

Daily Nebraskan
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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Computers byte dust Viruses spread via computer systems

There really is truth to saying, "It's better to be safe than sorry." As the cold and flu season falls upon us, we take the necessary precautions bundling up and taking vitamins.

The saying also applies to computerland, as computer viruses spread rapidly through systems across the country.

A computer virus is a mischievous little program that infiltrates systems via disk or electronic bulletin boards such as Mid-net, a nationwide computer network that the University of Nebraska-Lincoln subscribes to. The virus can then lurk inside programs in a computer's memory or on disk waiting to strike.

It can cause minor problems, like what happened last March when a virus caused terminals to bleep a "universal message of peace" before destroying itself. Or it might wreak havoc erasing information after informing a personal-computer user: "Your files will now byte the dust."

The most recent virus, allegedly created by Robert T. Morris Jr., a Cornell graduate student, was intended as an experiment. The virus, however, lost control of itself and ran amok, causing thousands of computers in university and military centers to shut down. UNL shut computers down temporarily last weekend in a precautionary measure against the virus. UNL systems were found uninfected.

Though this virus has garnered the most recent media attention, trade publications have known of the problem for a while.

The current issue of Macworld magazine discusses several viruses and lists several ways of safeguarding against them, one of which is not to panic. The problem is serious but one must realize that Big Brother is not hiding in the Super Mario Brothers game disc.

The hackers who create the viruses have caused damage and are capable of causing a great deal more. They have, however, pointed out a flaw in the computer system. The holes were there all along and it was inevitable that a young, gifted Mr. Spock would discover them.

Now the risk is here and must be dealt with. Specific laws will be introduced. But these hackers shouldn't be put in jail, they should be put to work. They obviously know what they're doing. Let them find ways of protecting against the viruses they created.

Meanwhile, it is important to use caution and common sense:

- Some electronic bulletins are now monitored, but exercise caution when using them.
- When using software, make sure it is from a reputable source.
- Back up copies of important information on disc or tape.

The risk is here, so be careful what you stick in your personal computer. This is one virus that shouldn't go untreated.

— John Bruce
for The Daily Nebraskan

opinion READER

Smokers asked not to toss butts

I am grateful for the new smoking policy at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, but as usual when government regulates something there is always spillover benefits and costs. One benefit is cleaner air indoors, but the cost of more cigarette butts litter on the ground all over the place.

I do understand that smoking is a habit that is hard to break, but it would be nice if a few more of those smokers

would throw away their butts in an ashtray or trash can. I have seen people crush their cigarettes right next to an ashtray. I do not know if they get on such a high with cigarettes that they forget the butt they throw on the ground is not biodegradable.

It really makes this place look bad.

Larry L. Davis
student-at-large

editorial

Signed staff editorials represent the official policy of the fall 1988 Daily Nebraskan. Policy is set by the Daily Nebraskan Editorial Board.

The Daily Nebraskan's publishers are the regents, who established the

UNL Publications Board to supervise the daily production of the paper.

According to policy set by the regents, responsibility for the editorial content of the newspaper lies solely in the hands of its student editors.

BULL SHORTS

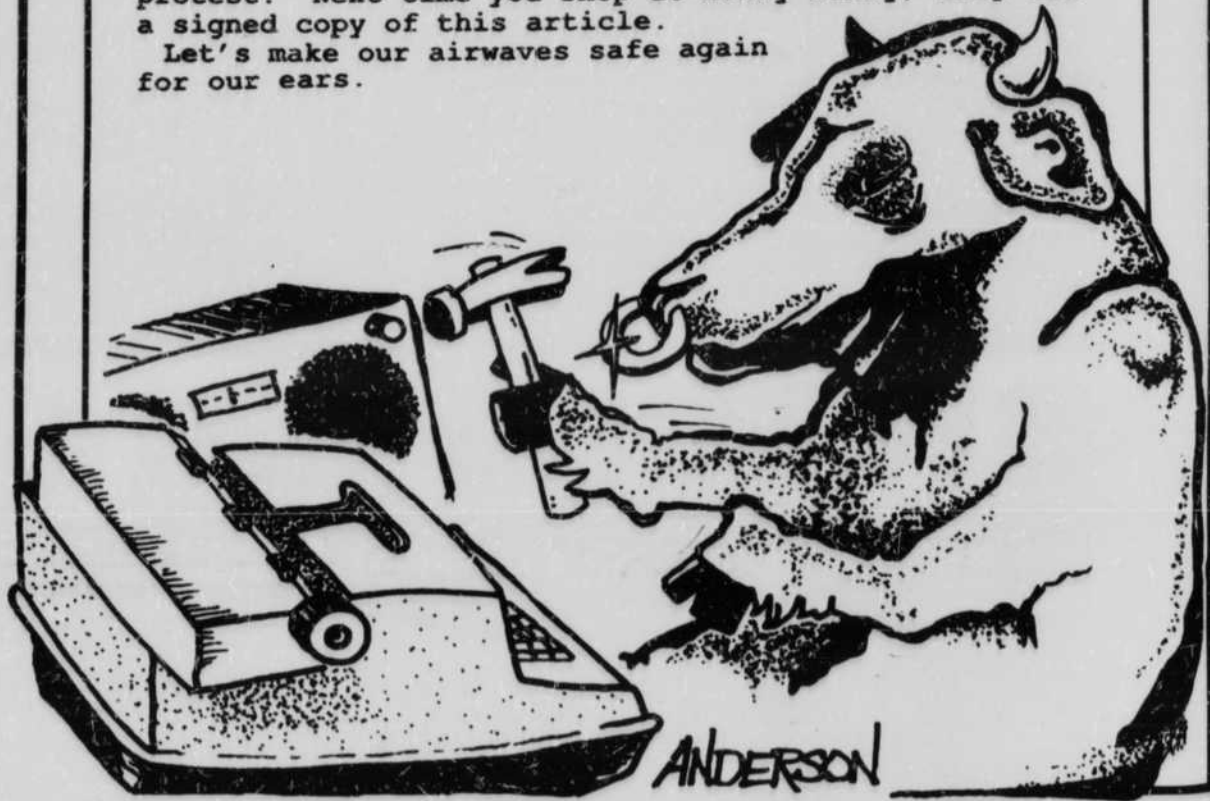
For anyone who has been more than a passive reader of Bull Shorts, you know that I like to take commercials and poke fun at the ones which I find to be totally unrealistic or ridiculous. Well, there is a local commercial I must make a point about and hopefully an example.

Hinky Dinky is using a woman named Sarah Thompson on its commercials. This woman tells us all the wonderful things Hinky Dinky does for us. I have no problem with Hinky Dinky. I shop there myself. It's Sarah's whiny, high-pitched "liiike ahhhhh hooo ahhhh, even ahhh, itsss ahhh suuuuper saaaaavings market and yeehh leeee just said that." which makes my skin crawl. I'd rather hear someone's fingernails on a blackboard.

Again, it's not Hinky Dinky I dislike, it's the commercials.

Here is where you can make a difference: Next time you hear the commercial on the radio, call the station to protest. Next time you shop at Hinky Dinky, drop off a signed copy of this article.

Let's make our airwaves safe again for our ears.



New ideas and opinion abound Columnist deems new board members rebels with a cause

"S"tir it up," must have been on the voters' minds Tuesday when they cast their ballots in the NU Board of Regents' races.

Four incumbents sought re-election. Two were successful. Two were not.

Sounds simple. Or is it?

On a board, which appears to be unified most of the time, how can some members maintain their popularity, while others lose it? Granted, some differences exist in the regents' constituencies, but those are unclear. The 5th and 3rd districts, both "out-state," are not incredibly different.

Therefore, the differences must lie in the candidates themselves. The board must not be as unified as it looks.

Margaret Robinson and Nancy Hoch (incumbents who both retained their seats) can be considered rebels on the board. I use rebels here with the same connotation in mind that I have when describing Thomas Jefferson or Martin Luther King Jr.

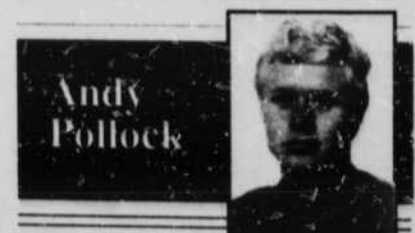
Both take stands, reject the desires of central administration and do what boards commonly don't like to do — namely, splitting votes.

The regents' recent decision not to buy a computer system that had already been shipped to the university provides an excellent example. Hoch and Robinson opposed the purchase and split the vote. Their votes, along with Don Fricke's and Don Blank's, were rejections of the authority of central administration and represented a legitimate check and bal-

ance, which is exhibited too seldom at this university.

Regents Robert Koefoot and James Moylan, on the other hand, voted for buying the computer system. Koefoot and Moylan lost in their bids for re-election.

I am not saying the computer vote is the reason they lost, but it reflects an example of the entire reason. In regards to university matters, both men



Andy Pollock

are conservative, lacking the interrogative attitudes that Robinson and Hoch have. They tend to trust without much question the judgment and decisions of central administration.

Koefoot and Moylan have tended to be part of a conservative mainstream that has dominated the board for several years. Many, including myself, believe this conservatism has stunted the progress of NU and inhibited the maintenance of quality education. And the quality of the university has certainly been threatened — look at our status in financing research and faculty pay.

A careful observer of the board remarked to me yesterday, "The old-boy network has been smashed."

It is difficult to say that, but it merits some truth. Moylan and

Koefoot are good people, but they have been entrapped by a conservative attitude towards NU that has been realized by their constituents.

Rosemary Skrupa, who defeated Moylan, has been criticized for harassing the management of the Omaha Public Power District. Maybe the board needs this. Hopefully, however, Skrupa will realize that UNL, not the University of Nebraska at Omaha, is the flagship campus, and should remain so.

Robert Allen, who defeated Koefoot, recently posed these questions in a Lincoln Star article: "(The NU administration is a definite issue) Do we need a president? The NU foundation moved out of Varner Hall. Does the NU staff need it all?"

These questions reflect a bold and open mind, which will give the board a fresh twist.

Hopefully, these inquisitive attitudes will not be drowned out by the board's mystical suppression of independent opinion and thought. And hopefully the inquisitive attitudes, now often dormant in current board members, will be given fresh blood.

The new board will be composed of regents who have new ideas and different opinions. In order to aggressively lead the university in the future, on a road of progression equal to and better than those of other colleges and universities, the board must listen to these ideas and opinions with respect and an open mind.

Pollock is a senior news-editorial major and a DN editorial columnist.