

**END OF PROJECT REPORT FOR FRGS  
VOTE 0738**

PROJECT TITLE

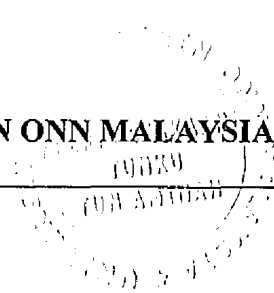
Finding New Steganography Algorithm to Hide Data in Image

HEAD OF RESEARCHER

**PROF. DR. ROSZIATI IBRAHIM**

FRGS GRANT  
VOTE 0738

**UNIVERSITI TUN HUSSEIN ONN MALAYSIA**



# END OF PROJECT REPORT FOR FRGS

Project Title:  
Finding New Steganography Algorithm to Hide Data in Image

FRGS Field: Technology & Engineering

Project Leader:  
Rosziati Ibrahim

Researchers:  
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2. Kamaruddin Malik bin Mohamad  
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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Steganography algorithm is used to hide data from third party in such a way that people are unable to detect the presence or contents of the hidden message inside the stego image. This algorithm is used to maintain the confidentiality of valuable information, and to protect the data from possible sabotage, theft, or unauthorized viewing as demonstrated in Figure 1. Though the hackers can steal the stego image, the valuable information inside the image is not readable. This really promotes secured data from hackers.

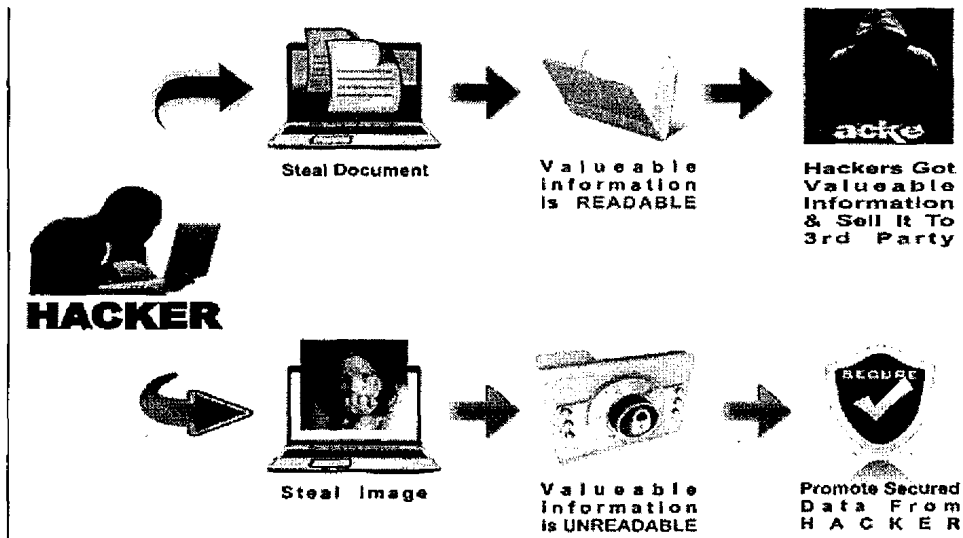
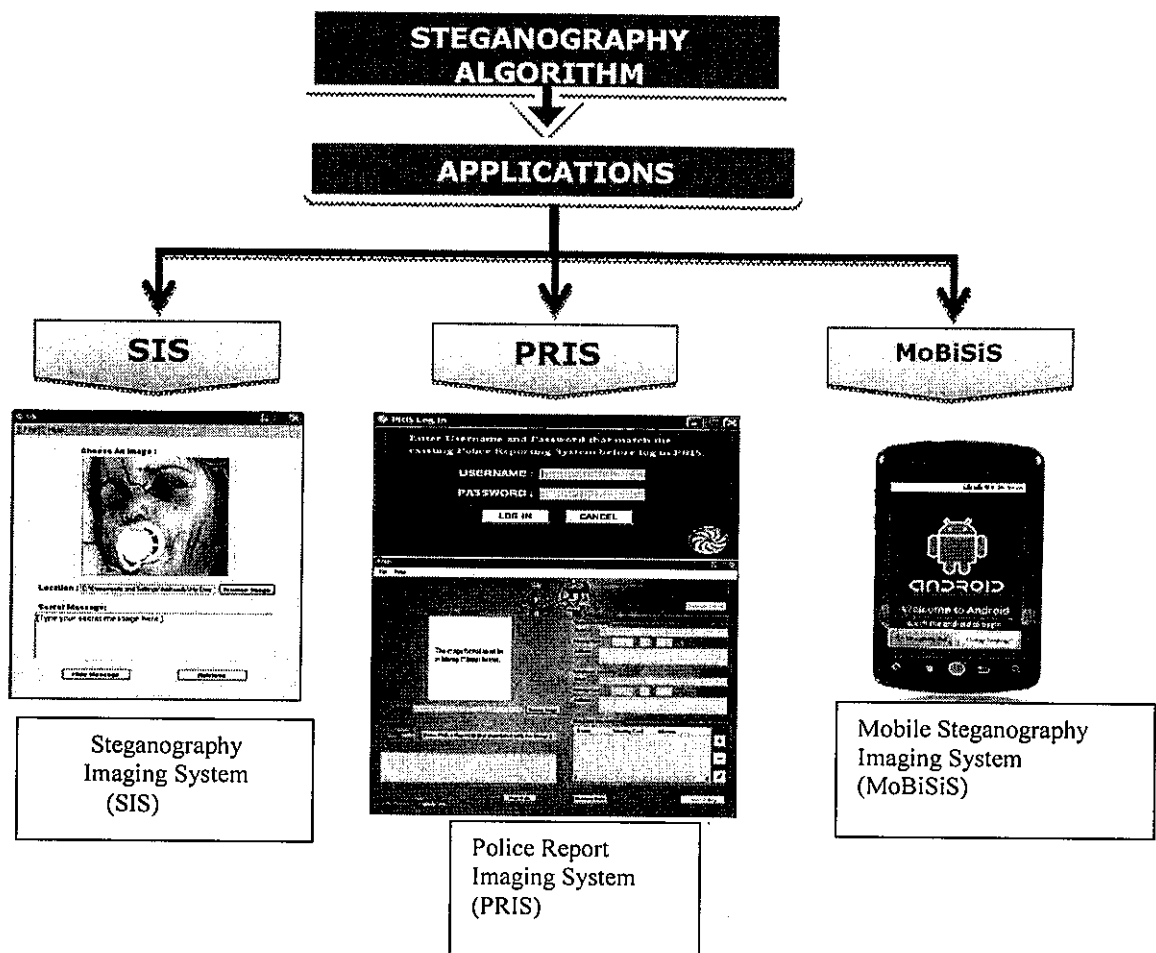


Figure 1: Confidential information can be hidden inside image

Based from the steganography algorithm, various applications can be developed. For this grant, the first step is to coming up with the algorithm. Once the algorithm has been design, few applications can be developed to test the algorithm. Figure 2 shows 3 applications that have been developed using the algorithm.



**Figure 2: Applications that have been developed using the algorithm**

The applications from steganography algorithm can be used by users who want to hide the data inside the image without revealing the data to other parties. The applications developed maintain privacy, confidentiality and accuracy of the data.

The algorithm has also been tested to see the viability of the algorithm. The PSNR (Peak signal-to-noise ratio) is used to test the image with the data inside it. This is important to see the distortion rate for the image. Based on the PSNR value for tested images, the stego images has a higher PSNR value. Hence the new steganography algorithm is very efficient to hide the data inside the images.

## 2. OUTCOMES/ACHIEVEMENT

Based on the grant, few outcomes have been established as follows:

- A new steganography algorithm to hide the data inside image has been found. The algorithm has been patented.
  - Title: COMPUTER IMAGE STEGANOGRAPHY PROCESS
  - Patent Filing No.: PI 2010006122
- A prototype (named Steganography Imaging System (SIS)) has been developed to test this new algorithm. The PSNR value is used to see the distortion rate of the stego images.
- A dedicated prototype for police requirements named PRIS (Police Report Imaging System) has also been developed to test this new algorithm. The PSNR value is also used to see the distortion rate of the stego images.
- Human Capital Development
  - One master student in image processing
  - Two final year projects for undergraduate students
- Publications at journals/conferences
  1. Rosziati Ibrahim, Teoh Suk Kuan (2011). *Steganography Algorithm to Hide Secret Message inside an Image*, Journal of Computer Technology and Application, Volume 2, No.1, Jan 2011, USA.
  2. Rosziati Ibrahim, Teoh Suk Kuan, (2011). *PRIS: Image processing Tool for Dealing with Criminal Cases using Steganography Technique*, Proceedings of The International Conference on Digital Information Management (ICDIM2011), Melbourne, Australia, pp193-198. (978-1-4577-1539-6/11/\$26.00 ©2011 IEEE).
  3. Rosziati Ibrahim, Teoh Suk Kuan, (2010). *Steganography Imaging System (SIS): Hiding Secret Message inside an Image*, Lecture Notes in Engineering and Computer Science: Proceedings of The World Congress on Engineering and Computer Science 2010, WCECS 2010, 20-22 October, 2010, San Francisco, USA, pp144-148.
  4. Abdullah Bamatraf, Rosziati Ibrahim, Mohd Najib Mohd Salleh (2011). *A New Digital Watermarking Algorithm using Combination of Least Significant Bit (LSB) and Inverse Bit*, Journal of Computing, Volume 3, Issue 4, April 2011, ISSN 2151-9617.
  5. Abdullah Bamatraf, Rosziati Ibrahim, Mohd Najib Mohd Salleh (2010). *Digital Watermarking Algorithm using LSB*, In Proceedings of International Conference on Computer Applications and Industrial Electronics (ICCAIE2010), December 5-7 2010, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, pp 154-158.
  6. Rosziati Ibrahim, Law Chia Kee (2012). *MoBiSiS: An Android-Based Application for Sending Stego Image through MMS*, In Proceedings of The Seventh International Multi-Conference on Computing un the Global Information Technology (ICCGI2012), June, 2012, Venice, Italy, pp115-120.

- Awards/ Others
  1. Gold Medal, MTE2012 (Malaysia Technology Expo 2012), Kuala Lumpur, 16– 18<sup>th</sup> February 2012.  
*Title: MoBiSiS: Android-Based Application for Sending Message inside Stego Image through MMS*
  2. Gold Medal, BIS2011 (The British Invention Show 2011), London, October 2011.  
*Title: Steganography Algorithm to Hide Secret Message inside An Image*
  3. Gold Medal, PECIPTA2011 (Ekspo Penyelidikan dan Ciptaan Institusi Pengajian Tinggi Antarabangsa), Kuala Lumpur, September 2011.  
*Title: A Novel Steganography Algorithm to Hide Secret Message inside an Image*
  4. Gold Medal, ITEX2011 (22<sup>st</sup> International Invention, Innovation & Technology Exhibition 2011), Kuala Lumpur, 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> May 2011.  
*Title: SIS: HIDING DATA FROM HACKERS*



MALAYSIAN ASSOCIATION OF RESEARCH SCIENTISTS

# Gold Medal

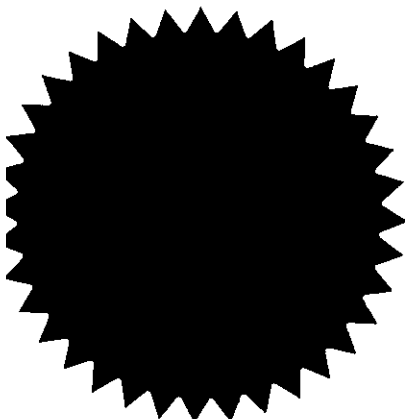
This Certificate of Award is presented to

**Prof Dr Rosziati Ibrahim  
Helmy Adly bin Mohd Noor  
Law Chia Kee  
Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM)**

For the invention/innovation of

**MoBiSiS : Android - Based Application for  
Sending Message inside Stego Image through MMS**

Malaysia Technology Expo 2012  
16 - 18 February 2012  
Kuala Lumpur



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Abdul Basid bin Ramli".

(Abdul Basid bin Ramli)  
Secretary General  
Malaysian Association of Research Scientists

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dr. Wan Manshol bin W Zin".

(Dr. Wan Manshol bin W Zin)  
Chairman  
Organizing Committee MTE 2012



Advisory Board

Chair



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

Members



# World Invention Awards

LONDON

## *Gold Medal*

### 2011

#### Steganography Algorithm to Hide Secret Message inside An Image

**Prof. Dr. Rosziati Ibrahim, Helmi Adly Bin Mohd Noor, Teoh Suk Kuan**

Signed: .....  
Kane Kramer - Chairman British Inventors Society



**PeciPTa 2011**  
Malaysia

INCORPORATING BUSINESS  
PARTNERING SESSIONS

# Certificate of Appreciation

*This is to certify that*

**ROSZIATI IBRAHIM  
HELMI ADLY MOHD NOOR  
TEOH SUK KUAN**

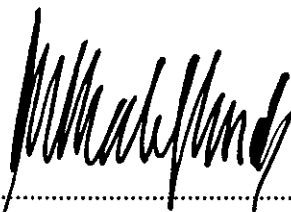
*(A NOVEL STEGANOGRAPHY ALGORITHM TO HIDE  
SECRET MESSAGE INSIDE AN IMAGE)*

*have been awarded a*

**GOLD MEDAL**

**PECIPTA 2011**

Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre  
13-15 September 2011



YB. Dato' Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin  
Minister of Higher Education



International Conference and Exposition on  
Invention of Institutions of Higher Learning



I. Finding New Steganography Algorithm to Hide Data in Image  
**Project Leader of FRGS** (RM48,000; 1 Mac 2010 – 28 Feb 2012)  
**Status:** Finished

Other Researchers

1. Dr. Mohd. Najib Mohd Salleh
2. Kamaruddin Malik (PhD Student)
3. Abdullah Omar Abdullah Bamatraf (Master Student)

Publications Under this Project

1. Rosziati Ibrahim, Teoh Suk Kuan (2011). *Steganography Algorithm to Hide Secret Message inside an Image*, Journal of Computer Technology and Application, Volume 2, No.1, Jan 2011, USA.
2. Rosziati Ibrahim, Teoh Suk Kuan, (2011). *PRIS: Image processing Tool for Dealing with Criminal Cases using Steganography Technique*, Proceedings of The International Conference on Digital Information Management (ICDIM2011), Melbourne, Australia, pp193-198. (978-1-4577-1539-6/11/\$26.00 ©2011 IEEE).
3. Rosziati Ibrahim, Teoh Suk Kuan, (2010). *Steganography Imaging System (SIS): Hiding Secret Message inside an Image*, Lecture Notes in Engineering and Computer Science: Proceedings of The World Congress on Engineering and Computer Science 2010, WCECS 2010, 20-22 October, 2010, San Francisco, USA, pp144-148.
4. Abdullah Bamatraf, Rosziati Ibrahim, Mohd Najib Mohd Salleh (2011). *A New Digital Watermarking Algorithm using Combination of Least Significant Bit (LSB) and Inverse Bit*, Journal of Computing, Volume 3, Issue 4, April 2011, ISSN 2151-9617.
5. Abdullah Bamatraf, Rosziati Ibrahim, Mohd Najib Mohd Salleh (2010). *Digital Watermarking Algorithm using LSB*, In Proceedings of International Conference on Computer Applications and Industrial Electronics (ICCAIE2010), December 5-7 2010, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, pp 154-158.
6. Rosziati Ibrahim, Law Chia Kee (2012). *MoBiSiS: An Android-Based Application for Sending Stego Image through MMS*, In Proceedings of The Seventh International Multi-Conference on Computing un the Global Information Technology (ICCGI2012), June, 2012, Venice, Italy, pp115-120.

# Steganography Algorithm to Hide Secret Message inside an Image

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Received: November 25, 2010 / Accepted: January 10, 2011 / Published: February 25, 2011.

**Abstract:** In this paper, the authors propose a new algorithm to hide data inside image using steganography technique. The proposed algorithm uses binary codes and pixels inside an image. The zipped file is used before it is converted to binary codes to maximize the storage of data inside the image. By applying the proposed algorithm, a system called Steganography Imaging System (SIS) is developed. The system is then tested to see the viability of the proposed algorithm. Various sizes of data are stored inside the images and the PSNR (Peak signal-to-noise ratio) is also captured for each of the images tested. Based on the PSNR value of each images, the stego image has a higher PSNR value. Hence this new steganography algorithm is very efficient to hide the data inside the image.

**Key words:** Steganography algorithm, secret key, image processing, data retrieval.

## 1. Introduction

This paper proposes a new algorithm to hide the data inside images using steganography technique. An algorithm is designed to hide all the data inputted within the image to protect the privacy of the data. Then, the system is developed based on the new steganography algorithm. This proposed system provides an image platform for user to input image and a text box to insert texts. Once the proposed algorithm is adapted, user can send the stego image to other computer user so that the receiver is able to retrieve and read the data which is hidden in the stego image by using the same proposed system. Thus, the data can be protected without revealing the contents to other people.

Steganography Imaging System (SIS) is a system that is capable of hiding the data inside the image. The

system is using 2 layers of security in order to maintain data privacy. Data security is the practice of keeping data protected from corruption and unauthorized access. The focus behind data security is to ensure privacy while protecting personal or corporate data. Privacy, on the other hand, is the ability of an individual or group to seclude them or information about themselves and thereby reveal them selectively. Data privacy or information privacy is the relationship between collection and dissemination of data, technology, the public expectation of privacy, and the legal issues.

Data privacy issues can arise from a wide range of sources such as healthcare records, criminal justice investigations and proceedings, financial institutions and transactions, biological traits, residence and geographic records and ethnicity. Data security or data privacy has become increasingly important as more and more systems are connected to the Internet. There are information privacy laws that cover the protection of data or information on private individuals from intentional or unintentional disclosure or misuse. Thus, hiding the data in a kind of form such as within an

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Suk Kuan Teoh, student, research fields: image processing, software engineering.

image is vital in order to make sure that security or privacy of the important data is protected.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews the related work and section 3 presents the proposed algorithm. The implementation of the system is discussed in section 4 together with the discussion of various results obtained from testing the system based on the proposed algorithm with various sizes of data. The image is also tested using the PSNR value. Finally, we conclude the paper in section 5.

## 2. Related Work

Hiding data is the process of embedding information into digital content without causing perceptual degradation [1]. In data hiding, three famous techniques can be used. They are watermarking, steganography and cryptography. Steganography is defined as covering writing in Greek. It includes any process that deals with data or information within other data. According to Lou et al. [2], steganography is hiding the existence of a message by hiding information into various carriers. The major intent is to prevent the detection of hidden information.

Research in steganography technique has been done back in ancient Greek where during that time the ancient Greek practice of tattooing a secret message on the shaved head of a messenger, and letting his hair grow back before sending him through enemy territory where the latency of this communications system was measured in months [3]. The most famous method of traditional steganography technique around 440 B.C. is marking the document with invisible secret ink, like the juice of a lemon to hide information. Another method is to mark selected characters within a document by pinholes and to generate a pattern or signature [3]. However, the majority of the development and use of computerized steganography only occurred in year 2000 [4]. The main advantage of steganography algorithm is because of its simple security mechanism. Because the steganographic message is integrated invisibly and covered inside other harmless sources, it

is very difficult to detect the message without knowing the existence and the appropriate encoding scheme [5]. There are several steganography techniques used for hiding data such as batch steganography, permutation steganography, least significant bits (LSB), bit-plane complexity segmentation (BPCS) and chaos based spread spectrum image steganography (CSSIS).

Research in hiding data inside image using steganography technique has been done by many researchers, for example in [6-10]. Warkentin et al. [6] proposed an approach to hide data inside the audiovisual files. In their steganography algorithm, to hide data, the secret content has to be hidden in a cover message. El-Emam [7], on the other hand, proposed a steganography algorithm to hide a large amount of data with high security. His steganography algorithm is based on hiding a large amount of data (image, audio, text) file inside a colour bitmap (bmp) image. In his research, the image will be filtered and segmented where bits replacement is used on the appropriate pixels. These pixels are selected randomly rather than sequentially. Chen et al. [8] modified a method used in [9] using the side match method. They concentrated on hiding the data in the edge portions of the image. Wu et al. [10], on the other hand, used pixel-value differencing by partitioning the original image into non-overlapping blocks of two consecutive pixels.

This research uses a similar concept introduced by El-Emam [7]. A bitmap (bmp) image will be used to hide the data. Data will be embedded inside the image using the pixels. Then the pixels of stego image can then be accessed back in order to retrieve back the hidden data inside the image. Two stages are involved. The first stage is to come up with a new steganography algorithm in order to hide the data inside the image and the second stage is to come up with a decryption algorithm using data retrieving method in order to retrieve the hidden data that is hidden within the stego image.

## 3. Proposed Algorithm

Our proposed algorithm is using two layers of security

to maintain the privacy, confidentiality and accuracy of the data. Fig. 1 shows the framework for the overall process of the system. The system is able to hide the data inside the image as well as to retrieve the data from the image.

From Fig. 1, for hiding the data, a username and password are required prior to use the system. Once the user has been login into the system, the user can use the information (data) together with the secret key to hide the data inside the chosen image. Using a novel steganography algorithm, these data will be embedded and hid inside the image with almost zero distortion of the original image.

For retrieving the data, a secret key is required to retrieving back the data that have been embedded inside the image. Without the secret key, the data cannot be retrieved from the image. This is to ensure the integrity and confidentiality of the data.

For the steganography algorithm, Fig. 2 shows the algorithm for embedding the secret message inside the image. During the process of embedding the message inside the image, a secret key is needed for the purpose of retrieving the message back from the image.

From Fig. 2, the secret message that is extracted from the system is transferred into text file first. Then the text file is compressed into the zip file. The zip text file then is used for converting it into the binary codes.

The purpose of zipping the text file is because the zipped text file is more secured if compared with the file that is without the zipped. The contents in the zipped file will significantly hard to be detected and read. Furthermore, this series of binary codes of the zipped text file and the key is a long random codes in which they only consist of one and zero figures. A data hiding method is applied by using this series of binary codes. By applying the data hiding method, the last two binary codes from the series are encoded into a pixel in image, then, next two binary codes are encoded to the next pixel in image, the process is repeated until all the binary codes are encoded. The secret key in this proposed steganography algorithm is playing an essential

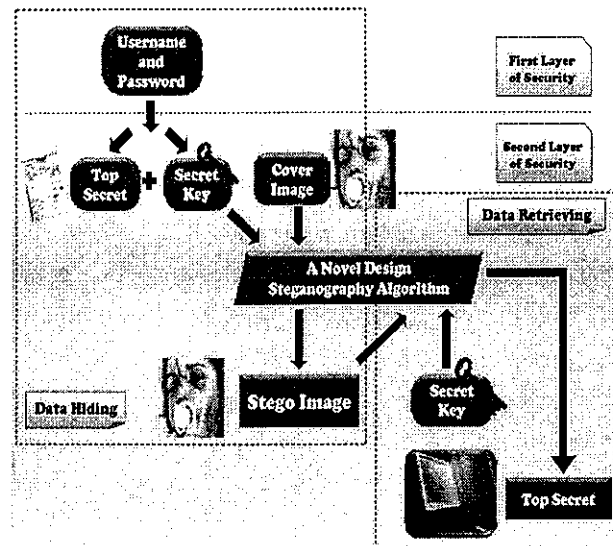


Fig. 1 The framework for the system.

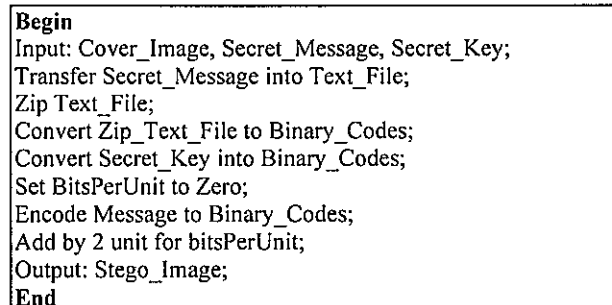


Fig. 2 Algorithm for embedding data inside image.

role where the key is acts as a locker that used to lock or unlock the secret message. For the data hiding method, each last two bit is encoded into each pixel in image. This will ensure the original image will not be tempered with too many changes.

Once the message is hidden inside the image, this message can be extracted back from the stego image. Fig. 3 shows the algorithm for extracting the secret message from the stego image. In order to retrieve a correct message from the image, a secret key is needed for the purpose of verification.

From Fig. 3, for the data extracting method, a secret key is needed to detect whether the key is match with the key that decodes from the series of binary code. Once the key is matched, the process continues by forming the binary code to a zipped text file, unzip the text file and transfer the secret message from the text file to retrieve the original secret message.

```

Begin
Input: Stego_Image, Secret_Key;
Compare Secret_Key;
Calculate BitsPerUnit;
Decode All_Binary_Codes;
Shift by 2 unit for bitsPerUnit;
Convert Binary_Codes to Text_File;
Unzip Text_File;
Output Secret_Message;
End

```

Fig. 3 Algorithm for extracting data from stego image.

The main focuses of this proposed steganography algorithm are the use of transferring secret message to a text file, zipping file, a key, converting both zipped file and key into a series of binary codes, and the use of encoding each last two binary codes into pixels in image. The image quality is still robust where the distortion and colour changes of images are reduced to the minimum or zero-distortion. Secret message, on the other hand, is difficult to be stolen by steganalysis.

The proposed steganography algorithm consists of two image embedding techniques which are data hiding method and data retrieving method. Data hiding method is used to hide the secret message and the key in cover image while data retrieving method is used to retrieve the key and the hidden secret message from stego image. Hence, data or in particular a secret message, is protected in image without revealing to unauthorized party.

Both from Figs. 2-3 show that 2 layers of security are maintain within the system. However, the secret key is used for verification process in order to retrieve the correct message back from the image. This secret key is also embedded together with the data inside the image. Therefore, when a user is transmitting the image via the internet, that image contains the data and the secret key as well. However, the data can only be retrieved from the image using the system.

#### 4. Result and Discussion

Based on the proposed algorithm, we develop a simple system, which implements the algorithm. We name the system as Steganography Imaging System (SIS). Based on the framework for the system as seen

in Fig. 1, SIS imposed on 2 layers of security. The first layer is for the login purpose and the second layer is for the hiding and retrieving purposes. The system is introduced in [11]. Fig. 4 shows the main interface for the system.

From Fig. 4, SIS has two main boxes, one box for the image and another box for the data that the user needs to hide inside the image. The image box is used for getting the image from any location and the text box is used for hiding and retrieving the message to and from image respectively. In order to hide the data inside the image, a secret key is required for the purpose of security reason. Fig. 5 shows the interface for the secret key which needs to be in 6 characters.

From Fig. 5, the secret key is required to enter twice for the verification purposes. For simplicity, 6 characters are used for the secret key. This secret key is also embedded inside the image together with the data. Therefore, to reduce the size of storing the secret key inside the image, only 6 characters are used for the secret key. Once the data has been key in and the secret key has been entered, the new stego image can be saved to a different image file. This new stego image can then



Fig. 4 The main interface for SIS.

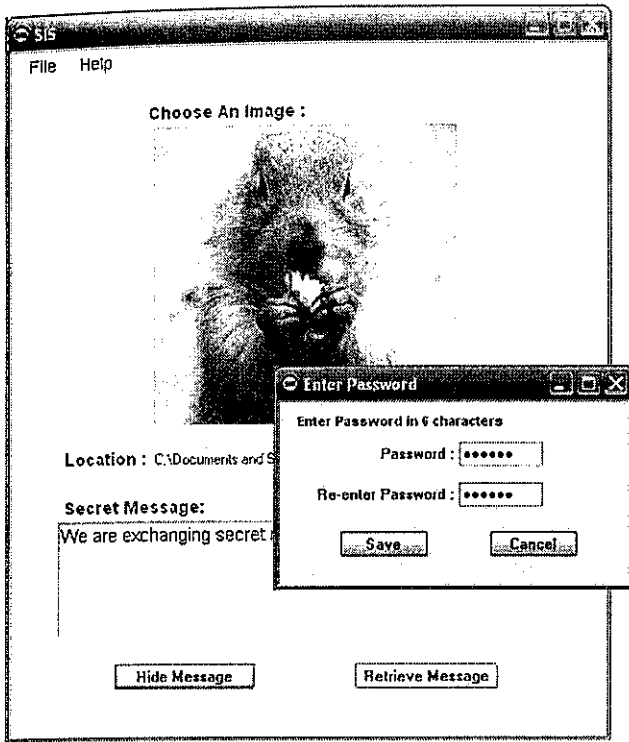


Fig. 5 The secret key is required for SIS.

be used by user to send it via internet or email to other parties without revealing the secret data inside the image. If the other parties want to reveal the secret data hidden inside the image, the new stego image file can then be upload again using the system to retrieve the data that have been locked inside the image using the secret key.

The system is tested using the images as showed in Figs. 6-7. Fig. 6 (a) shows the original image before the message is stored inside the image and Fig. 6 (b) shows the stego image after the message is stored inside the image. We found that the stego image does not have a noticeable distortion on it (as seen by the naked eyes).

Fig. 7 shows another example of image with data hidden inside the image.

From Fig. 7, it shows that the comparison of distortion by naked eyes between cover image and stego image is almost zero. The surfaces of between both images show no difference by using naked eyes even though the size of stego image has a slightly higher than the cover image.

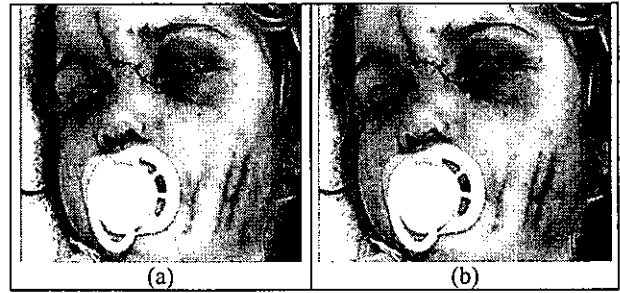


Fig. 6 (a) Original image (b) Stego image.

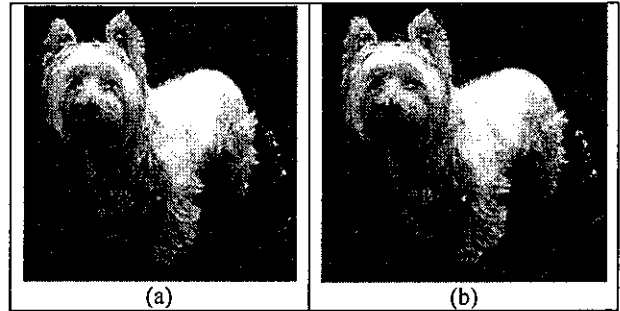


Fig. 7 (a) Original image (b) Stego image.

We then tested the algorithm using the PSNR (Peak signal-to-noise ratio). PSNR is a standard measurement used in steganography technique in order to test the quality of the stego images. The higher the value of PSNR, the more quality the stego image will have.

If the cover image is  $C$  of size  $M \times M$  and the stego image is  $S$  of size  $N \times N$ , then each cover image  $C$  and stego image  $S$  will have pixel value  $(x, y)$  from  $0$  to  $M-1$  and  $0$  to  $N-1$  respectively. The PSNR is then calculated as follows:

$$PSNR = 10 \cdot \log_{10} \left( \frac{MAX^2}{MSE} \right) \quad (1)$$

where

$$MSE = \frac{1}{MN} \sum_{x=0}^{M-1} \sum_{y=0}^{N-1} (C(x, y) - S(x, y))^2$$

Note that MAX is the maximum possible pixel value of the images. For example, if the pixels are represented using 8 bits per sample, then the MAX value is 255.

If the stego image has a higher PSNR value, then the stego image has more quality image. Table 1 shows the PSNR value for two stego images in Figures 6 and 7. The PSNR is calculated using the equation of PSNR in Eq. (1).

Based on values of PSNR from Table 1, the PSNR

values show that the stego images have quality images without compromising of the original image.

The pixels of the cover image must fulfill the minimum requirement for the process of data hiding. The minimum image pixel for width is at least 150 while the minimum image pixel for height is at least 112.

Smaller images file size, for example, a BMP image with a sized of 1.0 MB, is proved to be capable of hiding the Secret Message within it. The biggest size of a zipped file to be encoded into a 1.0 MB BMP image by proposed system is 3.16 KB, which means that the size of image can encodes 10553 characters with spaces (or 1508 words or equally to 4 pages of words) underneath the image with near-zero distortion. Both cover and stego images are alike with the images that showed in Fig. 7 with near-zero distortion noticeable by naked eyes. Therefore, the proposed steganography algorithm is a strong yet robust algorithm to produce a stego image which will not be doubted by outsider that the image contains any secret message.

The image file format used in proposed algorithm is focused on bitmap (BMP) format. The BMP file format handles graphics files within the Microsoft Windows OS. Typically, BMP files are uncompressed, hence they are large. The advantage of using BMP files is the simplicity and wide acceptance of BMP files in Windows programs. Thus, this type of image is chosen to be used in our proposed algorithm. Since BMP image has a relatively larger size, the pixels in image are relatively larger as well. Thus, it provides more space for binary codes to be encoded within it. To increase as much as characters that can be hidden, zip technique is used to reduce to total size of file and to enhance the security of the file.

Using the proposed algorithm, we test several sizes of BMP images to see the various sizes of data being stored in the image. Table 2 shows these various results for the testing.

Table 2 shows the comparison of different sizes in BMP image by using the proposed steganography algorithm. These BMP images are used as cover images

**Table 1** The PSNR value of stego images.

Image	Reference	PSNR for 1.0 KB embedded inside the image
Injured Baby	Figure 7 (a) : Stego Image (1)	76.15
Dog	Figure 7 (b) : Stego Image (2)	81.47

**Table 2** Comparison of different sizes in bitmap images.

Cover Image	Text File	FILE SIZE		Stego Image	Hide Message	Retrieve Message
		Original File	Zipped File			
438 KB	4.01 KB	513 Bytes	584 KB	✓	✓	
438 KB	12.1 KB	4.34 KB	Failed	—	—	
1.0 MB	10.4 KB	3.16 KB	1.34 MB	✓	✓	
1.0 MB	10.5 KB	3.15 KB	Failed	—	—	
3.14 MB	12.1 KB	4.34 KB	4.19 MB	✓	✓	
3.14 MB	27.0 KB	6.95 KB	4.19 MB	✓	✓	
3.14 MB	54.1 KB	7.03 KB	Failed	—	—	
6.74 MB	54.1 KB	7.03 KB	8.99 MB	✓	✓	
9.9 MB	334 KB	8.48 KB	13.2 MB	✓	✓	
9.9 MB	335 KB	8.49 KB	Failed	—	—	

to encode the zipped file within it. An image is normally contains 3.14 MB. Using the proposed algorithm, the biggest size of a zipped file that can be hidden into and retrieved from a 3.14 MB BMP image is 6.93 KB, which means that the size of image can encodes 27287 characters with spaces (or 4478 words or equally to 10 pages of words) underneath the image with near-zero distortion.

## 5. Conclusions

This paper proposed a new steganography algorithm with 2 layers of security. A system named SIS (Steganography Imaging System) has been developed using the proposed algorithm. We tested few images with various sizes of data to be hidden. With the proposed algorithm, we found that the stego image does not have a noticeable distortion on it (as seen by the naked eyes). We also tested our stego images using PSNR value. Based on the PSNR value of each images, the stego image has a higher PSNR value. Hence this new steganography algorithm is very efficient to hide the data inside the image.

SIS can be used by various users who want to hide the data inside the image without revealing the data to other parties. SIS maintains privacy, confidentiality and accuracy of the data.

### Acknowledgments

This research is supported under the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS) Vot 0738.

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# PRIS: Image Processing Tool for Dealing with Criminal Cases using Steganography Technique

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**Abstract**— Hiding data inside an image is a practical way of hiding secret information from intruders. Image processing can then be used to get the data back from the image. In this paper, we propose a new algorithm to hide data inside an image using the steganography technique. The original data can also be retrieved from the image using the same approach. By applying the proposed algorithm, a system called Police Report Imaging System (PRIS) is developed. PRIS is developed to handle secret information for criminal cases. The system is then tested to see the viability of the proposed algorithm. The PSNR (Peak signal-to-noise ratio) is also captured for each of the images tested. Based on the PSNR value of each image, the stego image has a higher PSNR value. Hence this new steganography algorithm is very efficient to hide data inside an image to handle information for the criminal cases.

**Keywords**- steganography technique, PSNR value, image processing, information retrieval

## I. INTRODUCTION

Police Report Imaging System (PRIS) is a system that is capable of hiding data inside an image. The system uses 2 layers of security in order to maintain data privacy. Data security is the practice of keeping data protected from corruption and unauthorized access. The focus behind data security is to ensure privacy while protecting personal or corporate data. Privacy is the ability of an individual or group to seclude them or information about themselves and thereby reveal them selectively. Data privacy or information privacy is the relationship between collection and dissemination of data, technology, the public expectation of privacy, and the legal issues.

Data privacy issues can arise from a wide range of sources such as healthcare records, criminal justice investigations and proceedings, financial institutions and transactions, biological traits, residence and geographic records and ethnicity. Data security or data privacy has become increasingly important as more and more systems are connected to the Internet. There are information privacy laws that cover the protection of data or information on private individuals from intentional or

unintentional disclosure or misuse. Thus, hiding the data in a kind of form such as within an image is vital in order to make sure that the security or privacy of important data is protected.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews the related work and Section 3 presents the details of the implementation of Police Report Imaging System (PRIS) together with the discussion of various results obtained from testing the system. Section 4 discusses the PSNR value of the images and finally, we conclude the paper in Section 5.

## II. RELATED WORK

Hiding data is the process of embedding information into digital content without causing perceptual degradation [1]. In data hiding, three famous techniques can be used. They are watermarking, steganography and cryptography. Steganography is defined as covering writing in Greek. It includes any process that deals with data or information within other data. According to Lou *et al.* [2], steganography is hiding the existence of a message by hiding information into various carriers. The major intent is to prevent the detection of the hidden information.

Research shows that the steganography technique has been implemented since ancient Greek. During that time the ancient Greek practice was to tattoo a secret message on the shaved head of a messenger, and let his hair grow back before sending him through enemy territory, where the latency of this communication system was measured in months [3]. The most famous method of traditional steganography technique during 440 B.C. was marking documents with invisible secret ink, like using lemon juice to hide information. Another method is to mark selected characters within a document by pinholes and to generate a pattern or signature [3]. However, the majority of the development and use of computerized steganography only occurred in the year 2000 [4]. The main advantage of using steganography algorithm is its simple security mechanism. Because the steganographic message is integrated invisibly and covered inside other harmless sources, it is very difficult to detect the message without knowing its existence and the

appropriate encoding scheme [5]. There are several steganography techniques used for hiding data such as batch steganography, permutation steganography, least significant bits (LSB), bit-plane complexity segmentation (BPCS) and chaos based spread spectrum image steganography (CSSIS).

Research in hiding data inside an image using the steganography technique have been done by many researchers, for example in [6], [7], [8], [9] and [10]. Warkentin *et al.* [6] proposed an approach to hide data inside audiovisual files. In their steganography algorithm, to hide data, the secret content has to be hidden in a cover message. El-Emam [7], on the other hand, proposed a steganography algorithm to hide a large amount of data with high security. His steganography algorithm is based on hiding a large amount of data (image, audio, text) file inside a colour bitmap (bmp) image. In his research, the image was filtered and segmented where bits replacement is used on the appropriate pixels. These pixels are selected randomly rather than sequentially. Chen *et al.* [8] modified a method used in [9] using the side match method. They concentrated on hiding the data in the edge portions of the image. Wu *et al.* [10], on the other hand, used pixel-value differencing by partitioning the original image into non-overlapping blocks of two consecutive pixels.

This research uses a similar concept introduced by El-Emam [7]. A bitmap (bmp) image will be used to hide the data. Data will be embedded inside the image using the pixels. Instead of filtering and segmenting the image and replacing bits in appropriate pixels as done by El-Emam [7], our algorithm uses transformation of the bits and shifting the bits for the appropriate pixels. Then the pixels of the stego image can then be accessed in order to retrieve the hidden data inside the image. Two stages are involved. The first stage is to come up with a new steganography algorithm in order to hide the data inside the image and the second stage is to come up with a decryption algorithm using data retrieving method in order to retrieve the hidden data that is hidden within the stego image. The novelty of the algorithm is that the text file that consists of data to be hidden is compressed into the zip file. The zip text file then is used for converting it into the binary codes.

The purpose of zipping the text file is to make it more secure compared to the file that is not zipped. The contents in the zipped file will also be significantly harder to detect and read. Furthermore, series of binary codes of the zipped text file and the key are long random codes that consist of only one and zero figures. A data hiding method is applied by using the series of binary codes. By applying the data hiding method, the last two binary codes from a series are encoded into a pixel in the image, then, the next two binary codes are encoded to the next pixel in the image, the process is repeated until the all the binary codes are encoded. The secret key plays an essential role in this proposed steganography algorithm as the key acts as a locker that is used to lock or unlock the secret message. For the data hiding method, each last two bit is encoded into

each pixel in the image. This will ensure that the original image is not tempered with too many changes.

Once the message is hidden inside the image, this message can be extracted back from the stego image. Further details of the algorithm can be found in [11].

### III. POLICE REPORT IMAGING SYSTEM (PRIS)

Our proposed algorithm uses two layers of security to maintain the privacy, confidentiality and accuracy of the data. Figure 1 shows the framework for the overall process of the system. The system is able to hide the data inside the image as well as retrieve the data from the image.

From Figure 1, for hiding the data, a username and password is required prior to using the system. Once the user has logged into the system, the user can use the information (data) together with the secret key to hide the data inside a chosen image. Using a novel steganography algorithm, the data will be embedded and hidden inside the image with almost zero distortion of the original image. The details of the steganography algorithm can be found in [11].

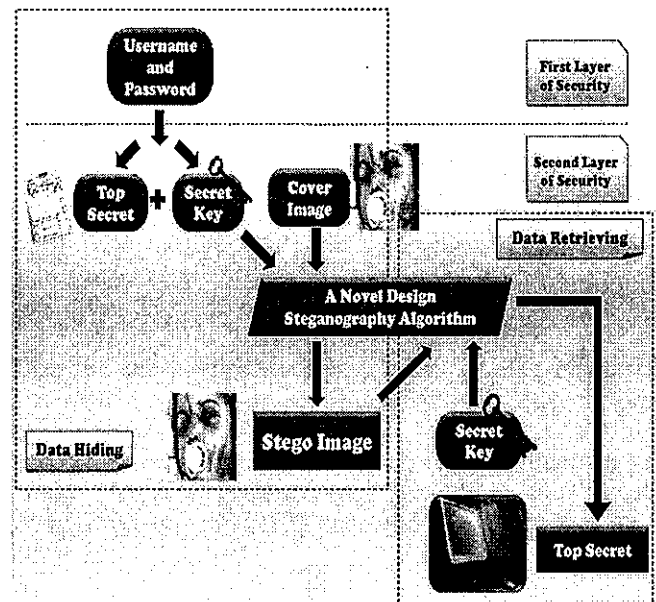


Figure 1: The framework for the system.

For retrieving the data, a secret key is required to retrieve the data that has been embedded inside the image. Without the secret key, the data cannot be retrieved from the image. This is to ensure the integrity and confidentiality of the data. The uniqueness of the system is that the secret key is also embedded inside the image together with the confidential information. If a user provides a correct secret key, then the confidential information can be retrieved from the system. Figure 2 shows the login interface of PRIS.

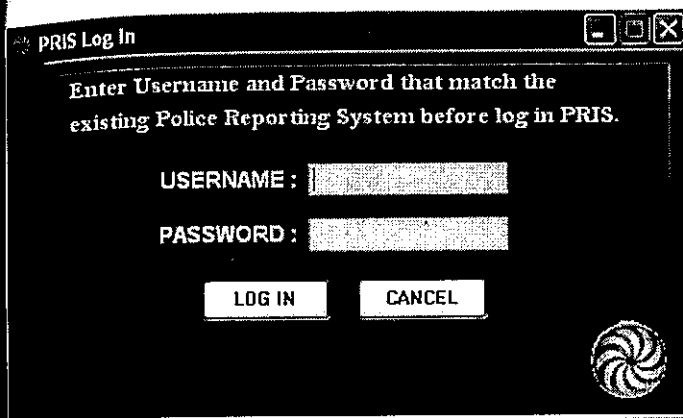


Figure 2: The Login Interface of PRIS

From Figure 2, a username and password is required to use the system. This is to ensure the data is protected and secured in order to maintain the privacy, confidentiality and accuracy of data. After successful login, a system displays the next interface as shown in Figure 3.

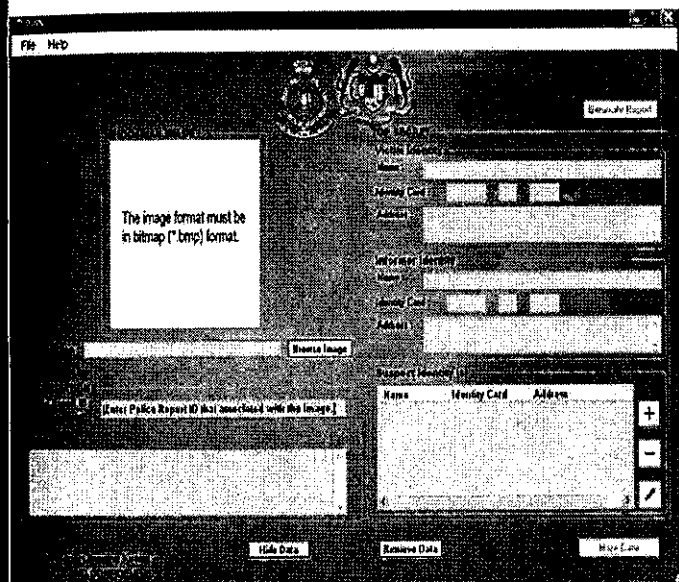


Figure 3: The Main Interface of PRIS

From Figure 3, a cover image is needed in order to hide the information inside the image. The victim's information and the informer's information can also be recoded using the system. The informer of criminal cases is crucial information. Therefore, the data is encrypted using the system to prevent intruders from knowing the identity of the informer. The informer can also inform the police on the suspect's identity using the system. To ease the reporting process, for each police criminal case, reports can also be uploaded using PRIS. Figure 4 shows the interface for uploading files.

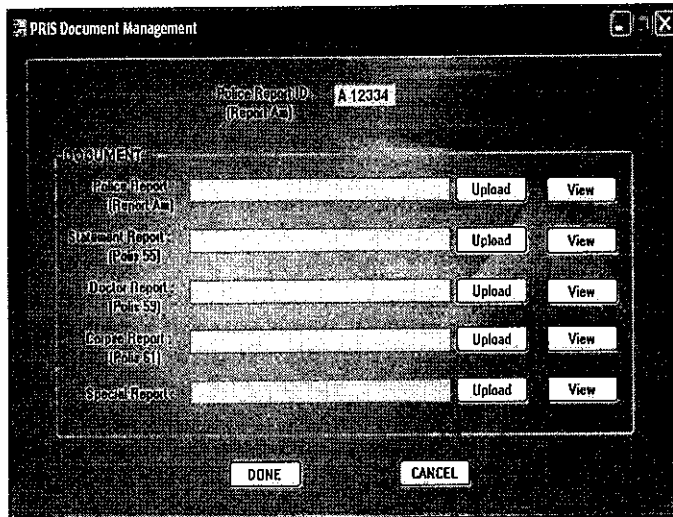


Figure 4: The Interface to Upload Documents for PRIS

From Figure 4, a user can also upload necessary documents for particular criminal cases. Each criminal case must consist of a police report document, a statement report and a doctor's report. The corpse's report and special report are other supporting documents that can be supplied if necessary. Then, the documents will be converted to zip files. The BMP image is then used as cover image to encode the zipped files within it. Note that the size for embedding information inside image will depend on the size of the cover image itself. The bigger the size of cover image, the more data can be embedded inside it. For example, using the proposed algorithm, the biggest size of a zipped file that can be hidden into and retrieved from a 3.14 MB BMP image is 6.93 KB, which means that the size of image can encode 27287 characters with spaces (or 4478 words or 10 pages of words) underneath the image with near-zero distortion.

Once the information has been stored inside the stego image, this stego image can then be sent via the Internet without exposing the information regarding the criminal cases. An intruder would not be able to retrieve information inside the image. The information can only be retrieved from the stego image with the (PRIS) system and the secret key for the image.

Instead of using a person to carry all the documentations regarding the criminal cases and asking that person to travel to deliver confidential documents, PRIS can be used to hide all the confidential documents within a single image. The image can then be transmitted using email without the hassle of traveling. This is a new way of delivering information for digital globalization.

In order to know the viability of the system, the system is tested using various images with various documents as showed in Figure 5.

image pixel for width is at least 150 while the minimum image pixel for height is at least 112.

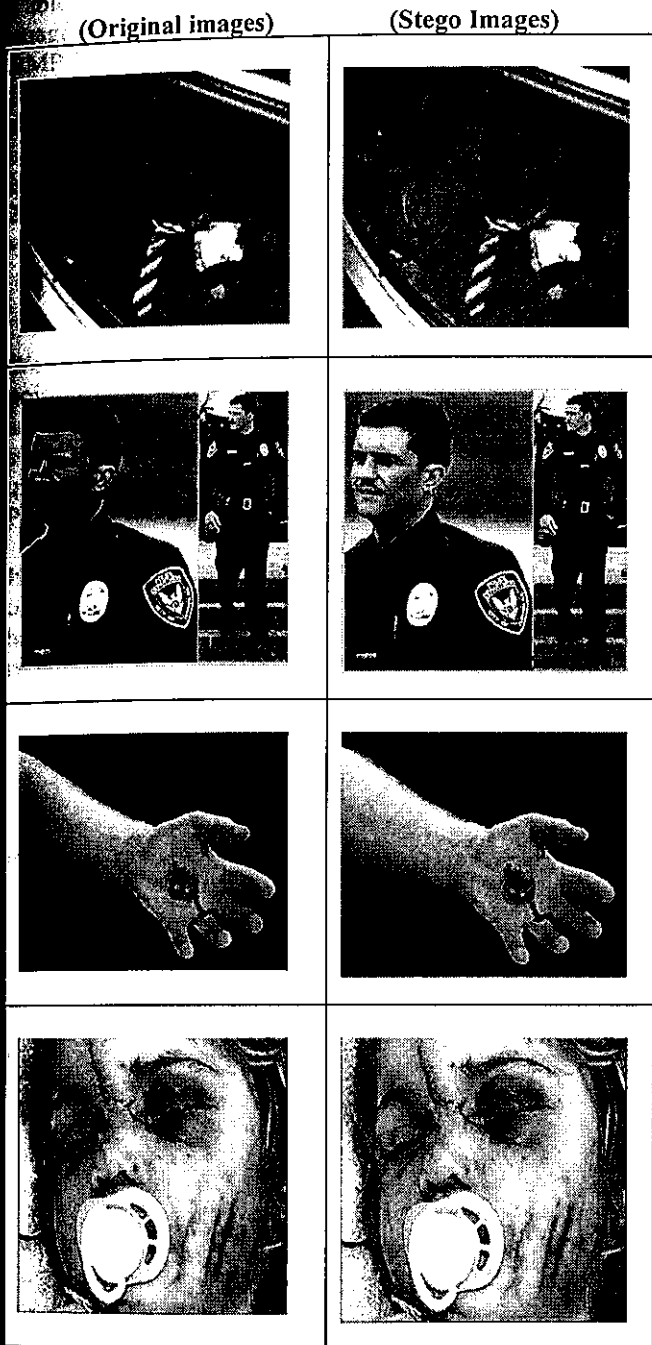
Smaller image file sizes, for example, a BMP image with a size of 1.0 MB, is proved to be capable of hiding a Secret Message within it. The biggest size of a zipped file to be encoded into a 1.0 MB BMP image by this proposed system is 3.16 KB, which means that an image of this size can encode 10553 characters with spaces (or 1508 words or 4 pages of words) underneath the image with near-zero distortion. Both the cover and stego images are the same as the images that are shown in Figure 5 with near-zero distortion noticeable by the naked eyes. Therefore, the proposed steganography algorithm is a strong yet robust algorithm that can produce a stego image, which will not be suspected by an outsider to contain any secret messages.

The image file format used in the proposed algorithm is focused on bitmap (BMP) format. The BMP file format handles graphics files within the Microsoft Windows OS. Typically, BMP files are uncompressed, hence they are large. The advantage of using BMP files is the simplicity and wide acceptance of BMP files in Windows programs. Thus, this type of image was chosen to be used in our proposed algorithm. Since BMP images have relatively larger sizes, the pixels in image are relatively larger as well. Thus, it provides more space for binary codes to be encoded within it. To increase the amount of characters that can be hidden, zip technique is used to reduce to total size of file and to enhance the security of the file.

Using the proposed algorithm, we tested several sizes of BMP images to see the various sizes of data being stored in the image. Table 1 shows these various results for the testing.

**Table 1: Comparison of different sizes in bitmap images**

FILE SIZE				Hide Message	Retrieve Message
Cover Image	Text File	Zipped File	Stego Image		
438 KB	4.01 KB	513 Bytes	584 KB	√	√
438 KB	12.1 KB	4.34 KB	Failed	—	—
3.14 MB	12.1 KB	4.34 KB	4.19 MB	√	√
3.14 MB	27.0 KB	6.95 KB	4.19 MB	√	√
3.14 MB	54.1 KB	7.03 KB	Failed	—	—
9.9 MB	334 KB	8.48 KB	13.2 MB	√	√
9.9 MB	335 KB	8.49 KB	Failed	—	—



**Figure 5: Images for Criminal Cases with information hidden inside the images**

Figure 5 shows the original images (left) before the documents are stored inside the image and the stego images (right) after the documents are stored inside the image. We have found that the stego images do not have a noticeable distortion on it (as seen by the naked eyes). The surfaces between both images show no difference using the naked eyes even though the size of the stego image is slightly higher than the cover image.

The pixels of the cover image must fulfill the minimum requirement for the process of data hiding. The minimum

Table 1 shows the comparison of different sizes in BMP image by using the proposed steganography algorithm. These BMP images are used as cover images to encode the zipped file within it. An image normally contains 3.14 MB. Using the proposed algorithm, the biggest size of a zipped file that can be hidden into and retrieved from a 3.14 MB BMP image is 6.93 KB, which means that the size of the image can encode 27287 characters with spaces (or 4478 words or 10 pages of words) underneath the image with near-zero distortion.

#### IV. PSNR VALUE

We then tested the algorithm using the PSNR (Peak signal-to-noise ratio). PSNR is a standard measurement used in steganography technique in order to test the quality of the stego images. The higher the value of PSNR, the better the quality of the stego image. For standard quality images, the PSNR value must be higher than 50.

If the cover image is  $C$  of size  $M \times M$  and the stego image is  $S$  of size  $N \times N$ , then each cover image  $C$  and stego image  $S$  will have pixel value  $(x, y)$  from  $0$  to  $M-1$  and  $0$  to  $N-1$  respectively. The PSNR is then calculated as follows:

$$PSNR = 10 \cdot \log_{10} \left( \frac{MAX^2}{MSE} \right) \quad (1)$$

where

$$MSE = \frac{1}{MN} \sum_{x=0}^{M-1} \sum_{y=0}^{N-1} (C(x, y) - S(x, y))^2$$

Note that MAX is the maximum possible pixel value of the images. For example, if the pixels are represented using 8 bits per sample, then the MAX value is 255.

MATLAB application for image processing is used in order to get the PSNR value for the stego images. Both the cover image and the stego image are used to determine the pixel values. If the stego image has a higher PSNR value, then the stego image is a better quality image. Table 2 shows the PSNR value for stego images in Figure 5. The PSNR is calculated using the equation of PSNR in (1).

Based on Table 2, each images described in Figure 5 contains data regarding the criminal cases. The data consists of various files being uploaded to the system. We managed to get a very good PSNR value for each image. Thus the stego images have quality images without compromising the original images. It is noted that the standard PSNR value for images must be higher than 50.

Table 2: The PSNR Value of Stego Images

Image	PSNR for Stego Image
Kidnapped Person	70.7586
Police Officer	69.0479
Wounded Hand	80.4669
Abused Child	74.6493

#### V. CONCLUSION

This paper discusses a system named PRIS (Police Report Imaging System). PRIS has been developed using the steganography algorithm discussed in [11]. PRIS can be used by police staffs whom want to hide the data inside an image without revealing the data to other parties. PRIS maintains privacy, confidentiality and accuracy of the data.

We also tested a few images with various sizes of data to be hidden. With the proposed algorithm, we found that the stego image does not have a noticeable distortion in it (as seen by the naked eyes). We also tested the images using PSNR value and found that the PSNR value is higher than 50. Hence this new steganography algorithm is very efficient to hide the data inside the image.

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# Steganography Imaging System (SIS): Hiding Secret Message inside an Image

Rosziati Ibrahim and Teoh Suk Kuan

*Abstract*—A new algorithm is designed in order to hide data inside image using steganography technique. By applying the proposed algorithm, a steganography imaging system (SIS) is developed in order to hide data inside the image. The receiver can use the same system as well to retrieve back the data that has been hidden inside the image. However, a secret key is needed by the receiver in order to retrieve back the data. This secret key is generated using the proposed algorithm during the process of hiding the data. By using the secret key to retrieve the data, it maintains privacy, confidentiality and accuracy of the data.

*Index Terms*—Steganography algorithm, secret key, image processing, data retrieval.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Steganography Imaging System (SIS) is a system that is capable of hiding the data inside the image. The system is using 2 layers of security in order to maintain data privacy. Data security is the practice of keeping data protected from corruption and unauthorized access. The focus behind data security is to ensure privacy while protecting personal or corporate data. Privacy, on the other hand, is the ability of an individual or group to seclude them or information about themselves and thereby reveal them selectively. Data privacy or information privacy is the relationship between collection and dissemination of data, technology, the public expectation of privacy, and the legal issues.

Data privacy issues can arise from a wide range of sources such as healthcare records, criminal justice investigations and proceedings, financial institutions and transactions, biological traits, residence and geographic records and ethnicity. Data security or data privacy has become increasingly important as more and more systems are connected to the Internet. There are information privacy laws that cover the protection of data or information on private individuals from intentional or unintentional disclosure or misuse. Thus, hiding the data in a kind of form such as within an image is vital in order to make sure that security or privacy of the important data is protected.

Manuscript received May 19, 2010. This work was supported in part by the Fundamental Research grant Scheme (FRGS) under Grant 0738.

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This research concentrates on finding a new algorithm to hide the data inside images using steganography technique. An algorithm is designed to hide all the data inputted within the image to protect the privacy of the data. Then, the system is developed based on the new steganography algorithm. This proposed system provides an image platform for user to input image and a text box to insert texts. Once the proposed algorithm is been adapted, user can send the stego image to other computer user so that the receiver is able to retrieve and read the data which is hidden in the stego image by using the same proposed system. Thus, the data can be protected without revealing the contents to other people.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 discusses an overview of the related work and Section 3 presents the proposed algorithm. The implementation of the system is discussed in Section 4 together with the discussion of various results obtained from testing the system based on the proposed algorithm with various sizes of data. Finally, we conclude the paper in Section 5.

## II. RELATED WORK

Hiding data is the process of embedding information into digital content without causing perceptual degradation [2]. In data hiding, three famous techniques can be used. They are watermarking, steganography and cryptography. Steganography is defined as covering writing in Greek. It includes any process that deals with data or information within other data. According to Lou et al. [5], steganography is hiding the existence of a message by hiding information into various carriers. The major intent is to prevent the detection of hidden information.

Research in steganography technique has been done back in ancient Greek where during that time the ancient Greek practice of tattooing a secret message on the shaved head of a messenger, and letting his hair grow back before sending him through enemy territory where the latency of this communications system was measured in months [6]. The most famous method of traditional steganography technique around 440 B.C. is marking the document with invisible secret ink, like the juice of a lemon to hide information. Another method is to mark selected characters within a document by pinholes and to generate a pattern or signature [6]. However, the majority of the development and use of computerized steganography only occurred in year 2000 [1]. The main advantage of steganography algorithm is because of its simple security mechanism. Because the steganographic message is integrated invisibly and covered inside other harmless sources, it is very difficult to detect the message without knowing the existence and the appropriate

encoding scheme [4]. There are several steganography techniques used for hiding data such as batch steganography, permutation steganography, least significant bits (LSB), bit-plane complexity segmentation (BPCS) and chaos based spread spectrum image steganography (CSSIS).

Research in hiding data inside image using steganography technique have been done by many researchers. Warkentin et al. [7] propose an approach to hide data inside the audiovisual files. In their steganography algorithm, to hide data, the secret content has to be hidden in a cover message. El-Emam [3], on the other hand, proposes a steganography algorithm to hide a large amount of data with high security. His steganography algorithm is based on hiding a large amount of data (image, audio, text) file inside a colour bitmap (bmp) image. In his research, the image will be filtered and segmented where bits replacement is used on the appropriate pixels. These pixels are selected randomly rather than sequentially.

This research will use a similar concept introduced by El-Emam [3]. A bitmap (bmp) image will be used to hide the data. Data will be embedded inside the image using the pixels. Then the pixels of stego image can then be accessed back in order to retrieve back the hidden data inside the image. Two stages are involved. The first stage is to come up with a new steganography algorithm in order to hide the data inside the image and the second stage is to come up with a decryption algorithm using data retrieving method in order to retrieve the hidden data that is hidden within the stego image.

### III. PROPOSED ALGORITHM

Our proposed algorithm is using two layers of security to maintain the privacy, confidentiality and accuracy of the data. Figure 1 shows the framework for the overall process of the system. The system is able to hide the data inside the image as well as to retrieve the data from the image.

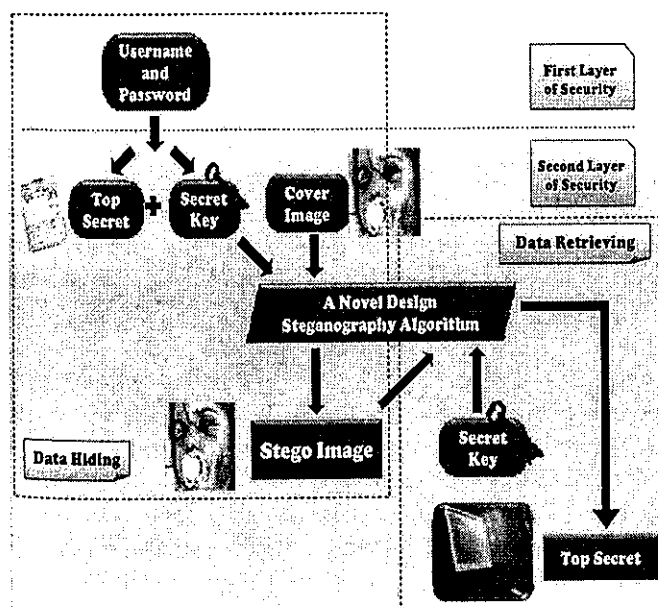


Figure 1: The framework for the system

From Figure 1, for hiding the data, a username and password are required prior to use the system. Once the user has been

login into the system, the user can use the information (data) together with the secret key to hide the data inside the chosen image. Using a novel steganography algorithm, these data will be embedded and hidden inside the image with almost zero distortion of the original image.

For retrieving the data, a secret key is required to retrieving back the data that have been embedded inside the image. Without the secret key, the data cannot be retrieved from the image. This is to ensure the integrity and confidentiality of the data.

For the steganography algorithm, Figure 2 shows the algorithm for embedding the secret message inside the image. During the process of embedding the message inside the image, a secret key is needed for the purpose of retrieving the message back from the image.

**Begin**

```

Input: Cover_Image, Secret_Message,
      Secret_Key;
Transfer Secret_Message into Text_File;
Zip Text_File;
Convert Zip_Text_File to Binary_Codes;
Convert Secret_Key into Binary_Codes;
Set BitsPerUnit to Zero;
Encode Message to Binary_Codes;
  Add by 2 unit for bitsPerUnit;
Output: Stego_Image;

```

**End**

Figure 2: Algorithm for Embedding Data inside Image

From Figure 2, the secret message that is extracted from the system is transferred into text file first. Then the text file is compressed into the zip file. The zip text file then is used for converting it into the binary codes.

The purpose of zipping the text file is because the zipped text file is more secured if compared with the file that is without the zipped. The contents in the zipped file will significantly hard to be detected and read. Furthermore, this series of binary codes of the zipped text file and the key is a long random codes in which they only consist of one and zero figures. A data hiding method is applied by using this series of binary codes. By applying the data hiding method, the last two binary codes from the series are encoded into a pixel in image, then, next two binary codes are encoded to the next pixel in image, the process is repeated until the all the binary code is encoded. The secret key in this proposed steganography algorithm is playing an essential role where the key is acts as a locker that used to lock or unlock the secret message. For the data hiding method, each last two bit is encoded into each pixel in image. This will ensure the original image will not be tempered with too many changes.

Once the message is hidden inside the image, this message can be extracted back from the stego image. Figure 3 shows the algorithm for extracting the secret message from the stego image. In order to retrieve a correct message from the image, a secret key is needed for the purpose of verification.