

The history of computer hacking

[Science](#), [Computer Science](#)



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Magazines about Hacking

Introduction

Hacking for computers was introduced in the mid-1980s. It was “encouraged” at the time because there were many magazine issues about it, so that contributed to people discussing about it. Some of these magazine brands were: Family Computing, K-Power, and Enter (as cited in Chadwick, 1983; Collins, 1983). They not only informed people about hacking, but also discussed about topics such as how to properly take care of the computer and new softwares. These magazine companies were not just any old magazine company, at the time they were “leading the U. S. with their youth- and family-focused computing magazines” (as cited in Collins, 1983).

Youth Hackers Inside and Out

The term hacker “was initially constructed among hackers themselves and the ways in which the image of the hacker continues to evolve in mainstream media” (Alper, 2014, para. 10). Dictionary. com defines a hacker as “a person who has a high level of skill in computer technology or

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programming”. The first modern use of the word hacker was in 1963 when a group of students hacked into a telephone system (as cited in Levy, 1984). In the early 1980s, hackers would compete with one another by seeing who could obtain unauthorized information first (as cited in J. Thomas, 2005). There became a time where congressmen and technologists encouraged parents of young hackers to send them to computer camps to encourage using their hacking skills beneficially. (as cited in Lee et al., 1986; Schulte, 2008). “ When the first 2 computers came into the home, it was the hackers who embraced them. In fact it was these early computers that created the hackers.

Their goal was to see how much they could make the computer do” rather than seeing what the computer was limited to do for the user (as cited in Cohl, 1986, p. 4). The Making of a Hacker in Family Computing Magazines Magazines “ encouraged parents to see the value in hacking as an educational opportunity and fun for the whole family” (Apler, 2014, Conclusion section, para. 6). This can be seen when “ K-Power [magazine] featured a section titled ‘ Hacker Heaven’...that printed original computer programs for amateur programmers to run on their own machines” (Alper, 2014, The Making of a Hacker in Family Computing Magazines section, para. 2).

This would have been cool for kids, teenagers, and maybe even young adults, to being able to code and construct their own program and then eventually being able to use and play with it while also learning about computer coding at the same time. They would feel a great sense of

accomplishment, yes it would have been easy to transfer the already written code from paper to computer, but then they could add and modify the code how they pleased. Legal Some people were beginning to think that hacking was unacceptable because it could be used to do malicious things and the press was putting it out as such. K-Power even suggested abandoning the label “ hacker” altogether. They had a contest for who could come up with a better name for computer programmers and tweekers in which the winner would receive a K-Power T-shirt (as cited in Krueger, 1984a, p. 72).

Another contest put on by Family Computing and K-Power magazines was called “ Hacker Heroes Contest” in which the reward 3 will go to “ kids who are putting their computing to good use by helping parents, their school, senior citizens, the handicapped, or their community” (as cited in Krueger, 1985, p. 72). This contest was created so that the term hacker was not always associated with awful things. A K-Power editor suggested that a hacker is not necessarily a criminal, hacking can be used positively (as cited in Holmstrom, 1984a, p. 6). This is seen as such when a 15-year-old boy helped police solve a case with his hacking skill. Even though this was the same boy who got caught by law enforcement beforehand for inadvertently tapping into a bank’s computer.

Breaking into someone else’s computer is illegal. As an Enter magazine reader wrote, “ no computer magazine—especially one geared for youth—should encourage this type of ethics” (as cited in July/August 1984, p. 4). Most young hackers are not even sure about what is legal or illegal when it

comes to hacking. The only way that some of them will find out is if the police come knocking at their front door.

Conclusion

Hackers were portrayed on posters as nervous nerds including a message to “ not let this happen to you.” Hackers are now deemed cool because a lot of them had appeared in “ movies, TV shows, comic strips, and cartoons” (as cited in Berry, 1985, p. 34). Hacking is even more popular today, because technology has really grown since the ‘ 80s, and with many new devices and softwares means that there are many more things to hack. Since about everyone in the world has some sort of technology, at least in North America, there is a greater chance of more people attempting to be hackers, because computers and technology in general was not found in most of the common households back in the day. Technology at the time just came out, and was expensive. In today’s age, there may not be many magazines encouraging hacking anymore, but there are plenty of websites and new stories about it.

References:

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