

August Newsletter

Don't Hold Your Breath Computer Service

We have started an ad campaign in city and towns around Genesee county and surrounding areas. On top of that look for the website to change a bit in the coming week as we have made a few changes to make it look a little better and more inviting. Also do too a mishap our whole comments page got erased. Unable to get any of it back we made the decision to take it off the website completely. Instead we are thinking of adding a forum where visitors could post questions to use about different computer related issues and we could answer them and also have other post comments if they have had the same problem. Not sure if there would be a big response to having a forum but it is being considered. Also soon look for a copy of our flyer to be posted on the website which than can be printed off and it has a 20% coupon on it. There is no expiration date on the coupon because I want people to cut it out and save it until their computer does have a problem. If that were 6 months or 12 months from now, at least when it does need a check up I know that there's a good chance they will come to me with it.

Also, if you have any suggestions for my monthly newsletter, or questions please e-mail them my way at decker_brian@computerbreath.com. I will also be updating my blog hopefully at least once a week about the business and things I encounter.

Computer World In June:

Kaspersky Labs

Kaspersky Labs, has detected two variants of a new worm, Networm.Win32.Koobface.a. and Networm.Win32.Koobface.b, which attack MySpace and Facebook users.

The worms transform victims machines into zombie computers to form botnets which are used to create DDOS attacks and send spam email. **Net-Worm.Win32.Koobface.a** infects the user when they access their MySpace account. The worm creates a range of commentaries to friends' accounts. **Net-Worm.Win32.Koobface.b**, targets Facebook users, creates spam messages and sends them to the infected users' friends via the Facebook site.

The messages and comments include texts such as "Paris Hilton Tosses Dwarf On The Street"; "Examiners Caught Downloading Grades From The Internet "; "Hello; You must see it!!! LOL. My friend caught you on hidden cam"; "Is it really celebrity? Funny Moments and many others".

Messages and comments on MySpace and Facebook include links to youtube.[skip].pl. If the user clicks on this link, s/he is redirected to http//youtube.[skip].ru, a site which purportedly contains a video clip. If the user tries to watch it, a message appears saying that s/he needs the latest version of Flash Player in order to watch the clip.

However, instead of the Flash Player, a file called codesetup.exe is downloaded to the

victim machine; this file is also a network worm. The result is that users who have come to the site via Facebook will have the MySpace worm downloaded to their machines, and vice versa.

FireWire

Universal Serial Bus 3.0 is just around the corner, but it does not mean that its brother IEEE 1394 standard (also known as FireWire and iLink) has ceased its development. In fact, this month the 1394 trade association said that it had ratified the 1394-2008 specification, which significantly improves bandwidth of the interconnect.

The 1394-2008 high performance serial bus standard updates and revises all prior 1394 standards dating back to the original 1394-1995 version, and including 1394a, 1394b, 1394c, enhanced UTP, and the 1394 beta plus PHY-Link interface. It also incorporates the complete specifications for S1600 version (with 1.6Gb/s bandwidth) and for S3200 version, which provides 3.2Gb/s speed.

Cuil

Have you ever looked at Google and thought: "There aren't enough search results here"? Well, surprisingly, you are not alone. Today marked the launch of a new search engine known as Cuil (pronounced Cool). The founders claim that with 120 billion (yes, 120,000,000,000) sites indexed, that they have 3 times the total sites indexed of the market leader Google.

"The Web continues to grow at a fantastic rate and other search engines are unable to keep up with it," said Tom Costello, CEO and co-founder of Cuil. "Our significant breakthroughs in search technology have enabled us to index much more of the Internet, placing nearly the entire Web at the fingertips of every user. In addition, Cuil presents searchers with content-based results, not just popular ones, providing different and more insightful answers that illustrate the vastness and the variety of the Web."

Mozilla Thunderbird

Mozilla Messaging patched nine security vulnerabilities in Thunderbird Wednesday, the first time it's plugged holes in the e-mail software since early May. Thunderbird 2.0.0.16, which was added to Mozilla's download servers late Wednesday, quashes nine bugs, including one that was patched last week in Firefox, the company's open-source browser. The remainder fix flaws that were first addressed in early July when Mozilla updated Firefox to version 2.0.0.15.

It's not unusual for Thunderbird security updates to lag behind those released for Firefox. Seven of the nine bugs were rated "moderate" by Mozilla, the second-lowest of the four rankings in its threat system. The other two were pegged as "low."

Blame Vista

It's Windows Vista's fault that solid-state storage isn't performing as well as its proponents predicted. So said SanDisk CEO Eli Harari, but at least he didn't go as far as saying it's Microsoft's problem to fix. SSDs are viewed as the heir apparent to the hard disk, particularly for laptops and other mobile computers. SSDs are way more shock-resistant and consume less power. Theoretically, they should deliver better performance.

Alas, many tests reveal that they don't. SSD "performance in the Vista environment falls short of what the market really needs", admitted Harari at the company's earnings conference this week.

Lost Laptop

Lose your laptop these days and you lose part of your life: You say good-bye to photos, music, and personal documents that cannot be replaced, and if it's a work computer, you may be the source of a very public data breach. But now, researchers at the University of Washington and the University of California, San Diego, have found a way to give you a shot at getting your life back. They plan to launch a new laptop tracking service, called Adeona that is free and private.

Named after the Roman goddess credited with guiding children back to their parents, Adeona uses software that has been under development for the past year. Here's how it works: A user downloads the free client software onto a laptop. That software then starts anonymously sending encrypted notes about the computer's whereabouts to servers on the Internet. If the laptop ever goes missing, the user downloads another program, enters a username and password, and then picks up this information from the servers, specifically a free storage service that has been around for several years, called OpenDHT.

ActiveX

An easy-to-use toolkit used to hack computers has now been updated to take advantage of an unpatched security vulnerability in Microsoft's software, which could mean attacks will intensify, according to vendor Symantec. The Neosploit toolkit is one of several on the Internet that can be used by less-technical hackers to compromise machines. Symantec said it has detected on its network of Internet sensors that Neosploit can take advantage of a vulnerability revealed early last week in Microsoft's Access database program.

"Further analysis of these honeypot compromises has revealed that the exploit has been added to a variant of the Neosploit exploit kit, it will very likely reach a larger number of victims," according to an entry on the company's ThreatCon advisory board. Microsoft hasn't patched the bug yet, and the company just issued its patches for the month on July 8. The vulnerability is within the Snapshot Viewer ActiveX control, which launches a viewer for Microsoft Access reports that doesn't require running the Access software itself.

Homer Simpson spreads malware

A screen name once connected to animated TV dad Homer Simpson is being used to spread malware.

In a 2003 episode of The Simpsons, writers revealed that Homer's e-mail address was chunkylover53@aol.com. Prior to the episode's airing, the address was registered by one of the show's writers, who used it to answer hundreds of e-mails from Simpsons fans. Years later, the chunkylover53 screen name has resurfaced, and it's now being used to distribute a trojan disguised as a Simpsons movie file.

According to FaceTime malware research director Chris Boyd, chunkylover53 is sending out auto-reply messages to users which promises a special exclusive episode of the show available for download. The link in the message leads to an executable file. Upon launching the trojan, the user is presented with a fake error message which is followed by several real error messages and, finally, a blank screen. Upon restarting, the system will run noticeable slower and be prone to crashes.

"For now, this is a good reminder to be cautious when randomly adding cool things seen on TV and film to your online applications," said Chris Boyd, the Malware research director

Microsoft Word

Microsoft has issued yet another security advisory in the wake of attacks targeting Word. The company said in the advisory that it has received reports of attackers targeting a flaw in the handling of .doc files. The attacks are not currently believed to be widespread, and the initial exploit attempts have been in specially targeted attacks.

The vulnerability lies in the way Word 2002 Service Pack 3 handles .doc files. An attacker could use a specially-crafted document to cause a memory overflow error and application crash. The error would then leave the system vulnerable and allow the attacker to remotely execute code on the target system. Microsoft said that the vulnerability only appears to exist in Office Word 2002 Service Pack 3. No other versions of Word or Office appear to be at risk for attack.

In addition to basic security practices such as enabling a firewall and antivirus software, Microsoft recommends that users exercise caution in loading mail attachments and avoid suspicious .doc files.

Microsoft update kills ZoneAlarm

Computers who use the ZoneAlarm security package might not want to install MS update KB951748. According to several news groups, the first thing you will notice after running the update is that your internet connection dies as KB951748 made changes to the networking files that Zonealarm doesn't like. It then decides to block everything just to be safe.

You can get around the problem by setting the Internet Zone Security permission slider from high to medium and that will give you your connection back but that is not really a good idea if you want high security. Sniffing around the forums we found similar advice although, apparently, the best bet is to reset the ZoneAlarm database.

Databits:

Google

If the web were a vast savanna of content and webpages, search engines might be our safari guides, helping us navigate through miles and miles of barren wastes. At the moment, Google seems to be the guide of choice for most web travellers, and for good reason too: Google has reached over one trillion unique indexed URLs. Contrast this to the paltry 26 million URLs Google had in 1998 when it first started out, and even the one billion the company had attained in 2000.

Paypal

PayPal, the San Jose company that revolutionized the way payments are made online, marks its 10th anniversary this year.

It has officially launched a site PayPal-10 which features a number of interviews with PayPal founders and key decision makers.

World's oldest blogger signs off, aged 108

An Australian woman renowned as the world's oldest blogger has died at the age of 108. Her last post described her ailing health but also how she still sang a happy song every day. Olive Riley, of Woy Woy about 50 miles north of Sydney, began blogging in February last year, sharing stories from her life during the two world wars, raising three children on her own, and working as a station cook in the outback.

The physically frail but mentally alert Riley won an international audience with her blog, The Life of Riley and series of videos posted on YouTube with her talking and singing.

Riley was said to be the world's oldest blogger as she was 12 years older than the previous titleholder, Spain's Maria Amelia. She was born in 1899 and would have turned 109 in October. 'She enjoyed the notoriety - it kept her mind fresh,' her great-grandson Darren Stone of Brisbane told local newspapers.

'She had people communicating with her from as far away as Russia and America on a continual basis, not just once in a while.'

Random Thoughts from Frenchy.

Murphy's Laws of Computing

1. When computing, whatever happens behave as thought you meant it to happen.
2. When the going gets tough, upgrade.

3. For every function, there is an equal and opposite malfunction.
 4. If at first you don't succeed, blame your computer.
 5. As soon as you understand your computer, it will become obsolete.
 6. A computer system that doesn't work invariably evolved from a simpler system that worked FINE.
 7. The #1 cause of computer problems is computer solutions.
 - a. Frenchy's comment: A computer "solution" is also called a "Patch" or "Hotfix".
 8. He who laughs last probably made a back-up copy.
 9. To screw up is human, to screw up royally requires a computer.
- A computer program will do what you tell it to, seldom what you want it to do.

That's all for now

Sincerely,
Brian Decker
Don't Hold Your Breath Computer Service