

ForUM Statistics



During April 2010, ForUM received a total of 72,807 visits, with 72,536 of them coming from the United States ... that's over 99% of the monthly total!

There were also 164 ForUM visitors from Canada, and 92 from Brazil.

CIO Corner *(by Frank Whidden, Ph.D., Interim CIO)*

The Cloud

Well, if you read anything technically related these days, I'm sure you've seen something related to the "cloud." You certainly shouldn't feel uninformed if it all seems somewhat nebulous. As has become the case for many years now in technology, the marketing function tends to interfere with the technical function. I'm sure the engineers are often surprised to attend marketing meetings and hear the spectacular new features they didn't know about in the products they invented. Such is the world we live in.

However, the cloud is a real phenomenon and I will briefly try to describe what we understand it to be and why it's important to the University community. The essence of the cloud is probably better explained by terminology that we have used for many years in the IT field such as "off-premises computing". At least we can nail that one down. Off-premise computing as the term suggests means at least part of the computing that is occurring is happening somewhere other than on-campus. This is not a new concept. In fact, most of the cloud is based on decades old concepts that were much more familiar in the mainframe era. Back then, it was typical for smaller organizations to have their data processed at some far distant computing center because of the cost of the hardware and software. For instance, in order to run payroll organizations would rent small

increments of time on the mainframe and the results would be sent back to the organization. In our day of heightened security concerns it is sometimes difficult to think in terms of off-premise computing but ever increasing costs for hardware, software, and personnel are forcing many organizations to reconsider.

There are some differences between the modern cloud and the off-premise computing of earlier times. The rise of the Internet means easy and ubiquitous connectivity for almost everyone. This means there is a lot of demand for software to constantly do new things. The cloud concept makes it much easier to bring new ideas to functionality very quickly. It also enables the IT group to be more nimble and responsive. Much of the power of the cloud is made possible through "on-demand" arrangements. That is, if a particular application needs additional disk space that expansion can be had on the fly and the organization only pays for the disk space actually consumed. The buzz word for this concept is "elasticity". This reduces disk space just sitting on the shelf because it had to be purchased at least 18 months in advance based on some forecasting model. Who knew 5,000 people would suddenly develop an urge to enroll in Art Appreciation?

So there are a lot of concepts involved in cloud computing, some old, some new. But, the general direction is to reduce the
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CIO Corner *(continued)*

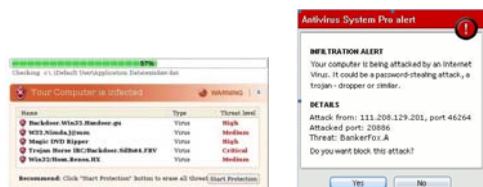
cost of computing while at the same time increasing the flexibility and adaptability of the hardware and software systems that we all increasingly rely on. Here in TSS we are working on technologies that

will enable us to leverage the cloud where it makes sense. The good news is that there is a lot of potential in the cloud and it looks like it will be available even to organizations of modest size and means.

Beware of Fake Antivirus

One of the more troubling malware developments in recent years is that of Fake Antivirus scams, sometimes known as “scareware.” Scareware is malicious software that presents itself to the user as legitimate antivirus software. In a typical attack, the fake antivirus software will “alert” the user to threats that have been found on the computer and offer to remove them. Often the user will be directed to a website where the fake antivirus software can be purchased. In fact, the threats this software reports are non-existent, but the money spent to be rid of them is very real.

Here are two examples of the many types of Fake Antivirus attacks:



Most fake antivirus applications spread via “social engineering,” which is to say that they require your input or acknowledgement to infect your computer. You have to click “OK” or “Yes” or something similar for the software to start installing. Unfortunately, clicking “No” or “Cancel” will often start the installation as well. To avoid this scenario, don’t click anywhere on one of these messages if it pops up on your screen. Instead, use [Alt]+[F4] to close the pop-up window. (On a Windows PC, [Alt]+[F4] closes the active window.)

Some Fake Antivirus applications are now starting to use “drive by downloads” to attack victims. With drive-by downloads, all you have to do is visit a compromised web page to get infected. Strong, up-to-date antivirus software and cautious web browsing habits are the best defenses for these kinds of attacks.

For More Information:

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104 Morgan Hall

Office:
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8 am – 5 pm
Monday - Friday

Help Desk:
(205) 665-6520
(866) 520-2401
24 hours a day
7 days a week

Email:
helpdesk@
montevallo.edu

On the Web:
www.montevallo.edu/cs

Coming Soon: Online Help Desk

This summer, Technology Services will be implementing a new incident tracking system called Service Now (SNOW, for short). One of the most exciting features of this system is its online self-service component. Once implemented, UM students, faculty

and staff will be able to login to SNOW to enter their own trouble tickets, check on the status of existing tickets, or add additional information to their tickets. We will be sending out additional information once the SNOW implementation nears completion

Tech Stats

During the month of April, a total of 499 calls were closed by the Central Help Desk and onsite personnel – that’s an average of over 16 per day! Over 83% were closed within 1 business day of receipt while over 51% of the calls received were from students calling for assistance with their accounts or regarding the student network.