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3 Top Ways People Get Infected by An Email Virus [In Case You Were Wondering]

by Tina on Jul. 20th, 2010

Original article appears at: <http://www.makeuseof.com/tag/top-ways-people-infected-email-virus-case-wondering/>

Viruses are some of the oldest parasites known to humans. They probably evolved while the first cells started to populate the planet. With the invention of computers, witty programmers copied the properties of biological viruses and translated them into tiny computer programs.

The sole purpose of any virus is to replicate and spread itself. Damage to the host system is a potential consequence. The most common way for a virus to enter a computer is via email. So how do people get infected by an email virus?

Shouldn't everyone know how [viruses](#) enter a computer and be prepared? In this article I will explore the top 3 ways people get infected by an email virus and I will point out how you can avoid such a virus infection.

1. A Virus As An Email Hoax

As mentioned in the introduction, viruses typically are programs. But that's not always the case. Some viruses speculate on nothing but your naivety. Did you ever forward a chain letter, a virus warning, or the email of a desperate parent whose child needed an organ donation? You probably fell for a hoax and helped to spread it.

In this case the virus is the email itself, although it's not really an infection. The damage, however, is the same as with other viruses: clogging up of inboxes and mailservers. Email viruses generally cause a waste of time, resources, and energy.

Next time you receive a potential hoax email, don't forward it unless you're sure it's genuine. About.com features [Top 10 lists](#) of latest viruses, virus alerts, and virus hoaxes. [Hoax-Slayer](#) is a good resource to get informed about email hoaxes and eventually verify the credibility of an email you have received. Or if the email has tried to defraud you or steal your information, report it [to the proper authorities](#).

2. A Virus In An Email Attachment

While forwarding an email doesn't cause you any major damage, an infection with a "real" computer virus, i.e. a self-replicating program, is a lot more critical. There are "harmless" variants that just forward themselves to your contacts. However, a virus may also be programmed for example, to destroy specific files on your system.

Most viruses are delivered through an email attachment. Attachments that contain viruses are either executable programs (file types: .com, .exe, .vbs, .zip, .scr, .dll, .pif, .js) or macro viruses (file types: .doc, .dot, .xls, .xlt). The safest way to avoid them is to not open email attachments.

Note that you can safely open [Word](#) documents in alternative programs that don't support macros, such as Wordpad or Open Office. Some viruses try to hide their true file extension by adding two of them. That's what the ILOVEYOU virus did; its name was "LOVE-LETTER-FOR-YOU.TXT.vbs".

The good news is that downloading and reading the email will not do you any harm. As long as the attachment is not opened, the virus won't hatch. If you don't know the sender and if the email text is suspicious, just delete the email along with the attachment.

If one of your contacts, however, was infected by a virus, the fraud is not as easy to spot. Carefully review each email and play it safe. Many web mail services can scan email attachments for viruses. If you use a desktop mail program like [Thunderbird](#) or [Outlook](#) and don't have a virus scanner that can scan email attachments, you may save (not open!) the attachment to your hard drive, where it becomes accessible for your virus scanner. Just remember never to open an attachment before it was scanned.

3. A Virus In The Email Body

Last but not least, malicious content can be found in the body of an email. Today, HTML is a common element of emails as it is used to embed pictures and links. However, HTML can also be used to embed scripts that execute automatically and subsequently infect your computer with a virus. That's why many mail programs, by default, block HTML and make you click a button to display content of trustworthy sources. It's a precaution you should not turn off.

Also, URLs can be a virus in disguise. You may see a harmless link that either leads you to a website that executes a malicious script or links to a completely different URL where you automatically download a self-executing virus. Taken together, the same rule as for attachments applies: never view or access links from suspicious sources.

Summary

The reason why all these strategies work is because the respective email is cleverly designed to foul its recipients. It may be a harmless call for sympathy or a threat that calls for instant action. Most people will readily click any link that is presented to them in order to solve a problem or access further information.

What you can do is the following:

- Act smart, not fast.
- Verify the source of any suspicious email before you act.
- Generally, do not blindly forward emails, open attachments and links, or view HTML content.
- Get an antivirus program and regularly update its virus definitions.
- Make sure your mail program is set to not automatically download and open attachments or display HTML content.

For more background information on viruses and malware, check out the following articles:

- [8 Best Sources To Follow Computer Virus News & Alerts](#) by Mohan
- [The Best Websites To Find Free Virus & Malware Fixes](#) by Karl
- [The 10 Best Free Anti-Virus Programs](#) by Justin
- [Top 5 Current Email Scams You Should Know About](#) by Dean

Virtual Catalog–Available Defined

A question came up recently about the "availability" of an item in the Virtual Catalog. "Available" in the Workflows / SirsiDynix system typically means that the item circulates and that it is "on the shelf" so that a patron can check it out. But in the Virtual Catalog, there are a couple of twists.

Let's say there is a book in the SAILS system that has many holds on it, Your patrons will be allowed to place a request for it in the Virtual Catalog. This is because the title is not currently available in our system. If it is not available in our system, and it is available in another, the request will go through. The lending library outside of SAILS can fill the request if it is still available when they process their requests. They may decide they don't want to fill it, if it is a popular title. They have the right to refuse.

Another puzzling situation arises when you see one of your patron's Virtual Catalog requests come in and know that you have the item sitting on your shelf. In that case, it may be that when the request was placed, it wasn't available in SAILS. It could also be that the Virtual Catalog system is not matching up the correct ISBN and thinks that your copy is different from the one requested. If this happens, you can send an example to eservices@sailsinc.org and we can see why it's happening.



TumbleBooks Unplugged

From TumbleBooks: We are excited to announce that the offline version of TumbleBookLibrary - TumbleBooksUnplugged - is now available for schools and libraries!

It's really simple! Here's how it works:

We'll send you a USB stick which you can put on your server or install directly on every computer in the building. Your children will now be able to access TumbleBooks without having to be on the Internet! This is ideal for institutions with limited bandwidth. It's also a great way to limit the amount of time your children spend online.

The collection contains 125 TumbleBooks, 25 chapter books, and 20 TumbleGames. It is a perfect addition to your existing TumbleBookLibrary subscription.

And the best news: This offer is exclusive to TumbleBookLibrary subscribers, and it only costs \$99/year to add TumbleBooksUnplugged to every computer in your library! To place your order, call TumbleBooks at 1-800-232-1844, or simply reply to this email: connie@tumblebooks.com

Collection Development Via Director's Station

By creating a few simple reports in Director's Station, you can easily gather information within minutes to help develop and maintain your collection of books, DVDs, and the thousands of other items you have on your shelves.

You can begin by determining what you have in your collection right now. Use the All Catalog Measures template to create a report that tells you how many copies you own as well as their dollar value. Like many of the Director's Station templates, you can break your results down by home location or item type. Just swap the library dimension on the left for either item type or item category 1 from the top. You can exchange several of the dimensions from the top pool for the default library dimension. Try moving item price. This is also a good way to do some quick error checking!

If you would like see what has been circulating most during the past year (or several), then use the All Checkout Measures (Historical) template. Director's Station will separate your circulation figures into checkouts, renewals at the desk, and renewals by patrons. This is also where you can get the checkouts by day of week or time of day.

If you want to get more granular, see what categories of patrons have been checking out these items during the past year. Use the All Checkout Measures (Historical) template to create a report of your total circulation for the year and swap the station library dimension (on the left) with the user profile dimension (from the pool at the top). Then add another parameter, such as home location, to see which kinds of items each user profile tends to bring home.

As you get an idea of who is taking out what, if you see that shelf space is a factor, you may want to do some weeding. Let's say that you want to know how many copies have not been checked out in the past three years. Using All Catalog Measures, limit to display copies by a specific home location. Put the Date Last Checked Out dimension on the left, uncheck all but the past 3 years. Along the top it will have the default measures. Then, click on one of the squares in the grid under Total Checkouts and export a list of "copies by least checked out" to Excel.

Date Last Checked Out	Total Checkouts
All Date Last Checked Out Total	29,890
2000	750
2001	749
2002	855
2003	1,453
2004	1,668
2005	
2006	
2007	
NEVER	

In another variation of the weeding report, just select by home location, and the results you export to Excel are a list of copies in order by the number of checkouts, from least to most, or vice versa. You then can see which copies have been checked out less than, say, five times over the lifetime of the copy.

This is just a sample of the reports you can create to help develop and maintain your collection. Read more next month on how you can use Director's Station to improve patron services. Contact eservices@sailsinc.org to learn how you can begin using Director's Station.

July's Email Problem

Some of you may remember a few days of disruption with your SAILS email account. The article on the front page of this newsletter is there for a reason. One of the sailsinc.org email accounts got hijacked and began sending out thousands of SPAM emails. The result of those mailings was that several email servers blocked anything coming from SAILS—AOL, Yahoo, HotMail, Comcast... To fix this, SAILS identified where we were being blocked, called people, filled out forms and (hopefully) are no longer on any blocked lists. We also increased our security on the mail server. Now, just because you have a sailsinc.org email account, your emails are being sent through our SPAM filter and not being sent out if they look too suspicious. This will keep our reputation to other email servers high. We thank you for your patience as we worked through this and try to balance the fine line of filtering. Block too much, real email is blocked. Block too little, SPAM gets through.

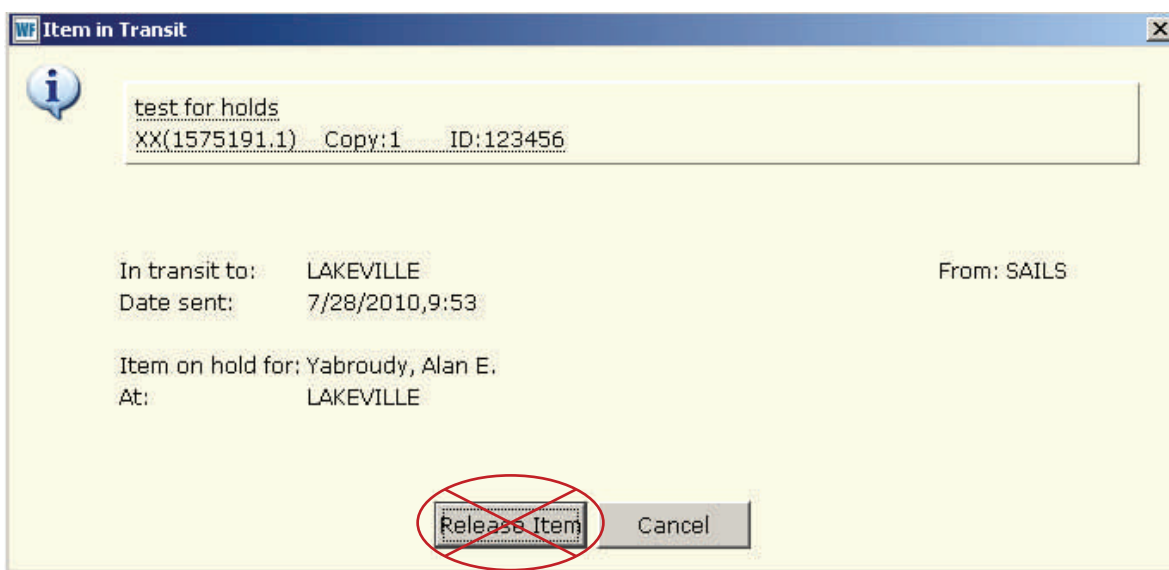
Double trapping of a hold can make it available

A patron may come into your library to pick up a hold after receiving a notice that the hold is available. You check your holds shelf, but the item isn't there, and you check WorkFlows to find out that, yes, the hold is available for pickup for a few more days. In WorkFlows, you see that the item is indeed on the holds shelf - the holds shelf of the sending library.

Why did this happen? Staff at the sending library may have fallen into the trap of double trapping the hold. To resolve this, the pickup library must contact the sending library (or SAILS) and ask them to do a Check Item Status and put the item back in transit for the patron.

The double trapping problem occurs when the lending library traps an item using the Trap Holds wizard, then for some reason scans and traps it a second time. If this happens, simply click Cancel in any pop-up screens that appear next. Don't click to release the item.

And if this isn't your day, and you do click to release the item by mistake, the solution is to - you guessed it - trap the item a third time in the Trap Holds wizard. WorkFlows will prompt you to put it back in transit to the pickup library. The other option is to use the Discharge wizard in place of the Trap Holds wizard.



2010-2011 Circulation Meeting Dates Circulation Roundtables

October 19, 2010	Ames Free Library, Easton	10 a.m.
November 9, 2010	Fall River Public Library	10 a.m.
March 8, 2011	Hanson Public Library	10 a.m.
March 22, 2011	Attleboro Public Library	10 a.m.
Annual Circulation Users Meeting		
May 24, 2011	SAILS Offices	9:30 a.m.

Cookery? Not anymore!

The Library of Congress is no longer using Cookery as a subject heading. What does this mean for patrons? If they do a search for the subject of cooking, they go directly to titles in our system. No cross-references. Cooking is now the correct subject heading. Here are examples of some popular cooking subject headings as they are now constructed: Cooking; Cooking, American; Cooking, Asian; Cooking, French; Cooking, Italian; Cooking (Beef); Cooking (Fruit); Cooking (Seafood); Cooking (Vegetables); Cooking for one; Cooking for two. These changes have been made to the database.

Overdrive Training Opportunities

Below is a great opportunity to get acquainted with the Overdrive service, brush up on your existing skills or learn about upcoming features with the service. I am always happy to come to a library and train a group of staff members as well. If you're interested in holding an onsite training for the whole staff, have your director contact llessner@sailsinc.org to arrange.

OverDrive's Training Month. September 2010.

Free online courses for library staff, beginner to advanced Register now!

Dear Library Partner,

OverDrive's Training Month is an educational and fun program to increase staff knowledge and help maximize circulation of your OverDrive 'Virtual Branch'.

Registration is now open. To guarantee the best selection of available dates and times, sign up now: <http://www.overdrive.com/products/dlr/training>. Sessions will be offered online throughout September with open enrollment for individuals and groups. Contests and prizes are included.

NEW for 2010: In response to participant feedback, audio for Training Month sessions will be provided via speakers/headphones on your computer. A phone connection is NOT required.

The curriculum includes courses covering each aspect of your OverDrive service:

Browse, Check Out, and Download!

Join us as we demonstrate how to browse, check out, and download titles from a library's Virtual Branch website. At the end of this course, staff should feel comfortable answering basic questions about your OverDrive service.

Patron Assistance

We'll help take your understanding of your OverDrive service to the next level so you can share your knowledge through support and training. We'll review frequently asked questions, support tips, and online help resources.

Community Outreach

In this session, we'll share creative, easy, and cost-effective ideas for introducing new patrons to your OverDrive service. We'll also feature prize winners from this year's 'Outreach Program' contest.

Mobile Update

In this session, you will be introduced to new mobile access options for users. Devices highlighted include iPhone®, BlackBerry®, Android™, and more. We'll also preview upcoming mobile features.

More than 7,500 librarians participated in Training Month 2009 and four libraries were the lucky winners of OverDrive's Training Month award packages. Don't miss out in 2010!

We look forward to meeting with you in September!

Sincerely,

OverDrive's Training Team

Questions about OverDrive downloads?



Get answers at **OverDrive's Training Month**

Free instructor-led courses for all library staff, beginner to advanced.



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	June '10	June '09	Total FY'10
Total Intranetwork Loans	58,667	59,236	707,353
Total Items Circulated	388,941	409,040	4,591,100
OverDrive Circulation	2,271	1,249	22,773
TumbleBooks	14,442	2,498	101,758
VirtCat Items Borrowed	1,166	1,269	14,208
VirtCat Items Loaned	646	542	6,302
Cataloging Requests	3,426	3,865	58,802
MARC Records Added	3,293	3,362	65,166
Patrons Added	2,863	3,185	44,328
Patron placed holds	50,995	52,092	596,438
Total MARC	1,095,203	1,071,064	
Total Holdings	3,683,445	3,645,420	
Total Patron	453,401	439,029	
Total Uptime	99.56%	99.99	99.6%

Upcoming Events

- 8/18 SAILS Board Meeting
10AM—11AM; SAILS
- 8/26—School Members Meeting
9AM—noon, SAILS

August 2010

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				