Hamilton Institute

Ian Dangerfield Lecture

Cybercrime & the Internet user:
If things are so bad how come they're so good?

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Abstract:

The web has introduced billions to computer security. Risks that used to affect only governments and large enterprises are now in the mainstream. Every day it seems brings stories of new breaches, new vulnerabilities and new things for the online population to worry about.

Yet, the story of online crime has some very puzzling facts at its core. Why do some sites impose baroque password policies on their users while others manage with far less? If cybercriminals can crack most passwords in a fraction of a second how do things still muddle along? How can things be so bad and constantly getting worse? Who falls for this stuff: Why do we still get absurd pitches from Nigerian princes long after everyone must have heard of the scam? Where do these estimates of cybercrime billions come from, and where are the cybercrime billionaires?

We give an accelerated tour of the cybercrime landscape, and show that not all is as it seems. Incentives and the difficulty of monetizing attacks attenuate harm. We are saved by the fact that lots of attacks that are technically possible are economically infeasible. [This talk assumes only the technical knowledge of a contemporary Internet user, but considerable curiosity.]

Bio: Cormac Herley is a Principal Researcher at Microsoft Research. His main current interests are data analysis problems, authentication and the economics of information security. He has published widely in signal and image processing, information theory, multimedia, networking and security. He is the inventor on over 70 US patents, and has shipped technologies used by hundreds of millions of users. His research has been widely covered in outlets such as the Economist, NY Times, Washington Post, Wall St Journal, BBC, the Guardian, Wired and the Atlantic. He received the PhD degree from Columbia University, the MSEE from Georgia Tech, and the BE(Elect) from the National University of Ireland.

Venue: Seminar Room, Hamilton Institute, 3rd Floor, Eolas Building

Time: Refreshments at 6pm followed by seminar at 6.30pm

Travel directions are available at www.hamilton.ie

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