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can be used for improved database mining, especially if weaker similarities are of interest.

—Richard Peters and Robert Sikorski

References

1. J. Altschul *et al.*, *J. Mol. Biol.* **215**, 403 (1990).
2. ———, *Nucleic Acids Res.* **25**, 3389 (1997).

Digital Mailbox:

www.sciencemag.org/dmail.cgi?53372b

Electronic Vaccines

If your computer has ever become infected by a rogue virus, you're not alone. Given the ease with which viruses can "move" about the Internet, it is likely that you will come across virtual viruses quite often. But there is no need to panic or lose data. We have listed several Web resources below that can help; these may be worth examining before your next virus attack.

Internet Hoaxes

ciac.llnl.gov/ciac/CIACHoaxes.html

How often do you get an e-mail chain letter alerting you of a new virus? Perhaps the most

common ones warn about the "Goodtimes Virus" and "Penpal Greetings," which reportedly erase your hard drive. These chain letters, and many others, are hoaxes. The Internet Hoaxes Web site, provided by the Computer Incident Advisory Capability (CIAC) of the U.S. Department of Energy, attempts to provide the reader with information about such e-mail hoaxes, including how they got started and what to do (if anything) about them. So, the next time you receive such a message, log on to this Web site, which also features a section on chain letters (ciac.llnl.gov/ciac/CIACChainLetters.html).

CIAC Virus Database

ciac.llnl.gov/ciac/CIACVirusDatabase.html

This site, also served up by CIAC, provides an online database with fact sheets about the most common Macintosh and PC viruses. Each fact sheet tells you what the virus does and how to disarm it. The database was last updated in March 1996.

McAfee Network & Security Management

www.mcafee.com/

This is the home page of a popular commercial distributor of antivirus software. Here, you can read technical papers about both PC and Mac viruses and antiviruses (or vaccines). You can also access an online mall where you can

purchase antivirus software directly with your credit card.

Symantec Antivirus Research Center

www.symantec.com/avcenter/

Here is an alternate commercial vendor of antivirus software. In addition to white papers about viruses and antiviruses, this site also offers a free electronic newsletter that will keep you up-to-date on the newest computer virology. You can also read information on Symantec's products, download updates and patches, and buy products directly online.

Microsoft Corporation

www.microsoft.com/mswordsupport/content/usage/macrovirus/default.htm

Microsoft has put together a good collection of resources for viruses specific to the Word program. These viruses are collectively known as Word macro viruses. Learn all about how to detect and disable them at this site. Also, see Net Tips on the following page for more background on Word viruses.

—Richard Peters and Robert Sikorski

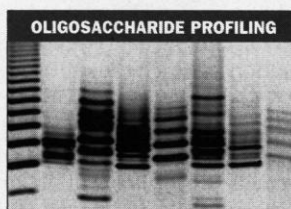
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