

CENT 1310
COMPUTER SYSTEMS & SOFTWARE
SECTION 101

COMPUTERS...ARE THEY REALLY SAFE?

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Date

Why are so many people afraid of computers? Well although computers are made for informational, business and leisure purposes, that is not always the case. Computers are just portals for hackers and crooks. In depth, they are the reason so many lives get destroyed every year. What is computer crime ^{one} you may ask? Well computer crimes, known as cybercrimes, are criminal activities committed on the internet. The crimes committed with these electronics are just about as dangerous as the crimes people commit every day. Even some hold the same penalty as murder.

There are over eleven computer crimes categories. These crimes have the ability to harm people mentally, physically, emotionally, and financially. No one can explain why these crimes even exist, but it is growing every year. The percentage of cybercrimes has risen from twelve percent in two-thousand nine to eighteen percent in two-thousand eleven (BBC News Business). Most of the people who commit these cybercrimes start from the beginning with basic computer knowledge and work their way up to the big leagues with crimes such as computer hacking, cyber terrorism, piracy and fraud.

Computer hacking is the practice of modifying computer hardware and software to accomplish a goal outside of the creator's original purpose. Hacking crimes carry penalties ranging from class B misdemeanor, which is punishable by up to six months in prison and a fine of up to one thousand dollars or even both. It could also be considered as a class B felony, which is punishable by up to twenty years in prison and a fine of fifteen thousand dollars. Computer hacking is one of the most dangerous because hackers can access a lot of information on a person such as bank accounts, credit card numbers, social security numbers, and personal information, just to name a few. Even though hacking takes plenty of talent and brains, it is as simple as walking down the street to a computer wizard.

Kevin Mitnick is an example of one of the most wanted computer criminals in the United States. He was the first person to ever get convicted of computer hacking. Mitnick's crimes consisted of him obtaining over twenty thousand credit card numbers, breaking into a California motor vehicles database, gaining control of New York and California telephone switching hub via modem and eavesdrop on other people's phone conversation and scanning police bands for mentions on his whereabouts. He later was arrested and was charged with twenty-three counts of access device fraud in North Carolina and in California was charged with twenty-five counts of computer, wire, and device fraud. Kevin Mitnick was sentenced to sixty-eight months in prison, but only served sixty months.

Cyber terrorism is any premeditated, politically motivated attack against information, computer systems, computer programs and data which results in violence against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents (Rouse). Most of the time, cyber terrorism occurs within the government. It is sometimes referred to as electronic terrorism or information war. Hacking plays an enormous role in cyber terrorism. The people who commit these crimes are often people who like to show off their skills to the public. They send viruses and can also use this to steal money from other people.

Stuxnet was a computer worm used to damage Iran's nuclear weapons facilities and it succeeded (Simonte). One reason such malware is so effective is that it tends to exploit previously unknown software vulnerabilities, known as zero-days, in widely used programs such as Microsoft Windows to gain control of a computer. A similar worm has recently been detected called Duqu. It was discovered September 1, 2011. Duqu malware is a variety of software components that together provide services to the attackers. Currently this includes information stealing capabilities and in the background, kernel drivers and injection tools. Part of this

malware is written in unknown high level programming language, dubbed "Duqu framework". It is not C++, Python, Ada, Lua and many other checked languages. However, recent evidence suggests that Duqu may have been written in Object Oriented C (OO C) and compiled in Microsoft Visual Studio 2008 (Wikipedia).

Cyber piracy is defined as using the internet to copy a digital document without authorization from the copyrighter. Cyber piracy includes copying and distributing music or videos without the copyright holder's permission (bootlegging), using cloned credit card information to steal from an online store, or copying software onto a CD without paying for it. Millions of Americans are caught every day for something as simple as piracy. The government makes sure that citizens are made aware of the act and the consequences that follow after committing these acts when they put the disclaimer on DVDs and CDs. The punishment is severe. The maximum penalties for piracy are prison time for up to ten years and a fine of up to two hundred fifty thousand dollars (Peer-to-Peer - History and Future).

"Kim Dotcom, known to society as Kim Schmitz, was a teenage internet tycoon. He is the founder of a website called Megaupload. On January two thousand twelve, he was charged with piracy in relation to his website. Kim cost the entertainment industry over five hundred million dollars of pirated content uploaded to his site. In nineteen ninety-four he was convicted of eleven counts of computer fraud, ten counts of data espionage, and an assortment of other charges" (wikipedia).

Although only a few crimes were mentioned, the list goes on and on. Computer crimes are committed everywhere every day. They not only harm individuals around the world, but the world itself. Computers were made to be safe and fun, but as long as there are IT hackers and

criminals, the computers we use are never safe. Hopefully, one day, computer wizards will use their talents for good and not personal gain.

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