



Ralph Scott

Spyware Doctor

Recently several computers that I own seemed to be having similar problems. The first indication that something was amiss was that Microsoft's Internet Explorer seemed to take a long time to locate frequently accessed pages on the Web. My thought ran to the usual problems one has with their Internet service provider. It must be @#\$%po& again! However I noted that colleagues were having similar problems with other providers, so it looked like the problem would be found elsewhere. I next ran a check of updates from Microsoft on their operating system and software, but all was up to date. Perhaps it was a problem with a virus, so I download the latest file definitions and ran a check. No luck there. I figured, well, maybe tomorrow all will be well. Of course this all happened just before exam time, so I needed to be able to open students' work quickly.

The next day was only worse. When I started out on my daily web run, I began getting a number of RUNDLL errors saying that various files in my hard drive program directory could not be found. Now I had a screen full of error messages (there must have a dozen or so) telling me things were not right. This now occurred on all my computers at home. Fortunately my computer at the library had not yet had this problem, and I was able to go out on the web and search for a solution. It turns out that this quick check of the Web turned up a solution to my problem. It seems that a spyware program, Spybot S&D, was causing stability problems with my computers. (www.adwarereport.com/mt/archives/0000045.html) Spybot is an example of what some computer users call a "good product gone bad." It seems that the last update of Spybot was designed to correct a problem but instead, caused an even greater issue. Some believe that the version of Spybot that was released to work with Microsoft's Vista operating system now causes Spybot to not work with Microsoft's XP operating system. I don't know if this is correct but it sure caused me a great headache. In reading on the web about this problem, it turns out that it is common with a number of spyware programs.

Once a problem like this occurs, other software makers are quick to jump on the repair bandwagon. Appropriately there is now a program called "Spyware Doctor" which will correct most of the problems caused by faulty spyware software. Spyware Doctor is available at: www.spywaredoctorsoftware.com. Spyware Doctor gets good reviews and has received good ratings from CNET and Tucows. It's available in a free download, which you can try, however I quickly decided that this was something I did not want to be without on my computer. (My students waiting for final grades were happy I had it also!) The full purchase price is \$29.95 although the day I tried the free download I recall getting a \$5.00

off coupon if you purchased right away. Spyware Doctor not only searches for spyware, but it also seems to clean up the problems left by other spyware programs such as Spybot and Ad-Aware. Just to be sure I un-installed Spybot before installing Spyware Doctor. (Spybot has an uninstall program, but I think it leaves some orphans lying around on your hard drive. Spyware Doctor works similar to other virus checking programs. There is an update cycle you need to go through each time you log on to your computer, and you can set the search levels using a navigation pane. I always set every choice to the highest level of protection on my computers. This is what the Spyware Doctor navigation pane looks like:



There are switches to start a scan, check for problems (called immunization), and real time "OnGuard" protection. Spyware Doctor is especially helpful in removing "rootkits" which is a new type of hidden operating system threat. That was what was slowing my computer to a crawl on the internet. One of these "kits" was taking away all the operating system memory.

The current version of Spyware Doctor works with Microsoft Vista, XP and Windows 2000. A separate older version is required for those using Microsoft Windows 98. Spyware Doctor itself is a rather small program using on 17, 233 KB of storage. If you don't have an anti-virus program you can also purchase Spyware Doctor with AntiVirus 5.5 for \$39.95. Incidentally both Spyware Doctor and Spyware Doctor with AntiVirus 5.5 allow you to install their software on up to three machines for the license price. I am sure soon another problem will attack my computer, but right now Spyware Doctor is keeping it humming along fine.