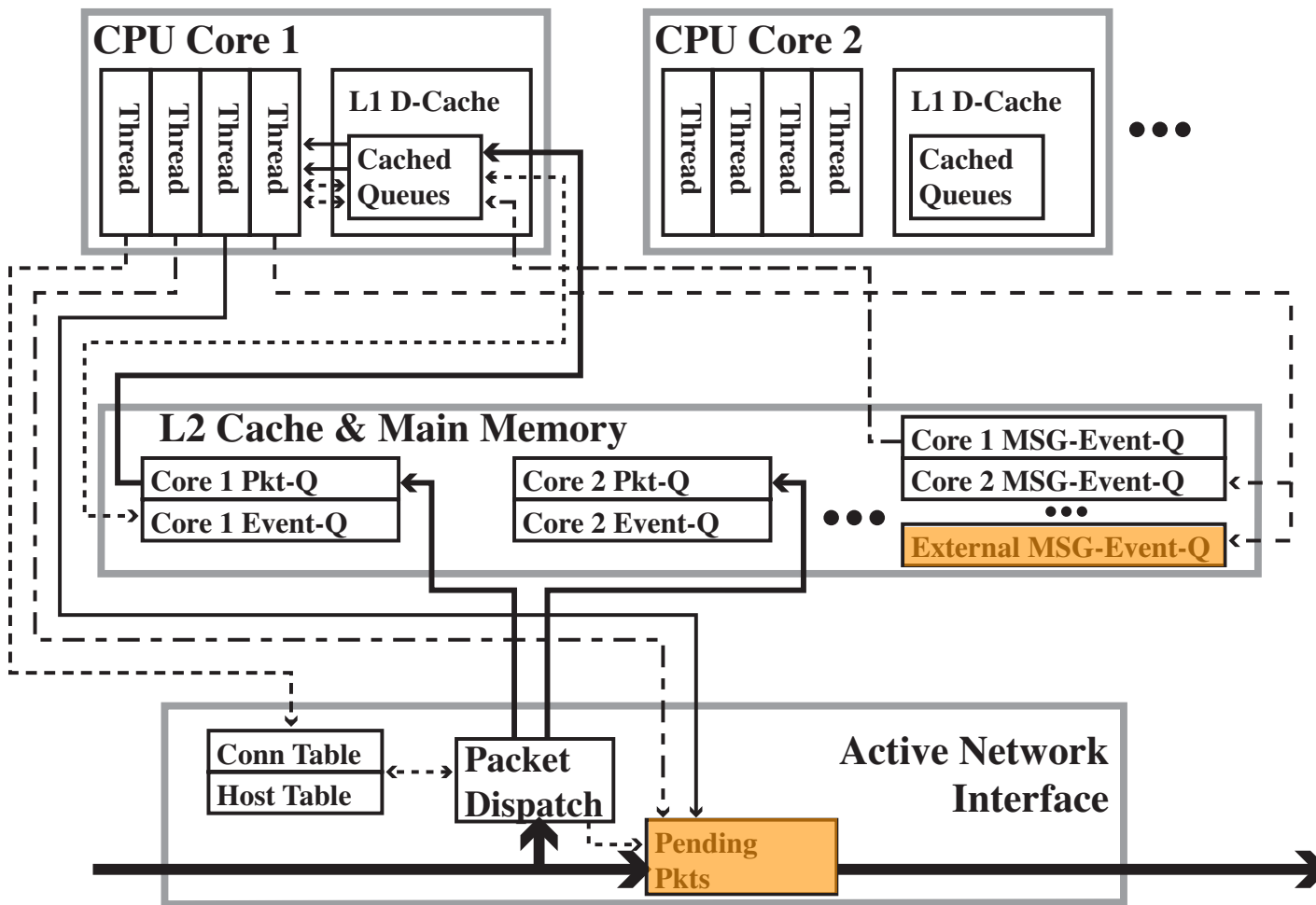


Figure 1: Shunting Main Architecture. The shunt examines the headers of received packets to determine the associated action: *forward*, *drop*, or *shunt* to the Analysis Engine. The Analysis Engine directly updates the Shunt's caches to control future processing, and either drops analyzed packets for immediate intrusion prevention or reinjects them once vetted for safety.

An Architecture for Exploiting Multi-Core Processors to Parallelize Network Intrusion Prevention

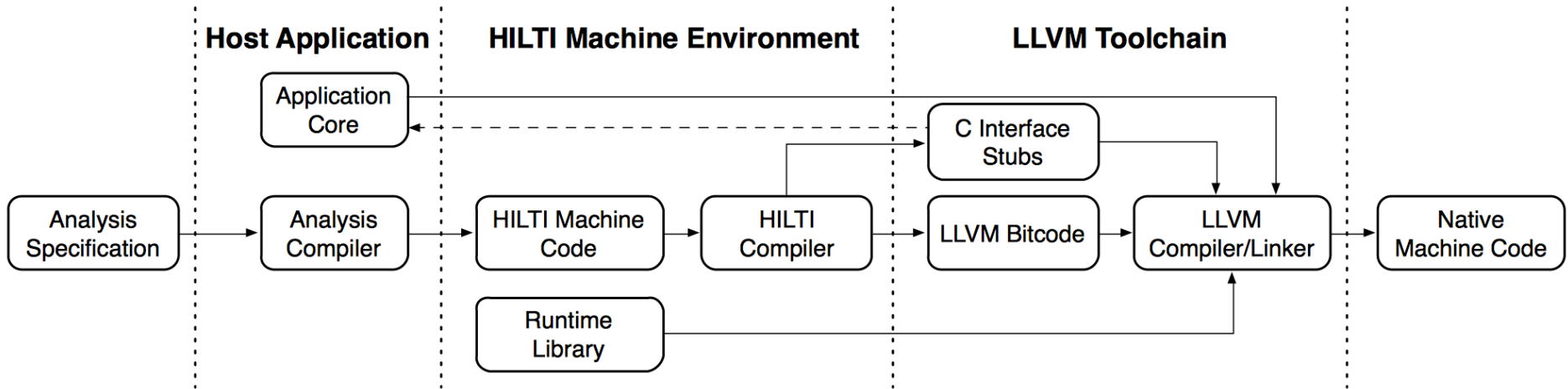


HILTI: An Abstract Execution Environment for Deep, Stateful Network Traffic Analysis

Functionality	Mnemonic	Functionality	Mnemonic
Bitsets	bitset	Packet i/o	iosrc
Booleans	bool	Packet classification	classifier
CIDR masks	network	Packet dissection	overlay
Callbacks	hook	Ports	port
Closures	callable	Profiling	profiler
Channels	channel	Raw data	bytes
Debug support	debug	References	ref
Doubles	double	Regular expressions	regexp
Enumerations	enum	Strings	string
Exceptions	exception	Structs	struct
File i/o	file	Time intervals	interval
Flow control	(No joint prefix)	Timer management	timer_mgr
Hashmaps	map	Timers	timer
Hashsets	set	Times	time
IP addresses	addr	Tuples	tuple
Integers	int	Vectors/arrays	vector
Lists	list	Virtual threads	thread

Table 1: HILTI's main instruction groups.

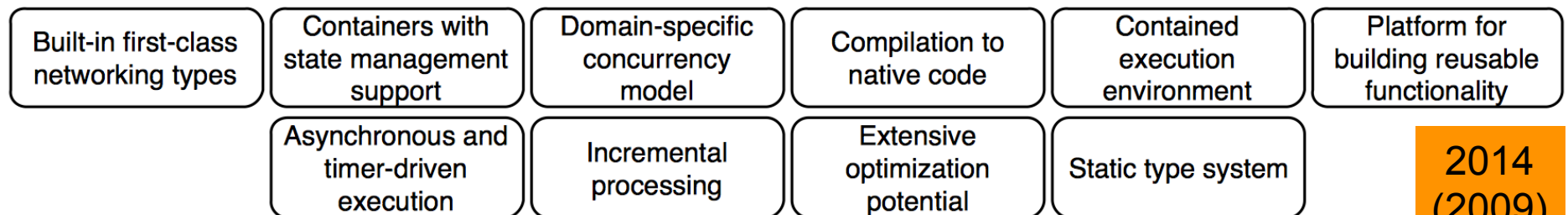
HILTI: An Abstract Execution Environment for Deep, Stateful Network Traffic Analysis



Traffic Analysis Building Blocks

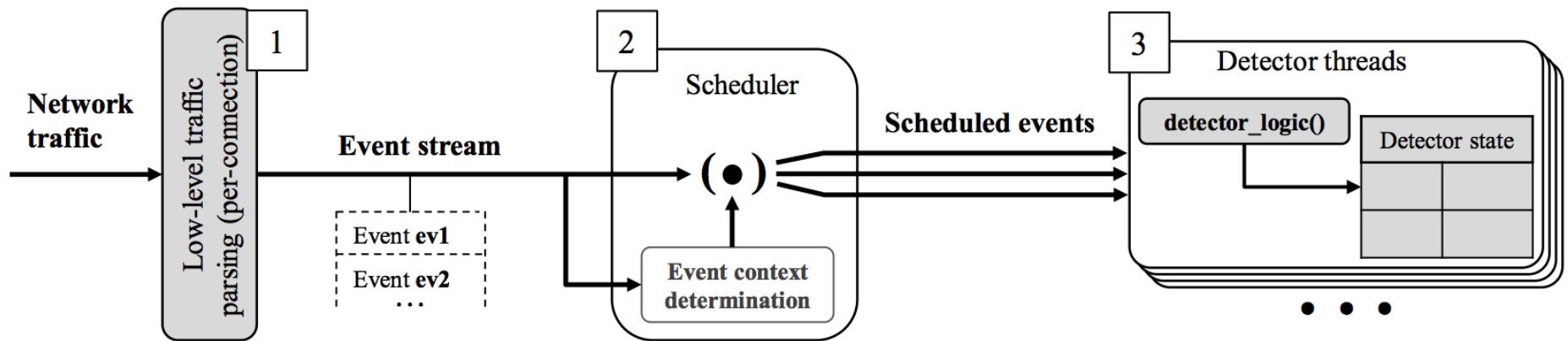


HILTI Environment



2014
(2009)

Beyond Pattern Matching: A Concurrency Model for Stateful Deep Packet Inspection



	<i>SINGLE-THREADED IDS</i>	<i>CONCURRENT IDS (LOCK-BASED)</i>	<i>CONCURRENT IDS (SCOPE-BASED)</i>
IDS LOGIC	<pre>void run_IDS() { while (p = read_packet()) { if (p.SYN) count_connections(p); } }</pre>	<pre>void run_IDS() { i = 0; while (p = read_packet()) { if (p.SYN) { event c = new connectionEvent(p); send_event(threads[i], c); i = (i+1) % N; } } }</pre>	<pre>void run_IDS() { while (p = read_packet()) { if (p.SYN) { event c = new connectionEvent(p); send_event(threads[c.src % N], c); } } }</pre>
DETECTOR	<pre>void count_connections(packet p) { if (++counts[p.src] > THRESH) report_host(p.src); }</pre>	<pre>handler count_connections(connectionEvent c) { lock_element(counts[c.src]) v = ++counts[c.src]; unlock_element(counts[c.src]) if (v > THRESH) report_host(c.src); }</pre>	<pre>handler count_connections(connectionEvent c) { if (++counts[c.src] > THRESH) report_host(c.src); }</pre>
	(a)	(b)	(c)

Figure 1: Simple portscan detector

Count Me In: Viable Distributed Summary Statistics for Securing High-Speed Networks

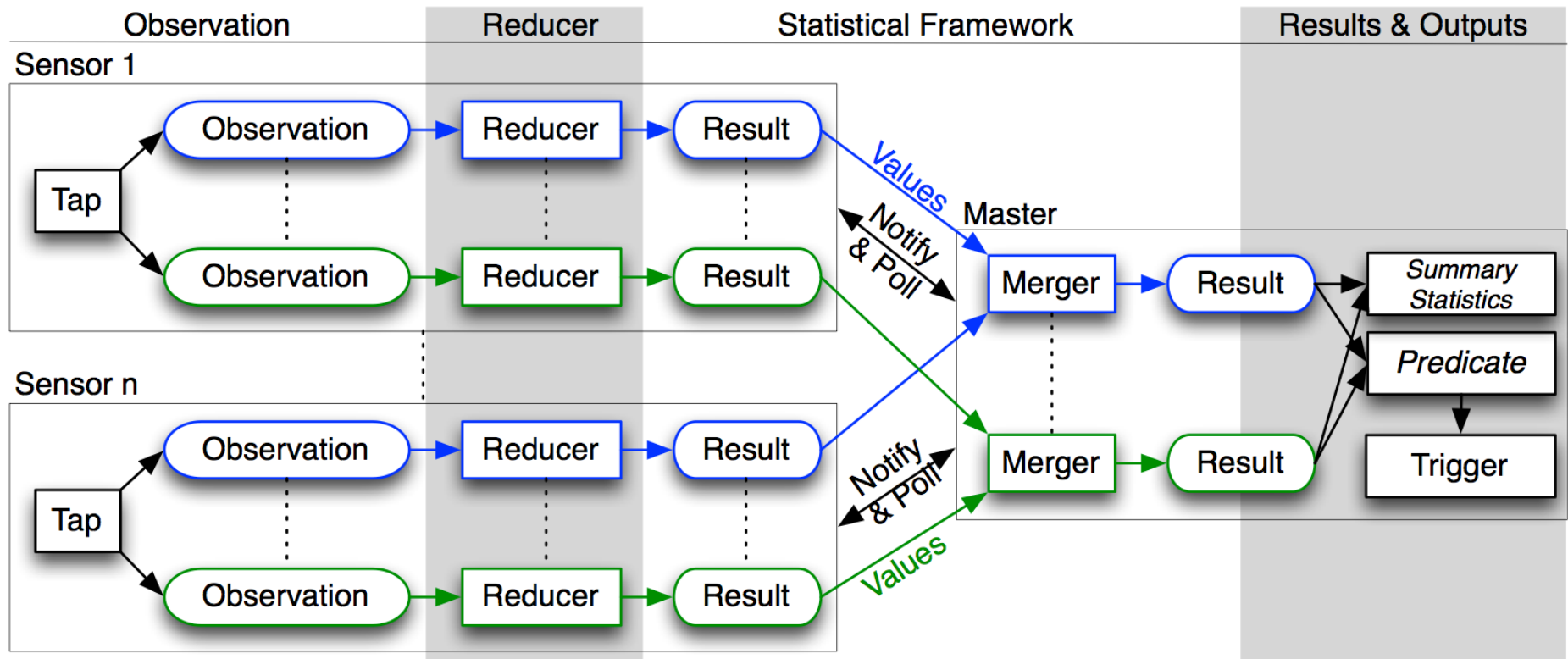


Fig. 2. Distributed Architecture.



BERKELEY LAB
LAWRENCE BERKELEY NATIONAL LABORATORY



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF
ENERGY



**UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA**

100G Monitoring



"You get to drink from the firehose!"

**Aashish Sharma
Vincent Stoffer**

**Bro4Pros
February 19th, 2015
OpenDNS, SF**

Real-time notification One of our main dissatisfactions with our initial off-line system was the lengthy delay incurred before detecting an attack. If an attack, or an attempted attack, is detected quickly, then it can be much easier to trace back the attacker (for example, by telephoning the site from which they are coming), minimize damage, prevent further break-ins, and initiate full recording of all of the attacker's network activity.

Real-time notification

Mechanism separate from policy

Extensible

Avoid simple mistakes

The monitor will be attacked

Prior to developing Bro, we had significant operational ex-

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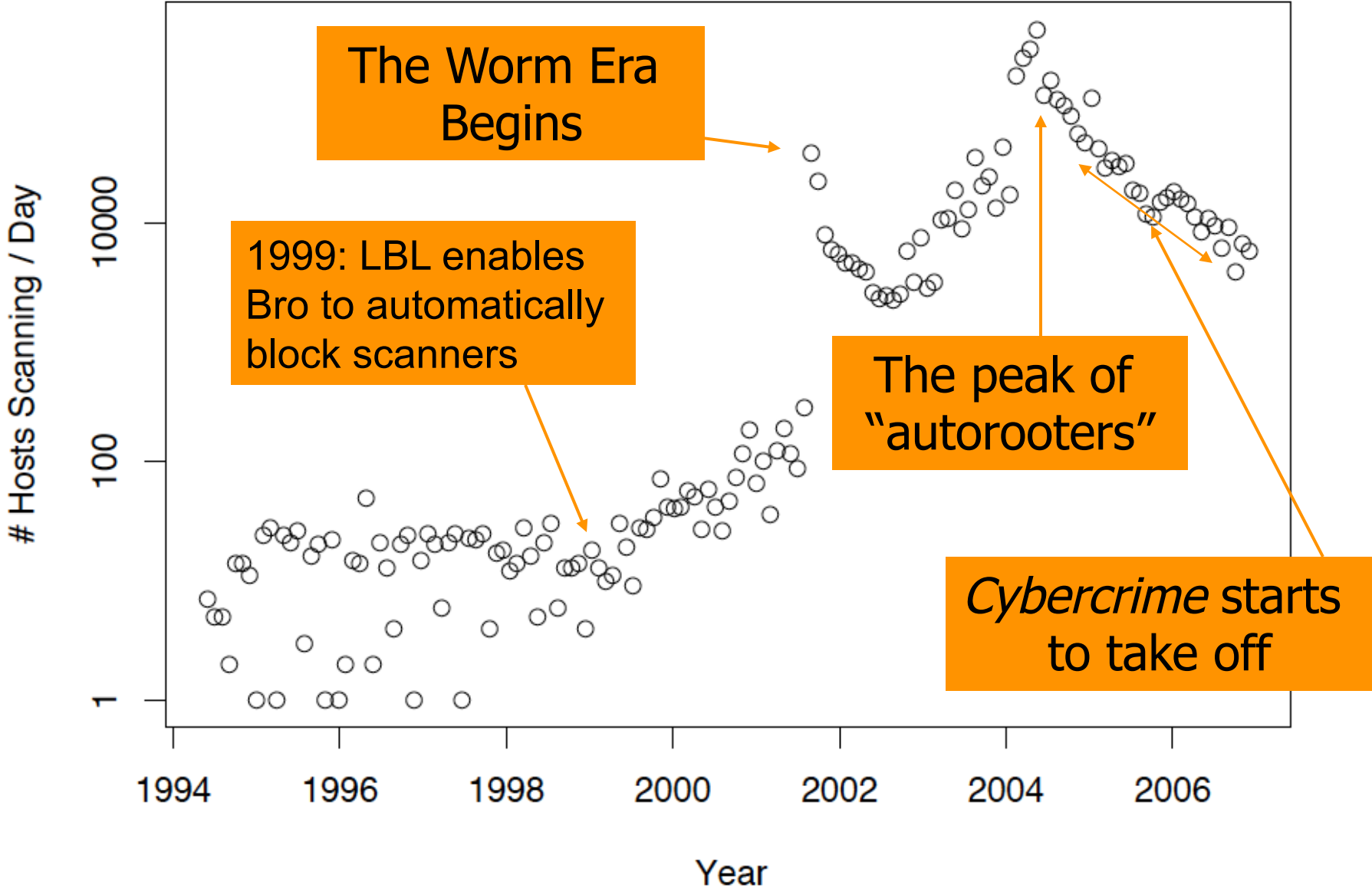
ca. \$24,000

...

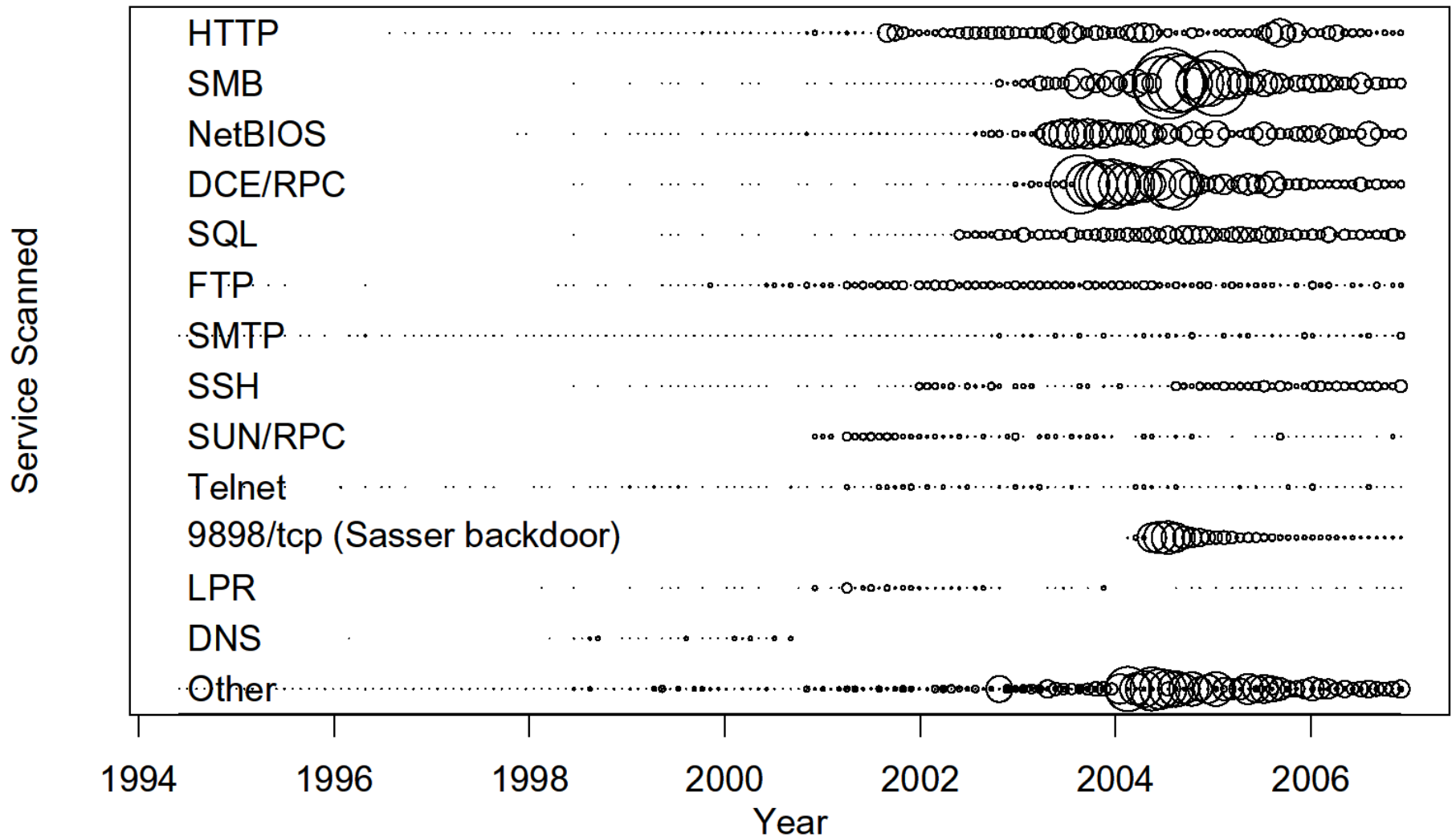
\$ 2,950 DEFTA-DA

Dual-attach FDDI card. We could instead get the single-attach card, \$700 less, DEFTA-AA. The use I see for dual-attach is a possible outgrowth of the project, which is using the machine as an intelligent "reactive" firewall (one which stops forwarding packets belonging to misbehaving sessions).

Scan Activity Seen At LBL



Services Scanned Over Time



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Real-time notification

This is not to discount the enormous utility of keeping extensive, permanent logs of network activity for later analysis. Invariably, when we have suffered a break-in, we turn to these logs for retrospective damage assessment, sometimes searching back a number of months.

Building a Time Machine for Efficient Recording and Retrieval of High-Volume Network Traffic

Enriching Network Security Analysis with Time Travel

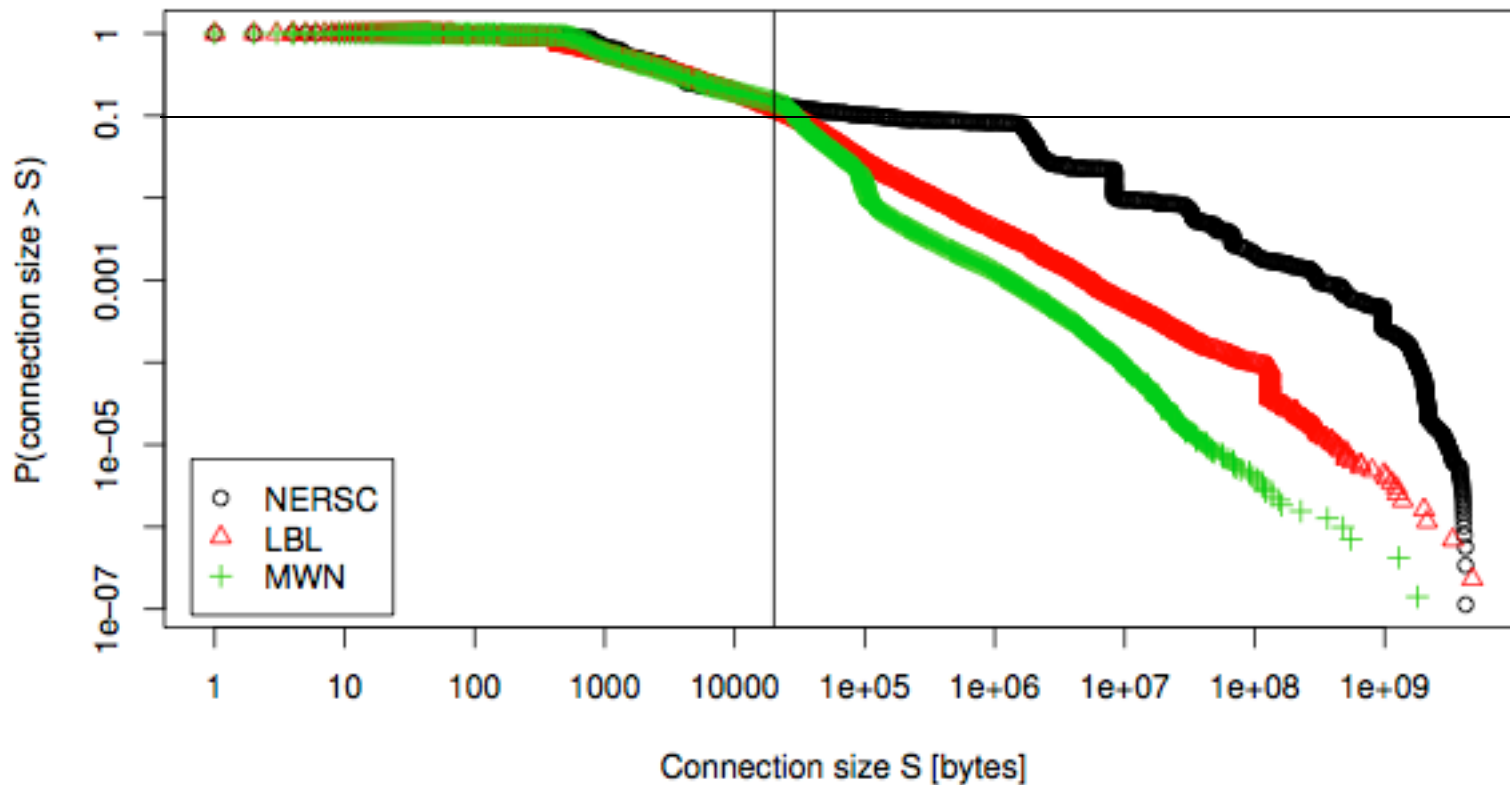


Figure 1: Log-log CCDF of connection sizes

2005/
2008

Mechanism separate from policy Sound software design often stresses constructing a clear separation between mechanism and policy; done properly, this buys both simplicity and flexibility. The problems faced by our

Extensible Because there are an enormous number of different network attacks, with who knows how many waiting to be discovered, the system clearly must be designed in order to make it easy to add to it knowledge of new types of attacks. In addition, while our system

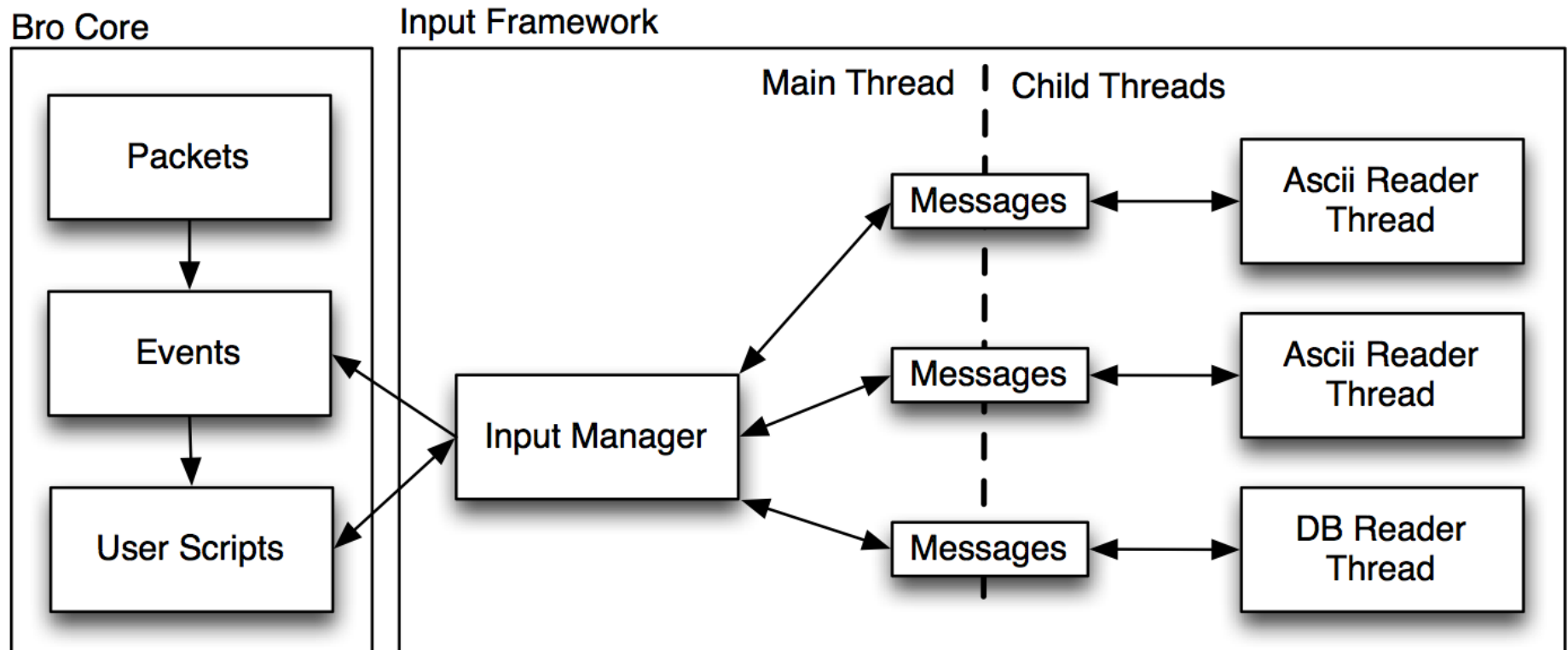
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A Lone Wolf No More: Supporting Network Intrusion Detection with Real-Time Intelligence



Through the Eye of the PLC: Semantic Security Monitoring for Industrial Processes

Table 1: Summary of plausible attacks against PLC implementations: Modbus example

Level	Impact		Attack description	Example
1	Data integrity		Corrupt integrity by adding data to the packet.	Craft a packet that has a different length than defined in parameters or in spec [2].
2	IT System	Reconnaissance	Analyse functionality a PLC implements.	Probe FC, listen for responses and exceptions [2].
		Integrity	Exploit lack of specification compliance.	Manipulate application parameters within spec (e.g., offset) or outside of spec (e.g., illegal FC) [2, 9, 37].
			Perform unauthorized use of an administrative command.	Use FC 8-0A to clear counters and diagnostics audit [2].
		Denial of service	Perform MITM to enforce system delay.	Send exception codes 05, 06 or FC 8-04 to enforce Listen mode [2].
Perform unauthorized use of administrative command.	Use FC 8-01 to restart TCP communication [2, 9].			
3	Process	Reconnaissance	Analyse structure of memory map.	Probe readable/writable points. Exceptions tell process implementation details [2].
		Direct control	Perform change on process variable.	Write inverted or min/max values [10]. Modify key setpoint variables [14, 26].
		Indirect control	Tamper with process values.	Replay values [14].

FC: Function code defining the type of functionality in Modbus.

MITM: Man-in-the-middle attack.

Rapid and Scalable ISP Service Delivery through a Programmable MiddleBox

MAdFraud: Investigating Ad Fraud in Android Applications

Pitfalls in HTTP Traffic Measurements and Analysis

Investigating IPv6 Traffic

What happened at the World IPv6 Day?

Exploring EDNS-Client-Subnet Adopters in your Free Time*

On Modern DNS Behavior and Properties

Enabling Content-aware Traffic Engineering

Pushing CDN-ISP Collaboration to the Limit

100+ more at <https://www.bro.org/research/index.html>

Prior to developing Bro, we had significant operational experience with a simpler system based on off-line analysis of

Avoid simple mistakes Of course, we always want to avoid mistakes. However, here we mean that we particularly desire that the way that a site defines its security policy be both clear and as error-free as possible. (For example, we would not consider expressing the policy in C code as meeting these goals.)

Mechanism separate from policy

Extensible

Avoid simple mistakes

The monitor will be attacked

NEW
The S Language

A PROGRAMMING ENVIRONMENT
FOR DATA ANALYSIS AND GRAPHICS

江州圖書館 The Superconducting Super Collider



The AWK
Programming Language



Concurrent
Programming

in ML



Glish: A User-Level Software Bus for Loosely-Coupled
Distributed Systems

1993

STROUSTRUP

in H. Reppy

2002: &attributes – state management, persistence, defaults, file rotation, logging

2002: IPv6 (due to ESnet need)

2002/2004: ALERT's / NOTICE's

2002: Signature engine

2003: modules

2005: BinPAC – DSL for protocol analyzers

2006: “when” statement

2009: BroControl

2012: “hook” construct

[Bro 2.4 documentation](#) »

Frameworks

- [File Analysis](#)
- [GeoLocation](#)
- [Input Framework](#)
- [Intelligence Framework](#)
- [Logging Framework](#)
- [Notice Framework](#)
- [Signature Framework](#)
- [Summary Statistics](#)
- [Broker-Enabled Communication Framework](#)



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[Writing Bro Scripts](#)

Prior to developing Bro, we had significant operational experience with a simpler system based on off-line analysis of `tcpdump` [JLM89] trace files. Out of this experience we formulated a number of design goals and requirements:

The monitor will be attacked We must assume that attackers will (eventually) have full knowledge of the techniques used by the monitor, and access to its source code, and will use this knowledge in attempts to subvert or overwhelm the monitor so that it fails to detect the attacker's break-in activity. This assumption significantly complicates the design of the monitor, but failing to address it is to build a house of cards.

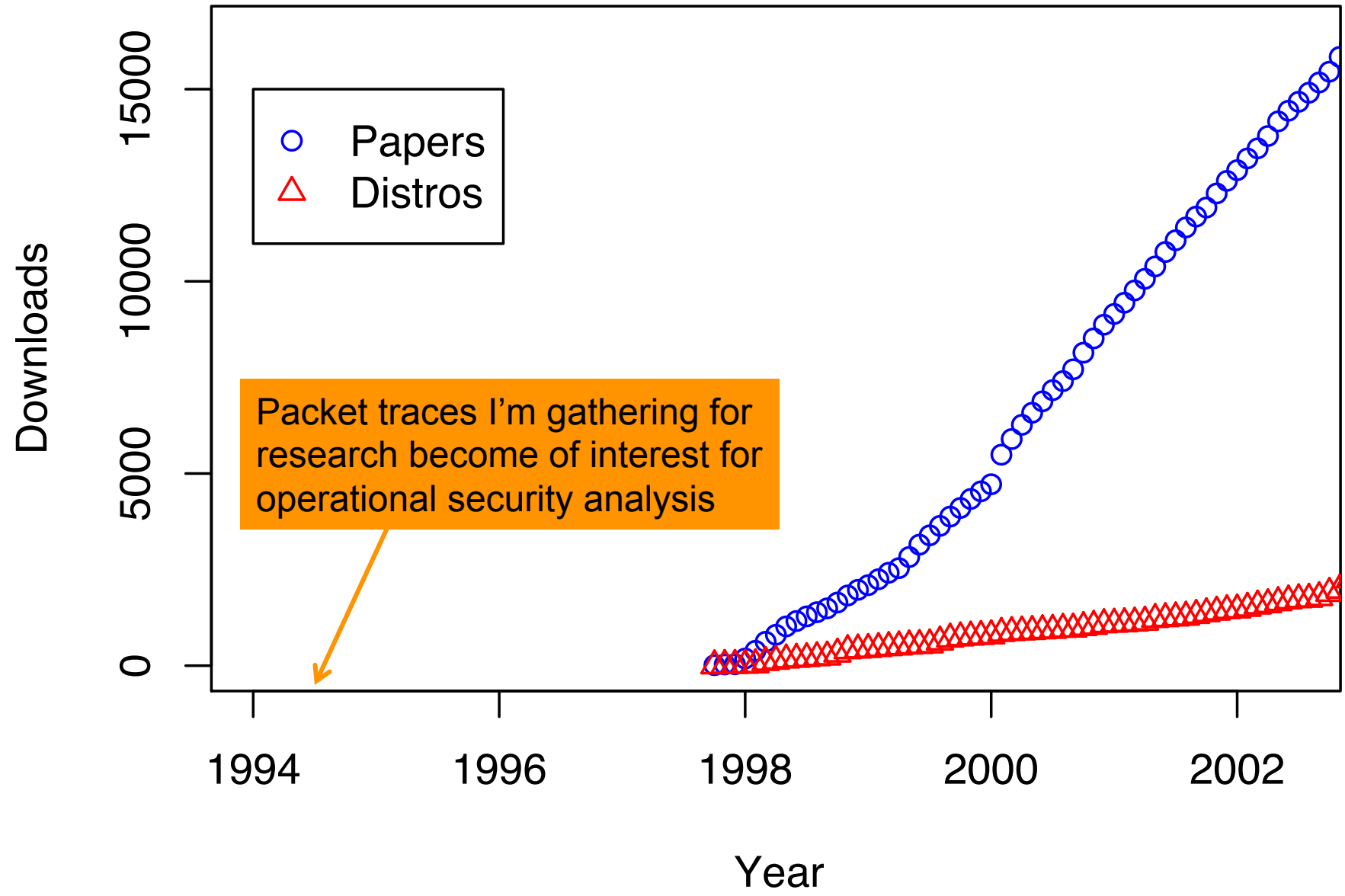
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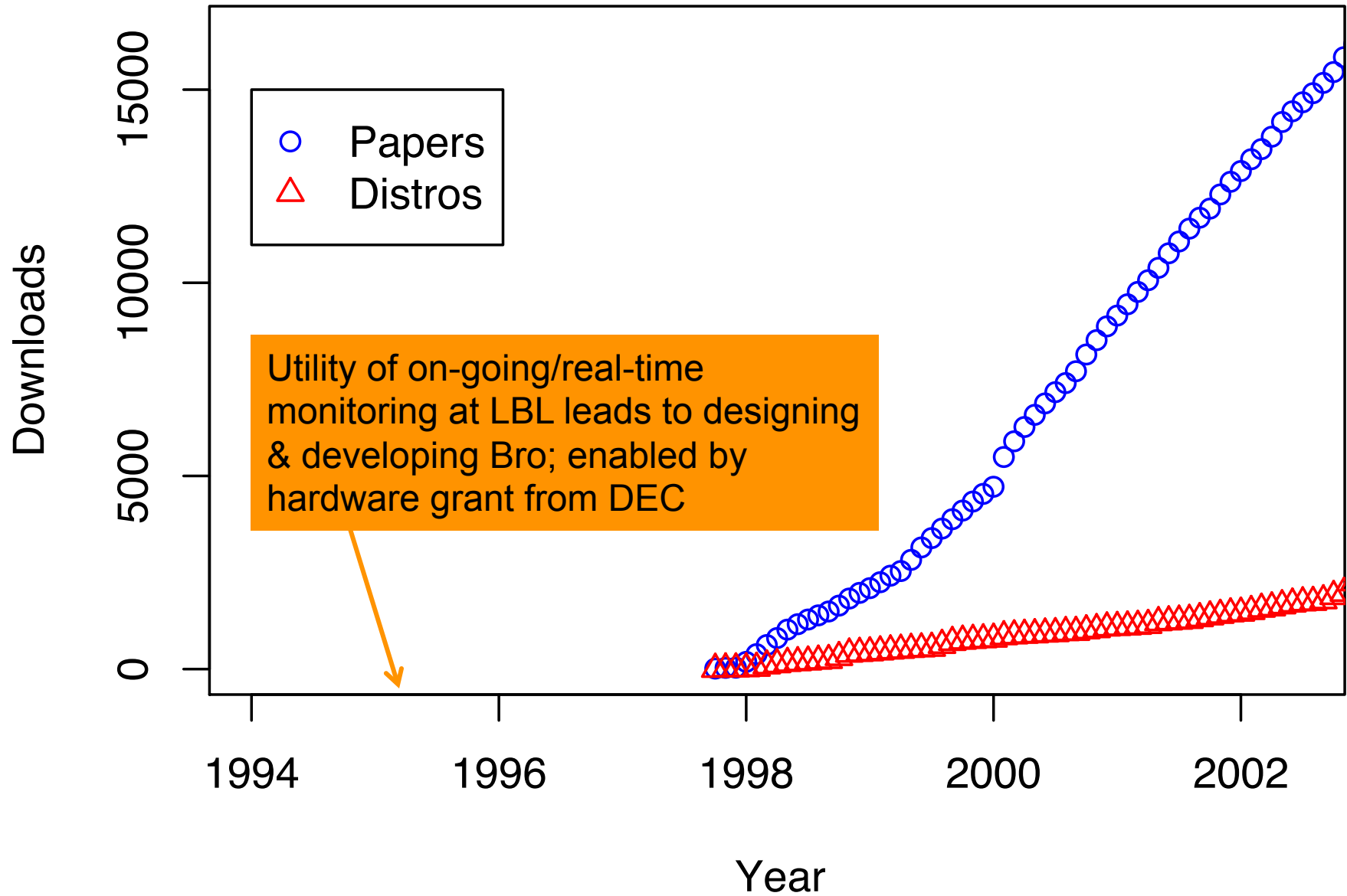
Part II:

Project Evolution

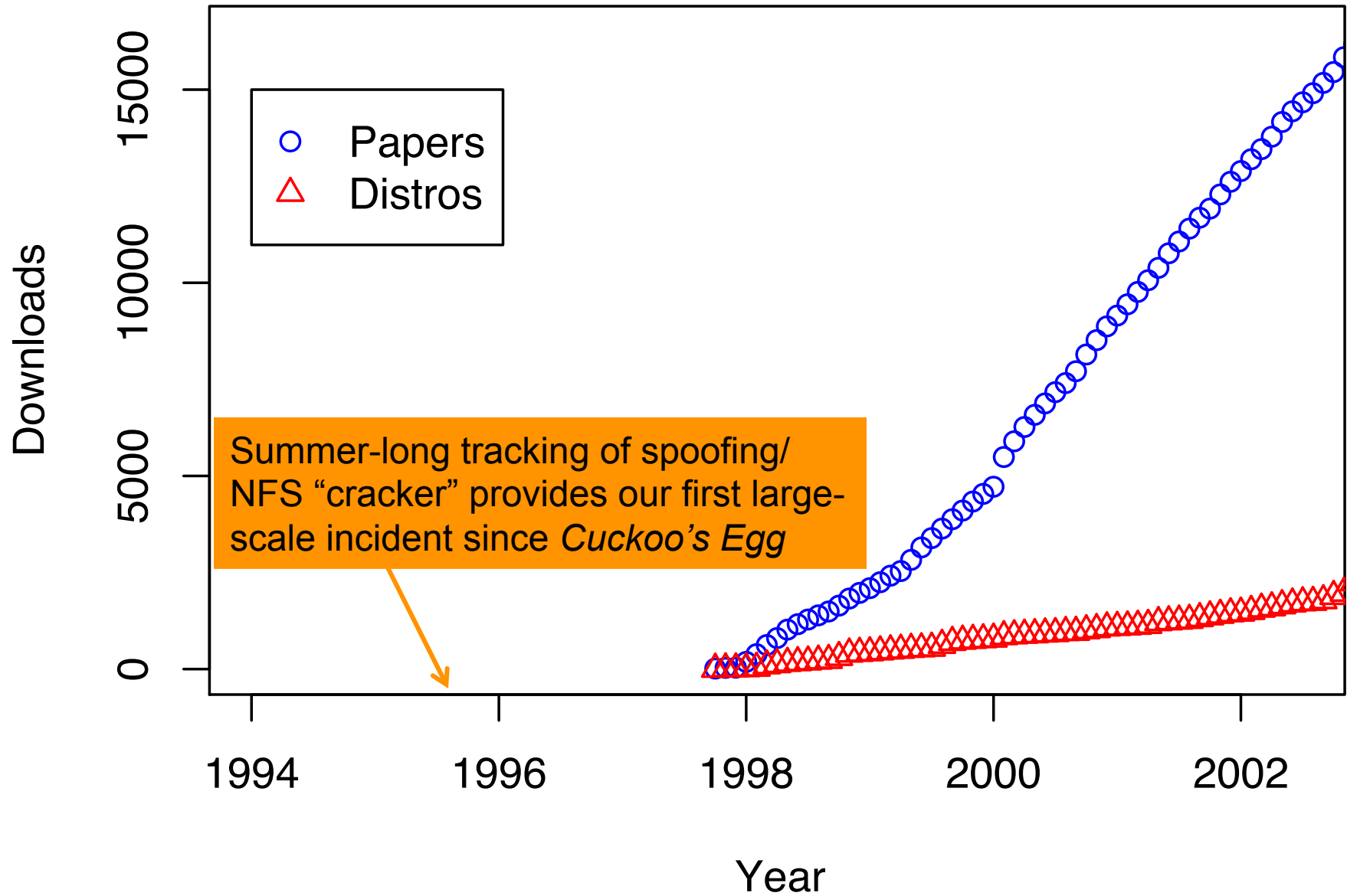
Interest in Bro



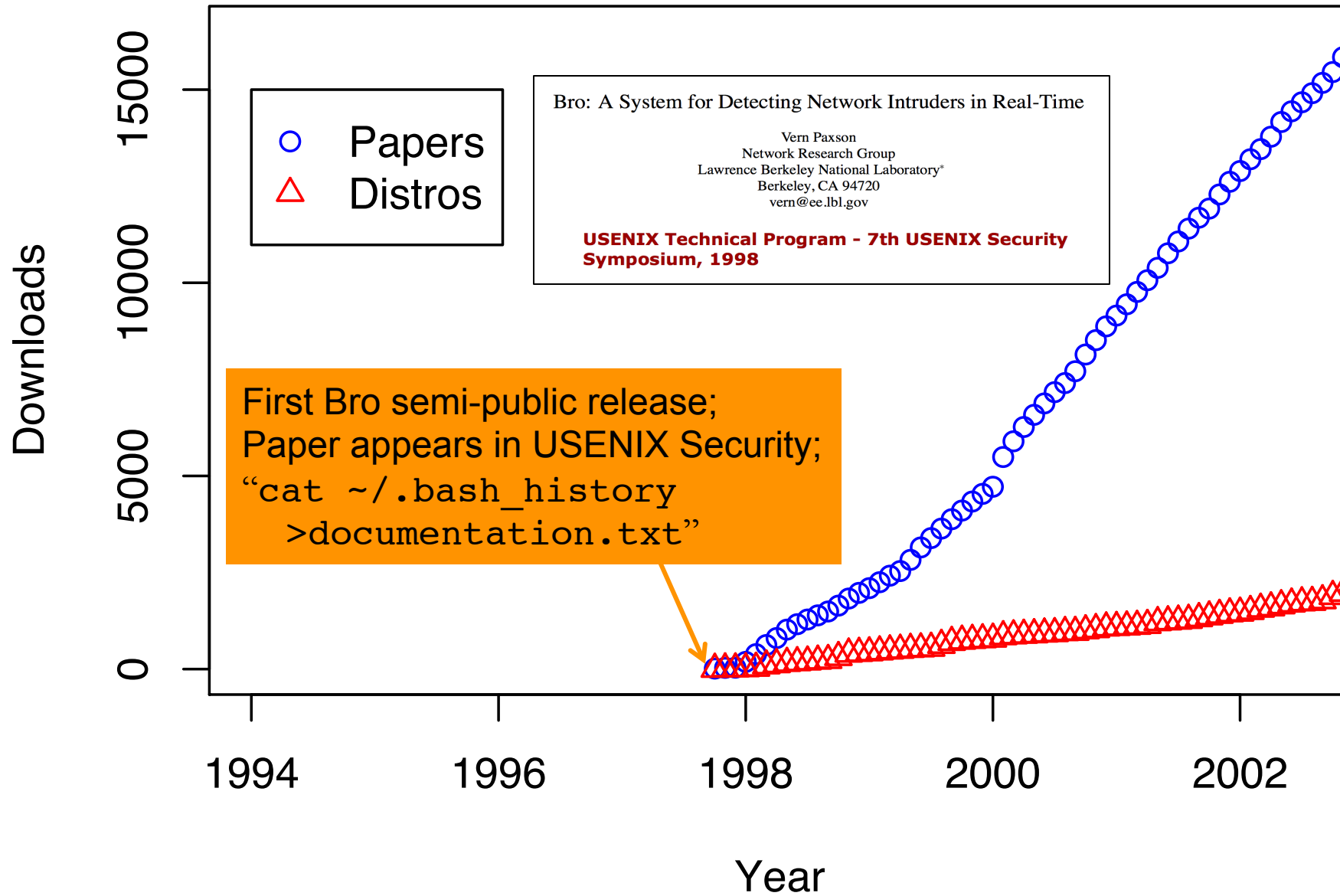
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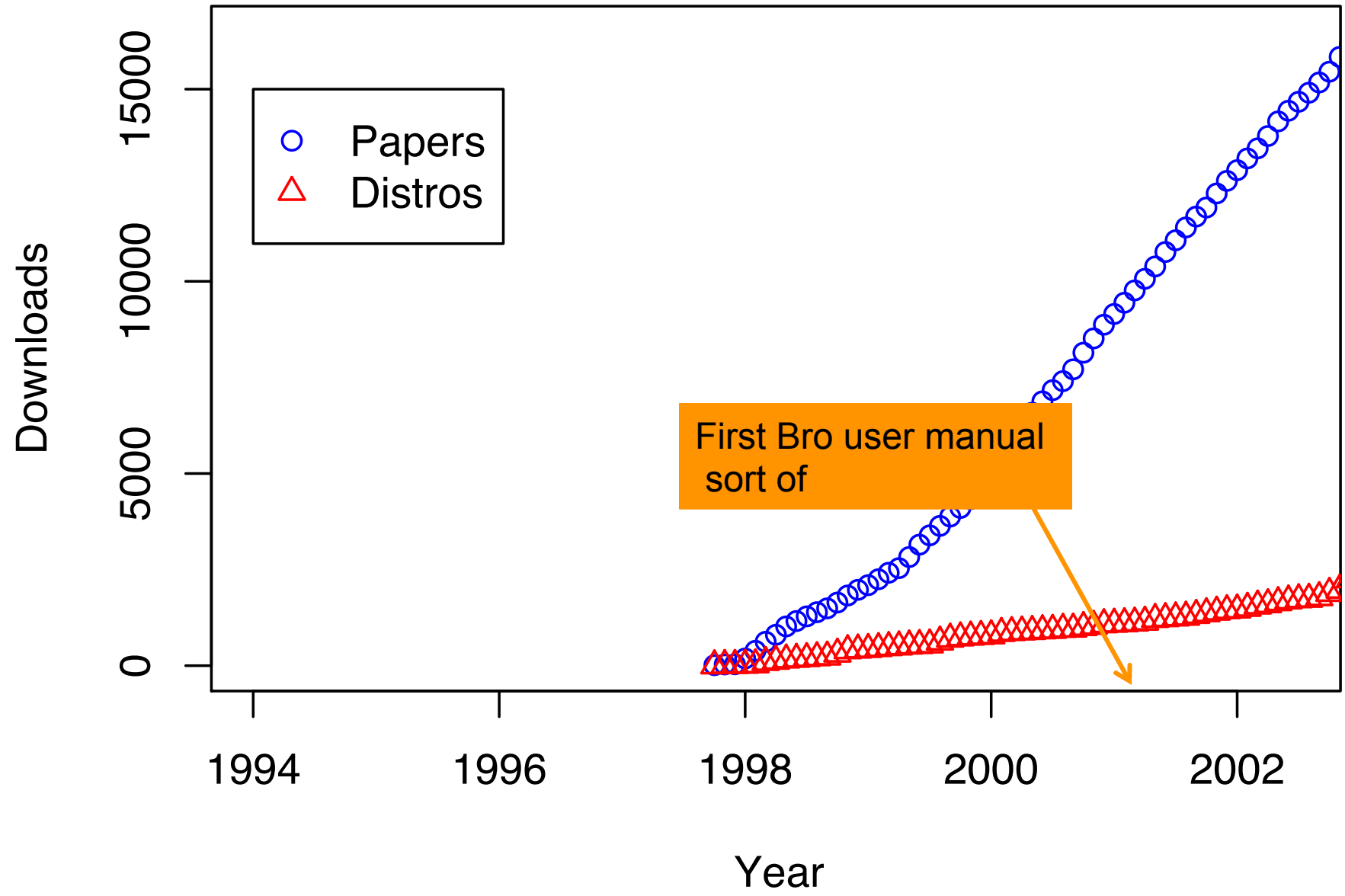
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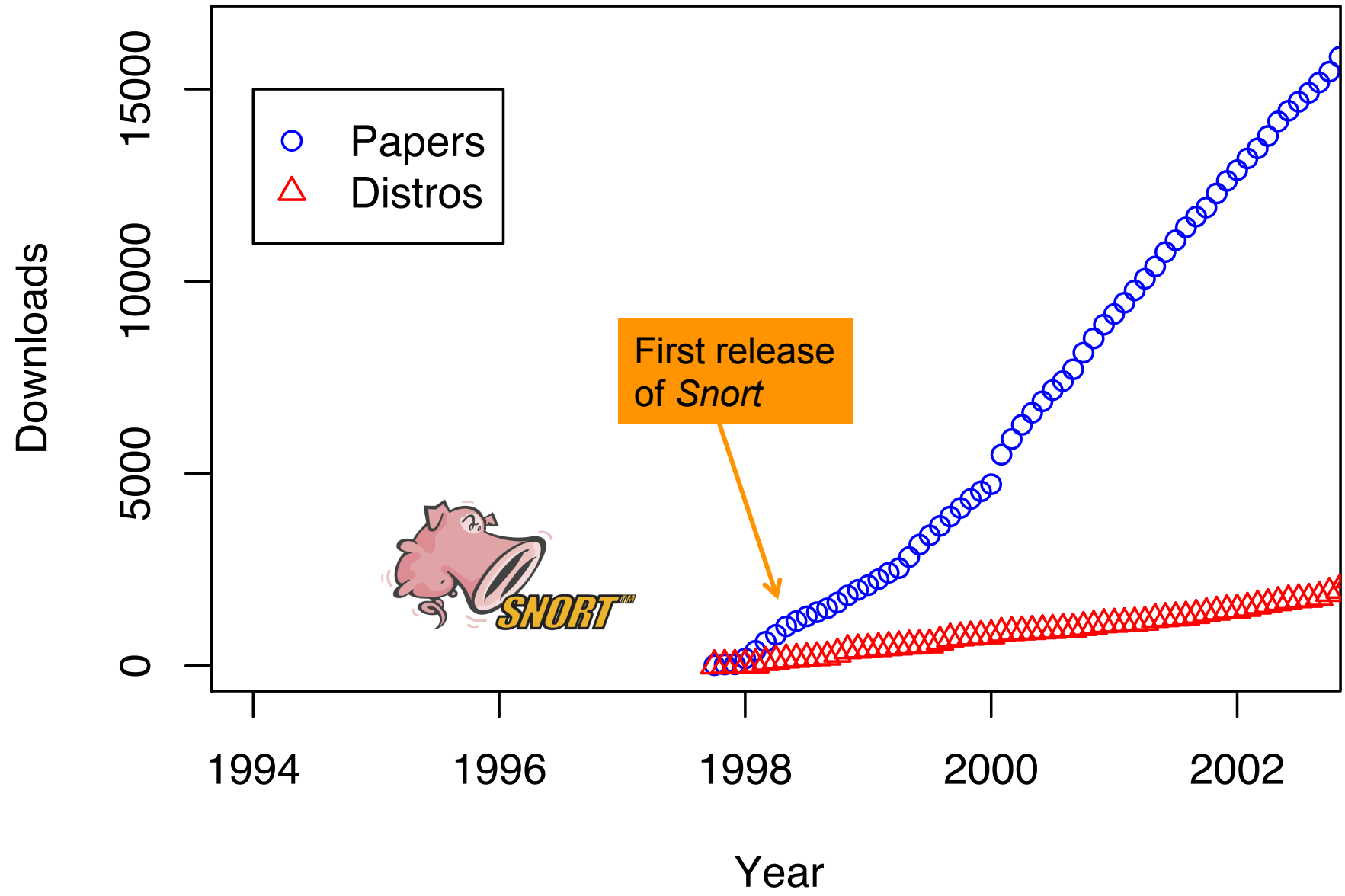
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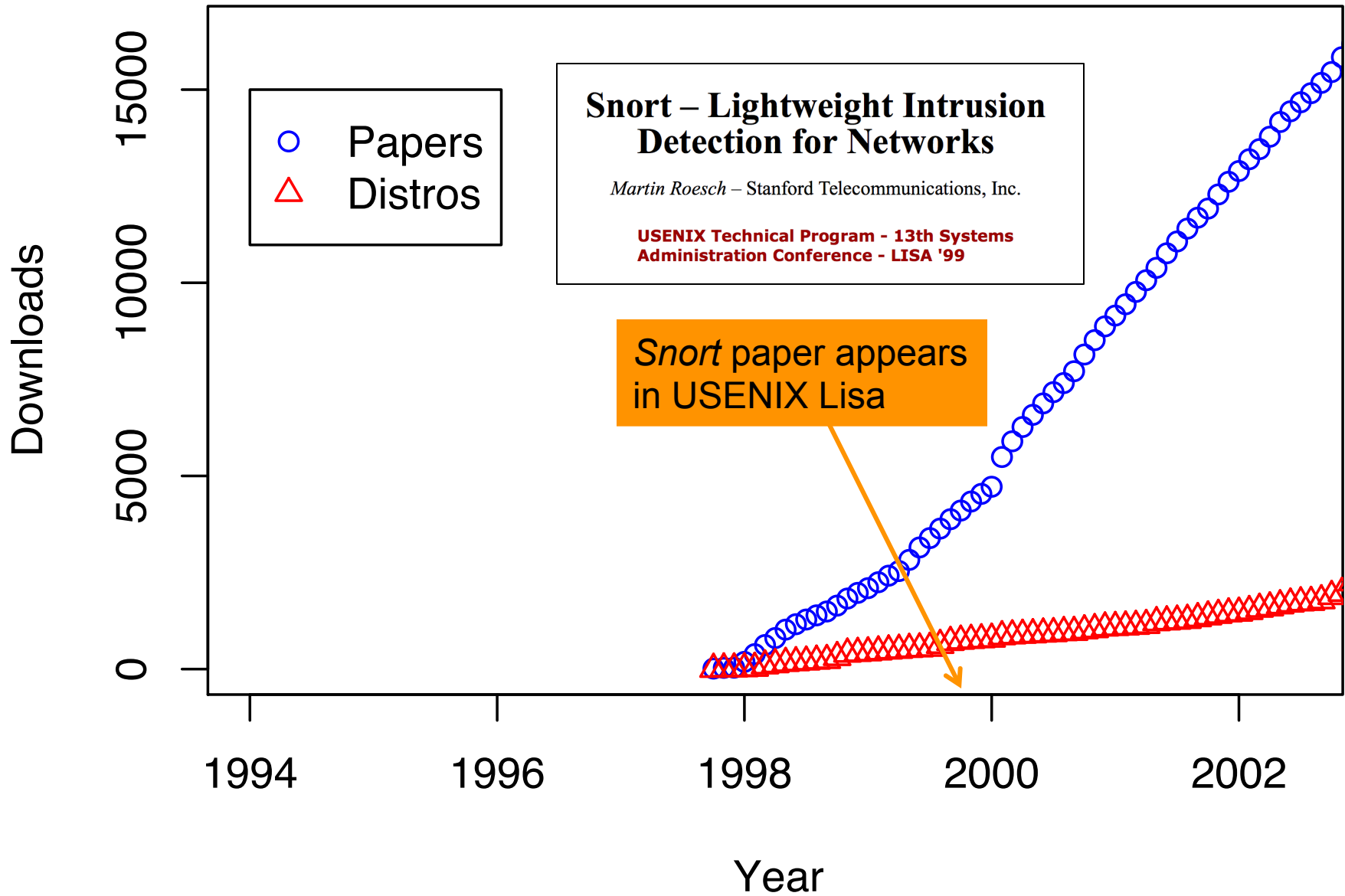
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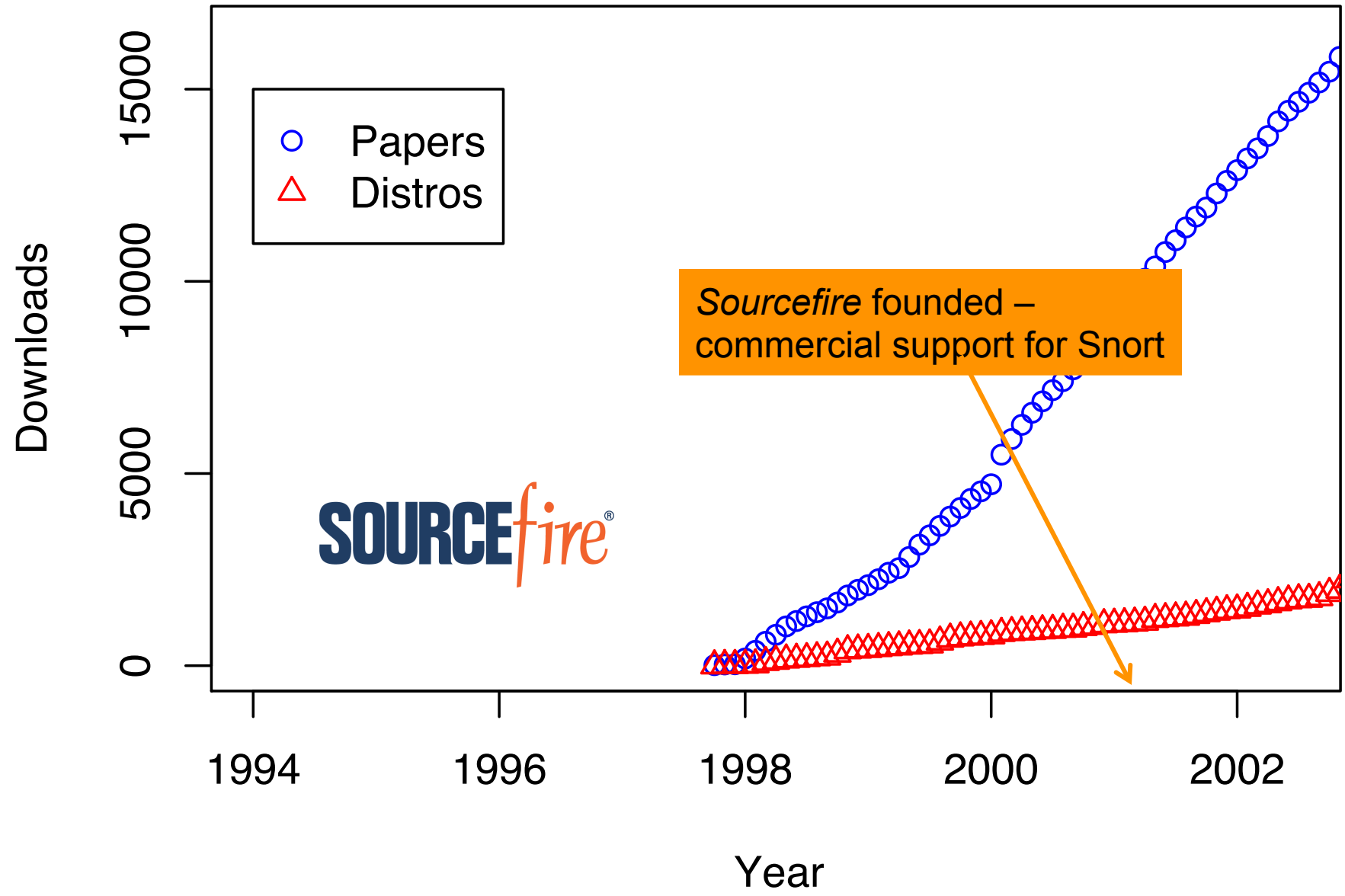
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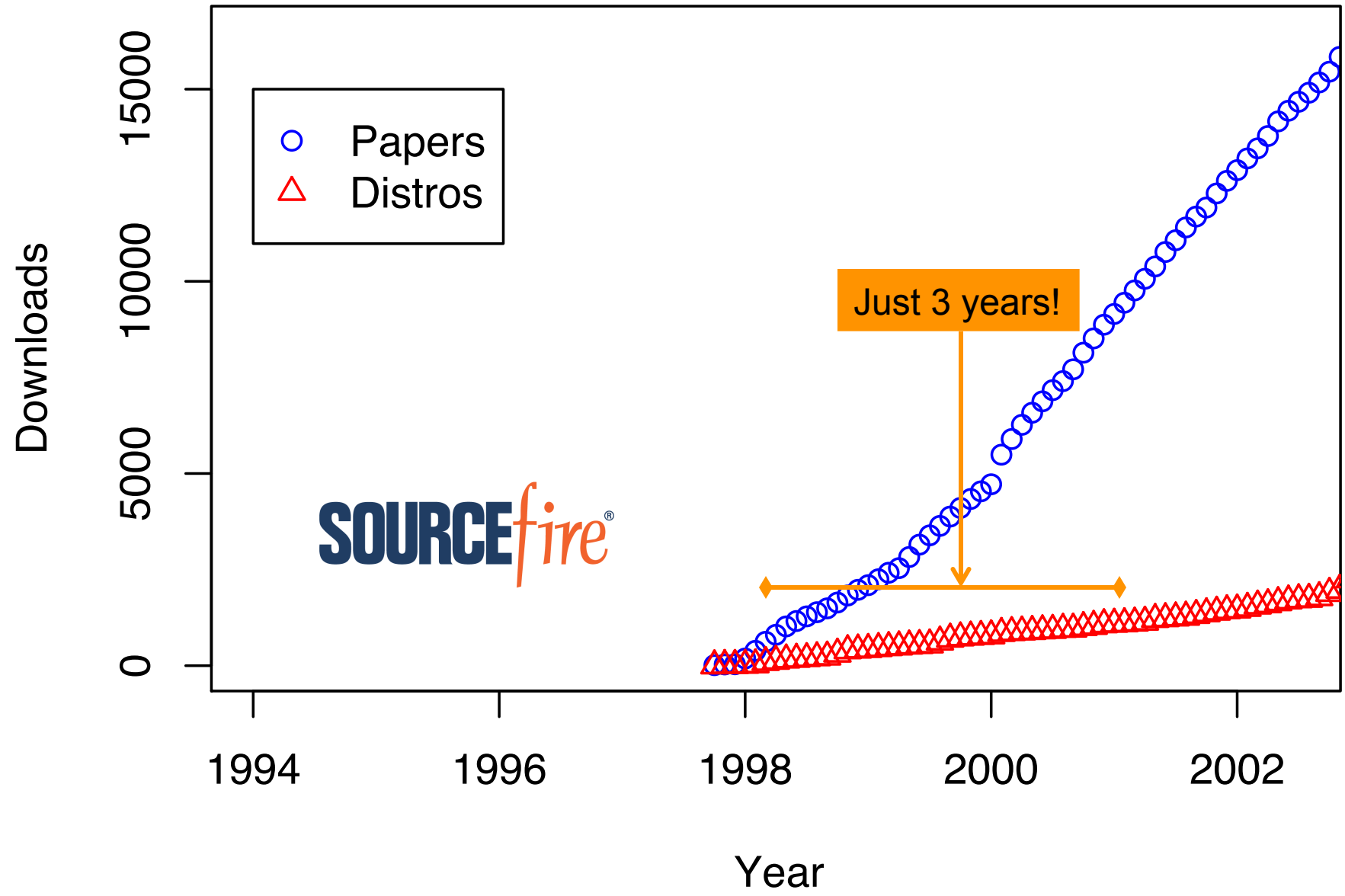
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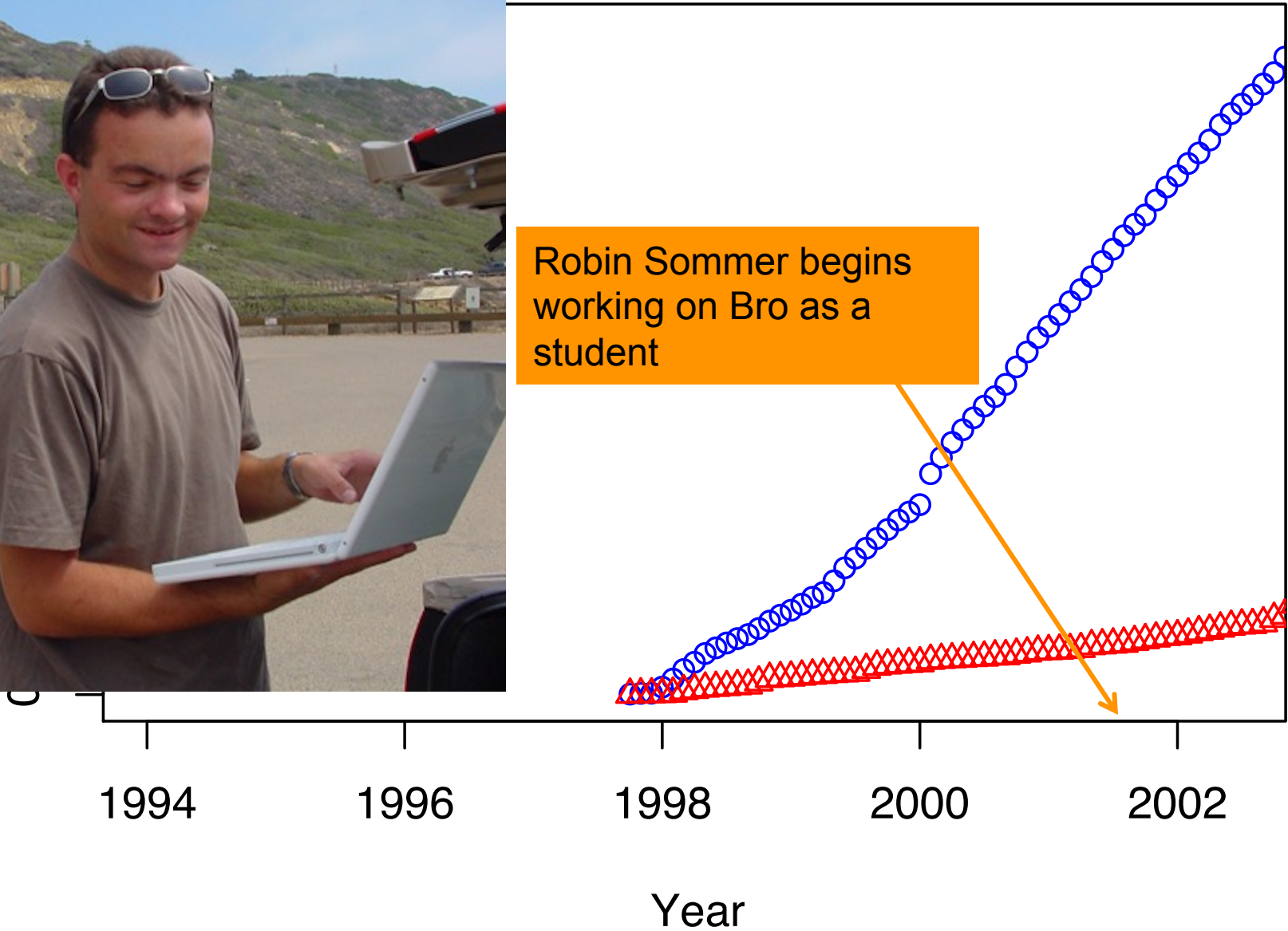
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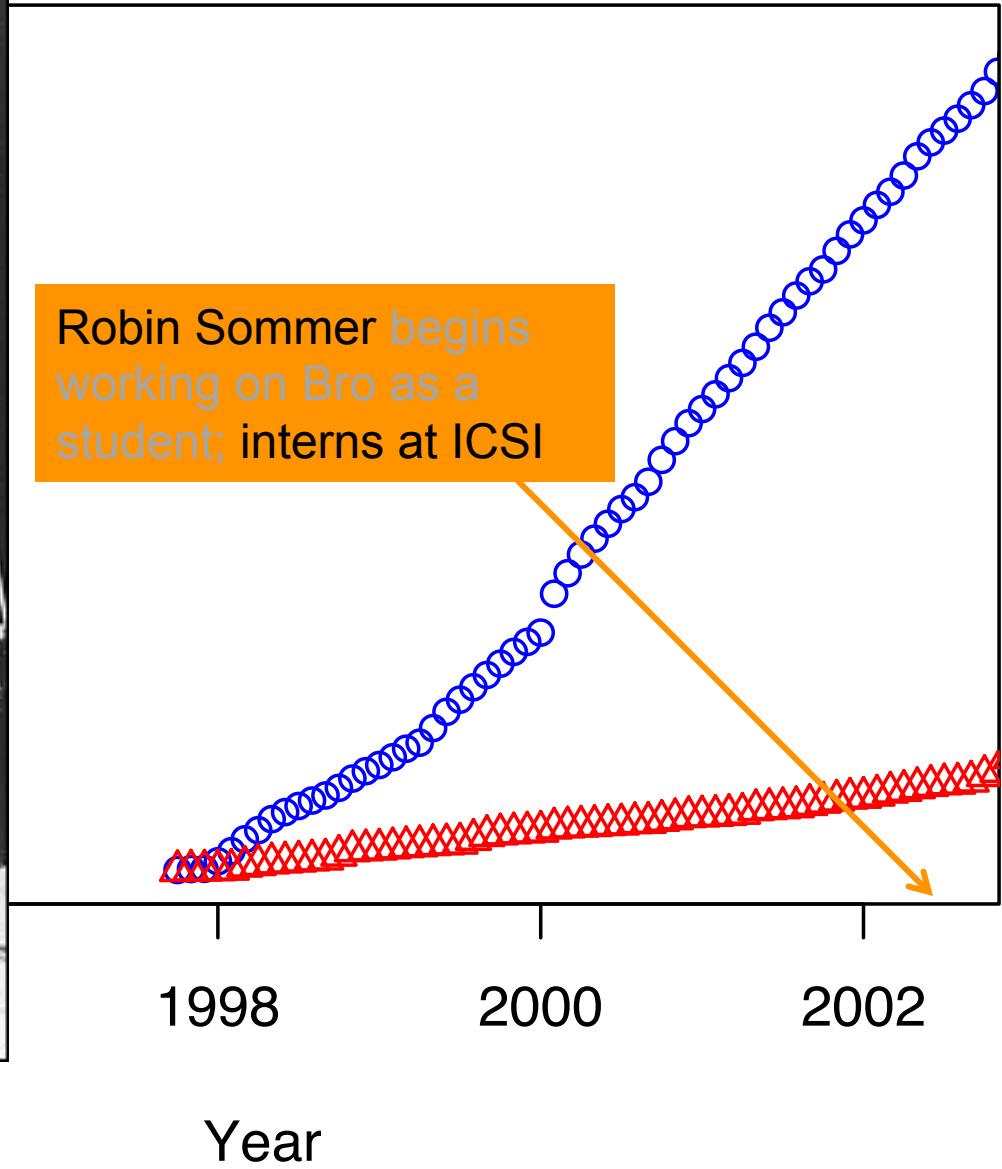
Interest in Bro



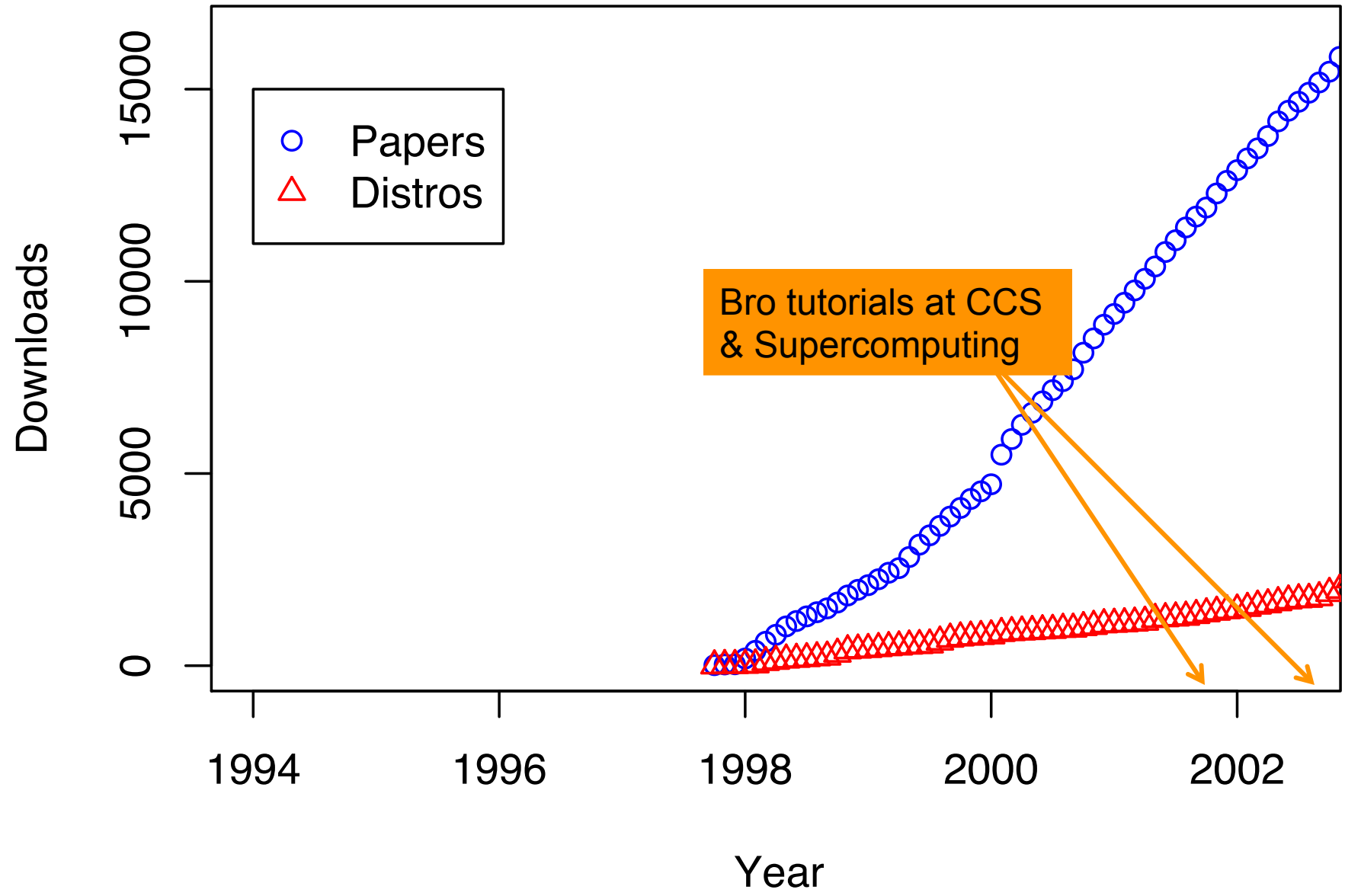
Robin Sommer begins working on Bro as a student



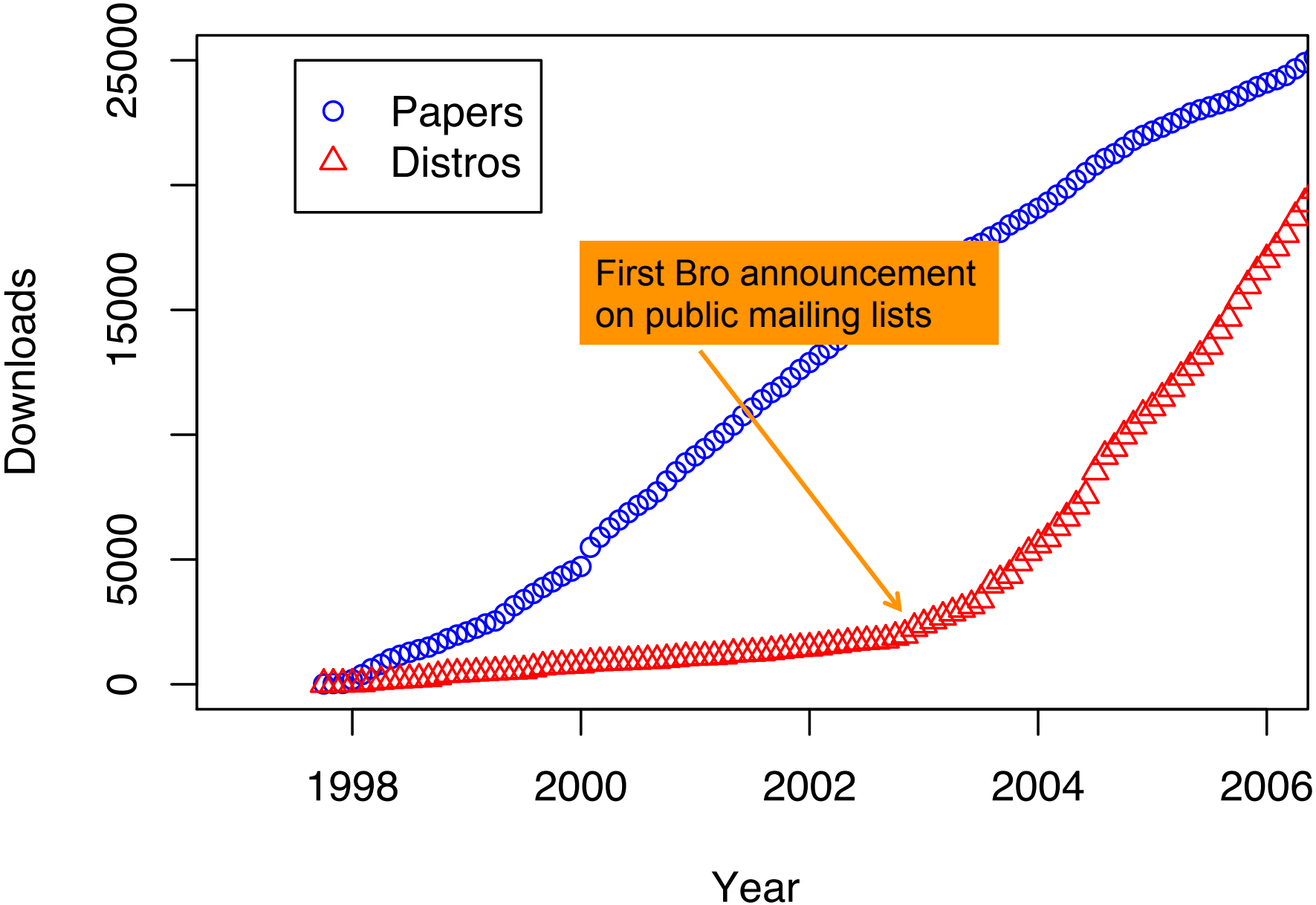
Interest in Bro



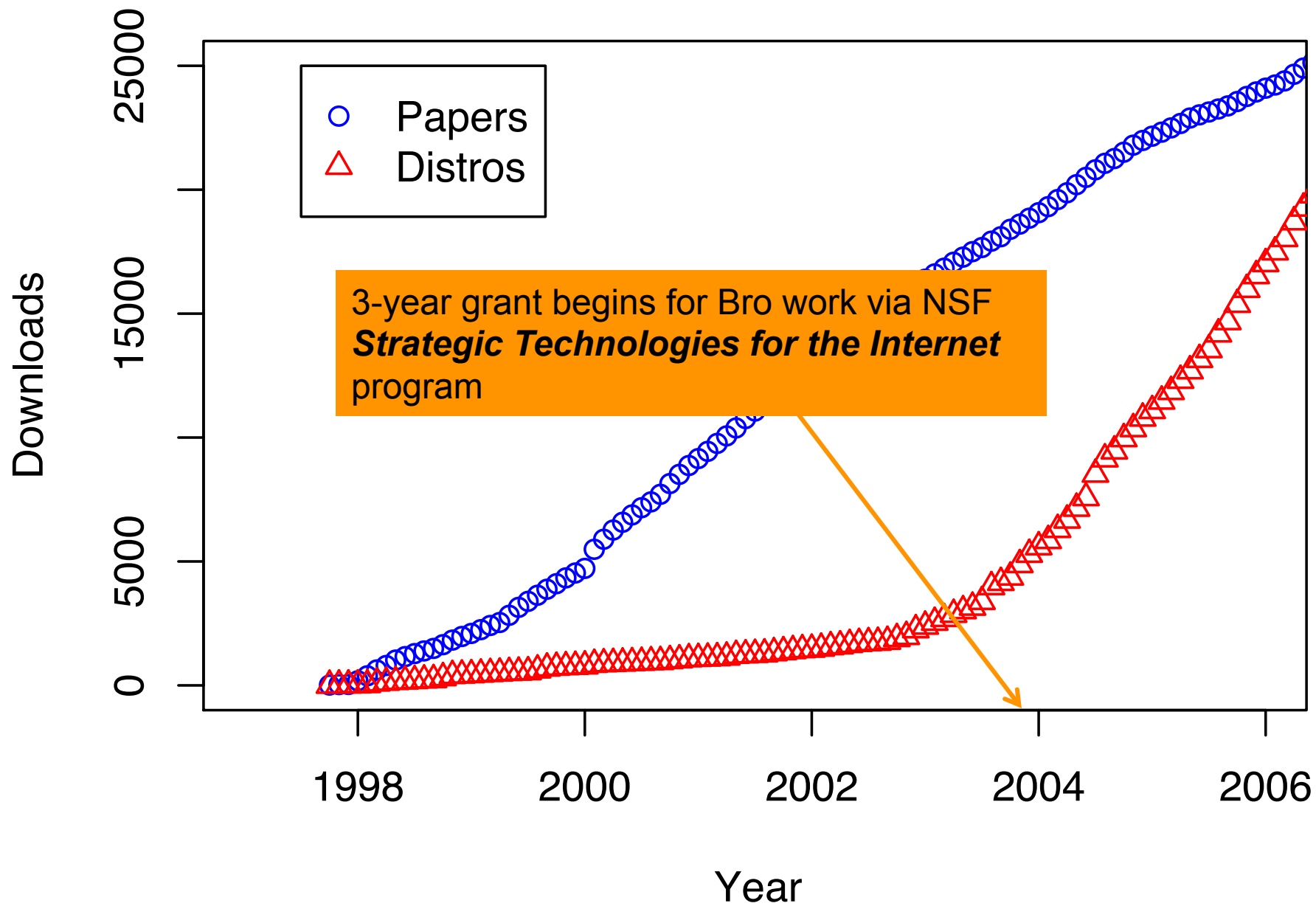
Interest in Bro



Interest in Bro



Interest in Bro





National Science Foundation
WHERE DISCOVERIES BEGIN

Award Abstract #0334088

STI: Viable Network Defense for Scientific Research Institutions

NSF Org: [ACI](#)
[Div Of Advanced Cyberinfrastructure](#)

Program Manager: Kevin L. Thompson
ACI Div Of Advanced Cyberinfrastructure
CSE Direct For Computer & Info Scie & Engin

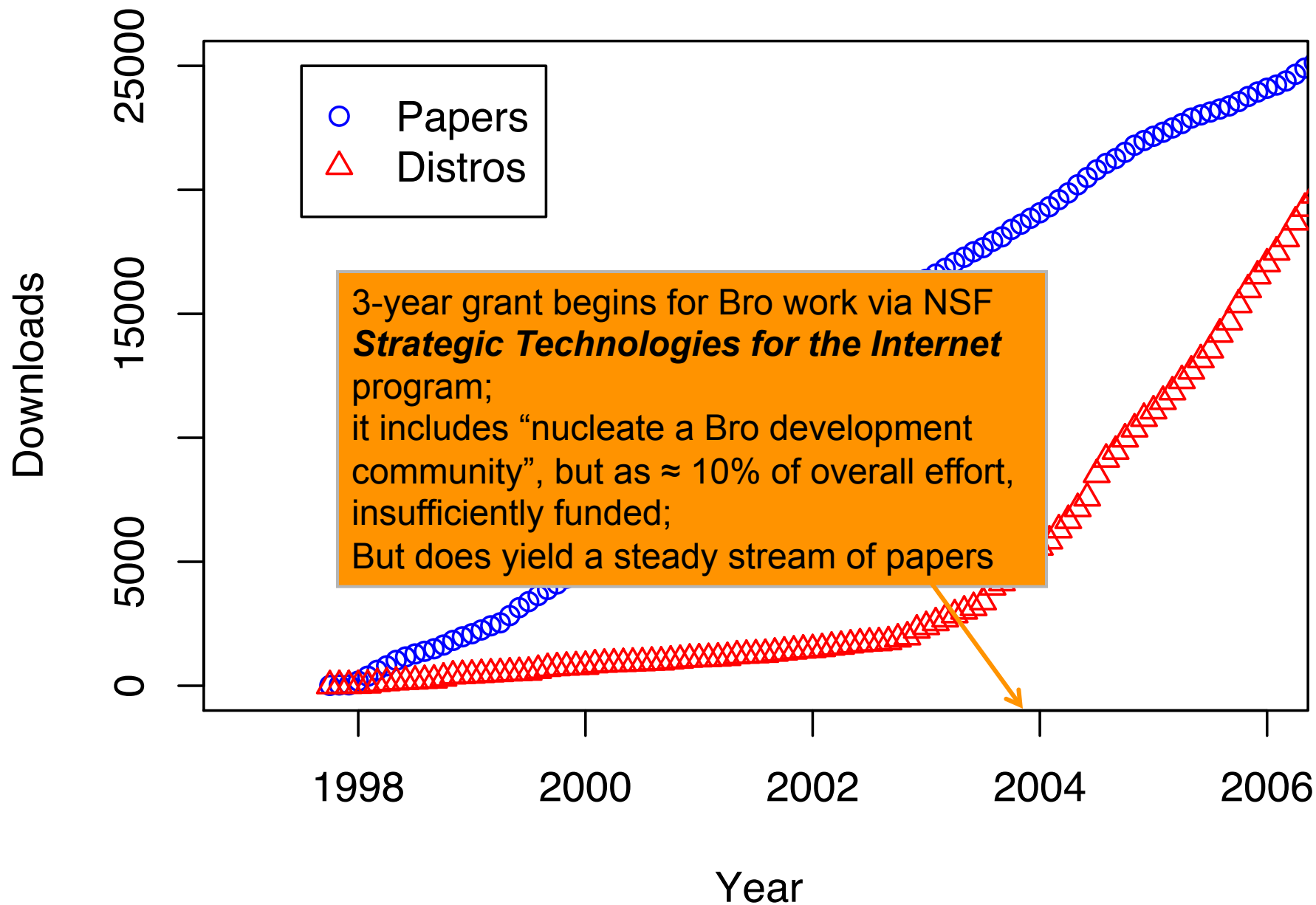
Start Date: November 1, 2003

\$1,629,392 ? End Date: October 31, 2007 (Estimated)

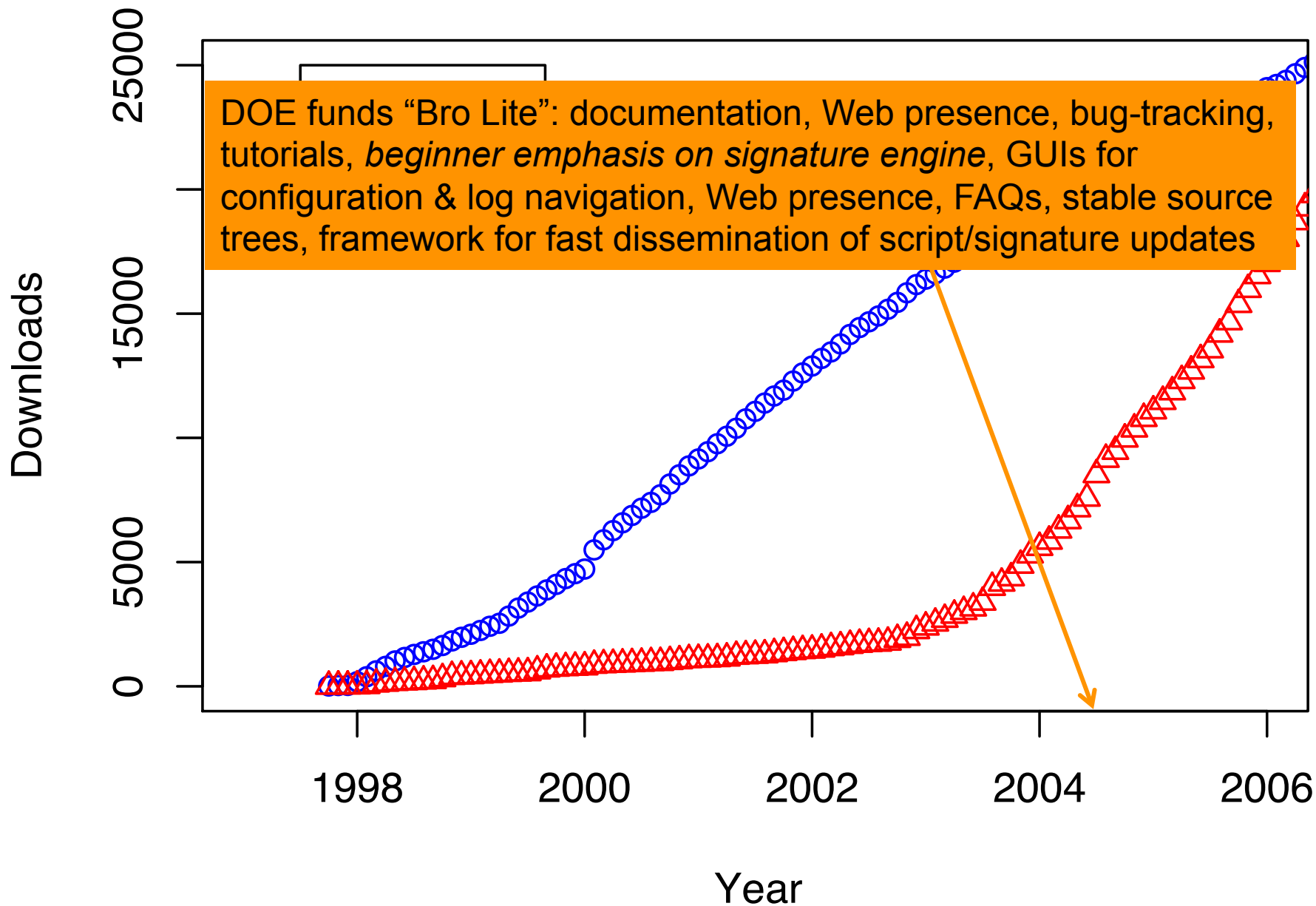
Awarded Amount to Date: \$900,000.00

Investigator(s): Vern Paxson vern@icsi.berkeley.edu (Principal Investigator)

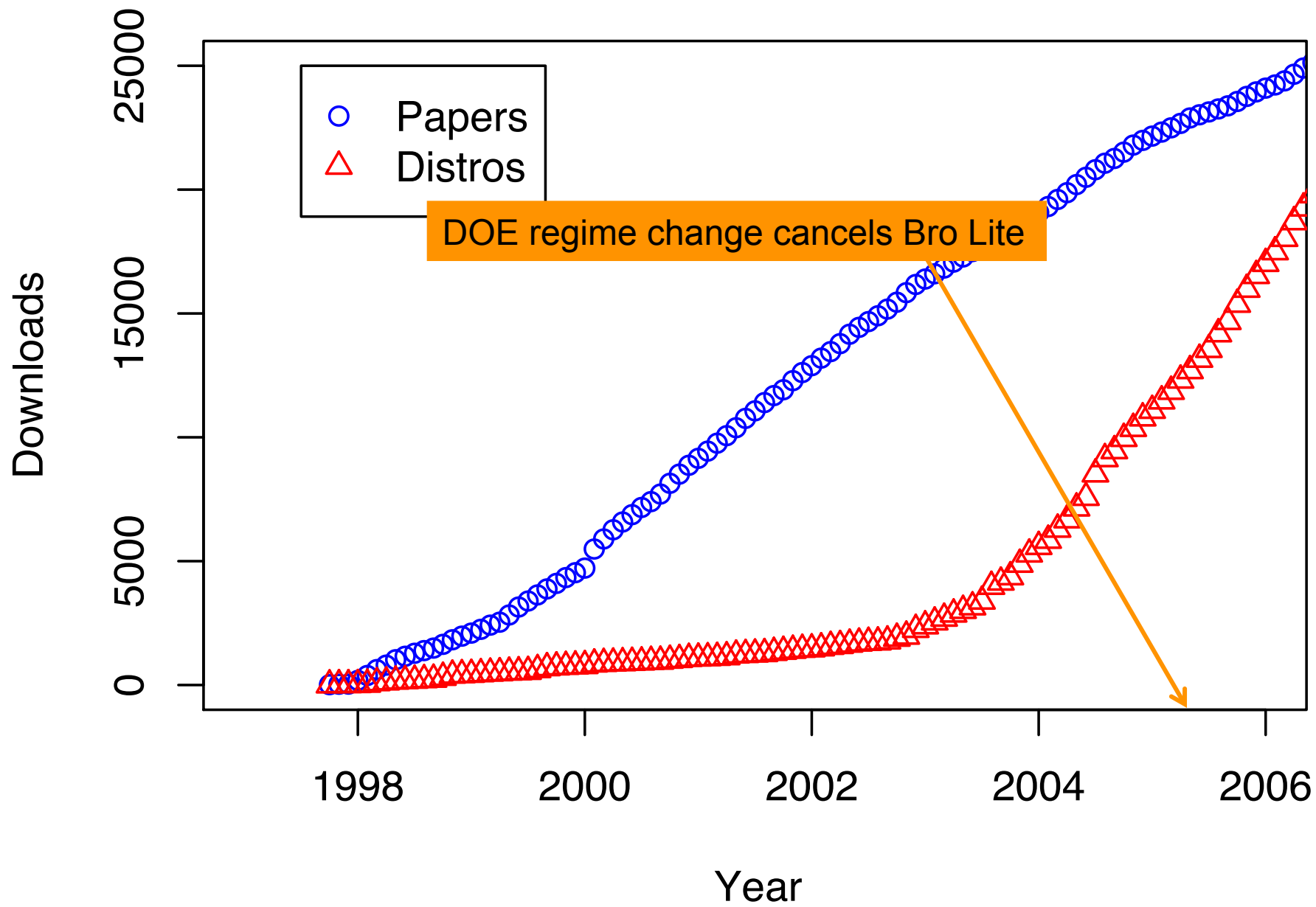
Interest in Bro



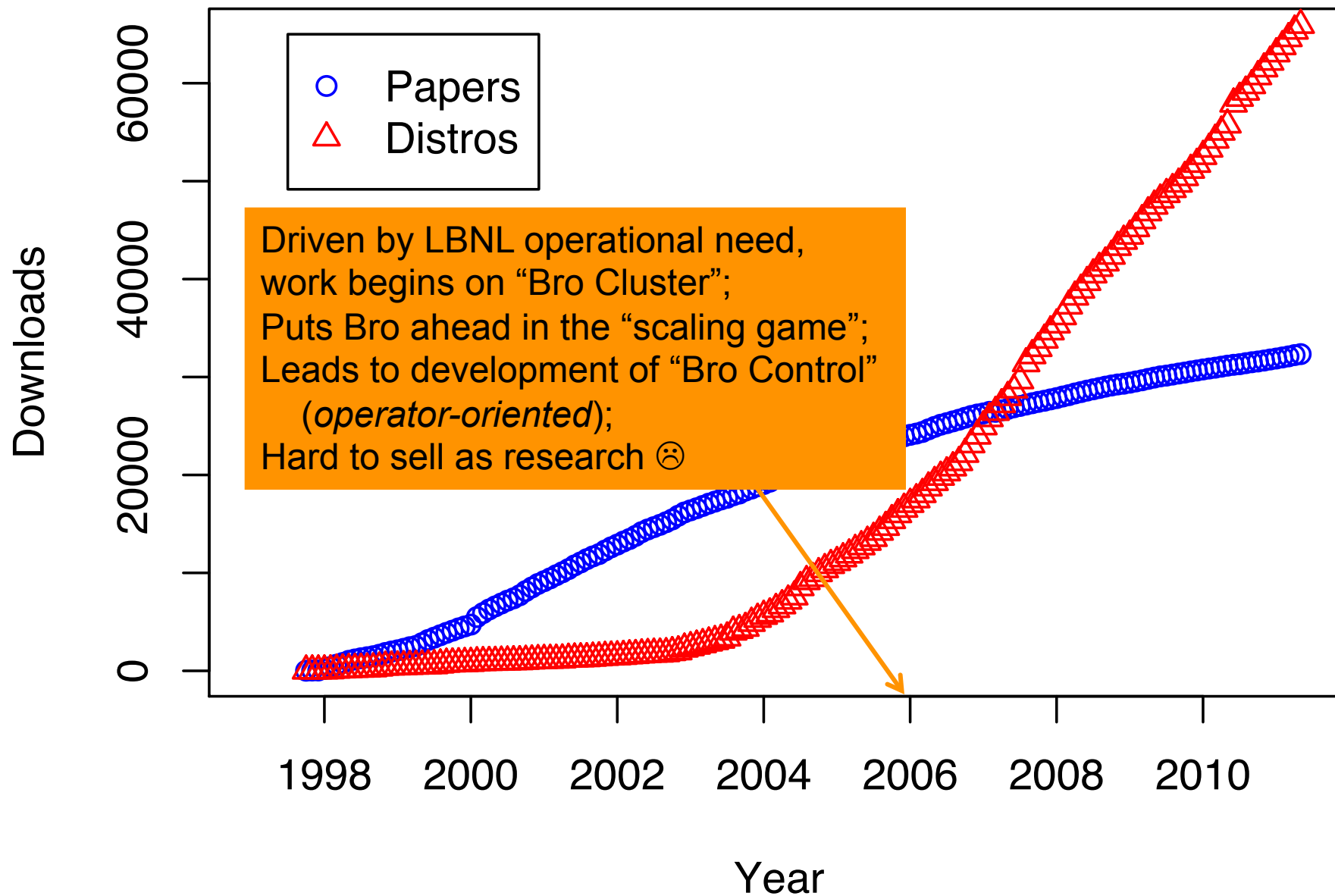
Interest in Bro



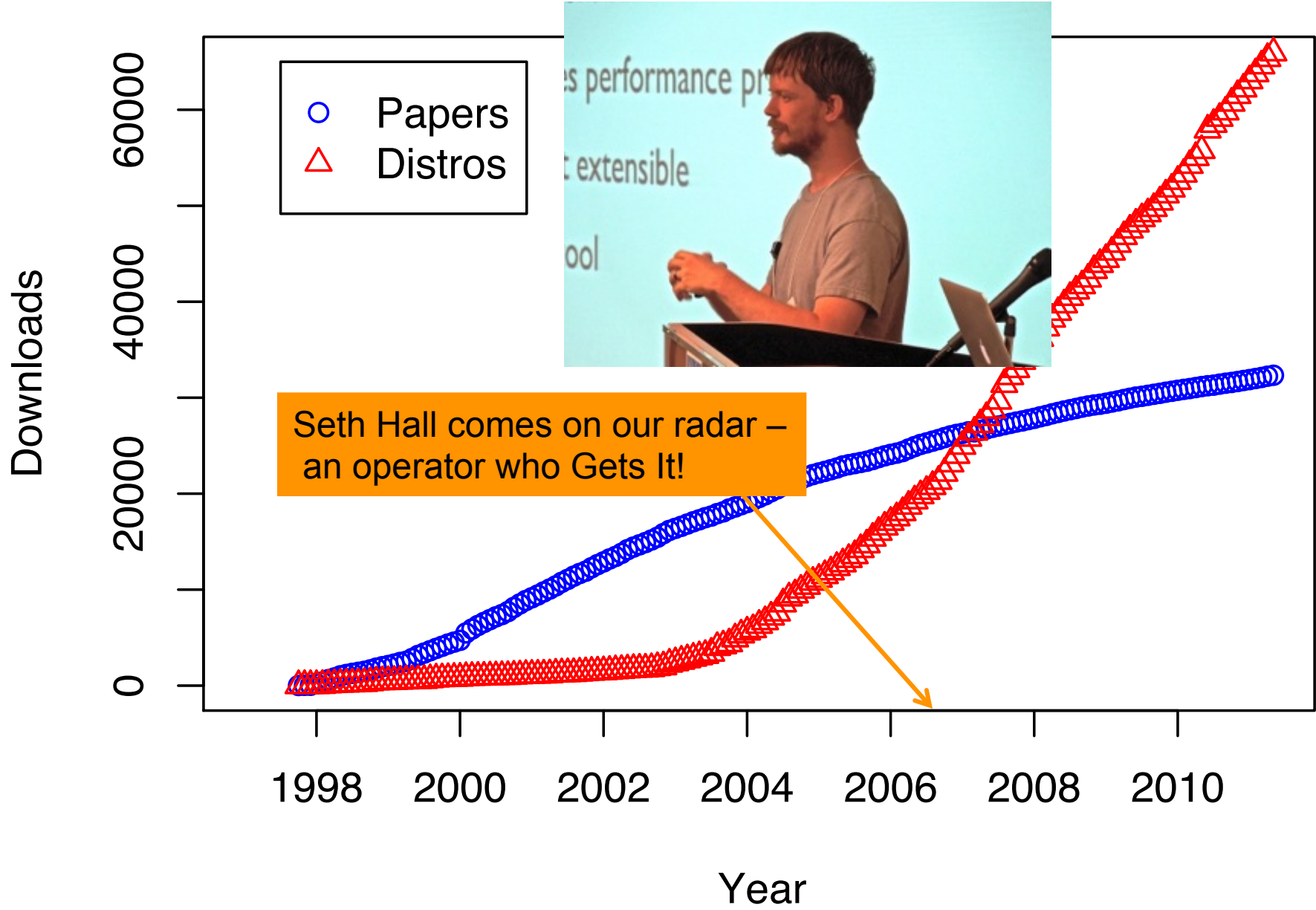
Interest in Bro



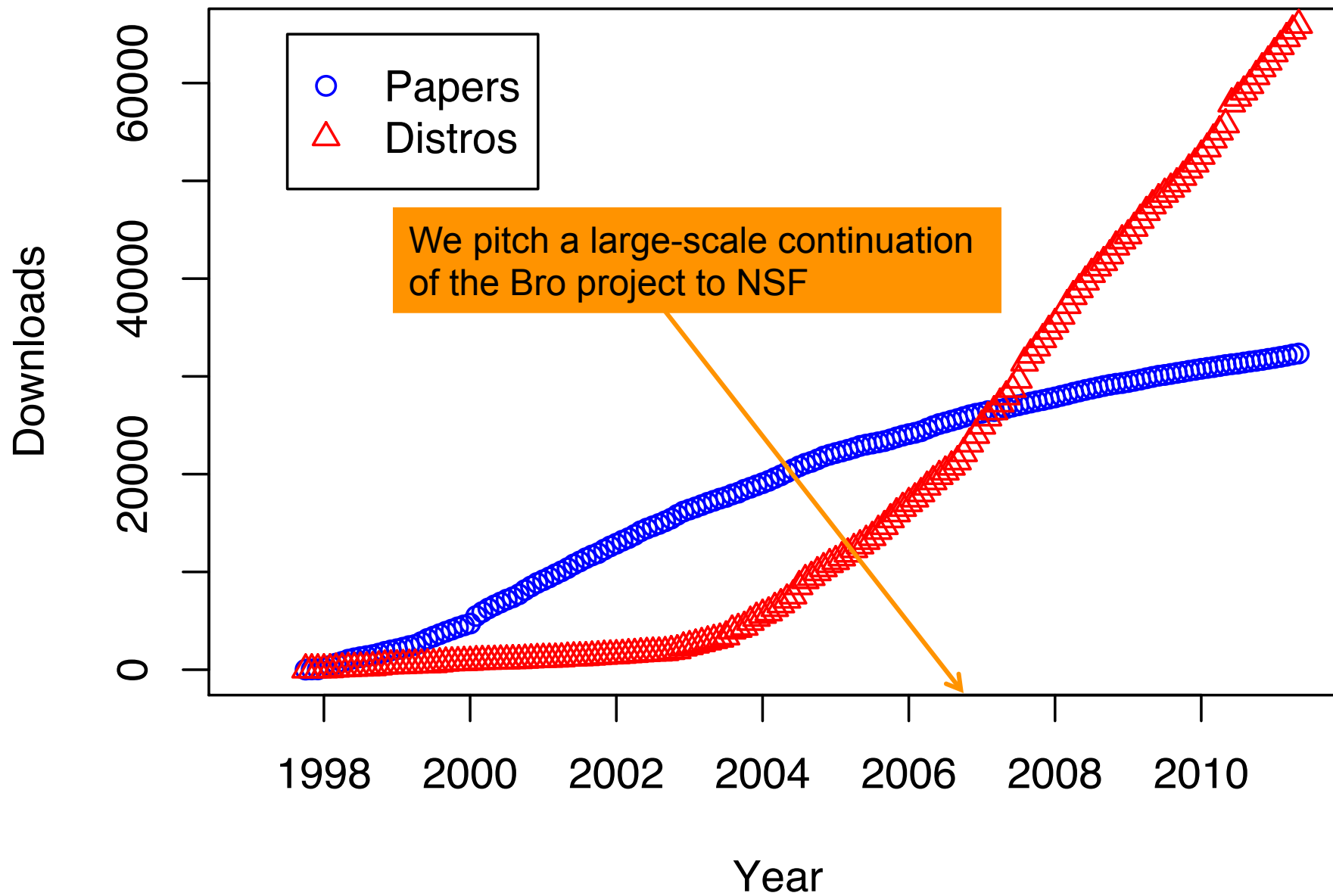
Interest in Bro



Interest in Bro



Interest in Bro





National Science Foundation
WHERE DISCOVERIES BEGIN

Award Abstract #0627320

CT-T: Approaches to Network Defense Proven in Open Scientific Environments

NSF Org: [CNS](#)
[Division Of Computer and Network Systems](#)

Program Manager: Carl Landwehr
CNS Division Of Computer and Network Systems
CSE Direct For Computer & Info Scie & Enginr

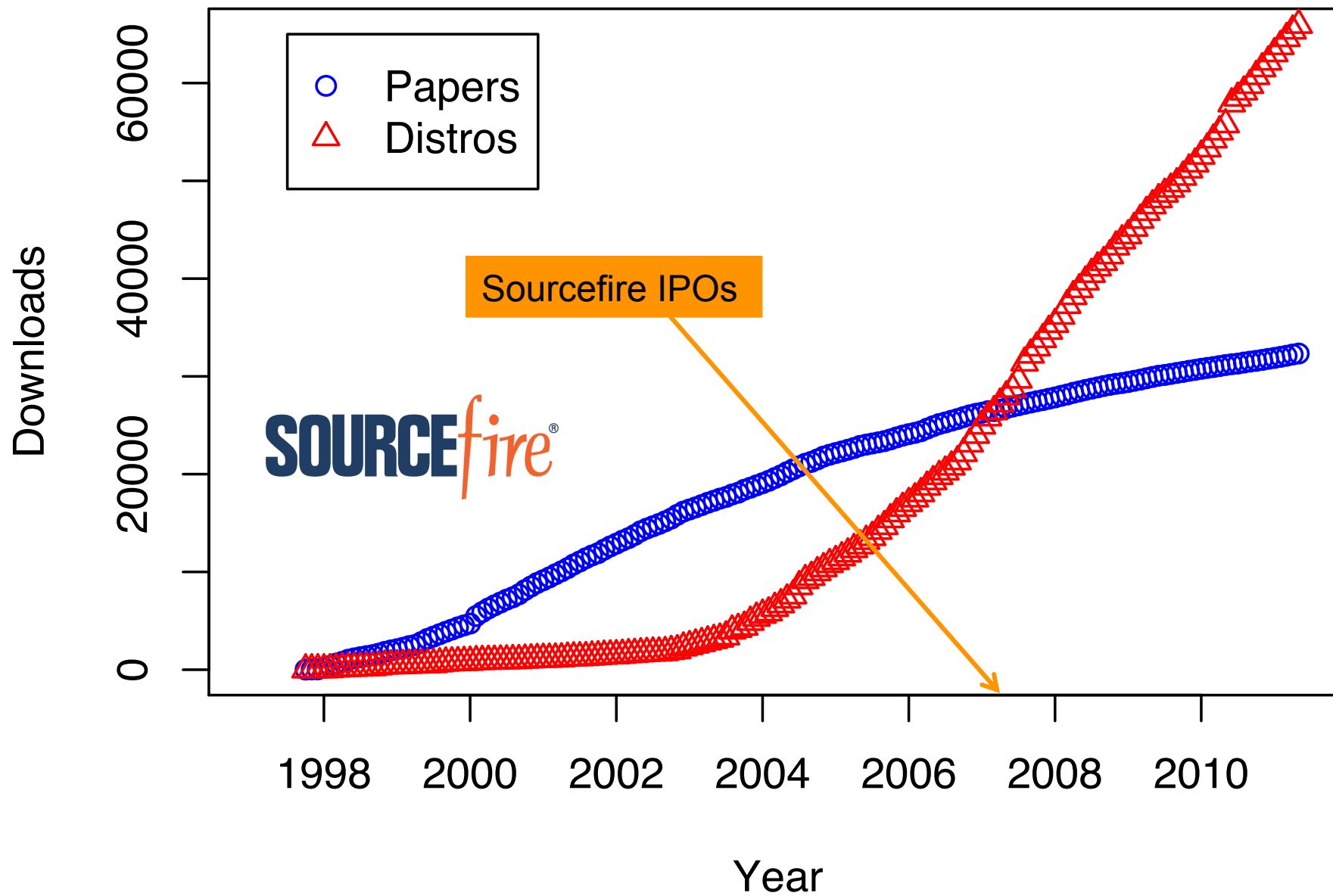
Start Date: October 1, 2006

\$1,999,054 ? **End Date:** September 30, 2009 (Estimated)

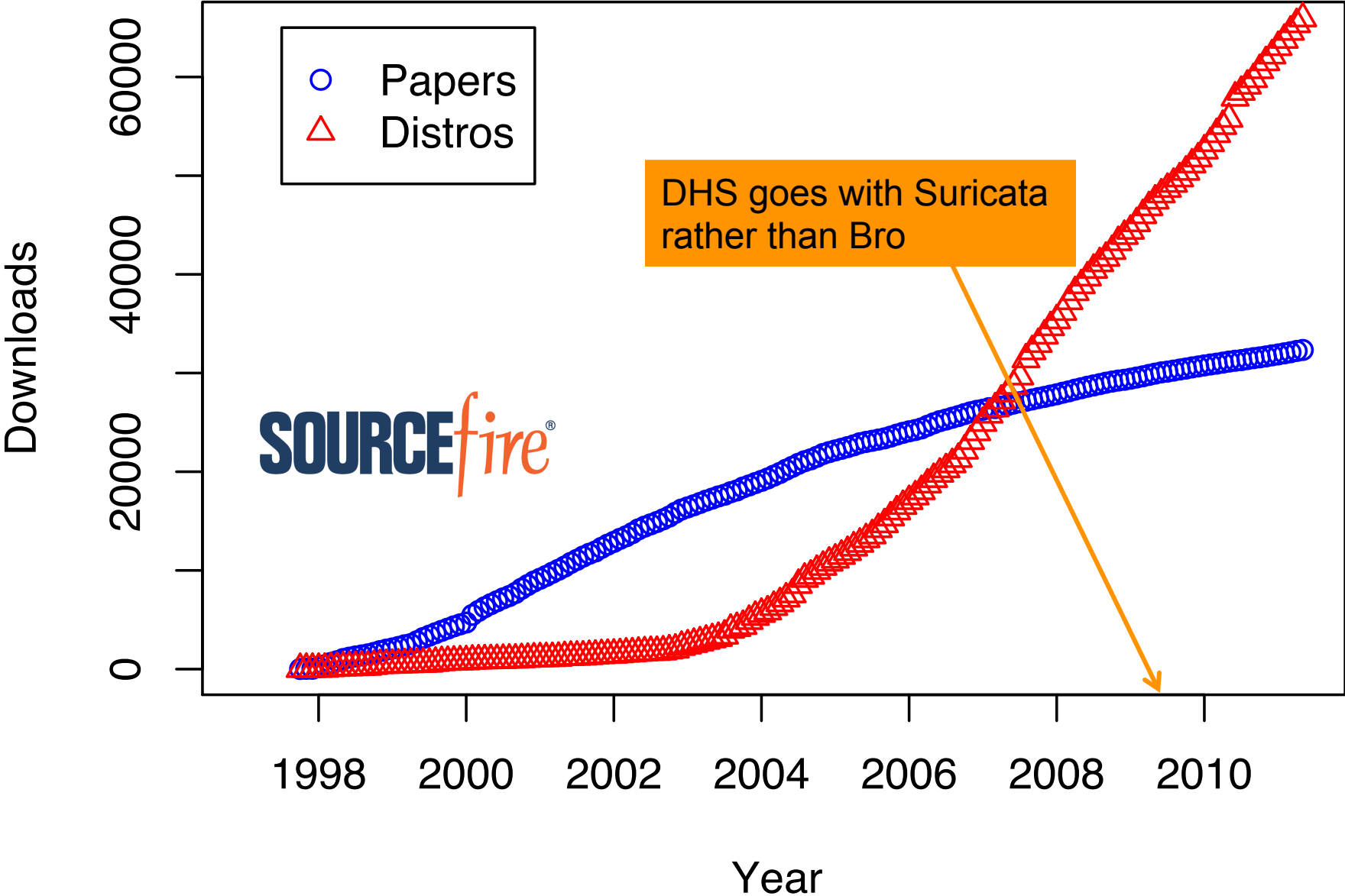
Awarded Amount to Date: \$236,066.00

Investigator(s): Vern Paxson vern@icsi.berkeley.edu (Principal Investigator)
Mark Allman (Co-Principal Investigator)
Robin Sommer (Co-Principal Investigator)

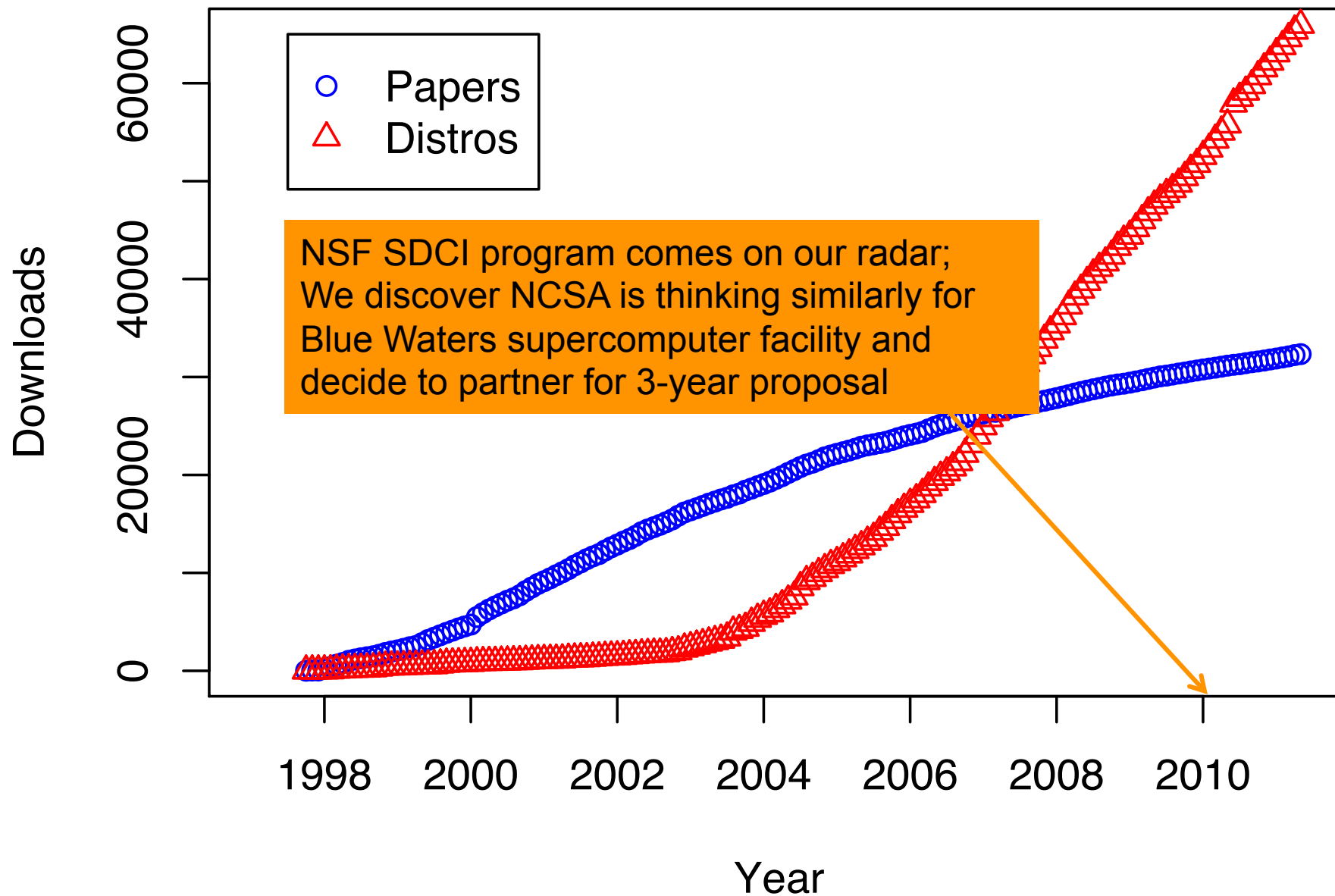
Interest in Bro



Interest in Bro



Interest in Bro





National Science Foundation
WHERE DISCOVERIES BEGIN

Award Abstract #1032889

SDCI Sec Improvement: Enhancing Bro for Operational Network Security Monitoring in Scientific Environments

NSF Org: [ACI](#)
[Div Of Advanced Cyberinfrastructure](#)

Program Manager: Anita Nikolich
ACI Div Of Advanced Cyberinfrastructure
CSE Direct For Computer & Info Scie & Engin

Start Date: September 1, 2010

\$2,995,905 ? End Date: August 31, 2014 (Estimated)

Awarded Amount to Date: \$2,995,905.00

Investigator(s): Robin Sommer robin@icsi.berkeley.edu (Principal Investigator)
Vern Paxson (Co-Principal Investigator)
Adam Slagell (Co-Principal Investigator)



National Science Foundation
WHERE DISCOVERIES BEGIN

Award Abstract #1032889

**SDCI
Securi**

More specifically, this project (1) improves the perspective of Bro's end-users by providing extensive up-to-date documentation and support, and refining many of the rough edges that the system has accumulated over time; (2) unifies and modernizes Bro's current code base that has evolved over 14 years of active development; (3) improves Bro's processing performance to the degree required for operation in current and future large-scale scientific environments; and (4) adds new data analysis functionality in the form of a highly interactive graphical user interface and a transparent database

Awa

Investigator(s): Robin Sommer robin@icsi.berkeley.edu (Principal Investigator)
Vern Paxson (Co-Principal Investigator)
Adam Slagell (Co-Principal Investigator)



Award Abstract #1032889

SDCI Sec Improvement: Enhancing Bro for Operational Network Security Monitoring in Scientific Environments

NSF Org: [ACI](#)
[Div Of Advanced Cyberinfrastructure](#)

Program Manager:



Cyberinfrastructure
Director & Info Scie & Engin

Start Date:

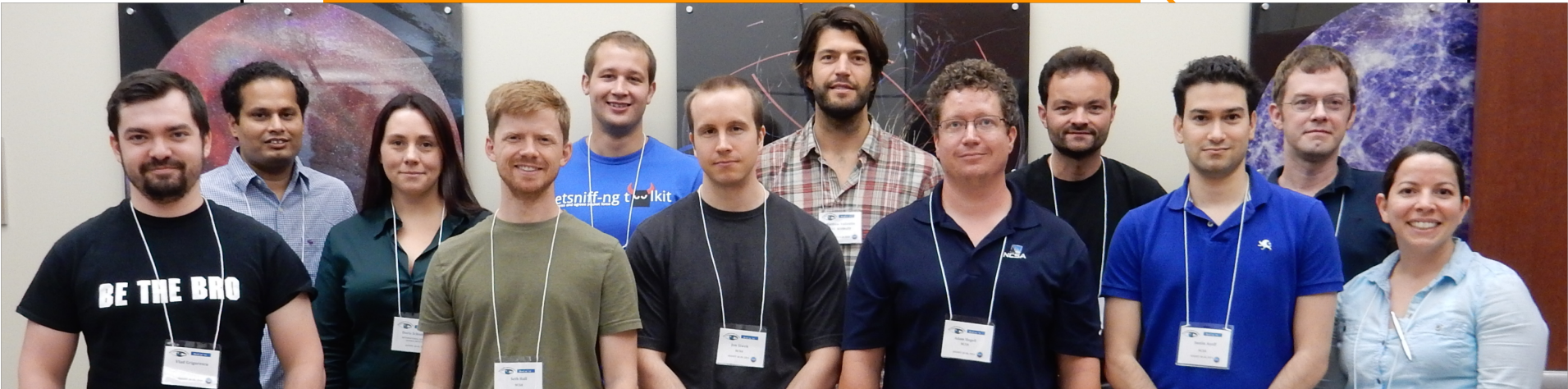
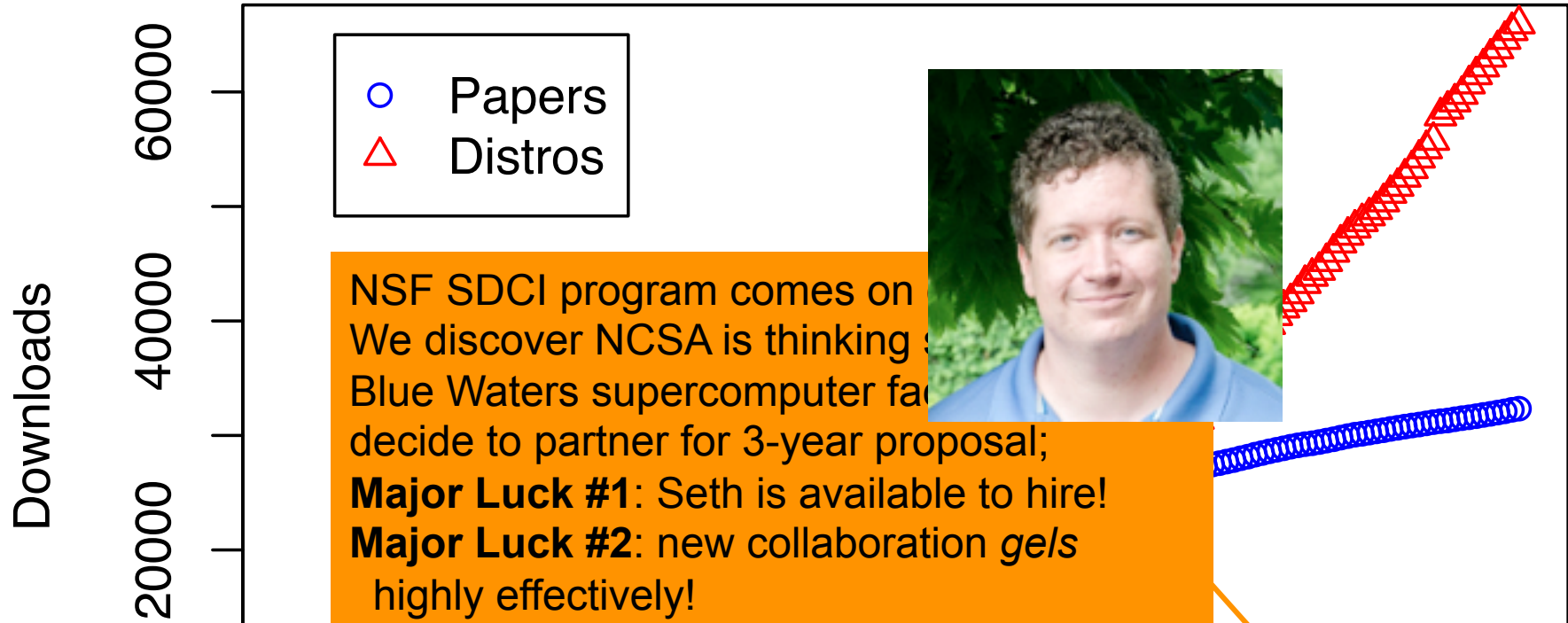
End Date:

(unannounced)

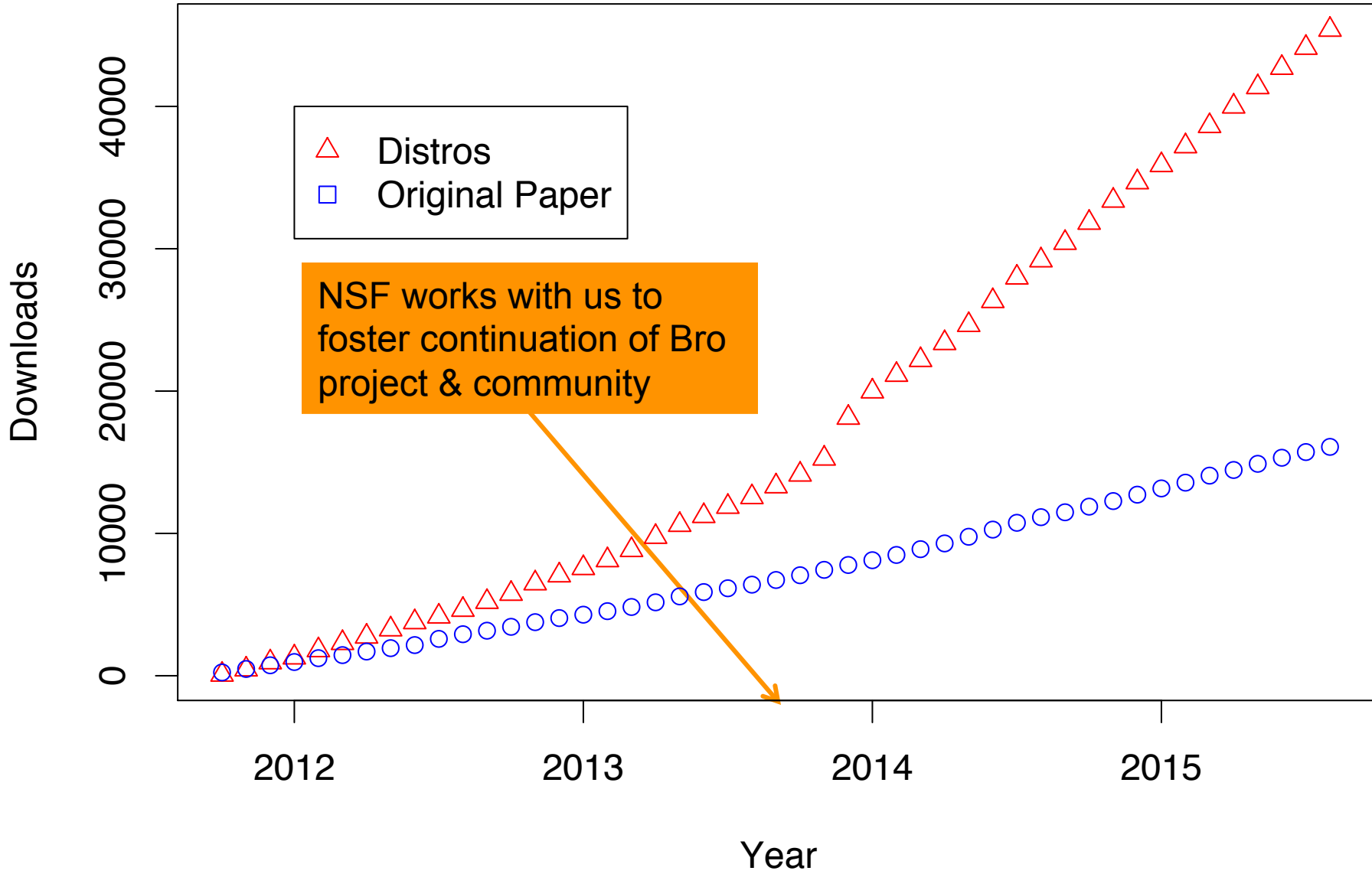
Awarded Amount to Date:

Investigator(s): [Robin Sommer](#) robin@icsi.berkeley.edu (Principal Investigator)
Vern Paxson (Co-Principal Investigator)
Adam Slagell (Co-Principal Investigator)

Interest in Bro



Interest in Bro





National Science Foundation
WHERE DISCOVERIES BEGIN

Award Abstract #1348077

A Bro Center of Expertise for the NSF Community

NSF Org: [ACI](#)
[Div Of Advanced Cyberinfrastructure](#)

Program Manager: Kevin L. Thompson
ACI Div Of Advanced Cyberinfrastructure
CSE Direct For Computer & Info Scie & Enginr

Start Date: October 1, 2013

\$3,729,977 ? End Date: September 30, 2016 (Estimated)

Awarded Amount to Date: \$3,360,092.00

Investigator(s): Robin Sommer robin@icsi.berkeley.edu (Principal Investigator)
Vern Paxson (Co-Principal Investigator)
Adam Slagell (Co-Principal Investigator)



National Science Foundation
WHERE DISCOVERIES BEGIN

Award Abstract #1348077

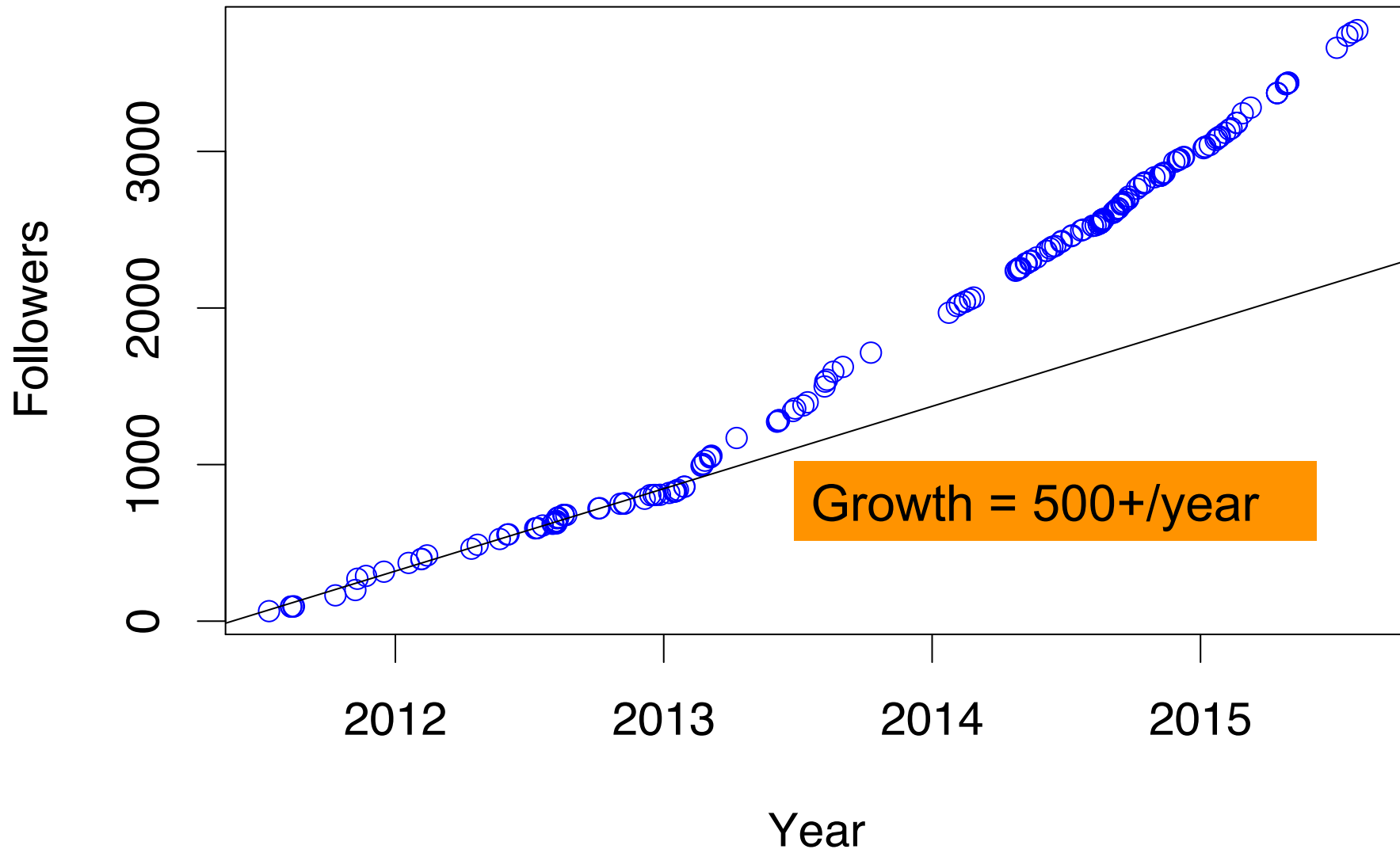
A Bro Center of Expertise for the NSF Community

NSF Org: [ACI](#)
[Div Of Advanced Cyberinfrastructure](#)

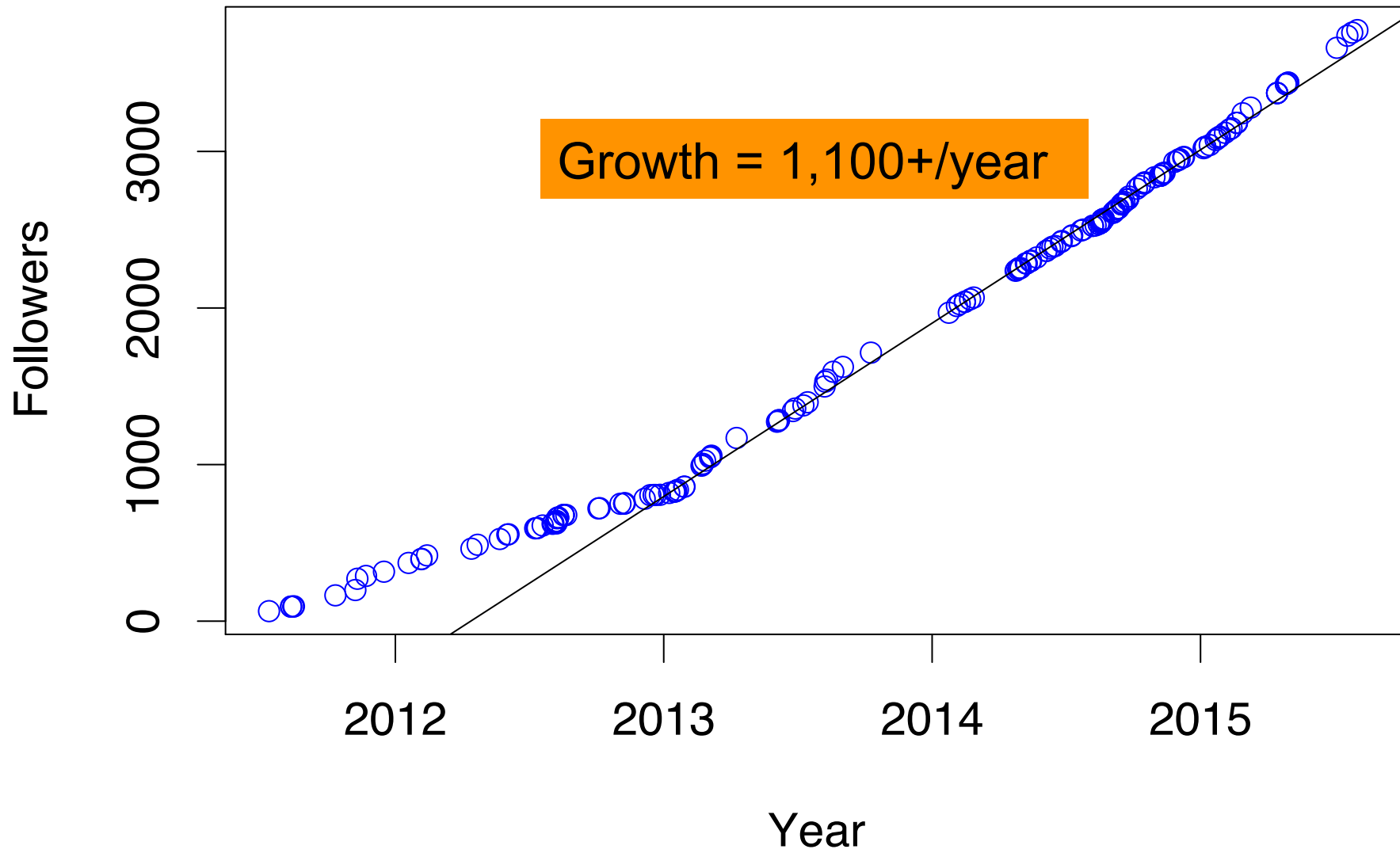
This activity promotes Bro as a comprehensive, low-cost security capability for these communities; providing guidance and support on all aspects of a Bro installation. The project devises reference scenarios for deployment and integration; and develops novel technical capabilities that cater to NSF environments. The project supports existing Bro users in optimizing and extending their setups, and makes Bro's capabilities available to new sites and projects that lack the resources to deploy Bro effectively on their own. At a technical level, the project is the focal point of Bro's open-source development, maintaining its code base and documentation. To the research community, the project acts as a facilitator for transitioning networking research results into practice by leveraging Bro as a deployment platform.

Investigator(s): Robin Sommer robin@icsi.berkeley.edu (Principal Investigator)
Vern Paxson (Co-Principal Investigator)
Adam Slagell (Co-Principal Investigator)

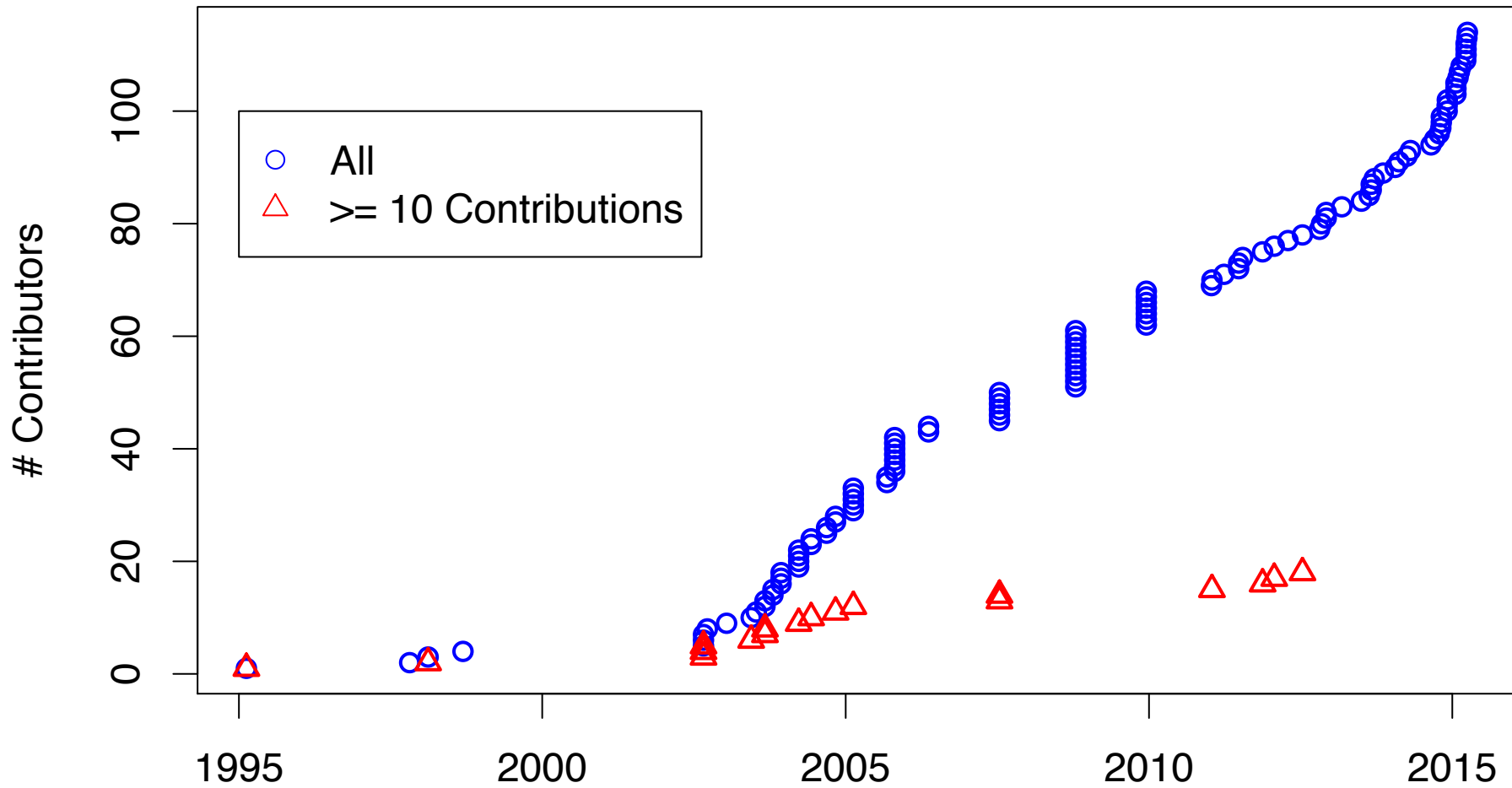
@Bro_IDS Twitter Followers



@Bro_IDS Twitter Followers



Arrival of Open Source Contributors



Looking Forward

- **Visibility: *Deep Bro***
 - Extensive interior site deployment
 - Enterprise protocols; distributed coordination
 - **Performance: *HILTI* + *Spicy***
 - Compiled multithreaded/multicore Bro
 - **Archive: *VAST* (*Visibility Across Space and Time*)**
 - Very high-performance event/logging archive
 - To support interactive forensic analysis ...
 - ... and capture of IOCs
 - **Longevity & Support: *Bro Foundation***
 - Via Software Freedom Conservancy
-