Safe Surfing

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Introduction

A few months ago there was a lot of talk about the "Love Bug" virus – and its cousins NewLove and FriendMess, and the devastation that resulted because of them. It is still spreading! What should we do? Stop using our computers....or at least stop using the Internet? What should we do?

The information that I would like to provide you with is not a cure for the present problem but – if anything, it just may provide you with enough ammunition to stop things like this from happening to you.

For those who have been following any of my previous articles, you may have noticed that I often use the term "proactive". Very simply, life with computers is in reality, a "cause and effect" situation. Therefore, I would like to be prepared *before* something does happen. An example of cause and effect is when a computer is first turned on it "boots up". When I receive an e-mail attachment, I may get a virus...and so on and so on.

The Internet is a great concept! It is a valuable resource for just about anything. E-mail is also a great concept. But are the hassles associated with the Internet overwhelming enough for me to actually stop using it. I sincerely hope not!

In my conversations with folks about their computing interests, especially as it pertains to the Internet, I have made mention of what I call "Filtered Web Sites". A Filtered Web Site is a location somewhere out there on the WWW that basically monitors the activity on their computer system(s) and does so on a regular basis. By monitoring, I mean that they routinely check their systems for infected or corrupted files, bad links, etc.

An example may help here. Let us say that you are looking for a particular solitaire game to try out. You load up a search engine, type in what you are looking for and begin your search. You are given a number of locations to find what you are looking for and you proceed to go to one of the sites listed. However, before you go to that web site, you should be asking yourself this question: "Where is it that I am about to go?" Knowing where you are going can alleviate many potential problems down the road. Very simply, the results of my search can take me down one of three avenues:

- A filtered site
- A non-filtered site
- A dark site

We all should want to go to the first location and try avoiding the second and third. So what is the difference?

A Filtered Web-site

As I mentioned, a filtered web-site is a location *that regularly monitors their Internet activity*. Very simply, something or someone is at that location checking to make sure that their system is functioning properly. If it is, then we should not have any problems. If someone should send them some information that IS corrupted, then they will deal with it *before* it reaches me. Many companies that operate these

sites are large enough to provide funding for this service – and a service it is. Also, advertisers may provide the necessary funding for this service.

An example of a filtered web site would be your bank or other financial institutions. Generally speaking, the publishers for magazines will also have a filtered Web-site as they want to have you come back to see them. Also, Web-sites that use https:// in their web site name – with the "s" basically meaning "secure". For example https://mywebsiste.com would be an example of a filtered Web-site.

A Non-filtered Web-site
The reverse side of this, a non-filtered web site, is a location that basically is a storage unit for data where little or no monitoring activities are provided at all. Needless to say, these are the types of places to try and avoid.

An example of a non-filtered web site is most Web-sites that use http:// in their web site name. For example http://mywebsiste.com would be an example of a non-filtered Web-site. Some opt for this latter designation as a secured Web-site simply costs more than a non-secured Web-site.

A Dark Site
A dark site is a term that I have coined that refers to a web site that uses blue text on a black background. Now, in order for you to be able to view the blue text on a black screen the area where your computer is located needs to be "dark" so that you are able to see the text – hence the name. There is another term used for these sites, but being a cautious person, I chose to not mention it making you less likely to go there.

The Question
Other than what is listed above, how am I to know if a site is filtered or not? Usually, by the reputation of those that host the site. These folks put a lot of time and effort – hence *money*, into these sites and in return, advertisers pay to go on them. They have a lot at stake, so they work accordingly.

What we should do?
So, to answer our previous question as to: "What we should do?" – stay with filtered Web-sites! As a few suggestions, consider the following:

http://www.pbs.org
http://www.bing.com
https://start.duckduckgo.com
https://www.youtube.com

In closing
When surfing the 'Net, always be cautious of where you are going. I hope that the above will at least provide you some information to arm yourself with. Happy computing!