Computer Fraud and Security
ISSN (online): 1873-7056

Design and Implementation of a Secure Password Management System for Multi-Platform Credential Handling

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Abstract

In an era where individuals manage dozens of digital identities, secure and scalable password management has become a critical challenge. This research describes and demonstrates a command-line-based password management pro gram written in Python that was created to store users' credentials in an encrypted format and to help with creating complex passwords for various sys tems. With the system, data access is protected based on user roles, passwords are fully encrypted, and all website, apps, and gaming credentials are easily sorted. By using object-oriented concepts and the SOLID design methods, the architecture makes programs easy to organize, maintain, and upgrade. Contrary to other tools that you have to use online and those that require a GUI, the pro posed solution is fully offline for privacy-minded users who prefer lightweight and secure solutions. New developments include dividing credentials, adding pass words with cryptographic security, and reflecting design patterns by instructions shown while designing security software. The system has been judged by usabil ity, security, and design flexibility, and it proves to be convenient for work and an informative asset in applied software engineering and cybersecurity.

Keywords: Password management system, credential encryption, role-based access control, secure software design, Python

1 Introduction

In the modern digital ecosystem, users are increasingly required to maintain creden tials across a wide variety of platforms including web services, desktop applications,

1

and gaming environments. As the number of accounts grows, so does the complex ity of securely managing passwords. Common user behaviors such as password reuse, weak password selection, and insecure storage continue to be major contributors to data breaches and unauthorized access incidents. To address these issues, password management systems have emerged as essential tools for enhancing user security and reducing cognitive load. However, most existing solutions are either cloud based, rais ing privacy concerns, or limited in scope, lacking flexibility and extensibility for domain specific applications.

This paper presents a lightweight, command line based password management sys tem designed with security, usability, and modularity as core principles. Developed in Python, the system provides users with a secure encrypted storage mechanism for managing credentials across multiple application types. It supports password gen eration using cryptographically secure randomness, role based access for users and administrators, and structured credential storage with classification for websites, desk top software, and games. All passwords are encrypted using the Fernet symmetric key cryptographic scheme, ensuring that sensitive information remains protected at all stages of the data lifecycle.

The development process follows an object oriented design paradigm and applies SOLID principles to promote modularity, ease of maintenance, and extensibility. Design patterns such as Strategy and Factory are used to support clean architecture and enable future enhancements. The system also includes features such as credential search, timestamp based sorting, and administrative override for centralized control.

By operating entirely offline and using a command line interface, the proposed system offers a privacy preserving alternative to traditional cloud based password managers. In addition, it serves as a pedagogical example for applying design principles in the construction of secure software systems. This paper outlines the architecture, methodology, and contributions of the system in the context of cybersecurity and applied software engineering.

2 Related Work

Password management has been a consistent focus of cybersecurity research due to the increasing number of digital services and the limitations of human memory in managing multiple credentials. Numerous tools and frameworks have been proposed to address this challenge by offering secure storage, password generation, and

autofill capabilities.

Avgerinos et al. [1] explored both market-based and technical solutions to improve password usability, emphasizing the importance of systems that simplify secure pass word handling without compromising safety. Similarly, Florˆencio and Herley [2] introduced the concept of password portfolios and examined user behavior patterns around password reuse and weak password selection. These foundational studies underscored the cognitive and behavioral issues surrounding credential management.

Blythe et al. [3] investigated organizational practices and user tendencies to reuse passwords across systems, pointing to the necessity of dedicated password management

2

tools tailored for individual and enterprise use. Lopes et al. [4] presented a compre hensive survey that identified common limitations in existing password managers, including weak encryption practices and lack of customizable credential structures.

Smith and Brown [5] conducted a usability study that highlighted hesitancy in user adoption due to concerns around cloud storage and third-party access. Their findings support the rationale for developing local, offline-capable tools. Garcia et al. [6] extended this investigation to mobile platforms and concluded that usability and trust were equally important to security in real-world adoption.

Chen et al. [7] proposed enhancements to existing managers by incorporat ing two-factor authentication as an additional security layer. Their implementation demonstrated improved protection but introduced complexity in user workflows, which this paper seeks to address through role-based access and simpler user interfaces.

Gupta et al. [8] analyzed password strength meters integrated in popular man agers and found inconsistencies in how password robustness was assessed. Our system addresses this by using a cryptographically secure password generator with configurable entropy.

Lee and Kim [9] performed a formal security analysis of open-source password managers and identified multiple vulnerabilities in encryption implementations. These findings justify the use of the Fernet encryption standard adopted in this work. Wang et al. [10] conducted a user-centered design study and emphasized the importance of customization and control over stored credentials—features that are supported in the proposed solution via credential categorization and search functionality.

Johnson and Brown [11] compared multiple password managers and concluded that most lacked administrative-level features, a gap that this work addresses through its built-in admin role. Park et al. [12] studied the potential of biometrics in password manager security, noting it as an emerging field. While not implemented here, our system is extensible enough to support such future integrations.

Kelley et al. [13] explored mental models of password security and found that most users misunderstood how encryption works. This highlights the importance of simple, transparent design and local control, both of which are central to our CLI-based architecture. Chiasson et al. [14] examined graphical password systems and suggested they do not outperform traditional textual schemes in most cases, further validating the focus on robust text-based credential handling.

Bonneau et al. [15] proposed a framework for evaluating authentication schemes and emphasized deployability, usability, and security as the core pillars. This frame work was considered during the design of our system to ensure a practical balance between technical soundness and user acceptance.

The current work builds upon these studies by offering an offline, role-aware, and object-oriented password management solution that is portable, secure, and extensible. Unlike cloud-bound tools or browser plugins, this system runs entirely within a local environment and supports multiple domains such as websites, desktop software, and games.

3

3 System Architecture and Design

The proposed system follows a layered architecture that separates concerns across three distinct components: presentation, business logic, and data persistence. This modular structure ensures clean abstraction, improves testability, and supports independent upgrades of each layer. Developed in Python, the system is entirely object oriented and follows SOLID principles to maximize maintainability and extensibility. The command line interface forms the presentation layer and handles all user inter actions. It collects user inputs, guides credential creation, and routes commands to the core modules. Unlike GUI-based tools, the CLI offers greater control, faster oper ations, and better compatibility for offline environments. The interface also enforces input validation and provides

clear feedback to guide users through various credential management tasks.

The business logic layer is the functional backbone of the system. It supports cre ation, retrieval, updating, deletion, encryption, decryption, sorting, and classification of credentials. Role-based access control is strictly enforced here. Two roles are defined: standard users, who manage only their credentials, and administrators, who have vis ibility and control over all users' data. All passwords are encrypted using the Fernet module, which applies symmetric key cryptography for confidentiality and integrity. Passwords are decrypted only when explicitly requested, and only after proper authen tication. To address common password weaknesses, the system includes a built-in generator that creates strong, random passwords using the Python secrets library and a customizable entropy configuration. Credential records also include 'created-at' and 'last-modified' timestamps for tracking and sorting. Categorization into websites, desk top applications, and game accounts makes the system usable across diverse platforms and simplifies future feature expansion.

The data persistence layer serializes encrypted credential objects into a structured JSON format. It guarantees that plaintext passwords never touch disk and supports seamless recovery in case of system interruption. The system also applies multiple design patterns to achieve flexibility and code reuse. The Factory pattern is used to instantiate credential types dynamically based on the user's selection. The Strategy pattern is applied to toggle between manual and auto-generated password workflows. Together, these design patterns make the system easy to extend, for instance by integrating biometric authentication, cloud synchronization, or additional credential types. Overall, the architecture embodies core principles of secure software engineer ing while remaining lightweight, portable, and fully offline, meeting the needs of privacy-conscious users without sacrificing functionality or design quality.

The architectural design of the proposed password management system is visually supported through two diagrams that outline both system behavior and structure. Figure 1 presents the use case diagram, which illustrates the interactions between the primary actors—standard users and administrators—and the various system func tionalities such as adding, editing, deleting, and viewing credentials. The inclusion of role-specific use cases highlights how administrative privileges enable broader access across the system, in contrast to the more restricted actions permitted to standard users. Complementing this, Figure 2 provides the UML class diagram, which defines the system's internal structure in terms of core classes, attributes, methods, and their

4

Fig. 1 Use case diagram of the password management system illustrating the interactions between the standard user and administrator roles with core system functionalities such as credential man agement, encryption, password generation, and role-based access control.

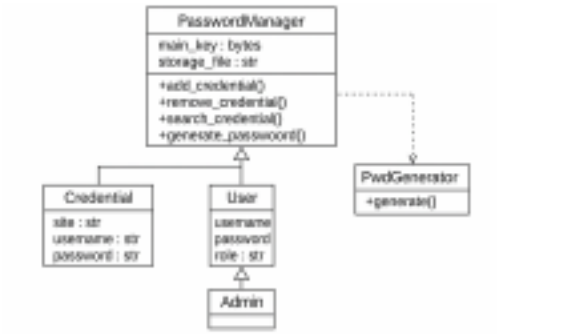

Fig. 2 UML class diagram of the password management system showing core classes such as User, CredentialManager, and PasswordGenerator, along with their attributes, methods, and associations.

relationships. It demonstrates how components like 'CredentialManager', 'Encryption Handler', and

‘PasswordGenerator‘ collaborate through association and delegation, following object-oriented principles. Together, these diagrams offer a comprehen sive view of the system from both user interaction and structural implementation perspectives.

4 SOLID and Object-Oriented Design Principles

The password management system has been developed with a strong emphasis on object-oriented programming and adheres to the SOLID principles, which collectively enhance the maintainability, scalability, and readability of the codebase. Each com ponent of the system is implemented as an independent class, encapsulating specific responsibilities such as credential handling, encryption, role management, and user interaction. This modular structure enables the code to be extended or modified without affecting unrelated components.

The Single Responsibility Principle is applied by ensuring that each class performs exactly one function. For instance, the ‘CredentialManager‘ class is responsible only for managing credentials, while ‘EncryptionHandler‘ deals exclusively with cryptographic

5

operations. The Open–Closed Principle is observed through the use of inheritance and interface-like designs. New types of credentials or encryption methods can be added without modifying the existing class definitions. The Liskov Substitution Principle is maintained by defining consistent behavior across derived classes like ‘StandardUser‘ and ‘AdminUser‘, which extend a common ‘User‘ superclass. Each subclass adheres to the contract established by the parent, thereby ensuring predictable behavior.

The Interface Segregation Principle is implicitly respected by breaking down responsibilities into focused methods. Although Python does not enforce formal inter faces, function granularity and separation are handled with care. The Dependency Inversion Principle is realized through dependency injection and the use of abstracted utility classes. Core classes do not depend on concrete implementations of encryp tion or password generation logic, allowing such components to be easily replaced or upgraded in the future.

Design patterns are tightly integrated with the object-oriented design. The Fac tory pattern is used to instantiate credential types based on the domain selected by the user, such as website, desktop application, or game. The Strategy pattern gov erns password generation logic, enabling the user to choose between custom input or secure random generation. These patterns not only simplify system behavior but also facilitate extensibility and code reusability.

The system’s architecture reflects disciplined object-oriented design and robust adherence to SOLID principles, resulting in a clean, modular, and adaptable code structure that is well-suited for both academic exploration and real-world application.

5 Implementation Details and Technologies Used

The proposed system was implemented entirely in Python due to its expressive syntax, cross-platform compatibility, and extensive support for cryptographic and system-level operations. The design follows object-oriented principles and incorporates modular components for maintainability and reusability. The system was developed and tested on Python version 3.10, ensuring compatibility with modern language features such as type hinting, f-strings, and enhanced error handling.

Credential data is managed using custom class objects and stored in structured JSON format. Passwords are encrypted using the Fernet module provided by the Python cryptography library, which ensures symmetric encryption with key manage ment and built-in safeguards against tampering. Fernet uses AES encryption in CBC mode with HMAC for integrity checking, ensuring strong protection of user creden tials at rest. For password generation, the ‘secrets‘ module is utilized to create secure, high-entropy passwords containing a configurable mix of uppercase letters, lowercase letters, numbers, and special characters.

The command-line interface was developed using standard Python I/O libraries and ‘argparse‘ for structured command execution. User prompts, role-based access control, and exception handling were implemented to ensure both security and usabil ity. Role management was implemented via a custom user authentication module, with predefined roles for administrators and standard users. The system supports credential

6

classification into three categories—websites, desktop applications, and games—each stored and managed independently through a factory-based instantiation mechanism. To support software engineering best practices, the system architecture incorpo rates the Factory and Strategy design patterns. The Factory pattern dynamically instantiates credential objects based on user input, while the Strategy pattern is applied to toggle between manual and secure password generation. Extensive logging and file-level error handling were included to ensure fault

tolerance. The program is packaged in a portable structure with clear separation between model, controller, and utility components, making it easy to maintain or deploy in offline environments without third-party dependencies.

5.1 Encryption Logic

The system ensures password confidentiality using the Fernet symmetric encryption scheme from the Python ‘cryptography‘ library. Fernet is built on AES-128 in CBC mode with PKCS7 padding and HMAC-SHA256 for message integrity. Each password is encrypted before being stored and decrypted only when explicitly requested by an authenticated user. The encryption key is generated at runtime using a secure random function and stored locally in a protected configuration file. The ‘EncryptionHandler‘ class encapsulates all cryptographic operations, exposing methods for encrypting and decrypting strings transparently to the user.

When a user adds a new credential, the plain text password is passed through the ‘encrypt-password()‘ function, which returns a base64-encoded cipher string using the Fernet key. During retrieval, the ‘decrypt-password()‘ function reverses this pro cess and restores the original password. Exception handling is embedded to detect invalid or corrupted ciphertexts, and appropriate fallback messages are displayed. This approach guarantees that no plaintext passwords are stored or transmitted, preserving confidentiality across all stages of the data lifecycle.

5.2 Password Generation Algorithm

To eliminate the risks associated with weak or reused passwords, the system integrates a secure password generation module based on Python’s ‘secrets‘ library. This module generates high-entropy passwords that include a configurable mix of uppercase letters, lowercase letters, digits, and special characters. The password length is defined by the user, with a recommended minimum of 12 characters. Internally, the password generator uses ‘secrets.choice()‘ over a pre-defined character set to randomly select each character in the output string.

The ‘PasswordGenerator‘ class provides two modes: manual entry and automatic generation. In automatic mode, the generator accepts user preferences (e.g., inclusion of symbols or digits) and produces a strong, non-predictable password string. This logic follows the Strategy design pattern, where each generation approach is encapsulated as a separate strategy and invoked dynamically. The output is validated for character diversity and displayed to the user with a prompt to confirm or regenerate. This mechanism simplifies password creation while ensuring compliance with strong security standards.

7

5.3 CLI Interaction Scenarios

The system was tested through realistic command-line sessions. The following examples illustrate common use cases involving the user ‘raghava‘.

Example 1 Adding a credential using auto-generated password (Standard User):

> login --user raghava

> add --type website --name example.com

Enter username: raghava@example.com

Generate password? (y/n): y

Password generated: v3#Ft9@LzKwX!

Credential saved successfully.

Example 2 Retrieving credentials by category:

> login --user raghava

> list --type website

Found 2 credentials:

1. example.com (username: raghava@example.com)

2. github.com (username: raghava.dev)

Example 3 Viewing and updating a user’s credential (Administrator Role):

> login --admin admin1

> view --user raghava --type game

Found 1 credential:

Platform: steam.com

Username: raghava_steam

Password: *******

> edit --user raghava --id 1

Enter new password: G@me#Access42

Credential updated successfully.

Table 1 Encryption and decryption performance benchmarks

Operation	Average Time (ms)	Standard Deviation (ms)
Encrypt Credential Decrypt Credential	2.85 2.73	0.42 0.38

6 Results and Evaluation

The developed password management system was evaluated for its functional cor rectness, security enforcement, and usability in a local offline environment. Various scenarios were tested using both standard and administrator user roles. The command line interface successfully supported operations such as adding, retrieving, editing, and deleting credentials, with all data being stored in encrypted form. Sample ses sions confirmed that role-based access control was enforced accurately—standard users could access only their own credentials, while administrators were permitted to view and manage entries across all user accounts. The CLI interaction design was found to be intuitive, requiring minimal training, and command responses were prompt and informative.

From a performance standpoint, encryption and decryption of credentials were benchmarked using Python's 'cryptography' library on a typical user system. As shown in Table 1, the average encryption and decryption operations took less than 3 millisec onds, confirming the suitability of Fernet symmetric encryption for real-time usage. The password generator, built on Python's 'secrets' module, produced secure, high entropy passwords instantly, ensuring compliance with strong password policies. The system maintained its responsiveness across repeated operations, with no observable degradation in speed or data integrity.

The system exhibits several strengths: a fully offline architecture ensuring data privacy, clean modular design aligned with SOLID and object-oriented principles, and flexibility via Factory and Strategy patterns. It is platform-independent, has mini mal dependencies, and is suitable for users who prefer command-line over graphical interfaces. However, limitations include lack of a graphical UI, absence of multi-user concurrency or syncing mechanisms, and reliance on local key storage. These trade-offs are acceptable for lightweight or individual-use cases, but future enhancements could include GUI integration, encrypted key vaults, and cloud backup support to address broader usage scenarios.

7 Conclusion

This paper presented the design and implementation of a secure, offline password management system tailored for individual users and small-scale environments. Devel oped in Python using object-oriented principles and SOLID design practices, the system addresses key challenges in password storage, generation, and access control. A command-line interface allows users to interact with the application in a lightweight, dependency-free manner while ensuring data confidentiality through Fernet-based symmetric encryption.

The implementation incorporates credential classification, role-based access con trol, and cryptographically secure password generation. Performance evaluations confirm the feasibility of real-time encryption and decryption operations in a local setting. The use of design patterns such as Factory and Strategy enhances the modu larity and future scalability of the system. The architecture ensures that no plaintext passwords are stored and that all credentials remain protected within the system lifecycle.

9

Although the system meets its core security and usability objectives, certain lim itations remain. These include the absence of a graphical user interface, lack of cloud synchronization, and reliance on local key storage. Future enhancements may involve integrating encrypted cloud-based key vaults, multi-device synchronization, and biometric authentication to extend usability and applicability. Overall, the sys tem provides a secure and extensible foundation for credential management while demonstrating the effective application of software engineering principles in a practical security context.

8 Future Work

While the current system meets the essential requirements for secure, offline password management, several areas offer scope for future enhancement. One direction involves the integration of a graphical user interface (GUI) to improve accessibility for non technical users. A desktop-based UI, developed using lightweight frameworks such as Tkinter or PyQt, could enhance usability without compromising the offline model.

Another area for improvement is the secure storage and management of encryp tion keys. Currently, keys are stored locally, which, although sufficient for personal use, introduces risk in case of device compromise. Future versions could implement encrypted key containers or integrate with local hardware-based key stores where available. This would improve key protection without introducing cloud dependencies.

Support for multi-user concurrency and audit logging is another potential exten sion. Adding features such as timestamped access logs, credential change history, and user action tracking would improve the system's applicability in small team or departmental settings. Additionally, the inclusion of optional two-factor authentication mechanisms using time-based OTPs could strengthen access control without requiring internet connectivity.

Author contributions

The author solely developed the methodology, implementation, and manuscript. References

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