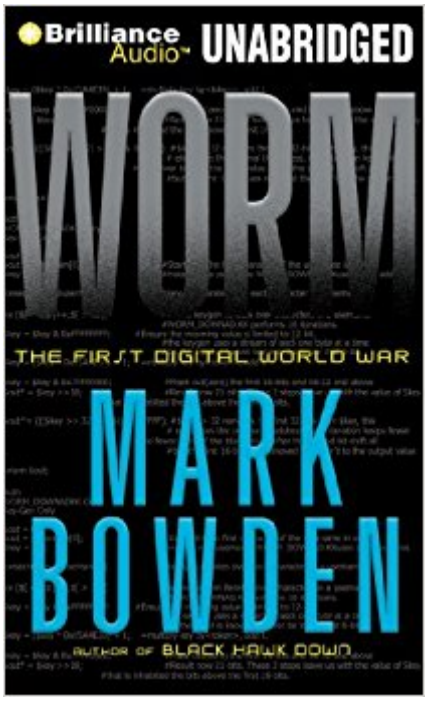
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Worm: The First Digital World War



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Synopsis

Worm: The First Digital World War tells the story of the Conficker worm, a potentially devastating piece of malware that has baffled experts and infected more than twelve million computers worldwide.When Conficker was unleashed in November 2008, cybersecurity experts did not know what to make of it. Exploiting security flaws in Microsoft Windows, it grew at an astonishingly rapid rate, infecting millions of computers around the world within weeks. Once the worm infiltrated one system it was able to link it with others to form a single network under illicit outside control known as a Ã¢â ¬Å“botnet.Ã¢â ¬Â• This botnet was soon capable of overpowering any of the vital computer networks that control banking, telephones, energy flow, air traffic, health-care informationÃ¢â ¬â •even the Internet itself. Was it a platform for criminal profit or a weapon controlled by a foreign power or dissident organization?Surprisingly, the U.S. government was only vaguely aware of the threat that Conficker posed, and the task of mounting resistance to the worm fell to a disparate but gifted group of geeks, Internet entrepreneurs, and computer programmers. But when ConfickerÃ¢â ¬â„¢s controllers became aware that their creation was encountering resistance, they began refining the wormÃ¢â ¬â„¢s code to make it more difficult to trace and more powerful, testing the Cabal lockÃ¢â ¬â„¢s unity and resolve. Will the Cabal lock down the worm before it is too late? Game on.

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Customer Reviews

"Worm" is worth attention. Government officials up to and including President Obama have taken notice of Conficker and begun to address some of the issues it raised."--"Bloomberg" "When Mark

Bowden writes, smart readers pay attention. . . . Bowden is a deserved brand name - a superb reporter and compelling narrative writer, whether his subject is war in a forlorn land ("Black Hawk Down," set in Somalia) or a variety of others in seven other books (Killing Pablo," "Guests of the Ayatollah," etc.). And now we have the current masterpiece, "Worm.""--"The Philadelphia Inquirer" "The author takes readers behind the scenes, showing the security specialists' increasing frenzy, not to mention occasional infighting, as they worked to defeat the worm. Along the way, the author lucidly explains how malware can take over computers as well as how the very openness of the Internet makes it vulnerable to attack."--"Publishers Weekly" "From the author of Black Hawk Down," a differ --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Mark Bowden is the author of seven books, including Black Hawk Down, Bringing the Heat, Killing Pablo, and Guests of the Ayatollah. He reported at The Philadelphia Inquirer for twenty years and is a national correspondent for The Atlantic Monthly. He lives in the Philadelphia area.

One of the greatest things about airport bookstores - they often ignore sale dates. I purchased Worm a few days ago without realizing it wasn't supposed to be released yet. Which is good, because it made that flight from Denver to Baltimore tolerable.First things first. If you are a network newbie, you will be coddled by this book. You don't need to have your MCSE or CISSP to read "Worm". Bowden does a good job of breaking down salient data - what is TCPIP, what is RPC - and creating explanations that make sense. Don't know why Port 445 is so special? Wonder why Windows is so often the target of malware around the world? (the technical explanation, not the political answer) You will after reading this book. It won't win you any medals at the next Cisco shareholders meeting or net you a job in IT, but at least you'll know why Patch Tuesday is important and why malware isn't just a problem with code - it's a social engineering problem, too.The next best thing about this book is how much it stresses that the Internet is still in it's adolescence. It's a hodgepodge of ancient protocols and new-fangled protocols shoehorned into communicating with one another, and that's a fragile animal. you'll wonder why it doesn't go down more often."Worm" is entertaining and informative. Personally, I think it's too short. You'll get a quick bio about a particular researcher, follow them through some problem solving and then, inexplicably, drop them entirely while picking up with another researcher. I think the personalities involved are as important as the science. But those quibbles are trivial.

It's out there. Waiting. Chances are, you've never heard of it. Nobody knows who controls it, or why.

No one knows what it will do. But its destructive capacity is terrifying.Welcome to the world of cyberwar! And, no, this is NOT science fiction."It" is the Conficker Worm, an arcane name (an insider's joke) for the most powerful "malware" -- malicious software -- yet encountered on the Internet. First detected in November 2008, Conficker is a devilishly clever bit of programming that took advantage of a vulnerability in the Windows operating system. Microsoft immediately moved to "patch" the vulnerability, but therein lay the problem: Windows is the most-pirated software of all, so hundreds of milliions of computers were running versions of Windows without the patch -- all of them vulnerable to Conficker (and to hundreds of other malicious programs whose authors now knew how to embed their work in Windows).Mark Bowden, the very capable author of Blackhawk Down, tells the story in Worm of a group that included many of the world's top computer security experts who privately came together early in 2009 to combat Conficker. At first, they were confined exclusively to the private sector, and their work was informal. Eventually, they managed to gain the attention of senior government officials and -- slowly, reluctantly -- obtain limited official support from the U.S. and Chinese governments. The group, known among themselves as the Conficker Cabal, even managed to get onto the White House agenda late in the game, as Conficker was upgraded once and then again - because the worm represented nothing less than an existential threat to the Internet itself.I did say the potential was terrifying, didn't I?Bowden is a superb journalist and a capable writer, as Blackhawk Down made clear. However, Delta Force soldiers pinned down in a firefight in Mogadishu make for great copy. Geeks exchanging emails about technical material don't. Bowden does an excellent job explaining in plain English the nature of Conficker and how it operates, and he does his best to sketch the members of the Cabal in three diimensions, but the result is hardly a page-turner. Still, Worm is a very important book, because it brings to light just how vulnerable is the infrastructure of the world we live in.And, oh yes, the Cabal managed to fight Conficker to something of a standstill. But they couldn't destroy it, and to date they've never found the hackers who created it. Conficker is still out there.[...]

We have been one command away from catastrophe for a long time now ~ Paul Vixie as quoted in the book.A worm is a small packet of information, rather like a virus in a human although not like a virus as we use that term in computers, that borrows deep inside your Windows operating system and waits for instructions from somewhere outside of your computer. It isn't there in particular to take out your computer, although it can, but to unite with others to act together to do something like take down the electric grid in the USA or even the internet if that is the intention. You don't have to open an email or go to some website to get it. If you are on the internet, and use Windows, it can

find you. Oh yes, it can come through your USB port. It is a bit more complicated than that but that's the basics.Worm tells the story of the Conficker Worm From the time it first showed its face in what is known as a honeynet through its updating and where it stands today. A honeynet looks like a bunch of computers on the internet but is really just one computer that is watching what is picked up. If you have lots of computers, you are more likely to pick up a virus, worm or trojan. There are people out there who are monitering the internet, some of whom are even being paid to do it. (I have to admit that my cynicism took a bit of a blow learning that there are people out there protecting the internet for free)What makes this interesting to me, is that it introduces us to the "good" guys in this war. The old idea of a young male hacking into computers for fun? Well, some of those guys grew up to be the White Hats as they refer to themselves. And they do all seem to be men. They find some of the same challenge that had them breaking into computers in pitting their intelligence against the Black Hats who are every bit as intelligent as themselves.Someone in a review complained that the ending is anticlimatic. Well yes, the worm is still out there. It hasn't done anything except send out spam for a very short time for a fake antivirus program, perhaps to show what it could do if it wanted to. But I think it is a glimpse into the near future. Maybe this worm is so well watched that it will never really do anything but what about other worms? Recently a worm disrupted uranium production in Iran. There are countries that would prefer that Iran not have the bomb. Using the word 'war' in the title probably doesn't help either. Sadly, a war without bombs and dust and places that can be watched on TV doesn't hold many people's attention.Another reviewer complained about the extensive explainations. I'm a woman in her 60s, about as far away from what people think of when they hear geek. I understood this book. (disclosure: I read Martin Gardner so there is some geek in me)I found the book interesting. I recommend it.

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