

Byte me

Cyber Studs

WHILE MOST CYBER-JUNKIES ARE busying themselves with up-to-no-good hacker antics, a new trend has been developing: student sleuths keeping on the lookout for bugs. Software bugs, that is, carelessly left by developers.

Reporters swarmed the tiny campus of Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Mass., when Paul Greene, a senior electrical engineering student, discovered a flaw in Windows 95. Greene's find made it possible for Microsoft to fix an error that let evil hackers erase the hard drives of unsuspecting Web users.

Greene says the problem was simple to solve. Nonetheless, he was paraded as a CPU hero among the computer community.

"I never expected so much fuss over something that was so easy to fix," Greene says.

Greene is not the sole sleuth on the scene, however.

In September 1995, Ian Goldberg and David Wagner, both graduate students at the U. of California, Berkeley, noticed a flaw in the encryption code that protects credit card purchases on the Web.

"We first tried to see if the random number generator was any good, but we quickly realized that the numbers weren't picked at random after all," Wagner says.

Whatever that means.

In a few hours, Goldberg cracked open the encryption code that made it possible to access confidential data, like credit card numbers, social security numbers and addresses.

"When we first found the bug, we just posted it at a Web site for surfers to view as a warning," Goldberg says. "We didn't think it was exciting enough to generate all this hoopla."

Not all the mishaps deal with large computer corporations, however. During last year's NCAA men's basketball tournament, a 14-year-old hacker broke into the NCAA Web site and littered it with white supremacist propaganda. Benjamin DeLong, a senior in information technology systems at the U. of Massachusetts, Amherst, quickly began to search for the hacker. He tracked him down and sent all the information to the NCAA, who gladly passed it on to the FBI.

"I believe he wanted to be caught," DeLong says. "I'm no high-tech developer, and it was just too easy for me."

But difficult for us mere mortals.

By Val Lik, Pace U., N.Y. / Illustration by Cameron Izuno, U. of Southern California



Sites for Sore Eyes

Web Surfing

<http://www.ronjons.com/ronjon.htm>

Miss the summer sun and fun already?

A 24-hour live feed of a surfin' safari off the Florida coast.

Shark Attack

<http://www.bev.net/education/SeaWorld/SharkCam/sharkcam.html>

Another live feed, but this one's got a bite to it.

Webster Dictionary

<http://www.m-w.com/netdict.htm>

This site is verisimilitudinous to the paper version. Huh? Look it up.

Hollywood Stock Exchange

<http://www.hsx.com>

Sandra Bullock not up to speed? Trade her for some Will Smith.

The Weather Channel

<http://www.weather.com/twc/homepage.twc>

If you're too lazy to step outside or look out the window.

Slap a Spice Girl

<http://www.head-space.com/Urban75/spice.html>

Smack 'em all you want, all you really really want.

Star Trek Drinking Game

<http://geog.utoronto.ca/reynolds/humor/trek.game>

Jim Beam me up, Scotty.

You always knew that your college education would pay off someday.



Plymouth Neon.

If you're a recent college grad or will be soon (cross those fingers), you can get \$1,400* off on a Plymouth Neon. Whoa! That's postage for 4,375 resumes. For more info, ring us up at 1-800-PLYMOUTH or check us out on the Web at www.plymouthcars.com.

\$1,000 Consumer Incentive
+ \$400 College Grad Cash
\$1,400 Total College Grad Savings

That's Plymouth.

*\$1,400 incentive includes \$1,000 cash back on new stock plus \$400 recent college graduate cash allowance (see dealer for details). Vehicle shown with optional equipment.

Bits & Bytes

- Students at the U. of California, Santa Cruz, are saying buh-bye to traditional ballot boxes in student government elections. Online voting replaced paper ballots in last spring's elections, a move that saved about \$4,000 in printing and labor costs. Students could cast their virtual votes from computer stations around campus, home connections, computer labs and even on the go — election workers carried laptops with wireless modems around heavy traffic areas.

- The world's oldest and largest computer programming competition for college students is only a month away, but it's not too late for programmer wannabes to get in on the IBM-sponsored action. The ACM Programming Contest

test pits teams of three students against a host of problems and gives them about six hours to program their way out of it. Solve your problems at <http://www.acm.org/contest>.

- Applying to college is as easy as a click of a button at the U. of Delaware and in the California State U. system. These schools and more are starting to offer Web-based application forms that students can either fill out online or download to send later.

- Bigfoot is making its way onto campus, and students are running — to sign up for free lifetime e-mail service. The e-mail management service is offering students a permanent e-mail address that picks up when their college.edu address is canceled. Instead of going undelivered, e-mail from old accounts will be forwarded to the user's Bigfoot address. See <http://www.bigfoot.com> for more info.

- Coaching Football** — U. of Florida — Scout a game and create a playbook one day, learn some coaching tips from guest lecturer Steve Spurrier the next.

- Music of Frank Zappa** — Indiana U. — The legend lives! Finally, you don't have to travel to the Moon (Unit) to learn about the man and his Dweezil.

- The Fine Art of Beer Tasting** — U. of Alabama, Birmingham — Belly up to the bar for this course that includes field trips to the Birmingham Brewing Company.

- Search for Extraterrestrial Life** — U. of Texas, Austin — Find out if men really are from Mars.