

Radio Days – 2010-07-31

Tip of the Week – Be Careful Using Internet Cafés

I recently talked to a person who had used an internet café overseas in the hotel where they were staying. There were two computers in the hotel's internet café: one appeared OK but the other stated that Windows was counterfeit. The question that I was asked was "What is the best thing to do under these circumstances?"

My answer was simple: take along a copy of Ubuntu Linux on CD. This way you can restart the internet café's computer with the Ubuntu CD in the drive. Just follow the prompts to run, **NOT INSTALL**, Ubuntu.

Once Ubuntu is loaded you will see a simple screen: all you need to do is to start the web browser (in Ubuntu's case it is Firefox) and do what you would have done normally: check your emails and browse the web. The advantage of this method is that you can do your work without worrying that the internet café's computer is infected.

When you have finished you just remove your CD and restart the computer. It will boot into Windows normally and the next person can do their thing.

Software Obsolescence

Over the last few weeks I have had calls from a number of people who needed help with old versions of Windows. Their computers usually had Windows 2000 on them, though I did have a call from a listener who had two computers: one had Windows 3.1 and the other had Windows 95. I was surprised that the computers were still working: they obviously do not make computers as well as they used to! The problem with these old versions of Windows (and, indeed, almost any other program) is that there is no more support. Old versions of Windows (that is, versions earlier than XP) are no longer supported by Microsoft so all other manufacturers have removed support as well. A case in point: one caller, who used Windows 2000, wanted to update her anti-virus but the new version would not install. This meant that she had no protection when she was on the internet.

If you are using Windows 2000 or earlier please remember that you are exposing yourself and your computer to unnecessary risks if you use the internet. These versions of Windows did not even have Windows XP's initial poor apology for a firewall, and no other company makes firewalls or anti-virus programs for these versions of Windows.

Again, if you are in the position of needing a computer with internet access but you cannot afford a new computer or a new version of Windows, you may be able to use Ubuntu to keep your data safe from attackers. Ubuntu is a free download but, at 700 MB, it will take too long to download on a dialup internet connection so your best bet, if you have a slow connection, is to download and burn at an internet café. You can then use it as a boot disc to access your computer.

Beware installing Ubuntu on your Windows computer: there are a number of ways to do it and the wrong one will (and I repeat **WILL**) delete all your data, so backup first!

Websites

Ubuntu www.ubuntu.com