

Internet security has become a very hot topic in the past few years. Companies looking to capitalize on the increased market that personal computer use has produced have resorted to rather devious methods to penetrate that market. Every time you visit a web site that has advertising links and you click on one of those links, the advertiser will be paid a small fee by the company whose product you have expressed interest in. If that was all that was done then there wouldn't be a problem. There is nothing wrong with an advertising company telling their client that because of their advertisement efforts, x number of people expressed interest in their product. That would justify the cost associated with paying the advertising agency in the first place. A very good example of that would be television ads. If you see an ad for Coca Cola, let's say, and because of what you see on the ad you run out and buy a case of Coke, and everybody else does the same thing, then Coca Cola will notice an increase in sales. They will associate that increase directly to the ad agency whomever created the ad. They will be paid handsomely for that. It's the American way, right?

Well, that's not the only thing that happens as a result of computer advertising. When you click on an ad link, quite often a small piece of information (called a Cookie) is placed on your computer indicating that you clicked on link such-and-such. That cookie's contents can be retrieved by outside concerns who patrol the internet reading people's computer contents looking for them. The programs that go searching for the cookies are called "Spiders" and the cookies themselves are called "Spyware". Once the information is gathered the websites will know what kind of pop-ups to force on you the next time you visit the site.

It's a rather ingenious way to determine markets if you stop and think about it. Let's say that you are the manufacturer of camping equipment. Wouldn't it be nice if you knew exactly which people to direct your ads to? It would save you so much money in advertising mailings and it just might help you to increase sales. Here's how it works: Let's say you click on a link for "Acme Fishing Gear". A cookie is placed on your computer that indicates you wanted information on Acme. Later that night, some "Spider" detects your cookie and saves the fact that you were interested in fishing. Now they know that you might also be interested in camping equipment. The next time you visit the initial site, they will recognize it's you and give you a pop-up for "Kelly's Kamping Kompany". On and on it goes. You will eventually get pop-ups for Canoes, Guns, other Fishing companies, etc.

There are special programs that you can get that will scan your computer looking for the cookies and delete them. These "Anti-Spyware" programs are quite often free of charge. I suggest that you look into one that I use called "Ad-Aware" that is created by Lavasoft. A link to their website is <http://www.lavasoftusa.com/>. You can either download the free version or pay a small price () to get the best protection and you will be eligible for upgrades.

Another culprit, and annoyance, is the pop-up ad. Everybody has, at one time or another, come in contact with such beasts. They are quite prevalent on web service sites

RI State Council Website: Printing Help

that are “free”. They are free because they rely on extensive advertisement revenue to produce and administer their website.

Microsoft has been under attack for many years about their lack of security against spyware, etc. One way to attack this problem is to place pop-up blockers in the web browser. That has dramatically reduced those annoying pests.

There is one side effect of pop-up blockers that has impacted our K of C website. Anytime you click on a link that is intended to produce a printable report the pop-up blocker detects the action and blocks it! While that’s a good thing for annoying ads it is a bad thing if you want to produce an officer list for a council!

Some pop-up blockers give you the ability to allow pop-ups on a site-by-site basis. If yours has that ability, then allow pop-ups for the stats council website permanently. That should free up any issues related to printing.

But if it doesn’t then have no fear. There is a way to allow the pop-up and produce the report. If you hold down the ‘Ctrl’ key while you simultaneously click the print link, the pop-up blocker won’t interfere with the activity. You will, however, have to remember to always precede clicking a report link by holding down the Ctrl key first.