

GLOBAL NEWSLETTER APRIL 2006

April Fool's!



From the United States of America to Australia, New Zealand to the Netherlands, April 1 is recognised by many countries as the time to play jokes and hoaxes on unsuspecting victims. The debate about the origin of this tradition is alive and well, with the Dutch, Scottish and French all having different versions of how this came to be. In Belgium, Iran and Spanish-speaking countries, they don't miss out on the laughter either but save their pranks for a different date.

Computers, and more recently the Internet, are great tools for practical jokes. As computers are widely used and just as widely misunderstood, we can be caught out easily when we're told something about this technology. Here are some of our favourite harmless pranks:

Internet Spring Clean: Back in 1997, people were asked to unplug anything that attached to the internet on April 1 for the Internet's annual spring clean. For 24 hours, 5 multi-lingual internet cleaning robots would roam the network and purge dead emails and inactive websites. The irony in this is that the Internet is just a collection of connected computers – turn off all the computers at the same time and you'd have no Internet. This hoax was actually an updated version of an old joke - warning people to place a plastic bag over their telephone to catch any dust as the phone lines were being cleaned on April 1.

WiFi Speed Spray: Originally 'sold' on a website then launched by someone else as an eBay auction. The WiFi Speed Spray claimed to increase the speed of your wireless network by 'scrubbing and cleansing the air, thus allowing the radio waves to move more rapidly'.

PC Ez-Bake Oven: From a well known site of computer toys and gadgets, this claimed to slot in like your CD drive and included a recipe book as well as 6 bake mixes for cakes, cookies and meatloaf!

April is also the time when email traffic increases, as humorous files and joke programs are sent from friend to friend. The harmless ones may do nothing more than turn your screen contents upside down for a minute. Now is a great time though to ensure your anti-virus software is up-to-date and working properly. If you do manage to pick up a nasty that you just can't get rid of, call your local Computer Troubleshooter. They have the experience and tools to check individual files and settings and see where the culprit is lurking.

We hope you didn't get caught by a prank this year, or you at least had the last laugh with some fun revenge!

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