

Desktop Witness:
the do's and don'ts of personal computer security
Michael A. Caloyannides
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Computers have changed the world. The internet and the web have changed the world, and made us feel expansive. September 11 has changed the world, and made us feel suspicious. We are interdependent in a way never before imagined possible, and that has both huge advantages and huge problems that we are only just beginning to recognise. If you use a computer connected to the internet, you are bound to have come across spam, and perhaps viruses. Other things will have come across you, and most likely you still don't know. But they - companies and governments - know all about you.

Desktop Witness is a wake-up call to all computer users, and certainly essential reading for people who travel and go into countries they are not familiar with. There's a lot of valuable instructions for PC users in this book, but the explicit precautions apply to any sort of computer anywhere. Whilst anyone visiting a repressive regime must read this book (but leave it at home), it's also important for those of us in free countries to read and worry. What sort of repressive regimes might be around the corner if we let drop our vigilance? We have hard-won freedoms that are being eroded on all sides, and many without our conscious permission.

Governments and companies have back doors into our computers and thence to our private lives. The future will be bleak unless more people read Caloyannides' book and protect themselves better (as he intends); the future will be more promising if we help raise the profile of these most important issues at the start of the second millenium.

Short reviews often end with the standard exhortation: read this book. In this case, if you don't read it, certainly get whoever is responsible for your PC to read it.

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