

Internet Safety Family Guide

Victoria Roddel

Lulu Press, Morrisville, North Carolina, hardcover, (167p)

ISBN: 1-4116-6669-0

Victoria Roddel's "Internet Safety Family Guide" is, as the author puts it in her introduction, "the only book in print for the general public regardless of occupation, age, race, marital status, gender, financial status, operating system, or level of computer experience that provides a basic explanation of all the major subjects related to online safety." It is, she warns, not a how-to guide; rather, it is written to "generate awareness" and "provide a platform where the reader can intelligently begin research and pursue a subject of choice."

Roddel's book is an extension of her Internet safety web site; it is well researched and methodically organized. The first chapter on basic safety, for example, provides the most elementary safety tips for Internet users - do not open unknown email attachments, use anti-virus and anti-spyware software, do not store sensitive information on a computer's hard drive, and many more. This chapter also draws analogies between intruders and infectors in the real world with those in computers; just as you would protect your home from criminals or yourself from infections, so should you protect your computer from intruders and online infections.

Roddel then moves onto home computer security with fundamental suggestions, such as the importance of user names and passwords, as well as elaborate ones, like permanently deleting information from a computer's hard drive using products like Cyberscrub and cyberCide. She devotes an entire chapter to children online, outlining a basic rule of thumb: "apply your family values and rules to the internet." Another chapter deals with protecting computers from the three basic kinds of infectors: worms, Trojans and viruses. Roddel talks knowledgeably on lessons learned from past virulent attacks of worms like Code Red and Benjamin. She also outlines the dangers of malware - "software that deliberately harms, restricts, alters, or stops your computer from working properly" - and unknowingly downloaded tracking software called spyware. A third type of less infectious but no less intrusive software is adware, which is essentially software that displays advertising while it is being used.

A particularly useful section is the book's focus on online fraud, scams and hoaxes. Roddel offers tips to spot dubious shopping web sites, advises readers to check out privacy policies, and points victims of online fraud to agencies that can help. She also gives useful and practical advice to deal with cyber harassment and stalking, identity theft, software piracy, and spam, ending her book with a quick primer on cyber law and legislation, and guidelines for reporting cybercrime in the United States.

Every chapter of the "Internet Safety Family Guide" comes with its own little glossary, as well as boxed items to highlight Roddel's most important tips and suggestions. The author also provides a list of useful web sites to download tools for online security. The book's language is simple and clear-cut, allowing even first-time computer users to follow its steps toward a secure connection and peace of mind on the Internet.

BookWire Review
March 14, 2006