Security Issues in Web Programming (Part 4)

Robert M. Dondero, Ph.D.
Princeton University

Objectives

- We will cover:
  - Data storage attacks
  - Data comm attacks
  - Third-party authentication (briefly):
    - CAS authentication
    - Microsoft EntraID authentication
    - Google authentication
    - Auth0 authentication

Agenda

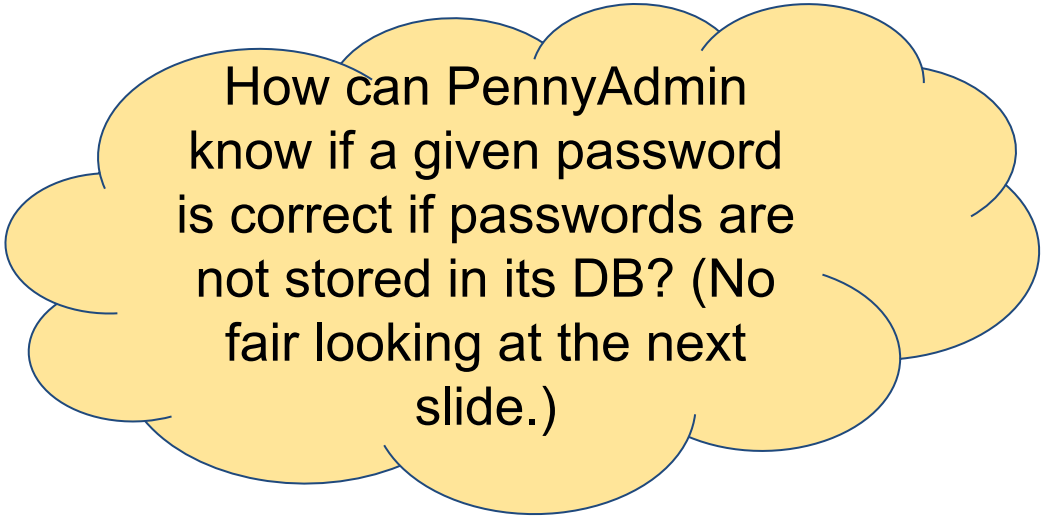
- **Data storage attacks**
- Data comm attacks
- Third-party authentication (briefly)
  - CAS authentication
  - Microsoft EntraID authentication
  - Google authentication
  - Auth0 authentication

Data Storage Attacks

- **Problem:**
  - PennyAdmin app stores passwords in DB
  - If attacker gains access to DB
  - … Then attacker learns passwords

Data Storage Attacks

- **Insight:**
  - PennyAdmin doesn't really need to store passwords
  - It's sufficient for PennyAdmin to know if a given password is correct



Data Storage Attacks

- **Solution:**
  - Store ***password hash codes*** instead of passwords
    - `hash_code = hash(password)`

Data Storage Attacks

- Which hash function?
  - ***md5***?
    - `hash_code = md5(password)`
    - No! See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MD5
  - ***sha256***?
    - `hash_code = sha256(password)`
    - Yes! See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SHA-2

Data Storage Attacks

- See **PennyAdmin8aHash** app
  - runserver.py
  - **penny.sql**, penny.sqlite
  - database.py
  - header.html, footer.html
  - index.html, show.html,
  - add.html, delete.html, reportresults.html
  - login.html, signup.html, loggedout.html
  - top.py, penny.py, **auth.py**

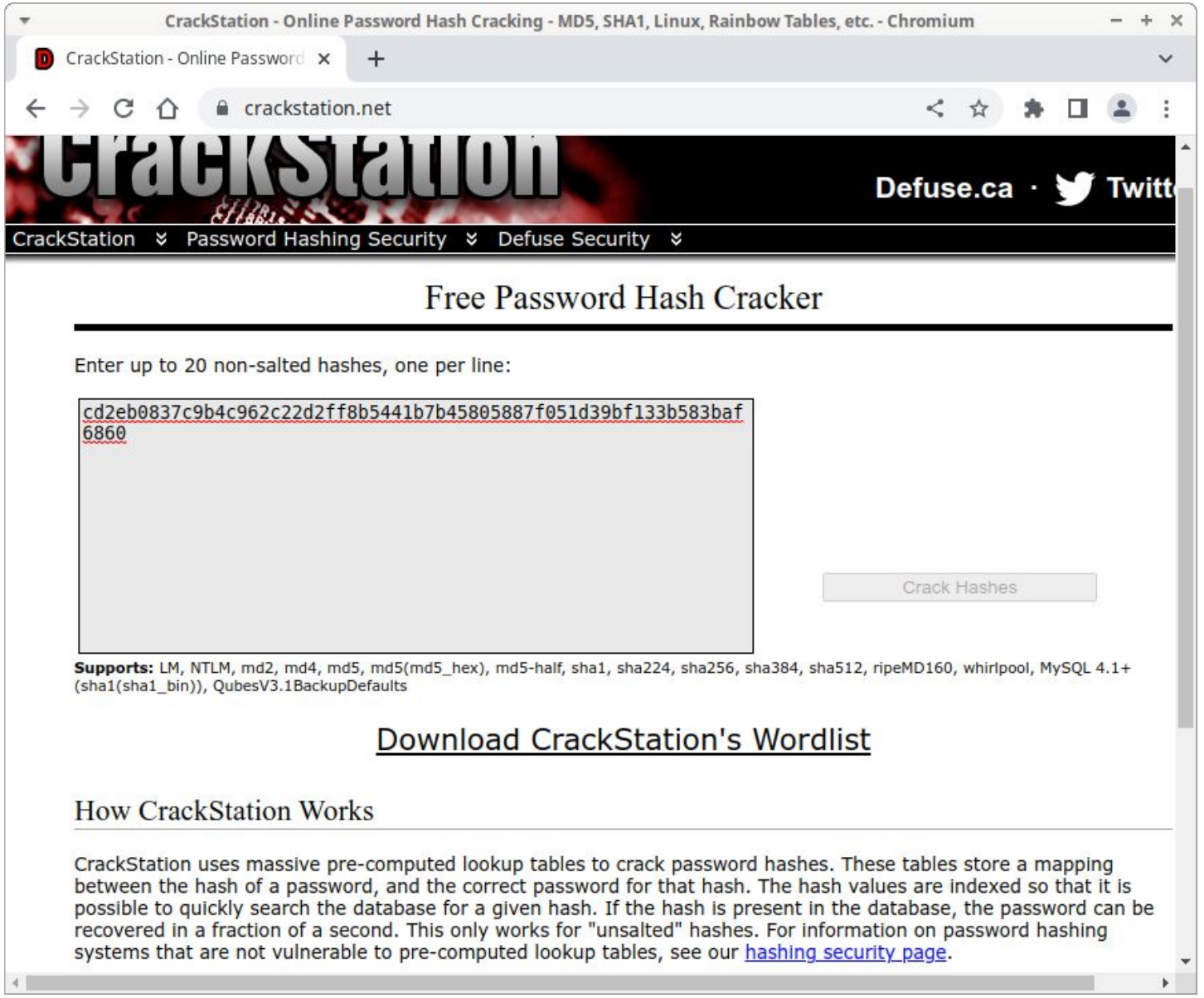
Data Storage Attacks

- **Problem:**
  - PennyAdmin app stores password hash codes in DB
  - If attacker gains access to DB, then…
    - Attacker learns password hash codes
  - If a password is common, then…
    - Attacker might find password hash code in a ***rainbow table*** (huge malevolent list of hash codes), and thereby learn the password

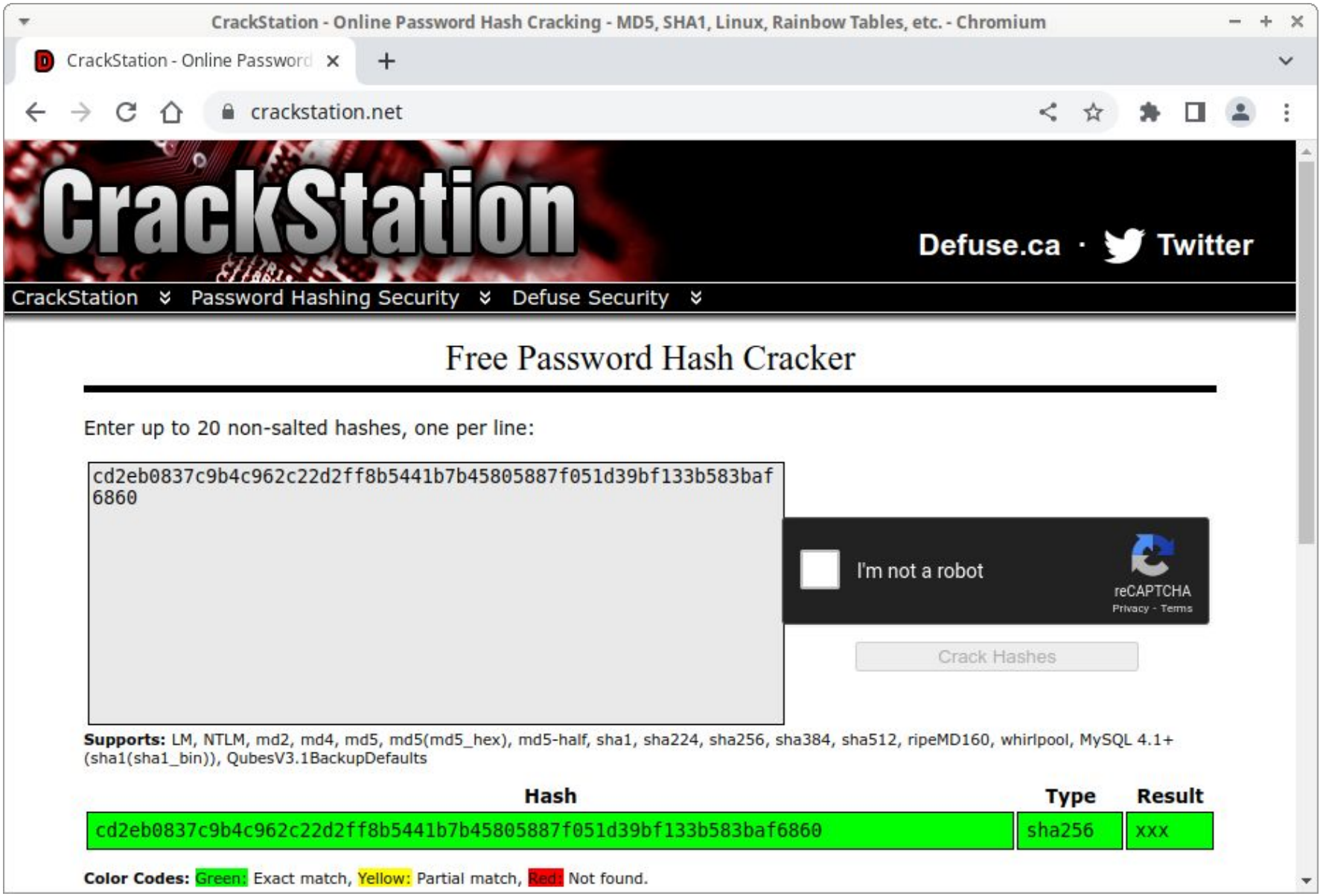
Data Storage Attacks

- **Example:**
  - Password:
    - xxx
  - sha256 hash code of that password:
    - cd2eb0837c9b4c962c22d2ff8b5441b7b45805887f051d39bf133b583baf6860
  - See https://crackstation.net/
    - Can derive xxx

Data Storage Attacks



Data Storage Attacks



Data Storage Attacks

- **Solution:**
  - Store hash codes of ***salted*** passwords
    - `hash_code = sha256('!@#$%^' + password)`
    - hash codes of salted passwords will not be found in a rainbow table

Data Storage Attacks

- **Problem:**
  - If an attacker learns the app's salt string, then the attacker (with lots of effort) might generate a rainbow table that contains hash codes for common salted passwords
    - … And so might discover the app's (common) passwords
- **Solution:**
  - Use a different salt string for each password

Data Storage Attacks

Salting and sha256 hashing in Python

```
$ python
>>> import werkzeug.security
>>> h = werkzeug.security.generate_password_hash('xxx', 'pbkdf2')
>>> h
'pbkdf2:sha256:600000$G8hNoAKf6ttD5iBa$262b04f2f287889ddffd77b0a735
b543491954d917d20bb36ae6ce2bd0ee5fde'
>>> werkzeug.security.check_password_hash(h, 'xxx')
True
>>> werkzeug.security.check_password_hash(h, 'yyy')
False
>>> quit()
$
```

Data Storage Attacks

Salting and sha256 hashing in Python

algorithm salt hashcode

```
pbkdf2:sha256:600000$G8hNoAKf6ttD5iBa$262b04
f2f287889ddffd77b0a735b543491954d917d20bb36a
e6ce2bd0ee5fde
```

Data Storage Attacks

- See **PennyAdmin8bSaltHash** app
  - runserver.py
  - **penny.sql**, penny.sqlite
  - database.py
  - header.html, footer.html
  - index.html, show.html,
  - add.html, delete.html, reportresults.html
  - login.html, signup.html, loggedout.html
  - top.py, penny.py, **auth.py**

Data Storage Attacks

- Q: Project concern?

- A: **Yes**
  - If your app does its own checking of user passwords

Agenda

- Data storage attacks
- **Data comm attacks**
- Third-party authentication (briefly)
  - CAS authentication
  - Microsoft EntraID authentication
  - Google authentication
  - Auth0 authentication

Data Comm Attacks

- **Problem:**
  - Attacker may access data during comm between PennyAdmin app and browser
- **Solution:**
  - ***Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure (HTTPS)***

Data Comm Attacks

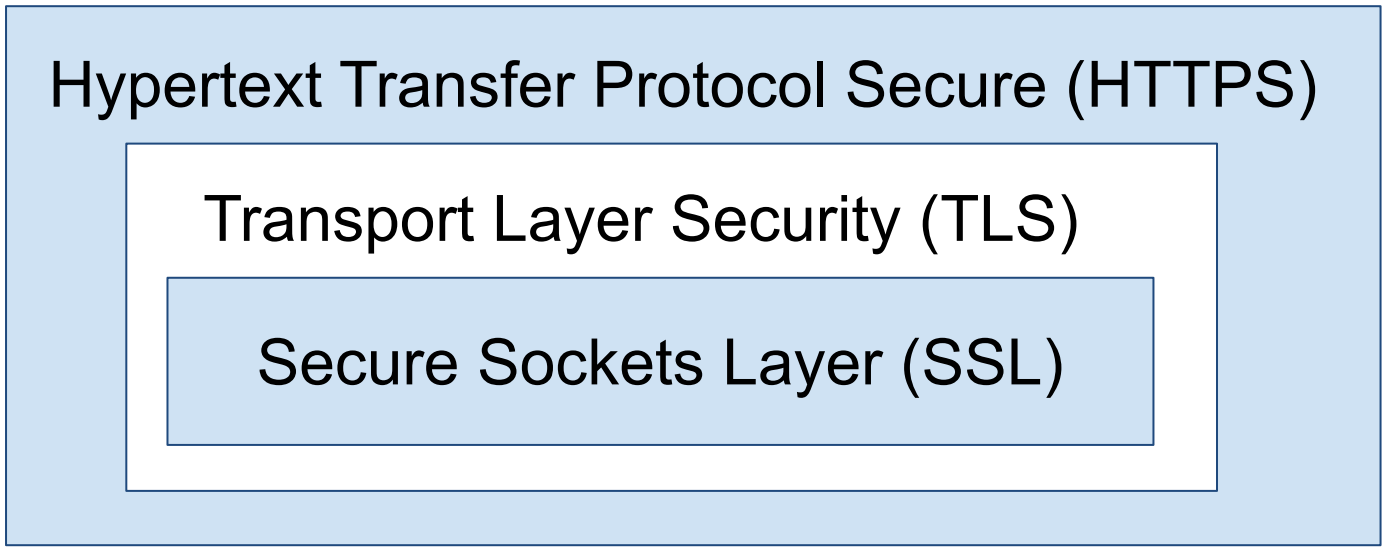
- **Technical** advantages of using HTTPS
  - Confidentiality
    - Prohibits ***message eavesdropping attacks***
  - Integrity
    - Prohibits ***message tampering attacks***
  - Authentication
    - Prohibits ***message forgery attacks***

Data Comm Attacks

- **Business** advantages of using HTTPS
  - Increases user confidence/trust in website
  - Increases Google search rank of website

Data Comm Attacks

- How HTTPS works:



Data Comm Attacks

- How to use HTTPS:
  - Configure server & app to use (& require use of) HTTPS
  - Command browser to send request specifying HTTPS as protocol
    - `https://…`

Data Comm Attacks

- How to configure server & app to use (& require use of) HTTPS:
  - Depends upon server…

Data Comm Attacks

- **Render server**
  - Already configured to use (& require use of) HTTPS
    - When server receives **`http:`**`//something` request, it sends redirect for **`https:`**`//something` request
  - So:
    - **Server**: Do nothing!
    - **App**: Do nothing!

Data Comm Attacks

- **Heroku server**
  - Already configured to use (but not require use of) HTTPS
    - When server receives **`https:`**`//`*`something`* request, it uses HTTPS
    - When server receives **`http:`**`//`*`something`* request, it uses HTTP
  - So
    - **Server**: (Regrettably) Do nothing!
    - **App**: Small change…

Data Comm Attacks

- **Solution 1:**
  - App explicitly performs redirects

Data Comm Attacks

- See **PennyAdmin9aHttps** app
  - runserver.py
  - penny.sql, penny.sqlite
  - database.py
  - header.html, footer.html
  - index.html, show.html,
  - add.html, delete.html, reportresults.html
  - login.html, signup.html, loggedout.html
  - top.py, **penny.py**, auth.py

Data Comm Attacks

- **Solution 2:**
  - `flask_talisman` module

Data Comm Attacks

- See **PennyAdmin9bHttps** app
  - runserver.py
  - penny.sql, penny.sqlite
  - database.py
  - header.html, footer.html
  - index.html, show.html,
  - add.html, delete.html, reportresults.html
  - login.html, signup.html, loggedout.html
  - top.py, **penny.py**, auth.py

Data Comm Attacks

- Notes:
  - Good to design your app to require use of HTTPS even when the app server already forces use of HTTPS
  - flask_talisman implements some additional security measures
  - Need not configure Flask test server to use (or require use of) HTTPS
    - But if you want to…
    - Or if you're using Google authentication…

Data Comm Attacks

- How to configure Flask test server & app to use (& require use of) HTTPS:

Data Comm Attacks

- **Preliminary step**: Get a ***certificate*** for your app

- **Option 1**: Get a certificate that is signed by a ***certificate authority***

Data Comm Attacks

Certificate authorities:

Rank	Authority	Market Share
1	Let's Encrypt	59.9%
2	GlobalSign	21.0%
3	Sectigo	5.6%
4	GoDaddy	3.9%
5	DigiCert	3.1%

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Certificate_authority#Providers

(as of July 2024, the most recent data available on Wikipedia as of Nov 2025)

Data Comm Attacks

- **Preliminary step**: Get a certificate for your app

- **Option 1**: Buy a certificate that is signed by a certificate authority
- **Option 2**: Create a ***self-signed certificate***

Data Comm Attacks

Linux, Mac, MS Windows Git Bash:

```
$ openssl req -x509 -newkey rsa:4096 -nodes -out cert.pem -keyout key.pem -days 365
Generating a RSA private key
.....................................................+++
.......+++
writing new private key to 'key.pem'
-----
You are about to be asked to enter information that will be incorporated
into your certificate request.
What you are about to enter is what is called a Distinguished Name or a DN.
There are quite a few fields but you can leave some blank
For some fields there will be a default value,
If you enter '.', the field will be left blank.
-----
Country Name (2 letter code) [AU]: US
State or Province Name (full name) [Some-State]: NJ
Locality Name (eg, city) []: Princeton
Organization Name (eg, company) [Internet Widgits Pty Ltd]: Princeton University
Organizational Unit Name (eg, section) []:
Common Name (e.g. server FQDN or YOUR name) []: localhost
Email Address []:
$
```

Output: cert.pem, key.pem

Data Comm Attacks

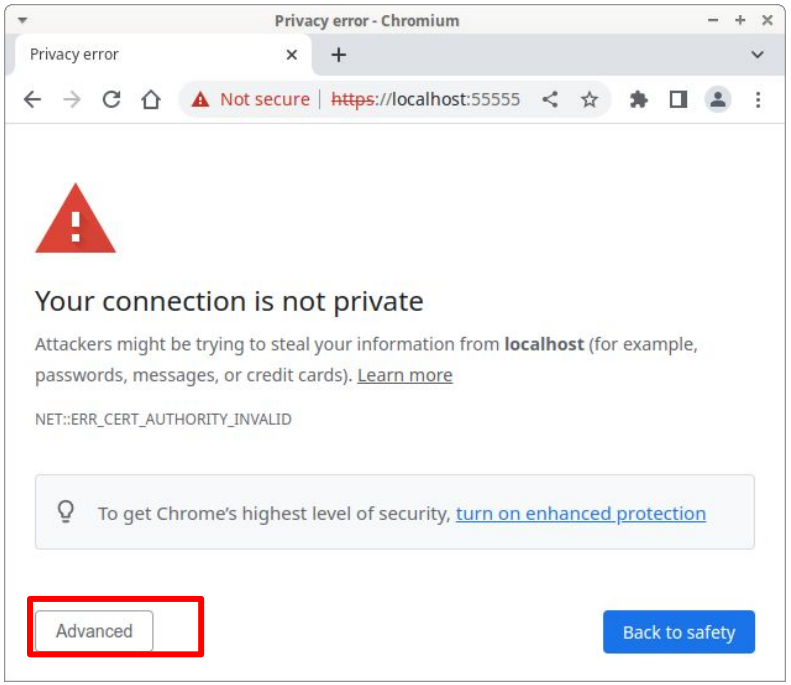
- Self-signed certificate
  - Confidentiality: yes
  - Integrity: yes
  - Authentication: no

Data Comm Attacks

- See **PennyAdmin09cHttpsLocal** app
  - **runserver.py**
  - penny.sql, penny.sqlite
  - database.py
  - header.html, footer.html
  - index.html, show.html,
  - add.html, delete.html, reportresults.html
  - login.html, signup.html, loggedout.html
  - top.py, penny.py, auth.py

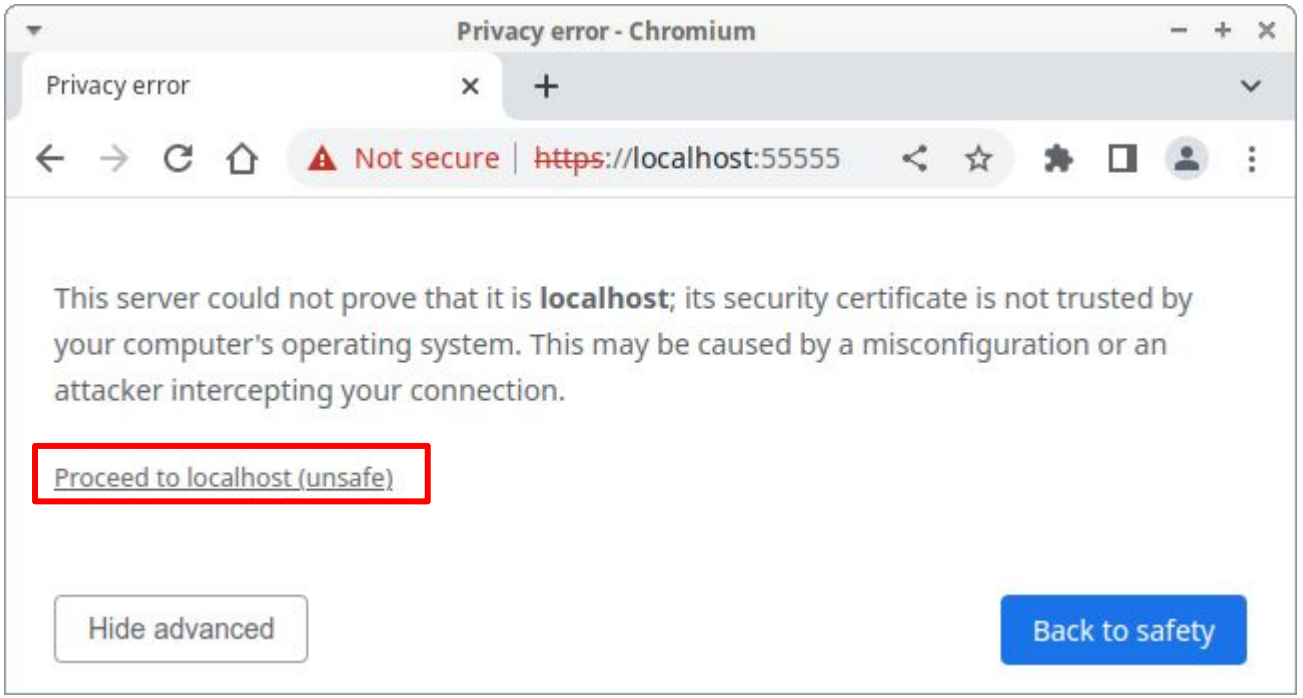
Data Comm Attacks

- See **PennyAdmin09cHttpsLocal** app
  - On local computer with Flask test server (using self-signed certif)



Data Comm Attacks

- See **PennyAdmin09cHttpsLocal** app
  - On local computer with Flask test server (using self-signed certif)



Data Comm Attacks

- See **PennyAdmin09cHttpsLocal** app
  - On local computer with Flask test server (using self-signed certif)

Data Comm Attacks

- Q: Project concern?
- A: **Yes**

Agenda

- Data storage Attacks
- Data comm attacks
- **Third-party authentication (briefly)**
  - CAS authentication
  - Microsoft EntraID authentication
  - Google authentication
  - Auth0 authentication

Agenda

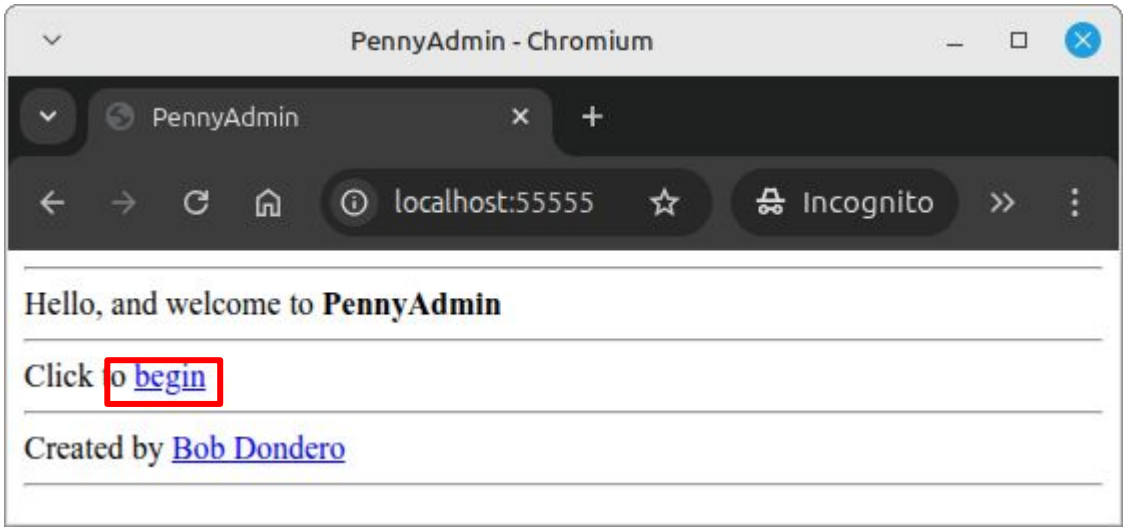
- Data storage attacks
- Data comm attacks
- Third-party authentication (briefly)
  - **CAS authentication**
  - Microsoft EntraID authentication
  - Google authentication
  - Auth0 authentication

CAS Authentication

- See **PennyAdminCas** app
  - Its behavior…

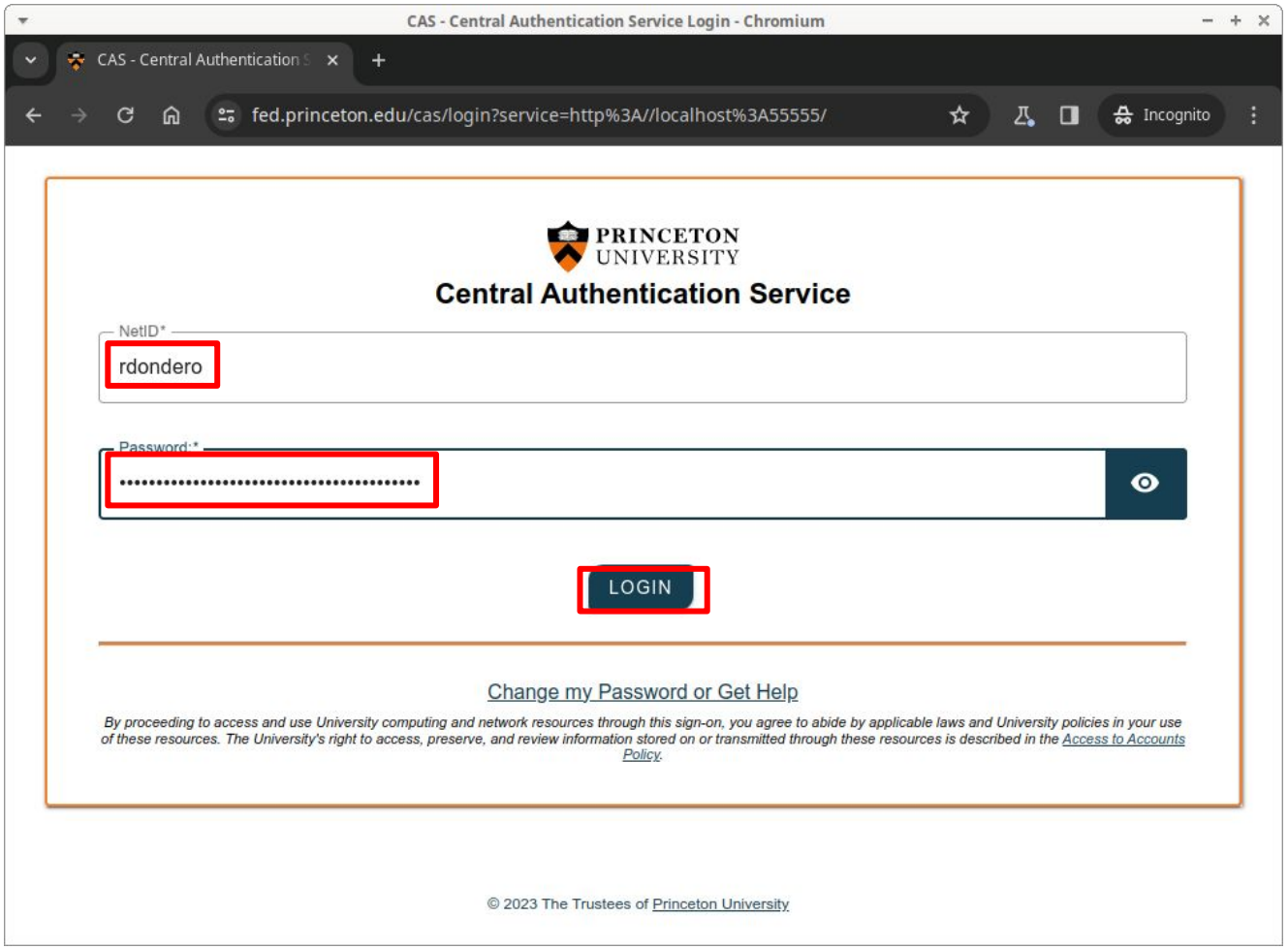
CAS Authentication

- See **PennyAdminCas** app (cont.)



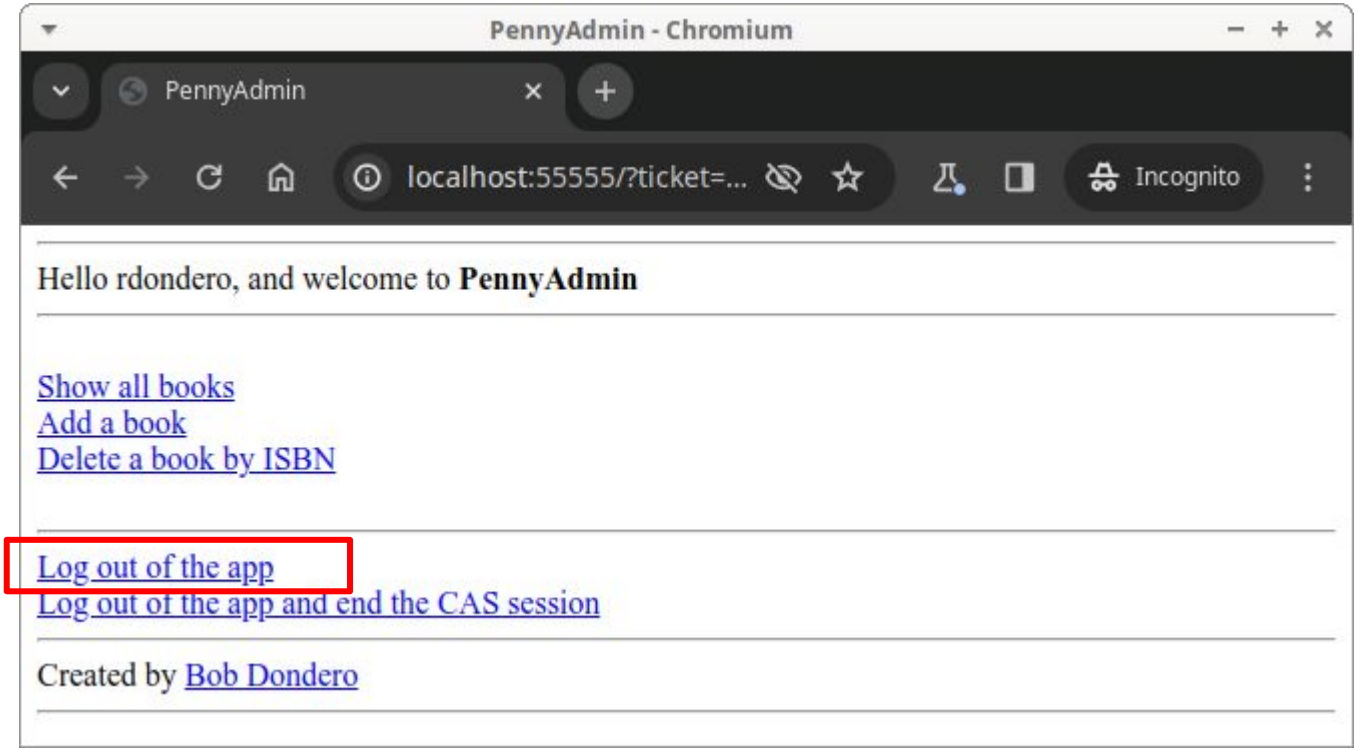
CAS Authentication

- See **PennyAdminCas** app (cont.)



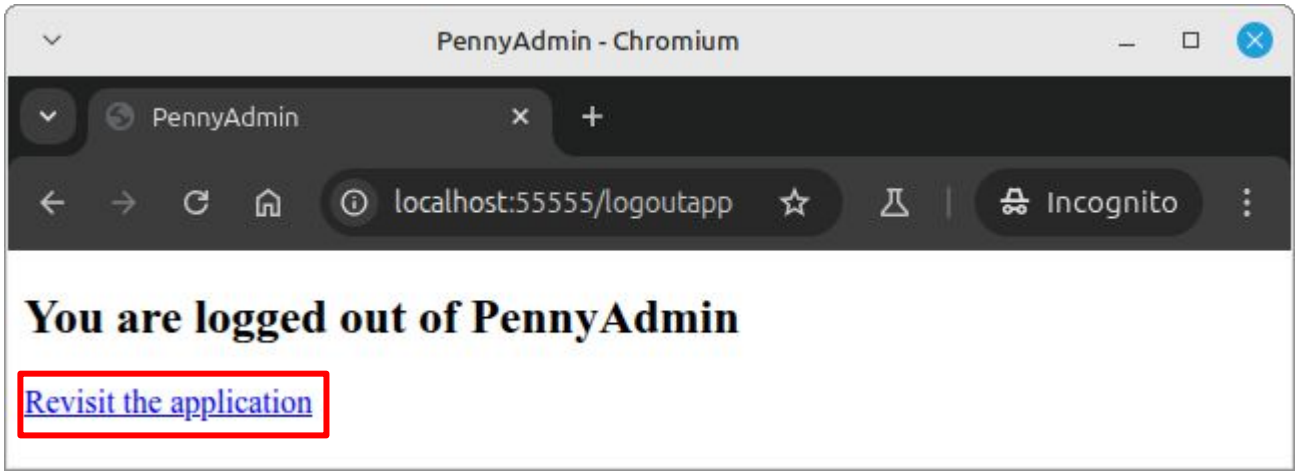
CAS Authentication

- See **PennyAdminCas** app (cont.)



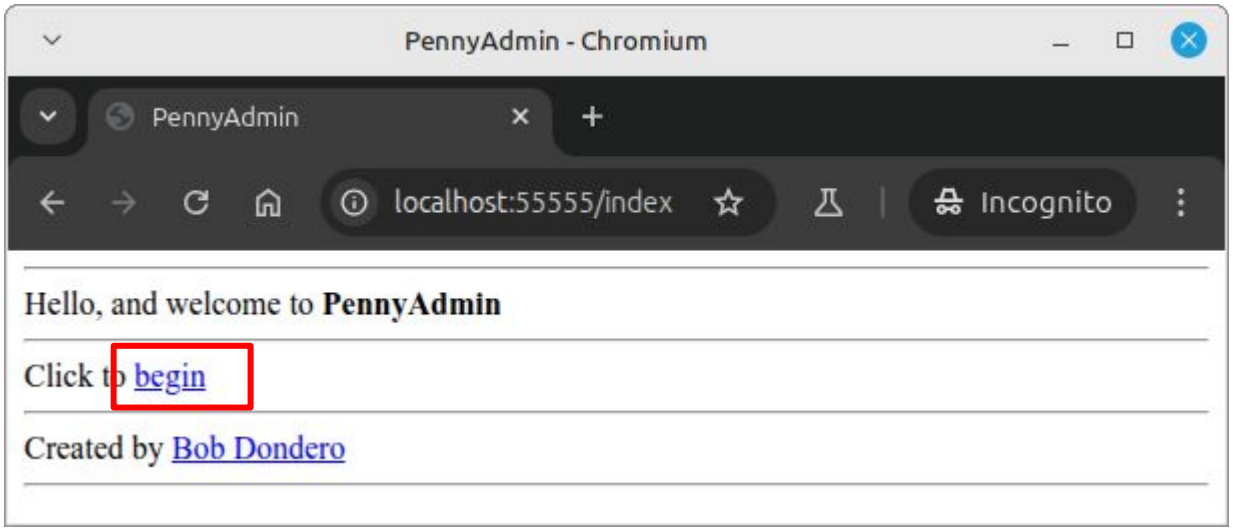
CAS Authentication

- See **PennyAdminCas** app (cont.)



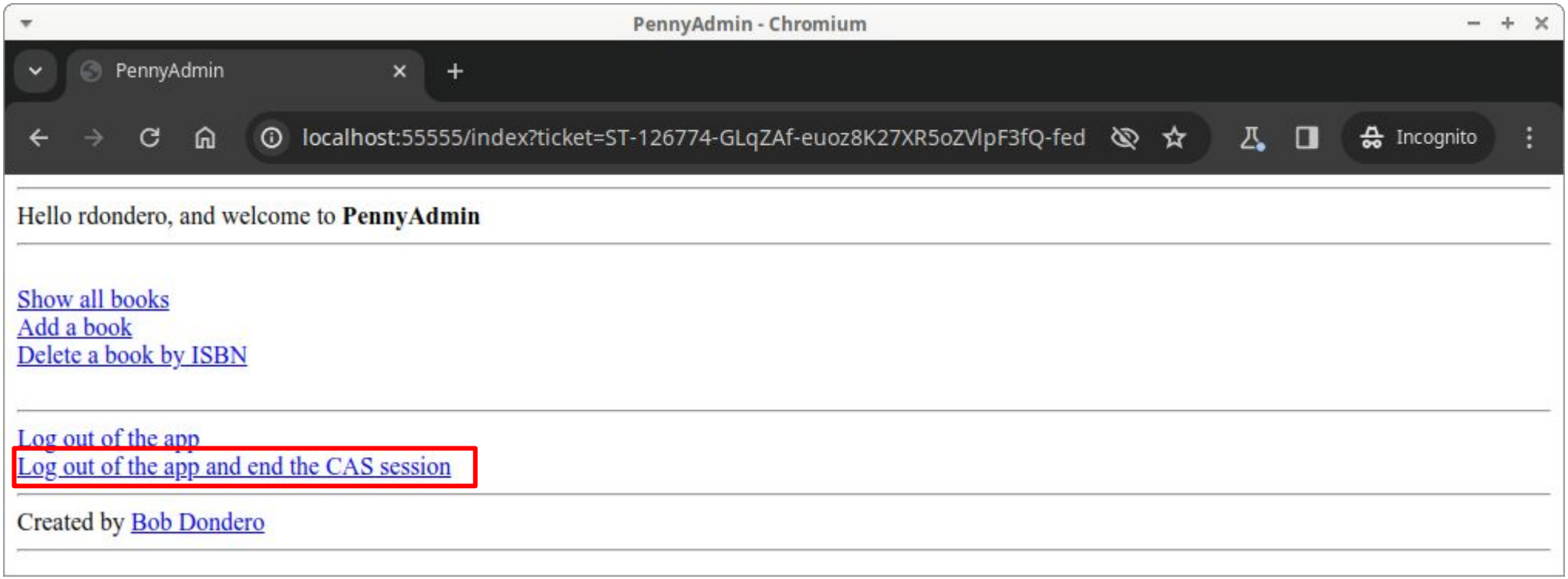
CAS Authentication

- See **PennyAdminCas** app (cont.)



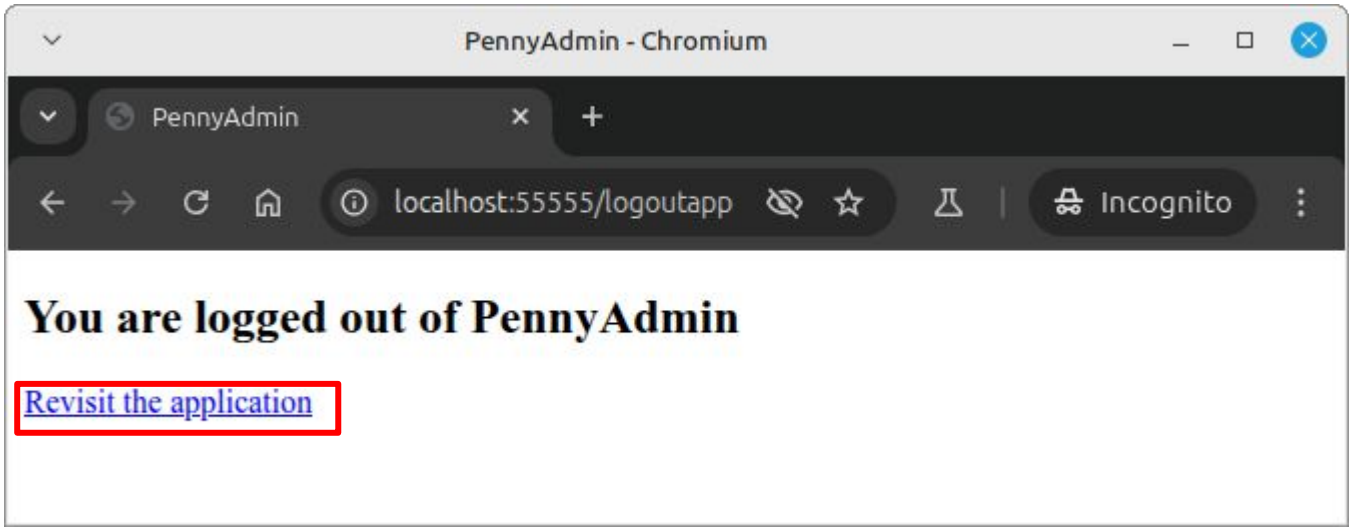
CAS Authentication

- See **PennyAdminCas** app (cont.)



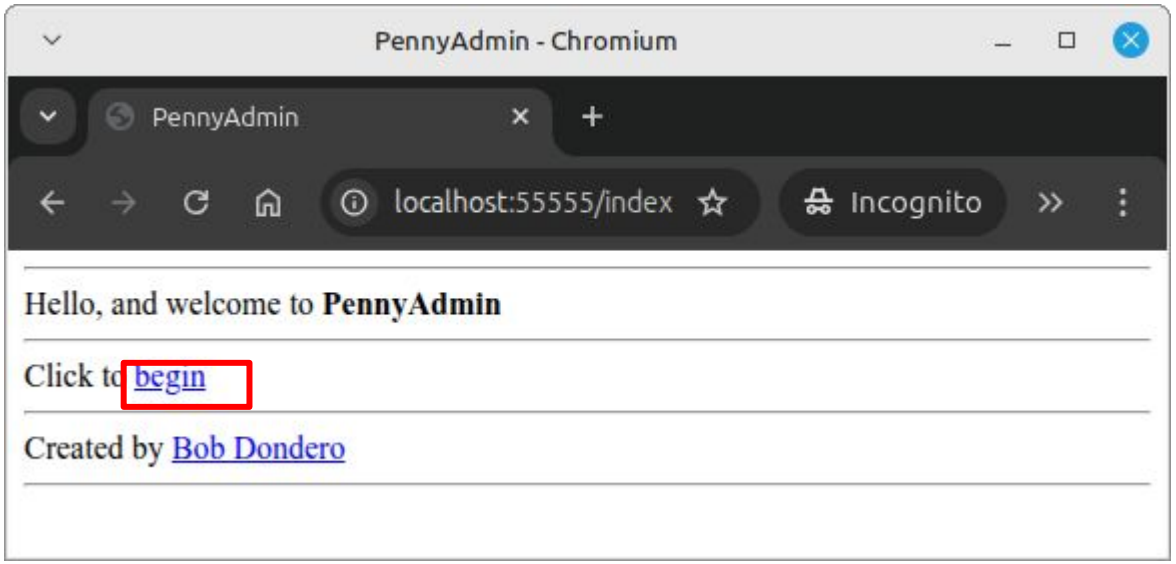
CAS Authentication

- See **PennyAdminCas** app (cont.)



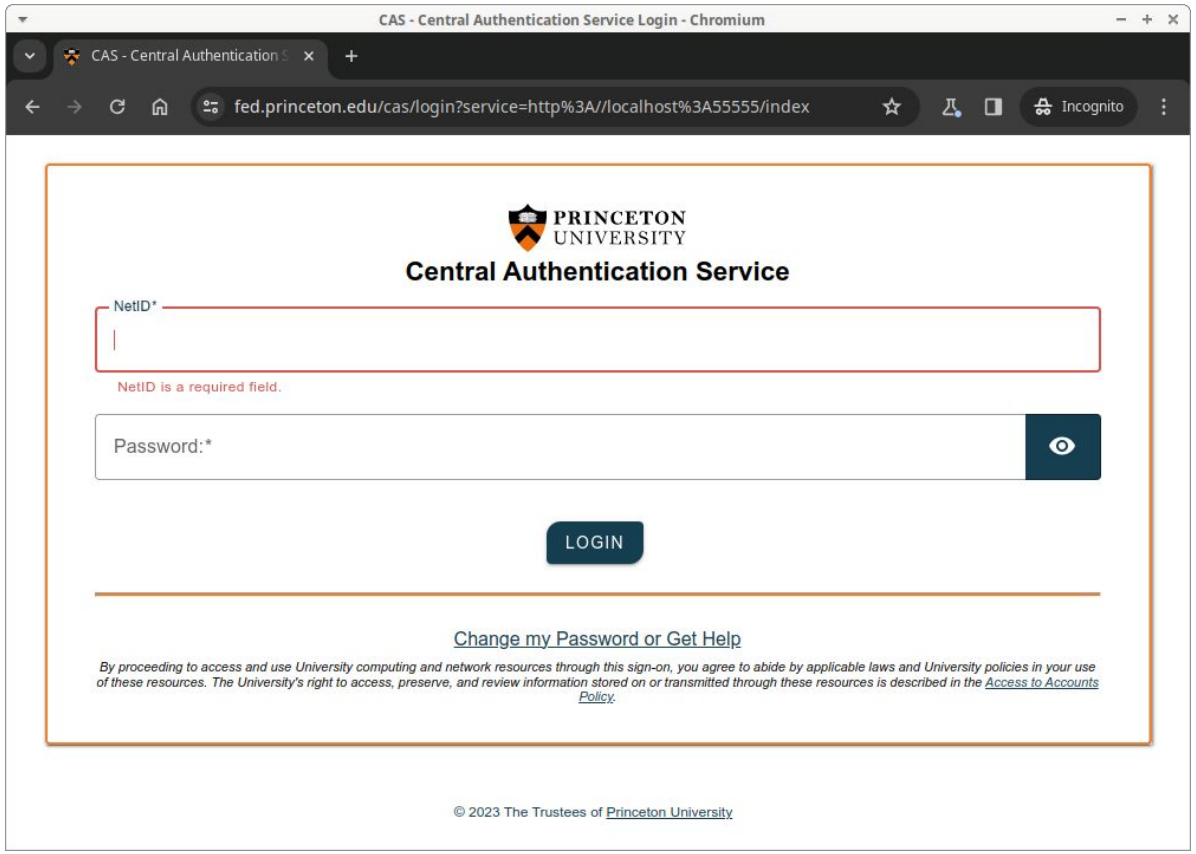
CAS Authentication

- See **PennyAdminCas** app (cont.)



CAS Authentication

- See **PennyAdminCas** app (cont.)



CAS Authentication

- See **PennyAdminCas** app (cont.)
  - See optional lecture material for:
    - The code
    - How to run it on your local computer
    - How to run it on Render
    - How it works

CAS Authentication

- **Pros**
  - Application need not manage usernames or passwords
  - Application ***cannot*** access passwords!
  - Application is constrained to one user community
  - Princeton OIT will support for the foreseeable future

CAS Authentication

- **Cons**
  - Complex
  - Adds overhead, but only during user's first visit to the app per browser session
  - Application is constrained to one user community!
  - Princeton OIT is phasing out
  - Deployment requires (minimal) Princeton OIT intervention

Agenda

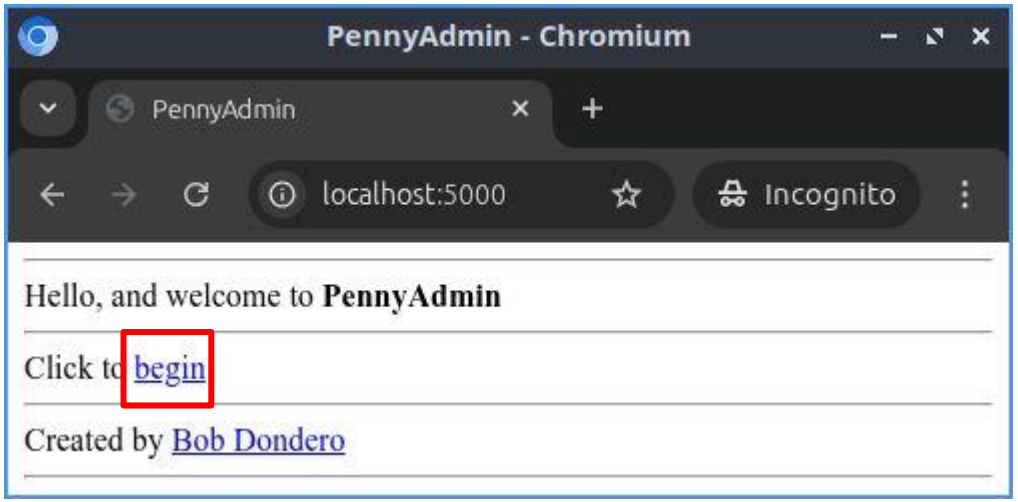
- Data comm attacks
- Third-party authentication (briefly)
  - CAS authentication
  - **Microsoft EntraID authentication**
  - Google authentication
  - Auth0 authentication

EntraID Authentication

- See **PennyAdminEntraID** app
  - Its behavior…

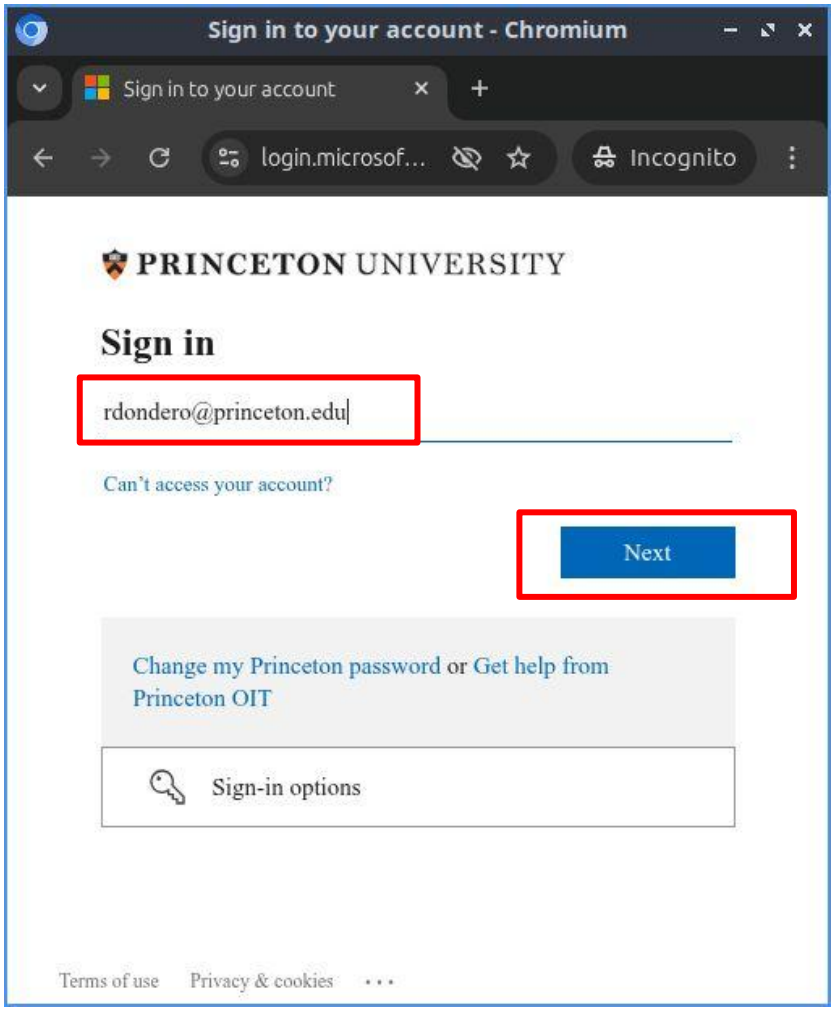
EntraID Authentication

- See **PennyAdminEntraID** app (cont.)



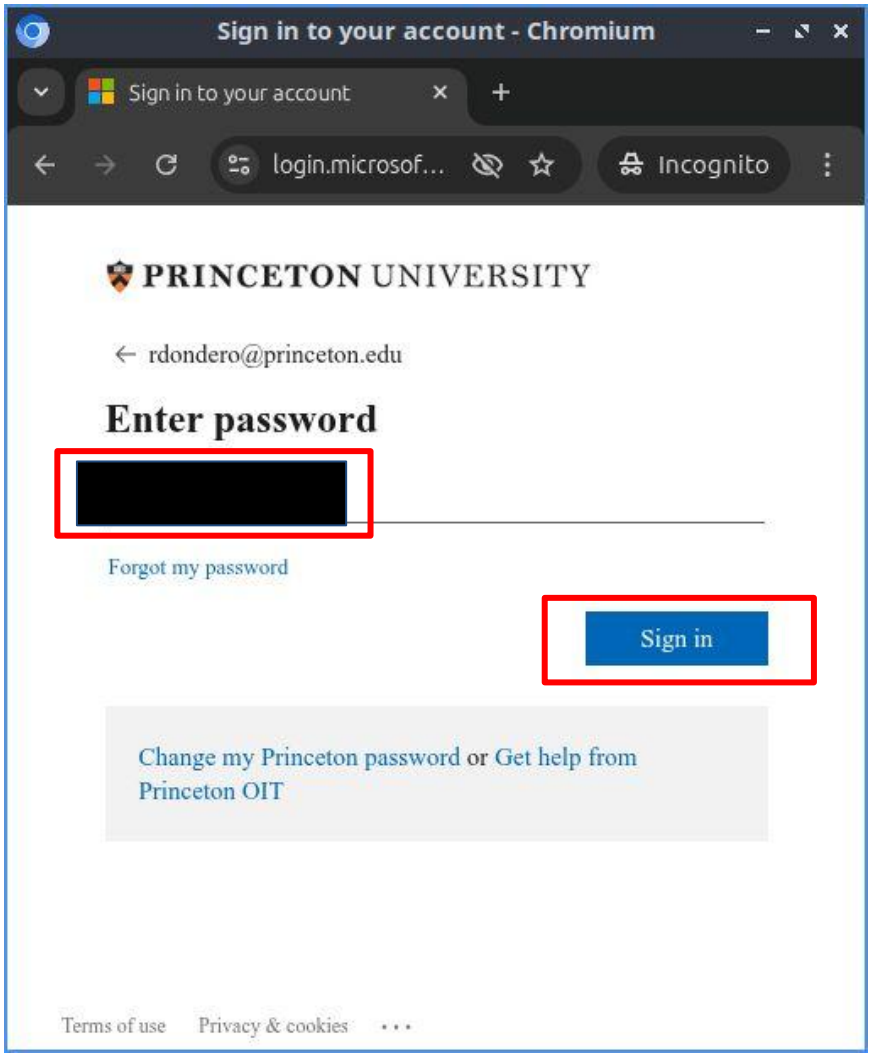
EntraID Authentication

- See **PennyAdminEntraID** app (cont.)



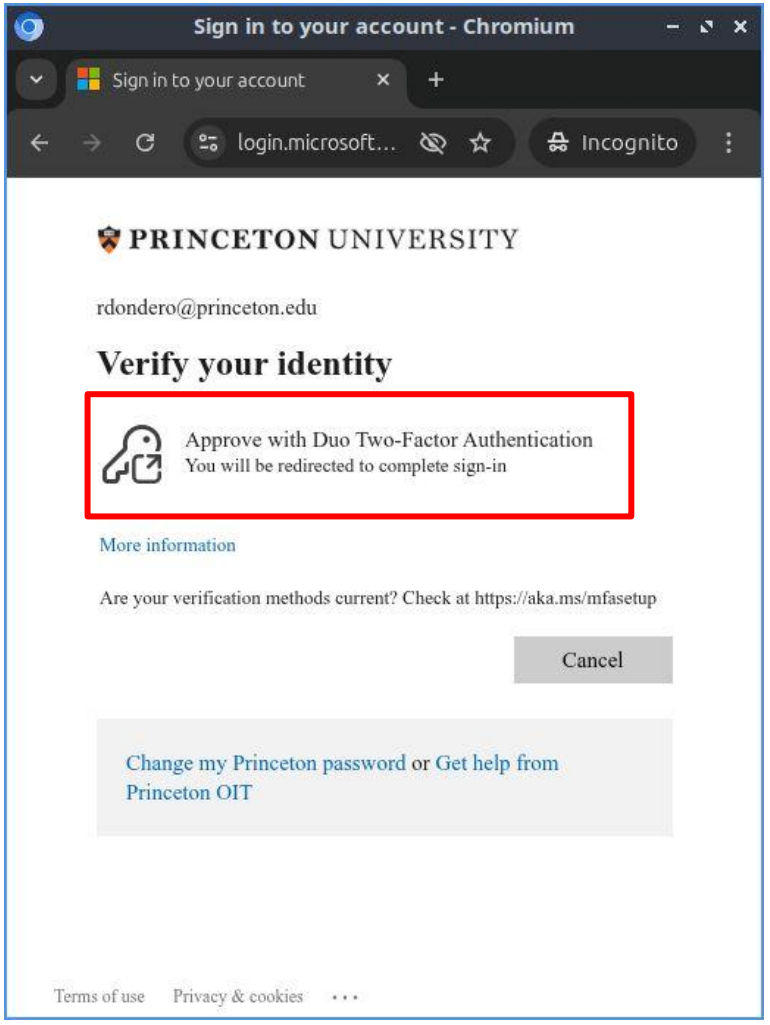
EntraID Authentication

- See **PennyAdminEntraID** app (cont.)



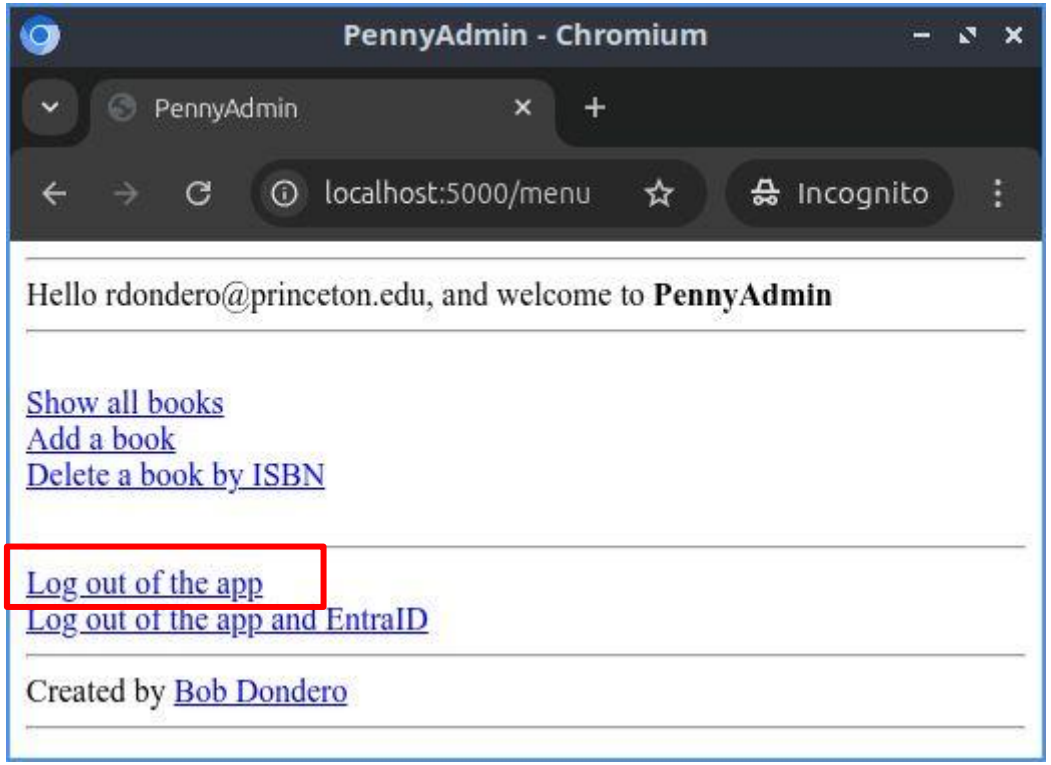
EntraID Authentication

- See **PennyAdminEntraID** app (cont.)



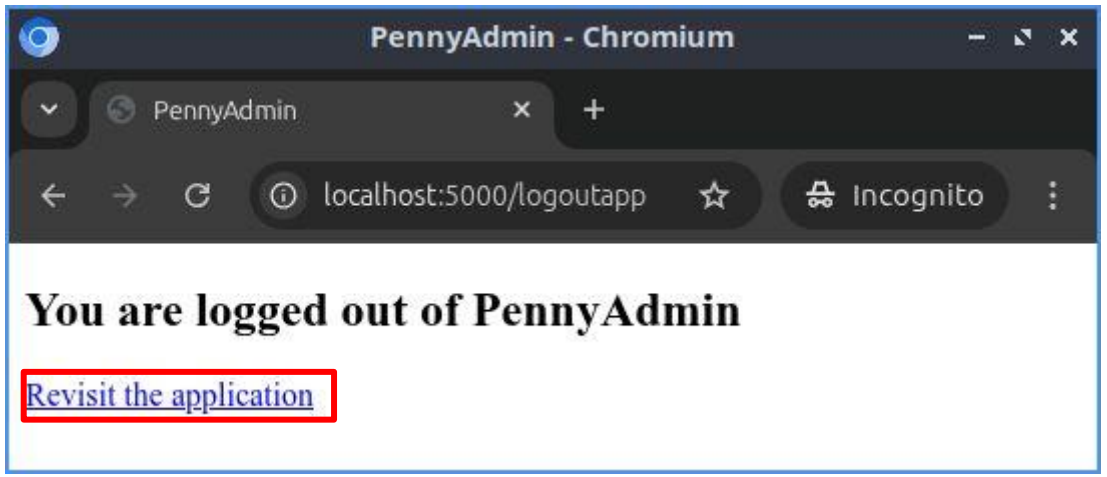
EntraID Authentication

- See **PennyAdminEntraID** app (cont.)



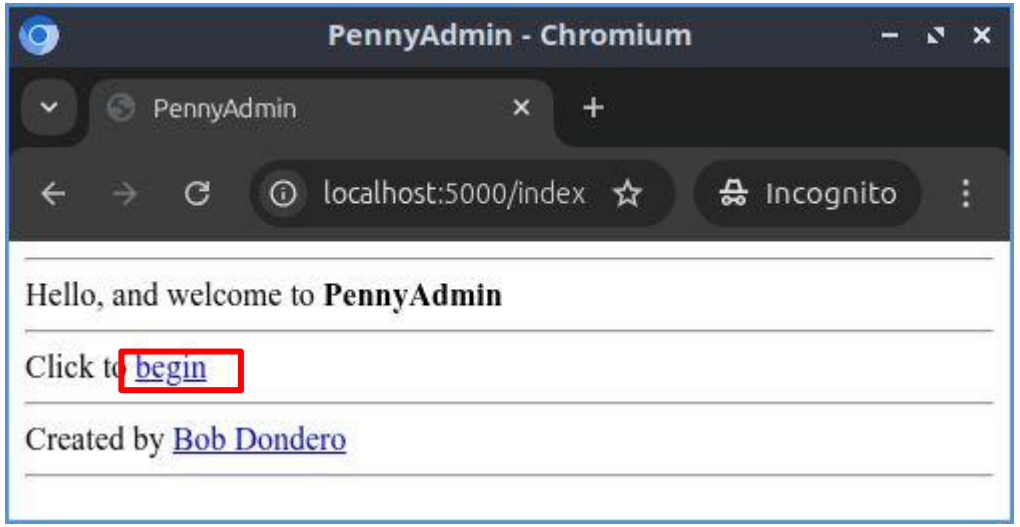
EntraID Authentication

- See **PennyAdminEntraID** app (cont.)



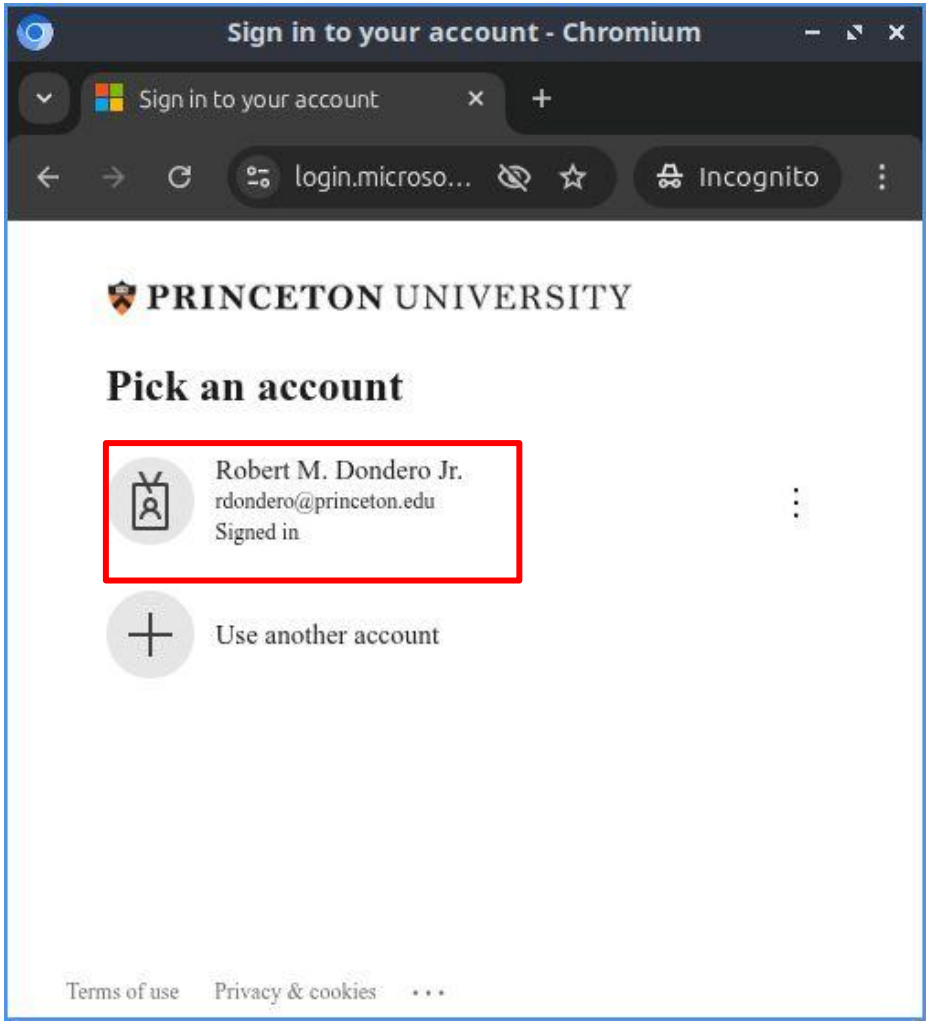
EntraID Authentication

- See **PennyAdminEntraID** app (cont.)



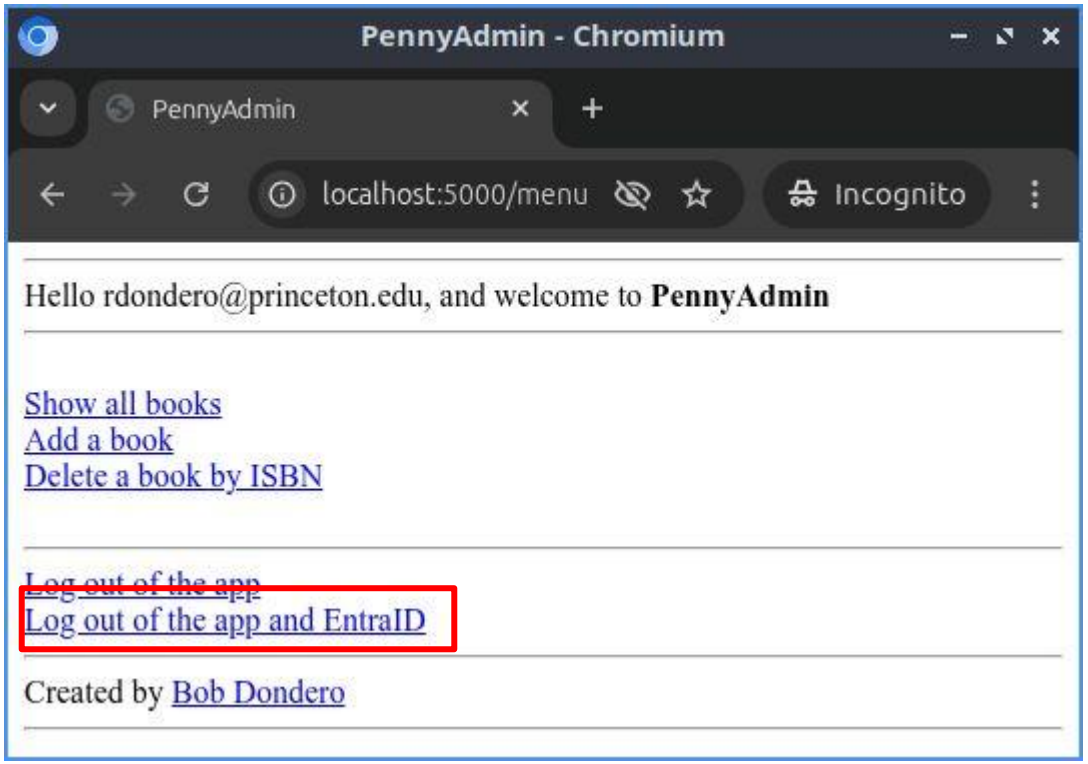
EntraID Authentication

- See **PennyAdminEntraID** app (cont.)



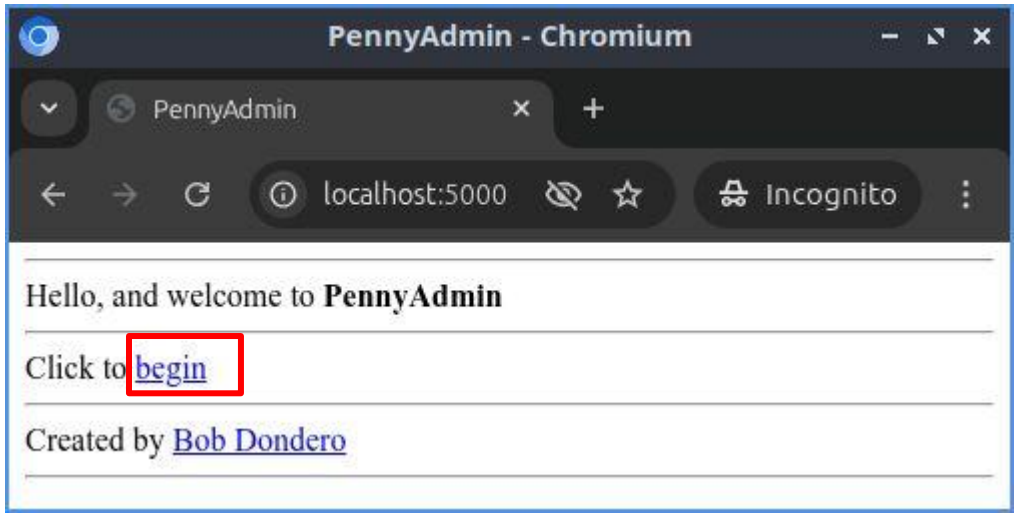
EntraID Authentication

- See **PennyAdminEntraID** app (cont.)



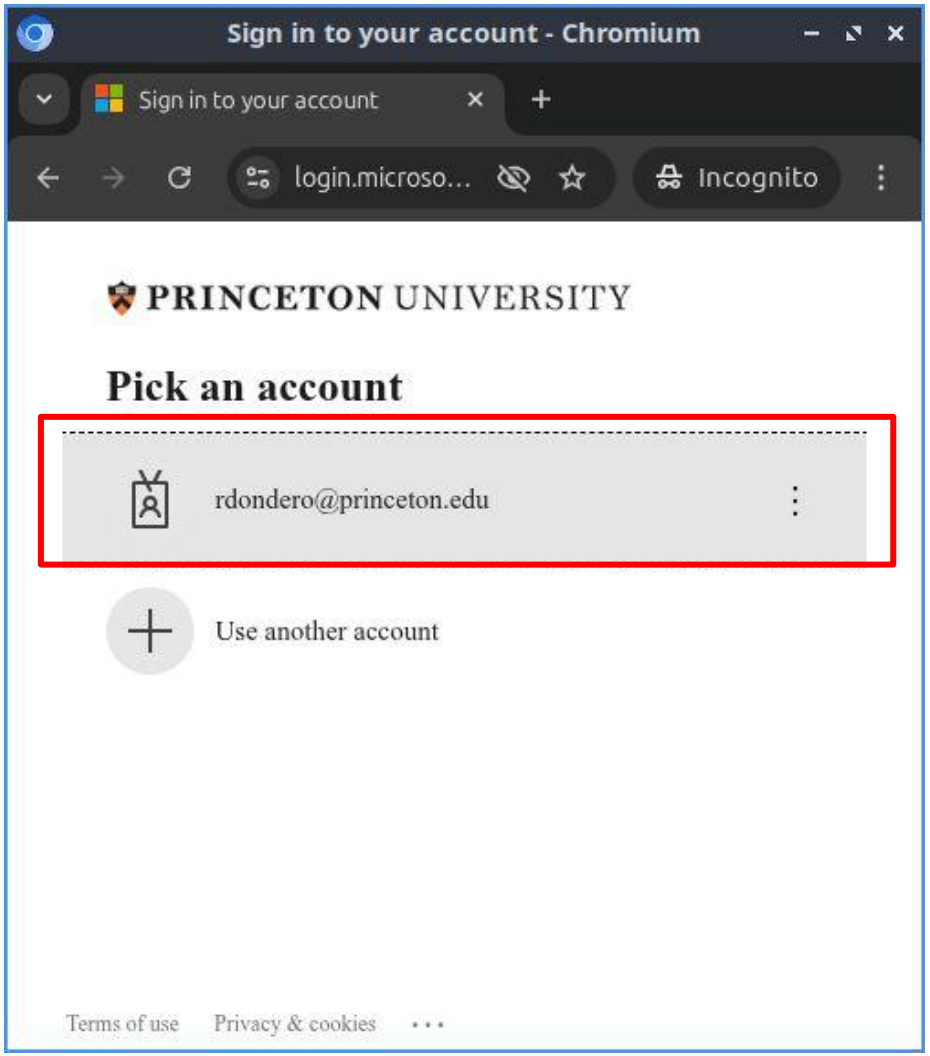
EntraID Authentication

- See **PennyAdminEntraID** app (cont.)



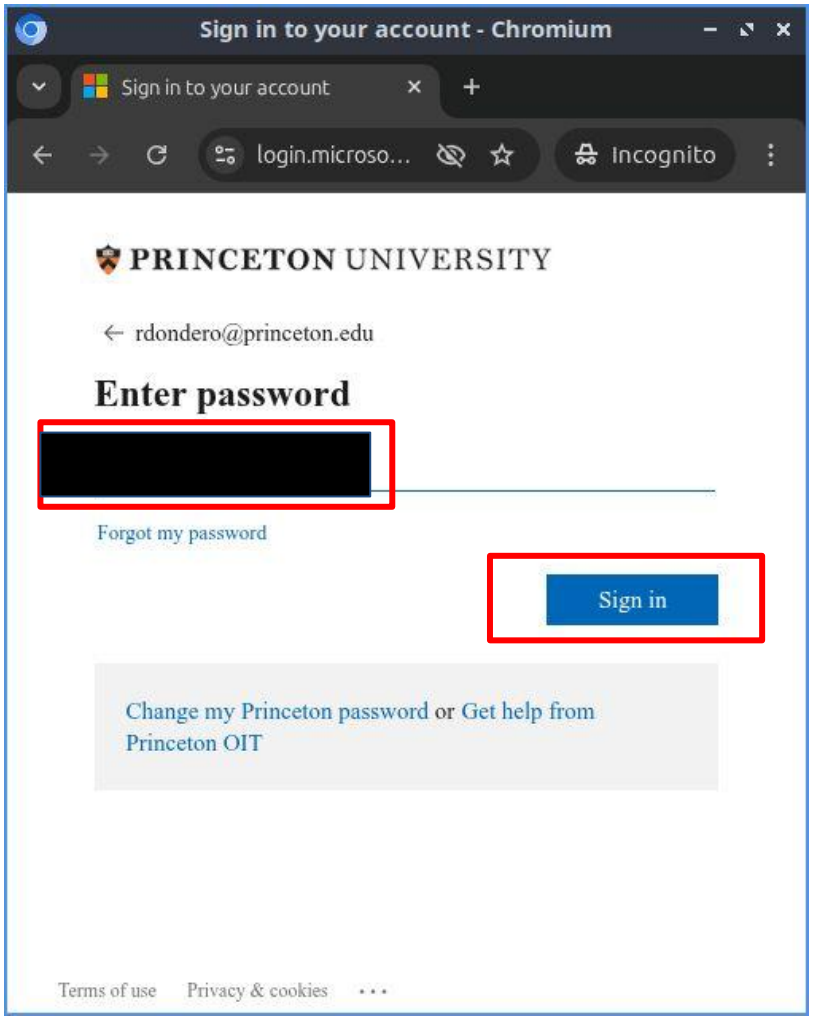
EntraID Authentication

- See **PennyAdminEntraID** app (cont.)



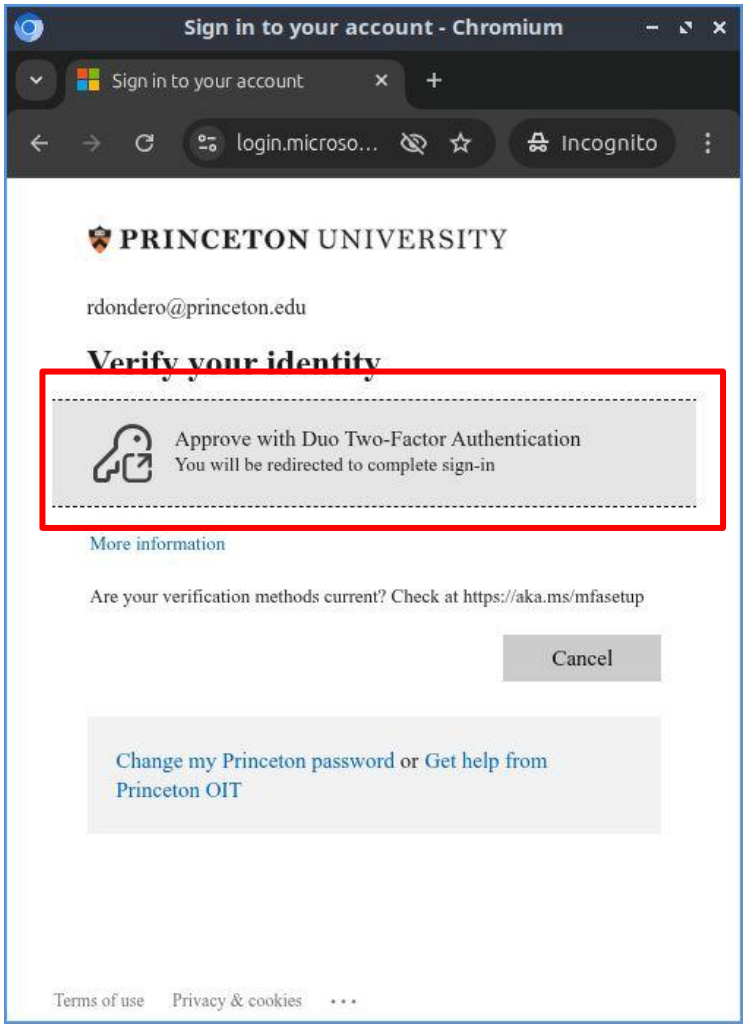
EntraID Authentication

- See **PennyAdminEntraID** app (cont.)



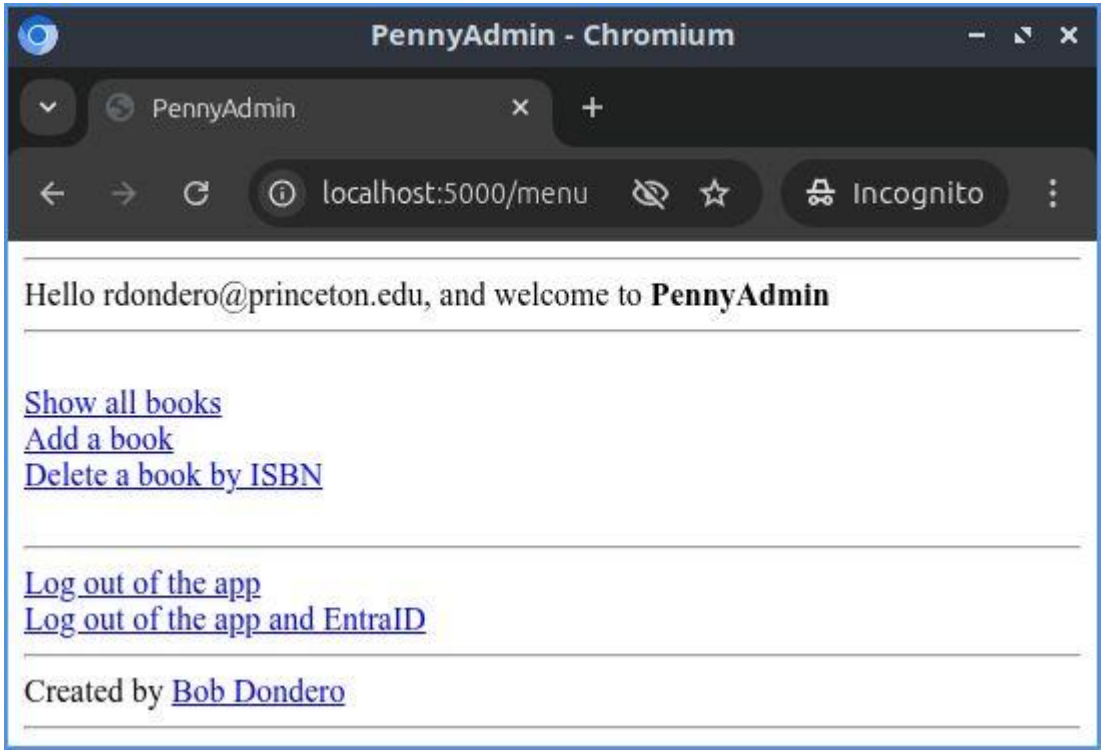
EntraID Authentication

- See **PennyAdminEntraID** app (cont.)



EntraID Authentication

- See **PennyAdminEntraID** app (cont.)



EntraID Authentication

- See **PennyAdminEntraID** app (cont.)
  - See optional lecture material for:
    - The code
    - How to run it on your local computer
    - How to run it on Render

EntraID Authentication

- **Pros**
  - Application need not manage usernames or passwords
  - Application ***cannot*** access passwords!
  - Application is constrained to one user community
  - More standards-based than CAS
  - Princeton OIT is phasing in
  - No need for Princeton OIT intervention

EntraID Authentication

- **Cons**
  - Complex
  - Adds overhead, but only during user's first visit to the app per browser session
  - Application is constrained to one user community!

Agenda

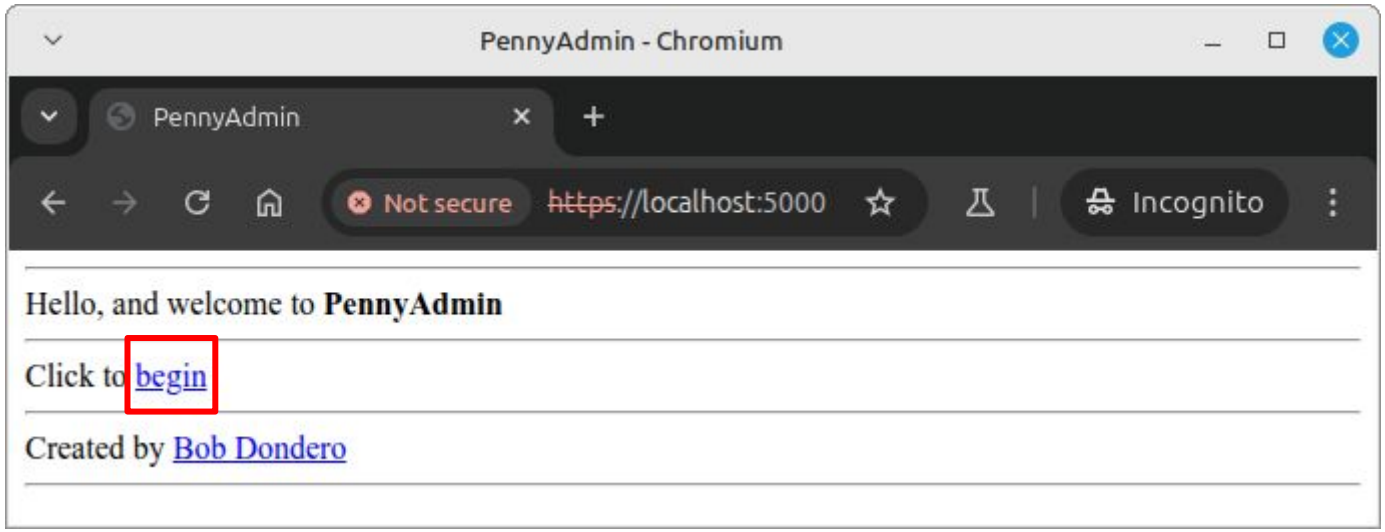
- Data comm attacks
- Third-party authentication (briefly)
  - CAS
  - Microsoft EntraID authentication
  - **Google authentication**
  - Auth0 authentication

Google Authentication

- See **PennyAdminGoogle** app
  - Its behavior…

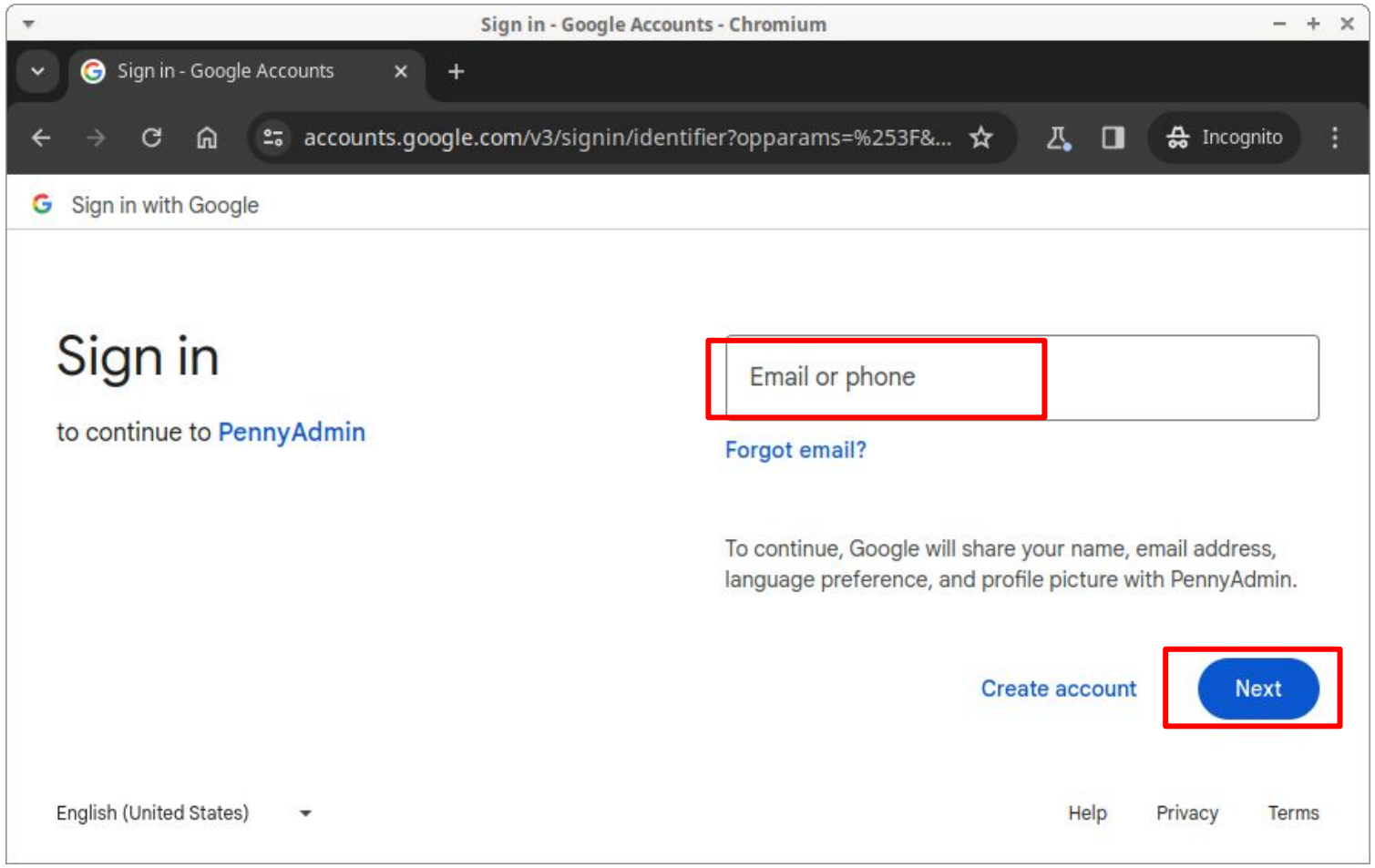
Google Authentication

- See **PennyAdminGoogle** app (cont.)



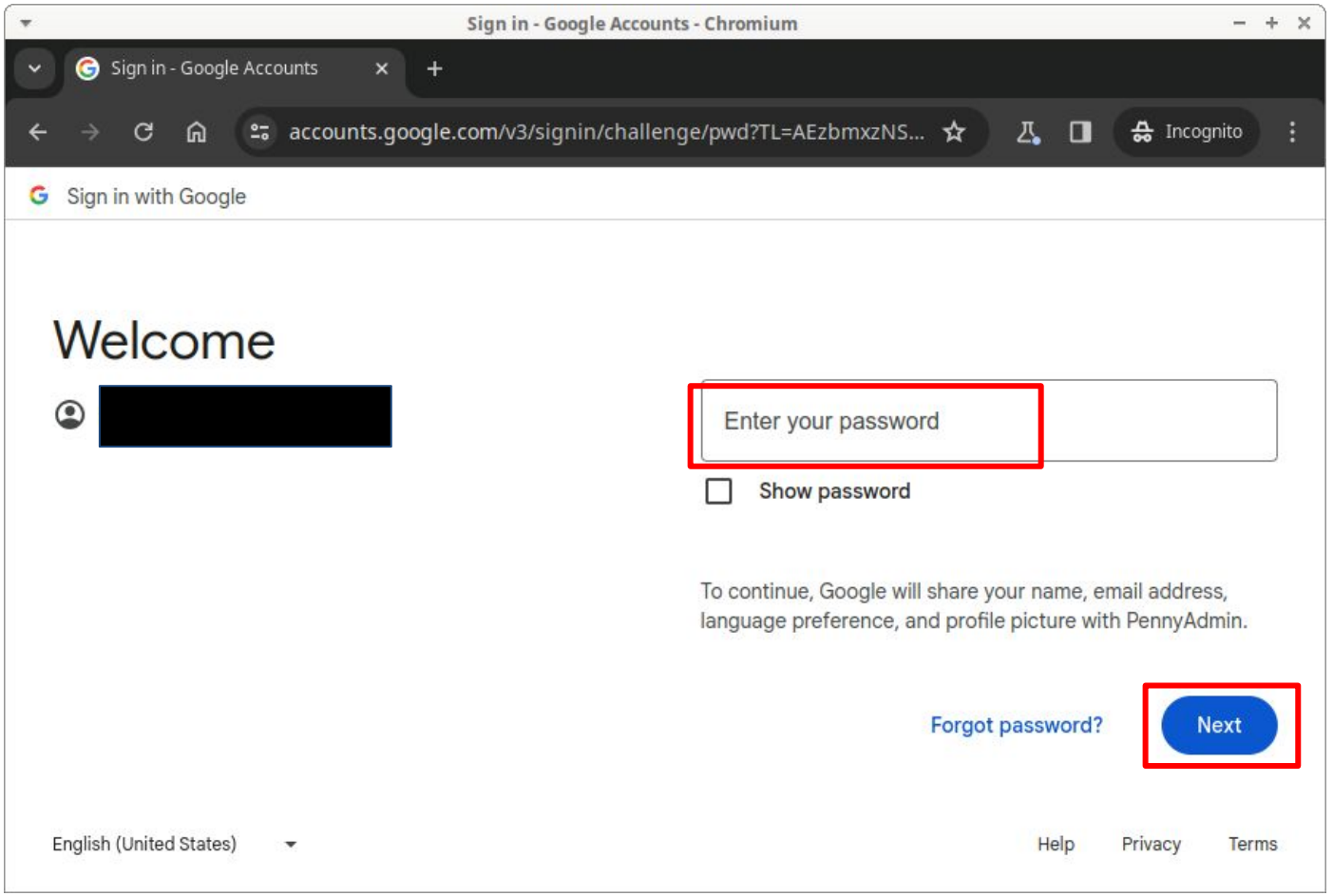
Google Authentication

- See **PennyAdminGoogle** app (cont.)



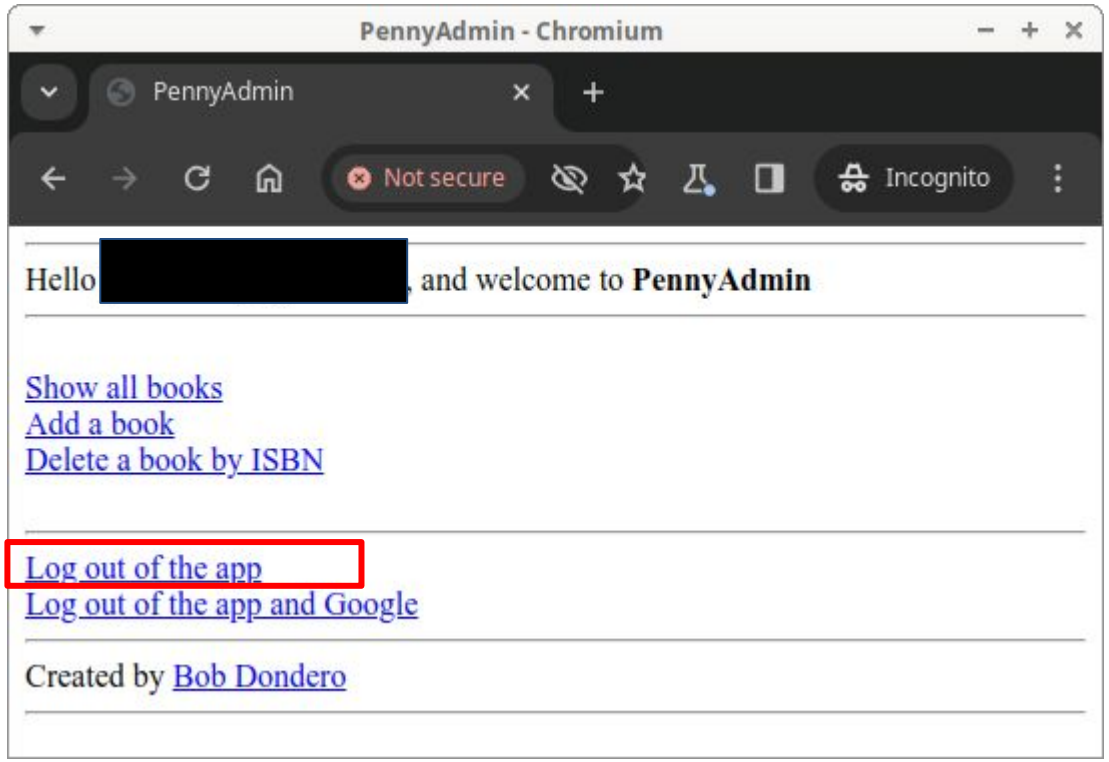
Google Authentication

- See **PennyAdminGoogle** app (cont.)



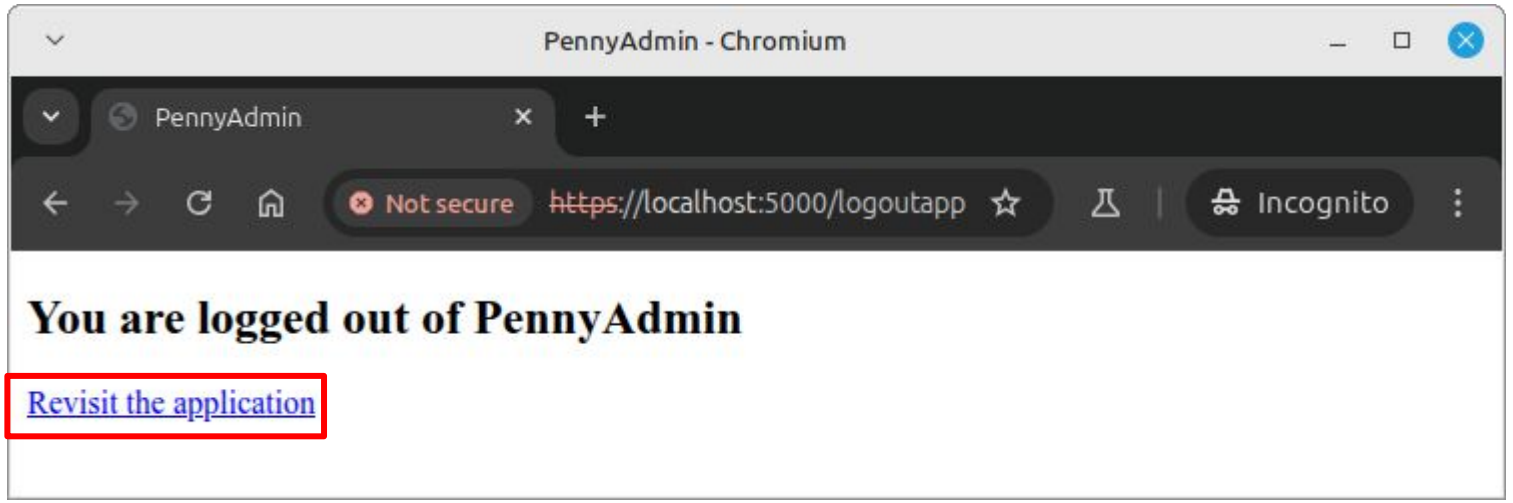
Google Authentication

- See **PennyAdminGoogle** app (cont.)



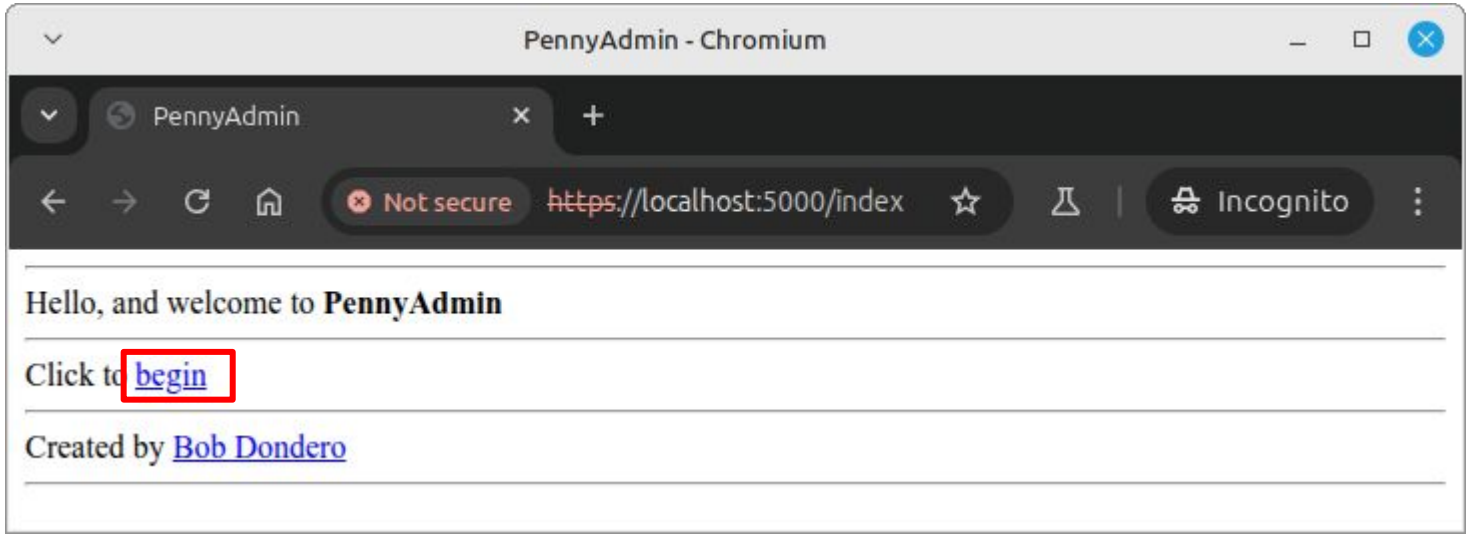
Google Authentication

- See **PennyAdminGoogle** app (cont.)



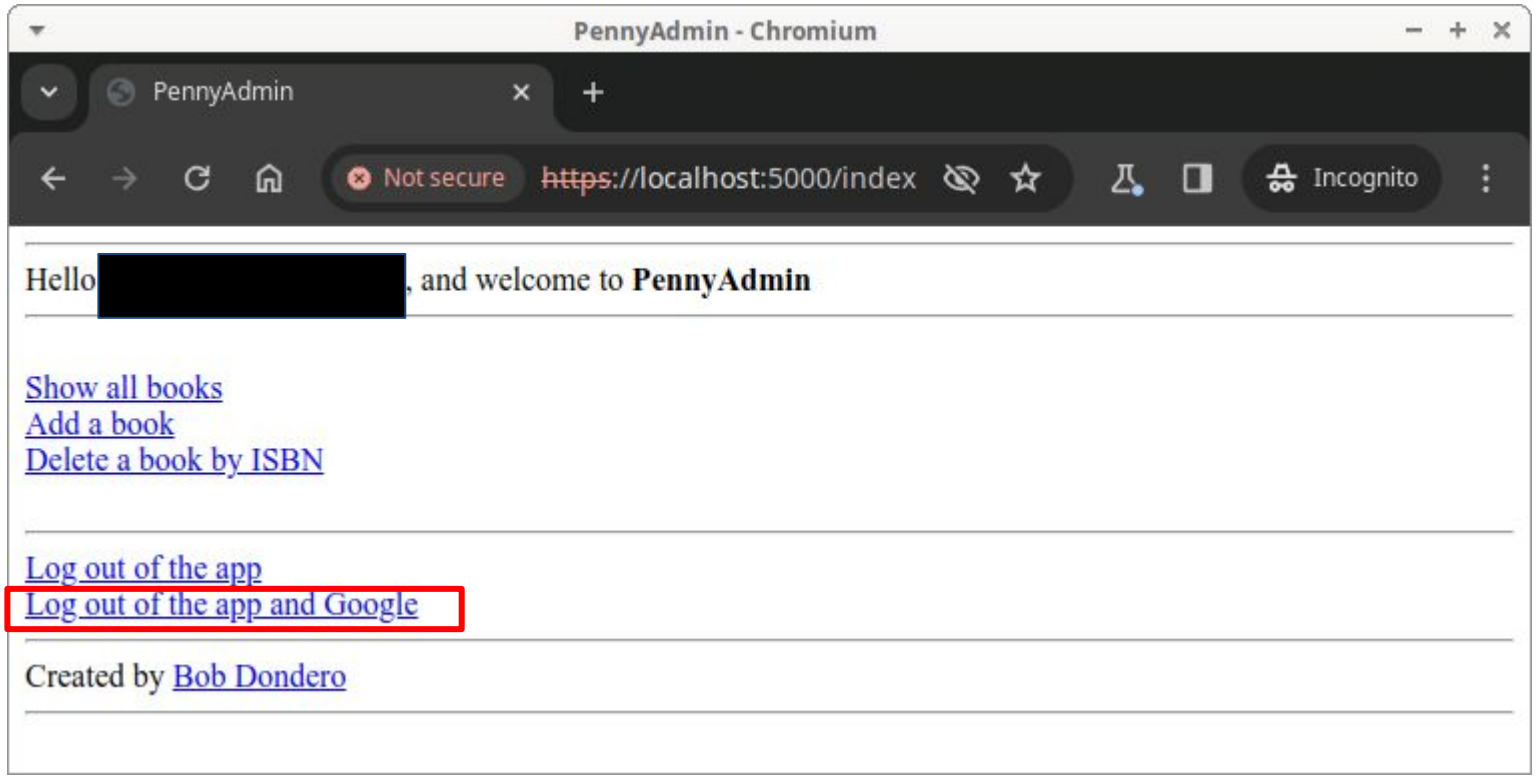
Google Authentication

- See **PennyAdminGoogle** app (cont.)



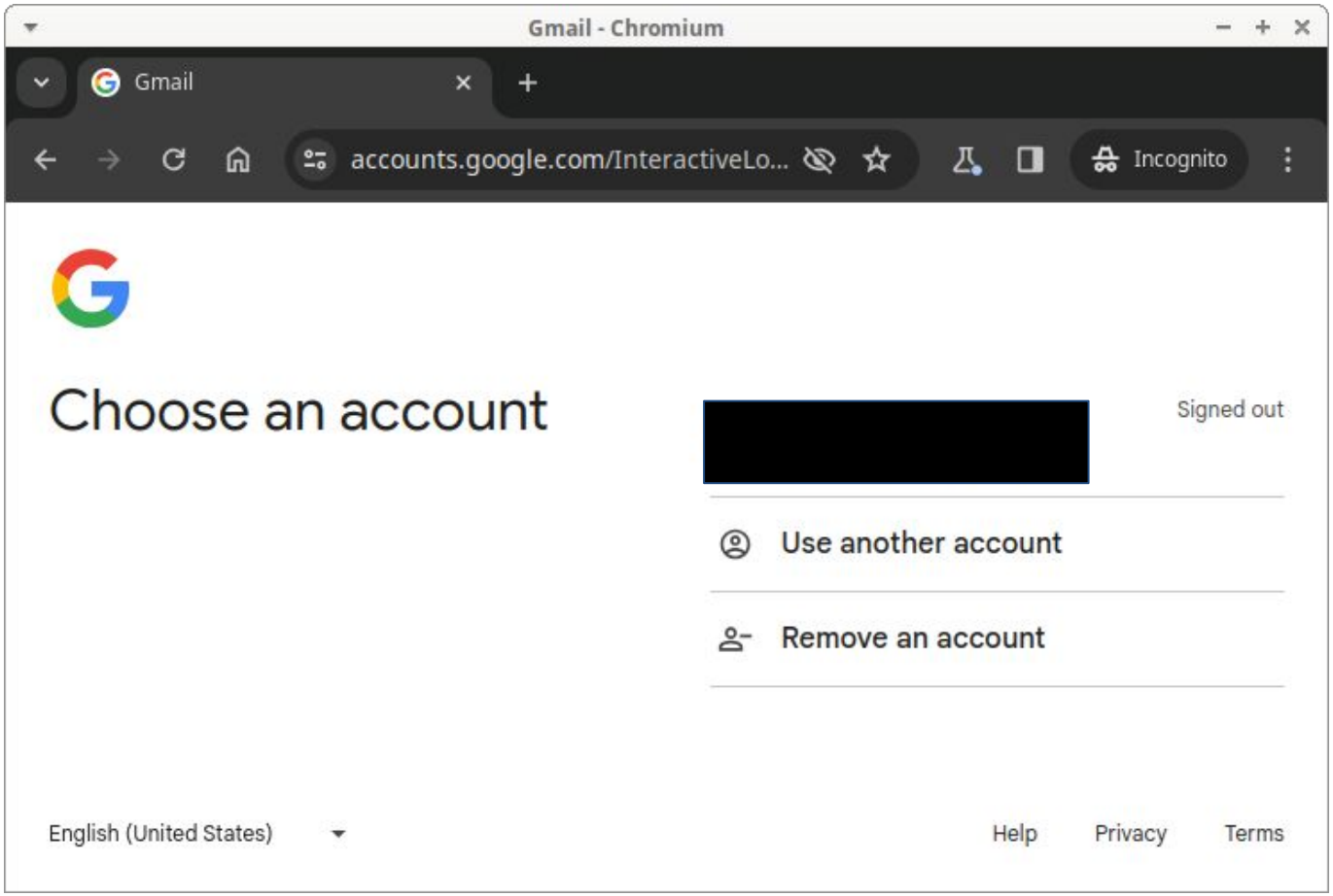
Google Authentication

- See **PennyAdminGoogle** app (cont.)



Google Authentication

- See **PennyAdminGoogle** app (cont.)



How to show loggedout page?

Google Authentication

- See **PennyAdminGoogle** app (cont.)
  - See optional lecture material for:
    - The code
    - How to run it on your local computer
    - How to run it on Render
    - How it works

Google Authentication

- **Pros**
  - Users need not remember (yet another) password
  - Application need not manage usernames or passwords
  - Application ***cannot*** access passwords
  - Application can access profile info that user provided to Google
    - Given name, family name, picture, …

Google Authentication

- **Cons**
  - Complex
  - Adds overhead, but mostly only during first user visit per browser session
  - Application is constrained to users who have Google accounts
  - Must use HTTPS with local server
  - If attacker learns user's password for **Google**, then attacker learns user's password for **your app**

Agenda

- Data comm attacks
- Third-party authentication (briefly)
  - CAS
  - Microsoft EntraID authentication
  - Google authentication
  - **Auth0 authentication**

Auth0 Authentication

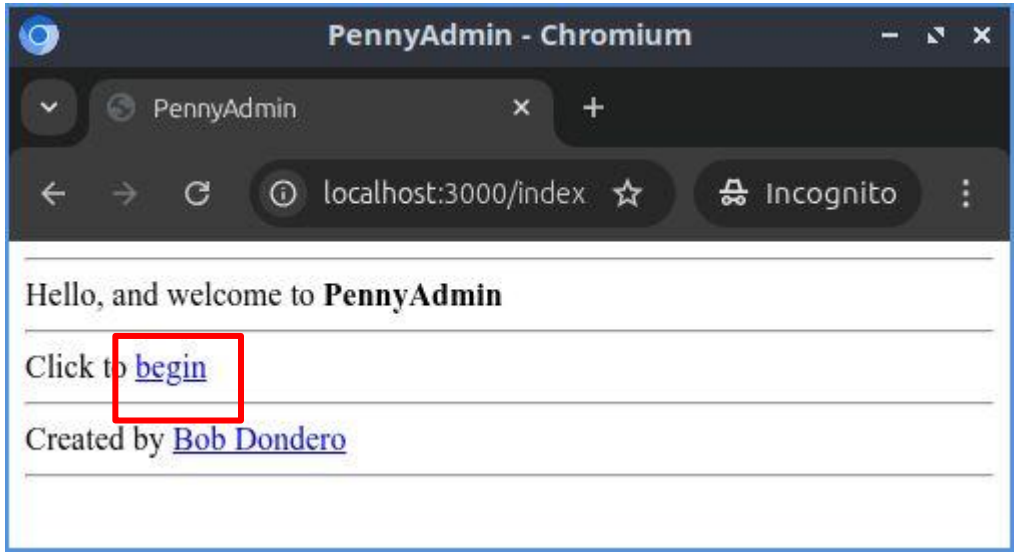
- ***Auth0***
  - https://auth0.com
  - A private company
  - Sells authentication services
  - Has a free tier

Auth0 Authentication

- See **PennyAdminAuth0** app
  - Its behavior…

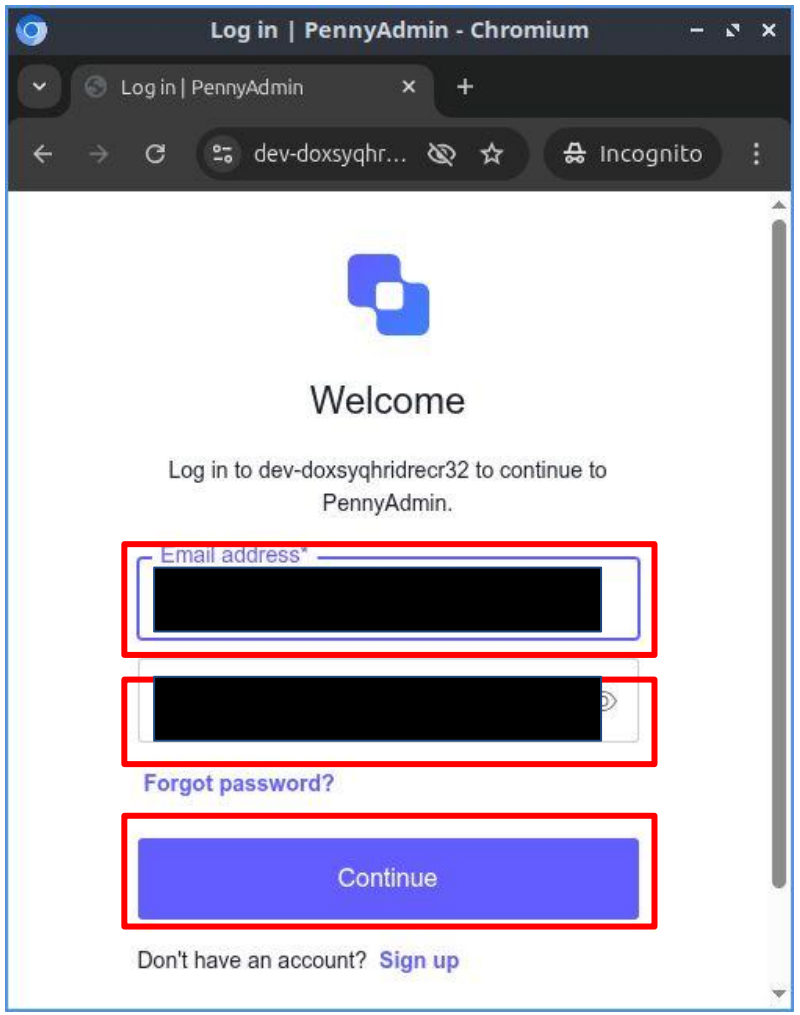
Auth0 Authentication

- See **PennyAdminAuth0** app (cont.)



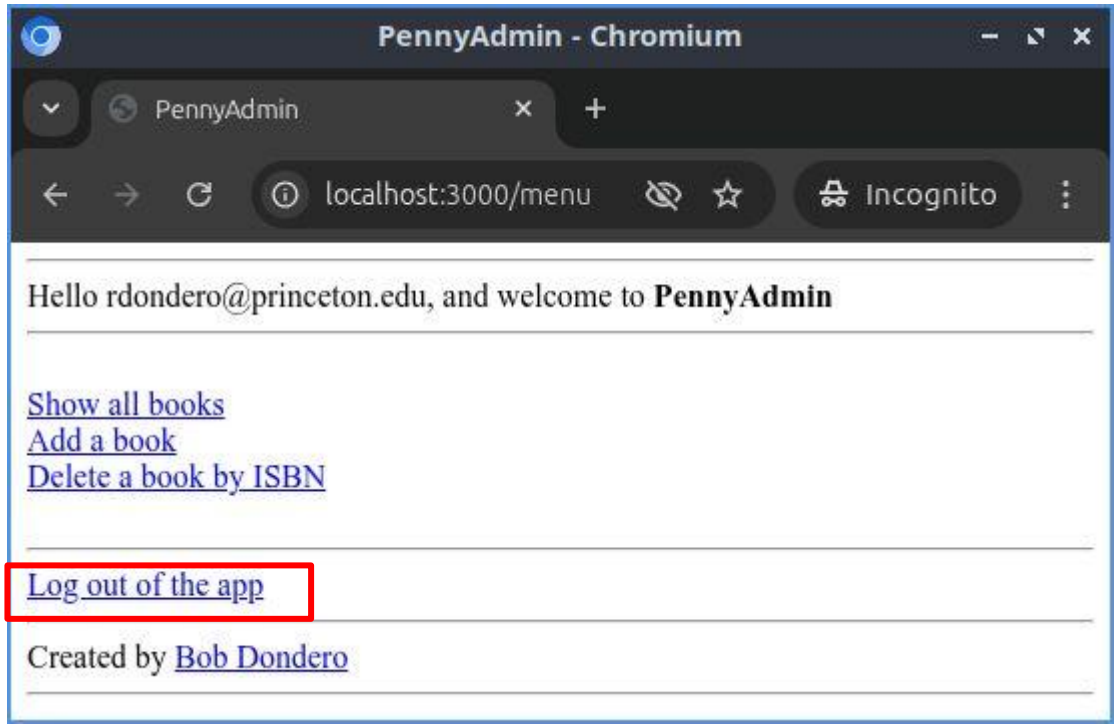
Auth0 Authentication

- See **PennyAdminAuth0** app (cont.)



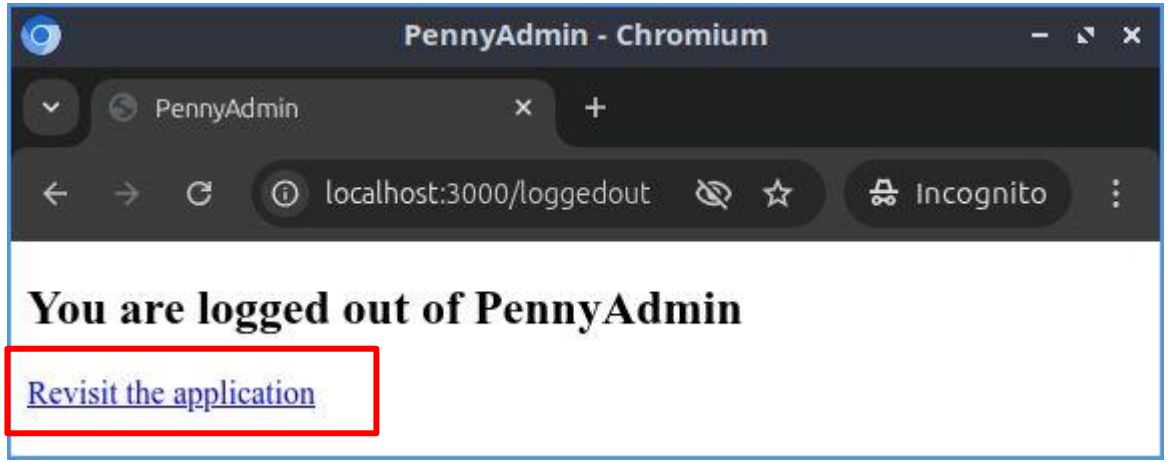
Auth0 Authentication

- See **PennyAdminAuth0** app (cont.)



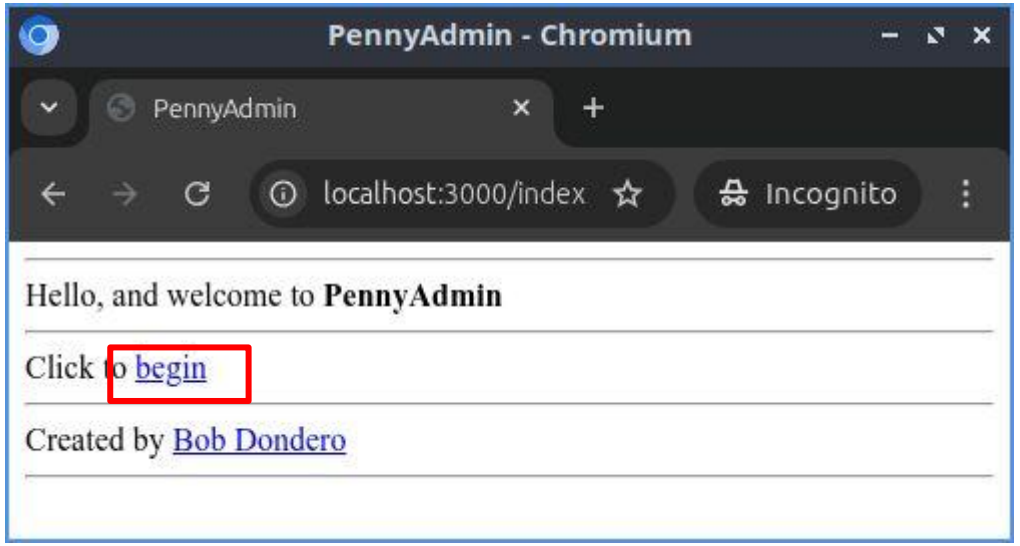
Auth0 Authentication

- See **PennyAdminAuth0** app (cont.)



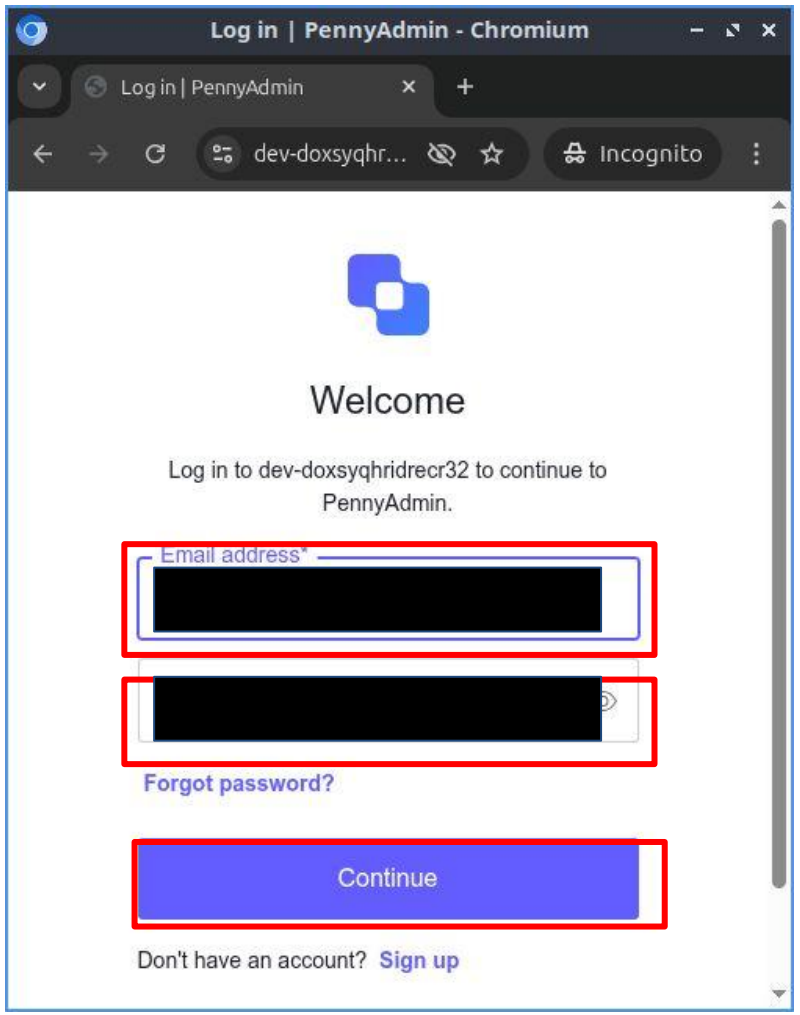
Auth0 Authentication

- See **PennyAdminAuth0** app (cont.)



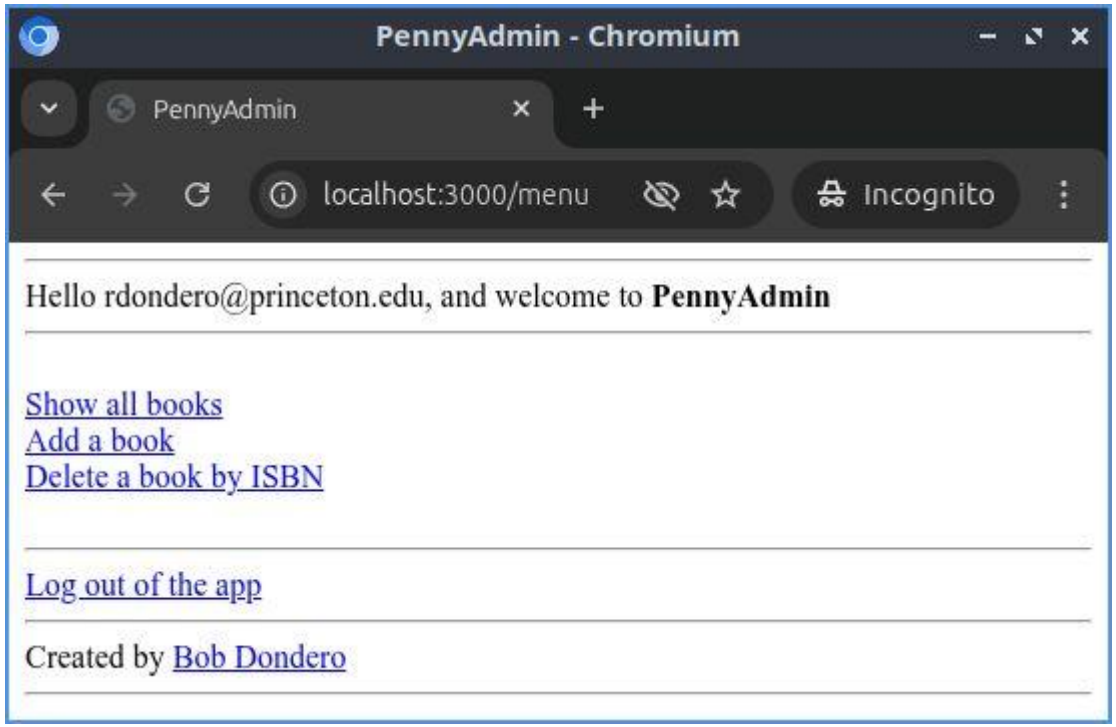
Auth0 Authentication

- See **PennyAdminAuth0** app (cont.)



Auth0 Authentication

- See **PennyAdminAuth0** app (cont.)



Auth0 Authentication

- See **PennyAdminAuth0** app (cont.)
  - See optional lecture material for:
    - The code
    - How to run it on your local computer
    - How to run it on Render

Auth0 Authentication

- **Pros**
  - Application need not manage usernames or passwords
  - Application ***cannot*** access passwords
  - Application can access profile info that user provided to Auth0
  - Many options available
    - Two-factor authentication
    - Google login alternative
  - Good documentation
  - Users not constrained to Princeton or Google

Auth0 Authentication

- **Cons**
  - Complex
  - Adds overhead, but mostly only during first user visit per browser session
  - Free tier limits login count (but the limit is generous)

Lecture Summary

- In this lecture we covered:
  - Data storage attacks
  - Data comm attacks
  - Third-party authentication (briefly)
    - CAS authentication
    - Microsoft EntraID authentication
    - Google authentication
    - Auth0 authentication

Lecture Series Summary

- In this lecture series we covered:
  - SQL injection attacks
  - Cross-site scripting (XSS) attacks
  - Authentication & authorization
  - Cookie forgery attacks
  - Cookie privacy attacks
  - Cross-site request forgery (CSRF) attacks
  - Data storage attacks
  - Data comm attacks
  - Third-party authentication (briefly)

More Information

- The COS 333 *Lectures* web page provides references to supplementary information