

Got Questions?



# VERMONT COMPUTING INC.

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**Take one!**



**Store Hours: Mon – Fri 8:00 – 6:00 Sat & Sun 10:00 – 12:00**  
**Holiday Hours: 24th 8am-4pm, 25th Closed, 26th Closed**

**Does it always feel like someone's watching you?**  
**Maybe it should. Find out in this issue...**

**Vol 7 Issue 23**  
**Dec. Part 1**  
**Newsletter**

## Spyware Explained!



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***NESH'S TECH TIP:***

- ***DON'T LET PEOPLE SPY ON YOU WITH SPYWARE!***
- ***SHUTDOWN:***
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## VCI News - New Staff



We would like to welcome a new member to the team, Bob Holman! Bob has been working with us for a little while now performing tech work and assisting with many duties here at VCI. He is a self taught computer whiz. In his free time he enjoys PC gaming. Let's all welcome a valuable addition to our technical team!

Also a reminder...

**Now through end of December all used computers, monitors and computer components are 10% off!**

...And, if you purchase a **new VCPC** you get a free *Norton Anti Virus* installed! Not to mention our professional maintenance and the worlds best warranty!

Be sure to take advantage of these great savings!

*Holiday Hours: December 22th, 10am-2pm (extended hours)*

*December 23th, 10am-2pm (extended hours)*

*December 24th, 8am-4pm*

*December 25th: Closed*

*Decmeber 26th: Closed*

## Headlines

### **Toshiba To Launch "Super Charge" Batteries**

<http://hardware.slashdot.org/hardware/07/12/13/1714258.shtml>

(Toshiba announces) that it has developed a new type of rechargeable battery dubbed the Super Charge ion Battery, or SCiB. Toshiba claims the new battery will mainly target the industrial market, though they hint the technology may eventually find a home in electric vehicles. The SCiB can recharge to 90% of total capacity in under five minutes, and has a life span of over 10 years. "Toshiba also says the battery has excellent safety with the new negative electrode material having a high level of thermal stability and a high flash point. The battery is also said to be structurally resistant to internal short-circuiting and thermal runaway."

### **'w00t' Named 2007 Word of the Year**

[http://news.yahoo.com/s/nf/20071212/tc\\_nf/57204](http://news.yahoo.com/s/nf/20071212/tc_nf/57204)

"...Merriam-Webster named "w00t" as the top word of 2007 after conducting a poll on its m-w.com Web site, in which visitors were asked to choose from a list of twenty words compiled by the company. The words were selected from frequent searches on Merriam-Webster Online and submissions to Merriam-Webster's "Open Dictionary," which enables visitors to submit suggestions for new words. In taking top honors, "w00t" beat out two other well-known recent additions to the English language: "facebook" (which finished #2) and "blamestorm" (which finished #5).

As the winner of the 2007 vote, "w00t" joins a prestigious group of prior winners, including "truthiness" (2006), "integrity" (2005), and "blog" (2004)..." (cont.4)

## Nesh's Tech Tip - Don't let people spy on you with spyware!



### What is spyware?

Webopedia  
(<http://www.webopedia.com/>)  
defines spyware as:

"(n.) Any software that covertly gathers user information through the user's Internet connection without his or her knowledge, usually for advertising purposes...Once installed, the spyware monitors user activity on the Internet and transmits that information in the background to someone else. Spyware can also gather information about e-mail addresses and even passwords and credit card numbers.

...Because spyware exists as independent executable programs, they have the ability to monitor keystrokes, scan files on the hard drive, snoop other applications, such as chat programs or word processors, install other spyware programs, read cookies, change the default home page on the Web browser, consistently relaying this information back to the spyware author who will either use it for advertising/marketing purposes or sell the information to another party.

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### Why do people write spyware?

In my search for an answer to this question, I ran across an interesting essay by Jen Petruzzini (<http://www.albany.edu/~jp279778/>). She says:

"Spyware has become so prevalent as a marketing tool primarily because of its ability to target online customers so quickly. The efficacy of web advertising is highly quantifiable in that it can be measured with click-through counts and web site hits. It is attractive to marketers who believe it will allow them to get the most from their advertisement spending by specifically targeting and tailoring to customers.

According to ongoing studies, consumers have a higher propensity for clicking on web advertisements when they first begin navigation than they are later on in their search. Spyware allows its authors' pop-up ads to be seen first by those infected, since their computers have been programmed to display them. Some spyware applications begin to display advertisements even before a person connects to the Internet."

### So we know what Spyware is, and why it exists, but why does this matter to you?

An article on Geek on the Run (<http://www.geekontherun.net/spyware2.htm>), gives us a little taste of what popular programs may come bundled (you can't install one without the other) with spyware:

"Some of the most popular programs on the Internet are

also among the worst offenders in terms of installing adware or spyware on your computer. Here's only a very small list:

*AIM (installs Weather Bug and Wild Tangent Games by default), Atom Wire, Ares, Audiogalaxy Satellite, Bear-Share, Bonzi Buddy, Brilliant Digital, Comet Cursor, ComTry, DashBar, Gator, Global Divx Player, Go MP3, Go!Zilla, Grokster, ieplugin, iMesh, KaZaa, LimeWire, Morpheus, NetPals, Piolet, QC Toolbar, QTrax, Screen-Scenes, Swaptor, WeatherBug, WeatherScope, Wild Tangent Games, XoloX, Zango Games...*

...and literally hundreds more -- far too many to list here."

So it seems you can get spyware - software that is sending information about how you use your computer, personal information, maybe even bank and credit card numbers - not only by visiting "shady" sites or P2P file sharing, but simply downloading and installing popular software that even your friends may be (and probably are) using.

### So how can you avoid it?

- **Be suspicious of "free" software.** Before you download any "free" programs, do some research to find out why someone is giving the software away for nothing.

- **Consider an alternative Web browser,** such as Mozilla Firefox. Many viruses and spyware applications exploit vulnerabilities in Internet Explorer.

- **Avoid Questionable ActiveX Components.** set the security settings in Internet Options to at least medium, which will prompt you before installing ActiveX controls. (If a box) pops up out of nowhere while you are browsing the Internet and asks if you would like to install some program or ActiveX component that you didn't ask for and don't recognize, say "No."

- **Make certain that Window's firewall is enabled.**

- **Promptly install all Windows updates.** Microsoft is constantly patching Windows to make it safer for you by fixing vulnerabilities that have frequently already been exploited. Turn on automatic updates and install updates as soon as it asks or visit windows update site regularly.

- **Don't click the monkey!** Don't fall for gimmick banner ads.

- **Use an anti-spyware program.** We recommend Spy-Bot (see the how-tos section of our website for usage instructions)

Follow these steps to become a more savvy surfer and avoid giving your browsing habits and personal information away for free!

## VERMONT COMPUTING, INC.

### Record Labels Change Minds About Sharing MP3s

<http://yro.slashdot.org/article.pl?sid=07/12/12/0124246>

"While the RIAA continues to sue people for p2p file sharing, the record labels have made an about-face and given their blessing to users sharing MP3s via the social networking site imeem.com. In May this year the site was being sued by Warner for allowing users to upload photos, videos, and music to share.

However to everyone's amazement, instead of being flattened, imeem.com managed to convince the label that this free promotion was a good thing. In July imeem.com signed a deal with the label. Since then the site has added Sony, BMG, EMI, and now the biggest fish of them all, Universal. Imeem now has the royal flush of record labels supporting its media-sharing service, each getting a cut of the advertising revenues generated by their catalog. Finally someone has figured out a way to do 'YouTube for MP3s' without getting sued out of existence." - END

## Shutdown - It's possible to be *too* paranoid

**A healthy dose of caution is important when downloading software and even browsing the internet, but there is such thing as taking it too far!** ([http://www.rinkworks.com/stupid/cs\\_paranoida.shtml](http://www.rinkworks.com/stupid/cs_paranoida.shtml))

\* Customer: "Email! I won't have anything to do with that Internet or modems of any sort! You should be careful about those. Don't you know that once you install a modem, the government can look into your computer and watch everything you do? That's why every night before I go to bed, I turn the monitor to the wall."

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I know a woman that believes there is a hacker attacking her computer. Every time there is a problem, or she gets an error message she is convinced it is "the hacker" messing with her. Almost every day she tells me "The hacker made me lose my document" or "The hacker made my email return with a wrong address message" or "The hacker made Explorer freeze today" or "The hacker made Napster lose its connection today" or "The hacker made a floppy unreadable" or "The hacker made the printer jam."

She has even assumed her imaginary enemy has superhuman powers. When I tell her some of the things she says are impossible to do, she says, "He knows how to do it. He is a genius."

She is sure this guy exists, and he devotes enormous resources and several hours a day, seven days a week to the sole purpose of bothering her.

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I was once using the generic telnet program on the library computers to check my mail on UTM (the local uni-

versity) with Pine. The computer-inept librarian walked up behind me.

\* Her: (shrieking) "WHAT ARE YOU DOING???"

\* Me: "I'm checking my email--"

\* Her: "It looks like you're breaking into the computer!!"

\* Me: "No really -- I'm checking my mail."

\* Her: "But that's not HOTMAIL!!"

\* Me: "I don't use hotmail. I use--"

\* Her: "But EVERYONE uses HOT-MAIL!!"

\* Me: "No, my account goes through UTM. My email account ends with--"

\* Her: "But that's not what MY UTM looks like!!" (apparently referring to the UTM web page)

\* Me: "Yes, I'm telnetting. It's another way of accessing--"

\* Her: "I think you better shut that off. You're breaking into the computer."

\* Me: "But I--"

\* Her: "Turn it off. I don't believe that 'checking mail' story."

-----  
\* Tech Support: "Yes, ma'am, we require a credit card or checking account in order to sign up on our service."

\* Customer: "Well, I saw on the news that I should never give out my credit card information!"

\* Tech Support: "Well, ma'am, we have to have a way to bill you."

\* Customer: "No other service does this!"

\* Tech Support: "No, ma'am, the others don't allow you to use a checking account."

\* Customer: "No honest company would ask me for my credit card information!"

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\* Tech Support: "May I have your phone number, sir?"

\* Customer: "I don't give out my phone number!"

\* Tech Support: "All right. How may I help you, sir?"

\* Customer: "How much for your Internet service?"

I gave him the prices.

\* Customer: "If I own the software why do you keep charging for it?"

\* Tech Support: "Well, sir, the software is free, but you are charged for being online."

\* Customer: "YOU CONNECT YOUR COMPUTER TO THE PHONE LINE?!?"

\* Tech Support: "Well, sir, you do use a modem to dial online."

\* Customer: "I WILL NEVER HOOK MY COMPUTER TO MY PHONE!!!!" (click)