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# HISTORY OF MALWARE, TROJANS AND WORMS (PART 1)

*We're always warning you against phishing, viruses and other nasty software which might harm your PC and data. For a change, let's look at the history of these nasties. Where do they come from? How long have they been around for? Are they a recent phenomenon?*

*It seems not. Viruses have been doing the rounds for more than 50 years.*

**1949 Self-reproducing "cellular automata"**
*John von Neumann, the father of cybernetics, published a paper suggesting that a computer program could reproduce itself.*

**1959 Core Wars**
*H Douglas McIlroy, Victor Vysottsky, and Robert P Morris of Bell Labs developed a computer game called Core Wars, in which programs called organisms competed for computer processing time.*

**1960 "Rabbit" programs**
*Programmers began to write placeholders for mainframe computers. If no jobs were waiting, these programs added a copy of themselves to the end of the queue. They were nicknamed "rabbits" because they multiplied, using up system resources.*

**1971 The first worm**
*Bob Thomas, a developer working on ARPANET, a precursor to the Internet, wrote a program called Creeper that passed from computer to computer, displaying a message.*

**1975 Replicating code**
*A K Dewdney wrote Pervade as a sub-routine for a game run on computers using the UNIVAC 1100 system. When any user played the game, it silently copied the latest version of itself into every accessible directory, including shared directories, consequently spreading throughout the network.*

**1978 The Vampire worm**
*John Shoch and Jon Hupp at Xerox PARC began experimenting with worms designed to perform helpful tasks. The Vampire worm was idle during the day, but at night it assigned tasks to under-used computers.*

**1981 Apple virus**
*Joe Dellinger, a student at Texas A&M University, modified the operating system on Apple II diskettes so that it would behave as a virus. As the virus had unintended side-effects, it was never released, but further versions were written and allowed to spread.*

**1982 Apple virus with side effects**
*Rich Skrenta, a 15-year-old, wrote Elk Cloner for the Apple II operating system. Elk Cloner ran whenever a computer was*

*started from an infected floppy disk, and would infect any other floppy put into the disk drive. It displayed a message every 50 times the computer was started.*

**1985 Mail Trojan**
*The EGABTR Trojan horse was distributed via mailboxes, posing as a program designed to improve graphics display. However, once run, it deleted all files on the hard disk and displayed a message.*

*Take note that information above is an extract from the* [Sophos Threatsaurus,](#) *compiled by Sophos, a security software and hardware company.*

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