

# Major ISPs propose measures to reduce spam proliferation

*Group of service providers recommend monitoring email flows to spot sources*

A group of six of the world's largest internet service providers have got together to propose guidelines and measures to stop the proliferation of spam.

The group, called the Anti-Spam Technical Alliance, is made up of Yahoo, AOL, Microsoft, BT, Earthlink and Comcast. This week they published a 19-page report outlining some general principles for reducing the amount of spam.

An estimated 80% of all email currently being sent is spam. An array of email viruses and worms have created a situation where home computers have become the unwilling distributors of unwanted email, or spam. These messages arrive to the email inboxes of other users with subject headings advertising porn sites, medical cures, or anything else that might encourage users to open the messages.

Once opened, these messages can wreak havoc on PCs, often causing annoying but harmless symptoms such as on-screen messages,

while others can result in data loss. Other viruses automatically send messages to all of the recipients in a users email address book, eventually resulting in a massive proliferation of the virus.

Most of the preventative measures are aimed at the ISPs. One consists of having an ISP identifying and blocking a computer that is sending out enormous quantities of email, a giveaway clue that the machine has been infected and is spewing out spam.

"All ISPs should develop methods for discovering compromised computers", according to the report. "Computers that show signs of infection should be removed from the network or quarantined until the virus, worm and/or other malware can be removed."

To prevent a computer from becoming a source of spam, the report recommends that ISPs put a limit on the amount of email a residential PC can send out.

The group is also in favour of im-



Many home PC users do not realise when their computers are sending and receiving viruses / JOSUE GARCIA

plementing systems to verify the identity email senders.

Yet stopping the flow of spam could prove difficult. There is no way to provide reliable figures on the number of computers that might be infected, but most experts think that that number is growing. 89% of spam is believed to come

from PC's which act as relays to disseminate messages.

In addition, EBay merchants and other businesses use email extensively to market their products, often making it difficult to distinguish between commercial email and messages carrying viruses.

And measures by large provid-

ers will not be sufficient to stem the flow of spam, because much of it originates from smaller ISPs. "We want to make sure other online neighbourhoods are clean", said AOL spokesman Nicolas Graham, who added that his company immediately cancels an account if they discover it has been infected.

## New European store for iTunes shows brisk sales figures

Apple's online music service iTunes reported sales of 800,000 songs since its first European store opened last week. The service had already become popular in the US, having sold more than 80 million songs since April 2003.

iTunes customers pay 0.99 euros for each song they download, which they select from a catalogue of more than 700,000 titles. After downloading songs to personal computers, consumers are then able to play them on a portable player called iPod. The top-selling artists from Europe have included Anastacia, Alicia Keys, the Pixies and Herbert Gronemeyer. Some artists have released exclusive tracks for iTunes.

Steve Jobs, Apple's chief executive, claims that iTunes has become the top online music store in Europe, and that his company had outsold their closest competitor OD2 by 16 times since the opening of the new store.

The music industry, which has seen sales fall after a sharp rise in music piracy, expects online music stores to help bring back lost customers. Download music services have been available in Europe for about three years, but sales have never been as brisk as in the North American market.



An early General Motors car when they were still based in Michigan / ARCHIVE

## General Motors moves Asia offices to Shanghai

General Motors Corp. (GM), a leading car manufacturer, announced its plans to move its Asia-Pacific headquarters from Singapore to Shanghai by January. GM, along with a local partner, will be spending 250 million dollars to expand a design centre in China. The company said the amount is part of a planned 3 billion dollar investment over three years in a country it expects to become its number two market in 2004. GM, a distant second to Volkswagen AG in the world's ma-

jor car market, intends to raise its annual output to 1.3 million units by 2007 by expanding factories and building new plants, as it tries to catch up with its winning rival. "We wouldn't mind being number one," GM CEO Rick Wagoner told a news conference on Wednesday. Overall car sales in China nearly doubled in 2003 after breaking the million mark for the first time the year before. Yet, according to Automotive Resources Asia, that kind of growth will prove impossible to sustain.

## Telegraph going once, twice, sold to Barclays

ALEX LEFF

The Barclay brothers have put an end to months of uncertainty by buying the *Daily* and *Sunday Telegraphs* and the *Spectator* magazine for 665 million pounds. The purchase was made after battling between the brothers and venture capitalist group 3i. *Telegraph* group CEO Jeremy Deedes is optimistic about the new ownership, saying it would bring the newspaper and staff a "period of certainty and stability." *Telegraph* is UK's best-selling broadsheet, with a circulation of 873,181 copies.

Hollinger International, the paper's last owner based in the US, put the group up for sale in November after bitter disputes with the then boss Lord Black. The former boss was accused of taking unauthorised payments from the firm, and attempted to sell the *Telegraph* directly to the Barclay brothers for 245 million pounds, but was stopped by a court case and a law suit of 1.25 billion dollars. The Barclays, grey-haired multi-millionaire twin brothers who live in the Channel Islands, are the owners of the *Scotsman* newspaper and London's Ritz hotel.

"We are delighted to be the new owners and look forward to working with the team to take the busi-

ness forward," Aidan Barclay, chairman of the Barclays' holding group and son of Sir David, one of the twins, told the BBC. *Telegraph* CEO Mr Deedes seems convinced that the twins won't break up and sell off the group, judging by their "great track record for nurturing, developing and investing in acquisitions".

The takeover will not be smooth sailing for the Barclays. Dwindling circulation and a begrudged co-owner of the printing facilities, *Daily Express* owner Richard Desmond, might present significant challenges. Not to mention Lord Black's possible grand finale of a law suit to prevent the sale from closing. A report in the *Daily Telegraph* said that Lord Black may use his majority voting stake in Hollinger to block the purchase. The group believes it does not need the permission of a majority shareholder to complete the takeover, but that argument may not hold up in US courts.

The sale itself was not the original intention of the group's owner, who had hoped to sell its whole newspaper portfolio, which includes the *Chicago Sun-Times* and the *Jerusalem Post*. But the bid process quickly revealed that prospective buyers were after the *Daily* and *Sunday Telegraph*, along with *Spectator* magazine.