OUTREACH & EXTENSION
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI
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INNER CIRCUITS

A Technology Newsletter for Extension Specialists

Extension Technology and Computer Services
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Spybot --
Your Defense
Against Bad Software
page 2

Work Computer and
"Other" Software
page 3

Summer Hours
page 3

More Training
Scheduled!
page 4

What's on Your R
Drive - Profiles and
Mail Folders?
page 4

Anti-virus Corner
page 4

Beware of Spyware & Adware

By John Myers

"Spyware" and "Adware" are new computer terms for some types of, in my opinion, unwanted software. A common definition of "Spyware" is software that transmits personally identifiable information from your computer without your knowledge. A common definition of "Adware" is software that collects aggregated usage information for delivering you advertisements tailored to your habits.

No one intentionally installs this software. The software is usually included in other software that you download and install on your computer. Most software installations contain an end user license agreement (EULA) that you accept before the software can be installed. Hidden in this long text screen, that most people don't read, are a few lines telling you about privacy matters. These few lines in the long EULA are your warning that this unwanted software could be present.

This type of software can be as simple as cookies that your web browser uses. A cookie is a small text file sent by a web server to your web browser to be read back from that browser. Cookies are a way to have the browser "remember" specific bits of information. These cookies can be used by the web server to display, what I call, the Dreaded Advertisement Blitz. This is where you open one web site and new browser windows just start opening up; sometimes faster than you can close them.

Even if you don't care that companies are gathering personal information and surfing habits information on you, this software consumes computer resources. It takes up disk space, uses memory, slows running programs and consumes limited bandwidth.

Getting rid of these types of software can be very complicated and time consuming. Uninstalling the parent software program will not necessarily remove the unwanted software. Many of these "Spyware" and "Adware" software programs continue to run long after their parent software has been removed. One sure way to remove them is to reformat your hard drive and reload the operating system and standard software after first backing up your data. Who has an extra 4 to 8 hours to do this per machine?

There are a number of detection and removal software packages available to help with this problem of "Spyware" and "Adware", Ad-aware, System Detective, OptOut, NetCop, SpyCop and Spybot to name a few. Most of the software is priced between $30 and $70, but there is some freeware. You really have to read the EULA carefully,

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not all the freeware software is free. For example, Ad-aware is free if it is used on personal computers only. It costs if used on commercial, governmental or educational machines.

In researching software to detect and remove "Spyware" and "Adware" software I had a funny thing happen. I installed some spy detection software and evaluated it. I didn't find it that useful so I uninstalled it and installed another software package for evaluation. The second spy detection software detected that the first spy detection software had "Spyware" software still running. You just can't be too careful!

Spybot --
Your Defense Against Bad Software

By Charlie Baerwald & John Myers

Now that you've read about "spyware" and "adware" software, you're wondering "What can I do about it? Which software can I use?" The answer to these questions is Spybot. The remainder of this article will instruct you on how to install and operate the software known as Spybot.

To install Spybot, download spybotsd12.exe from S:\MUCampus\ETCS\Utility to your desktop. When the download is complete, close all running programs, including email, and double click the file and follow these steps.

Click Next on the Welcome Screen
Click to accept the agreement and then Click Next
Click Next on the Select Destination Directory Screen
Click Next on the Select Components Screen
Click Next on the Select Start Menu Folder Screen
Uncheck the "Create a Quick Launch icon" box and then Click Next
Click Install on the Ready to Install Screen
The program will now copy files to your computer
Click Finish on the Completing the Spybot Screen

With Spybot installed, we can start it by double clicking the "Spybot – Search & Destroy" icon on your desktop. The first time you start Spybot, you will be prompted for the language to use. Click the English icon. A window will pop up describing how removing some files from programs might disable the program. This warning is given out of courtesy and for legal reasons. If you don't want to see this message again, check the box, and click OK. Otherwise just click OK.

Before we check our computer we need to update the database that Spybot uses. This works just like antivirus software – it needs to be updated as new spyware is discovered. The only difference is that the Spybot update is a manual process. Click the Search for updates button, or the Update icon on the left. When it's finished searching you'll see the updates it found. Make sure all the update boxes are checked, and then click Download Updates. When downloading is complete, the updates are automatically applied, and the listed items will have green check marks beside them.

Now that we have the program updated, we are ready to scan our computer. Click "Search & Destroy" and then click "Check for Problems" on the bottom left of the window. The search process will take around 2 to 10 minutes, depending on the speed of your machine. When it's finished, you'll either get the message "Congratulations No immediate threats were found" or a list of the possible spyware the program found. To remove the spyware, first make sure all the boxes are checked and then click on the "Fix selected problems" button. You'll be asked to verify that you want to remove the files. Click Yes.

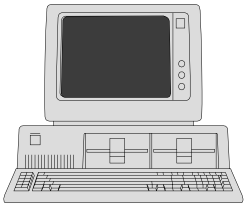
When the problems are fixed, the files have been removed, each file "fix" will be verified with a green check mark. In some cases, during or after the fixing process, you may see a message that some problems couldn't be fixed. The reason is that files cannot be removed if they're running in the computer's memory. To remove them, click yes, then restart you computer. Spybot will run automatically on the restart. This recheck can take longer that the original scan, so please be patient.

After you have removed the "spyware" and "adware" programs from your computer, they can be reinstalled. This is why you will need to run Spybot on a regular basis. Once every one to two weeks will be fine. Since the update process is manual, you should check for updates each time you scan your computer.

The "Immunize" part of Spybot does not appear to block all the known bad products, so we will not be using it at this time. If you have any problems or reservations about running this program, please contact someone at ETCS and we will assist you.

Work Computer and "Other" Software

By John Myers



It's almost impossible to think about doing our jobs nowadays without a computer. It feels like it was just yesterday that we were distributing our first IBM dual floppy PCs. Times really have changed since then. Before we got connected to the internet, we didn’t have access to software other than the "standard supported software". We now have many choices when it comes to the hardware and software that we use.

Having more software choices is both good and bad; good in that we can do more things and bad in that it can cause many problems. With the explosion of the internet, we are tempted to install more and more software that we find at various sites on the web. As seen in the "Spyware & Adware" article, this installation of software can do more than we bargained for. It can also cause our computers to crash or worse - not boot.

Here at ETCS, we find ourselves having to rebuild more and more machines. When the machines come in, we find a lot of non-standard software on them. It's an impossible task to keep track of all the software one can find on the internet and document what software package will or will not work with another software package.

We have tested what we call the "standard software" on our computers and have found it to be very stable. We believe that the additional software being loaded on the machines can cause instability. Some non-standard software interferes with the normal functioning of our standard software. Some departments on campus have gone as far as producing a "banned" software list. If the "banned" software is found on their machine, it can be reported to their supervisor.

WebShots and HotBar are two software packages that top my list of undesirable software. Besides using up bandwidth, when WebShots fails it causes your computer to hang. The dreaded on/off power cycle is the only way to bring life back to your computer. HotBar has been found to corrupt files that Outlook uses. This corruption will either stop Outlook from starting or crash whenever you try to create a new message.

We understand that the "standard software" might not have everything you need to do your job. In this case, it is acceptable to install additional software. If you don't need the software for your job, please don't install it. Your machine will be more stable the less software you install on it. Also, installing and then uninstalling software does not bring the computer back to where it was before the initial installation. I have yet to find an uninstall program that removes everything that the installation program installs. Files, directories and registry entries are left behind after the uninstall process. These items can cause your computer to be unstable.

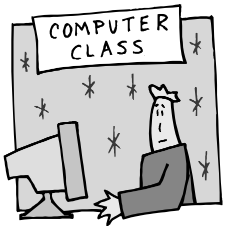
If while you're surfing the web you find new and interesting software that you need for your job, please contact us and we'll help to make sure it won't cause you any problems. But if the software is not needed for work, please avoid causing potential problems by refraining from installing it. Use your own personal computer for testing.

Summer Hours

By Jeanne Meyer

ETCS personnel will adopt the standard campus hours again this summer. The office will be open from 7:30 am-12 noon and 12:30 pm-4:00 pm beginning Monday, May 19 and continuing through Friday, August 15, 2003.

More Training Scheduled!



by Jill Dourty

Access Level 1
Thursday, May 15, 2003 (8:30am - 12 noon)

Excel Level 1
Thursday, May 1, 2003 (8:30am - 12 noon)
Monday, May 12, 2003 (1:00pm - 5:00pm)

Excel Level 2
Thursday, April 24, 2003 (8:30am - 12 noon)
Monday, May 26, 2003 (12:30pm - 4:00pm)

FrontPage Level 1
Monday, April 21, 2003 (1:00pm - 5:00pm)

FrontPage Level 2
Thursday, May 8, 2003 (8:30am - 12 noon)
Tuesday, May 27, 2003 (12:30pm - 4:00pm)

Outlook Level 1
Monday, May 19, 2003 (1:00pm - 4:00pm)

Outlook Level 2
Tuesday, May 6, 2003 (1:00pm - 5:00pm)
Thursday, May 29, 2003 (8:00am - 12 noon)

PowerPoint Level 1
Tuesday, April 29, 2003 (1:00pm - 5:00pm)
Friday, May 9, 2003 (8:30am - 12 noon)

PowerPoint Level 2
Monday, April 28, 2003 (1:00pm - 5:00pm)
Tuesday, May 13, 2003 (1:00pm - 5:00pm)

Publisher Level 1
Tuesday, May 20, 2003 (8:30am - 4:00pm)

Word Level 1
Tuesday, April 22, 2003 (1:00pm - 5:00pm)

Word Level 2
Monday, May 5, 2003 (1:00pm - 5:00pm)
Thursday, May 22, 2003 (8:00am - 12 noon)

There are only 12 seats available for each of these courses. If you would like to register for any of these, please fill out our online form by clicking on http://etcs.ext.missouri.edu/trainform.shtm. For more information, please send an email to ETCS at ETCS@missouri.edu.

What's on your R Drive–Profiles and Mail Folders?

By Ethan Froese

Some of you may have noticed one of the following folders in your R drive called mail, profile or profiles and may have wondered what this mysterious folder contains. Some of you may have even taken things a step further and decided to delete that suspicious looking folder. I implore you – don't.

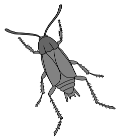
This folder contains information about your email, bookmarks and other settings that need to be saved. The most important files in these folders are the ones ending in ".pst" and ".pab". These files contains email that you have moved from the Exchange email server to your R drive to avoid those pesky "over the quota limit messages" in Outlook.

If you do decide to do some spring cleaning and you see something on your R drive that you didn't put there, please contact someone at ETCS before you delete it. We can restore files from the backups, but a phone call takes a lot less time.

Anti-Virus Corner

Current Norton Anti-Virus Versions

Program Versions:	
Program:	**8.00.9374**
Scan Engine:	**4.1.0.15**
Virus Definition File:	
Version:	**rev. 20**
Date:	**4/2/03**



(Your versions should be at this level or greater.)

See http://etcs.ext.missouri.edu/tips/default.htm for instructions on updating your anti-virus.

***Inner Circuits* Mailing List Corrections/ Additions** - Send an email message to ETCS or call 573-882-7130 to correct an address, add someone to or delete someone from the mailing list.