On the PSA Website

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Keeping Your Computer Safe

I usually like to devote this column to certain aspects of the PSA website and how members can take advantage of them. In this month's column, however, I'd like to take a little time to talk about defending your own computer against viruses.

Viruses are about as old as the internet—they are intended to disrupt, corrupt, and rob you of personal information and normally they are easily preventable with just a few steps. It used to be that most computer viruses were aimed at Windows-based machines, and those who ran systems on the Apple Operating system (IOS) were relatively safe.

All of that has changed in this digital age. The more we have allowed technology to enter our daily lives, the more viruses have been able to infect. We now have gadgets we call "Smart" such as TVs, phones, lights, security, refrigerators, and even our vacuum cleaners. Social Media, a once-innocent way to share recipes and family photos, is now a major political and news-disseminating tool. It is also a great way for the bad guys to steal our personal data and spread misinformation. It's enough to make every one of us paranoid. But should we be? Yes! In this new world of ours, you can never be too paranoid or too cautious when it comes to anything electronic.

What you can do to protect yourself

If I were to go over every tool available to protect yourself from electronic scams, it would take up several volumes of a book, much less this short column, but I'm going to try to give you some tips.

Install two types of virus protection on your computer: one for "usual viruses" and one for ads (also called Adware). There are many free programs available on the internet and there are some that promise and do too much! Do your research to find out which one is best for you and don't let anyone convince you that you have to spend hundreds of dollars to do so. Virus software does not always get rid of Adware—Adware programs do. You will know if you have an issue with Malware (which is what they call those little ads that keep popping up on your computer screen) if you keep seeing them pop up on your computer screen! Those may be set by Cookies (code that many websites add to your computer to make it easy to return to their site without having to put in your information again). You may not even know you have those. Cookies are not bad things, on the whole. Getting rid of all your Cookies will make your life very difficult because you'll have to keep reloading your key information. But some Cookies can wreak havoc on your computer.

If something seems strange, don't think it's in your imagination. If you try to get to Google and the home screen of Google says S-e-a-r-c-h instead of G-o-o-g-l-e, then your computer has been infected by one of the most insidious viruses today called Chumsearch. Chumsearch, known as a browser hijacker, not only takes over your search engine, but also downloads adware, and is very hard to remove but easy to get (you'll need both the virus software and the malware software to get rid of it). Hint: If you get a message that you have to update your Adobe Flash right away (Just click here, they say!) then there's a possibility that you will have this virus. You'll notice that even if you click and update, you'll get this message repeatedly (with this virus) - the best way to avoid this issue is to go directly to the Adobe site to update and never click a "click here" for updating. If that site says you don't need it, don't do it! Another hint for a Mac that indicates

you may have this Chumsearch virus is in the Preferences window—if you suddenly see a new preference saying User Profiles (a circle with a checkmark in it), that's a sign that you have been infected. Open that preference and remove the profile that was created—this profile puts the virus back on every time you remove it. Check on a non-infected computer for ways to remove this Chumsearch virus.

Create a system for passwords and change it often.

One of the biggest mistakes you can make is to use the same password for everything. On the other hand, if you create a unique password for each situation, you'll never remember it. There's a solution to this! Choose a unique four or five-letter word or name, such as "book" that means something to you and use that for the basis of all your passwords. Choose three numbers and a symbol, such as 456#. That will be the basis of all your passwords. Now you need something to individually identify each usage of a password. For this, choose two or three capital letters to represent the individual website that requires the password, such as PSA and insert that into the middle. So, in this example, my PSA password would be: bookPSA456#. For my bank account, my password would be bookCHA456#. For my Amazon account, my password would be bookAMA456#.

Social Media

This section could be a book in itself, but I've already run out of space so I'll be short. Be careful what you share and do not ever take those cute tests that Facebook gives out, such as "What color is my aura?" Or "Where should I live?" All of these tests are meant to gather personal information about you. Don't take them. Don't share them. If a post says, "Hey, I'd like to see who reads this message" and it appeals to your sense of fairness and virtue, resist! They are just chain letters and people can trace these and gather names. Avoid them. Do not share them.

The internet is still one of the greatest sources of information out there—the ability to instantly find what you need is incredible. Proceed cautiously and with a healthy dose of paranoia and you'll be ok. And if you mess up, don't worry about it. We all have! ∎

Change of Email Address?

Please advise PSA Headquarters, all Divisions in which you work as a volunteer, and all individual PSA contacts if you change your email address. You can also visit the PSA website to update your email address.

hq@psa-photo.org

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It's easy to donate! Your donations to the General Operations, Scholarships and Grants, or the Print Collection Preservation Program can help PSA complete it's mission. Visit the PSA website for more information about making donations. Thank you.

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PID Photo Essay Contest Deadline Extended to August 25, 2018

The PSA Projected Image Division (PID) Photo Essay Contest has three sections: Color, Monochrome, and Video. Members can submit up to two entries per section. Gold, Silver, and Bronze Medals plus HM ribbons are awarded per section. Award recipients also receive acceptances and title credits that can be applied to PID Star Ratings.

The deadline has been extended so there is enough time to submit this year. There is an online entry form and an easy online upload for the essays. For more information: https://psa-photo.org/index.php?pid-photo-essay-contest.

In many countries photographers prepare AV programs that are "Photo Essays" and qualify for entry in this contest.

Joanne Stolte, FPSA, MPSA, EFIAP
Director, PID Photo Essay Contest