

The Virus Turns 40

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Today we have the dubious honor of wishing a happy birthday to the computer virus. It is hitting its 40th birthday, so get out the grim reaper cake and "Over the Hill" balloons. While we certainly won't be wishing the virus many happy returns, we can get a look at how the virus has evolved over time.

You may be wondering what the first virus was? As it turns out that the first virus was created in 1971, and was promptly given the name [Creaper](#). The Creaper most noticeable side effect was when the virus displayed the message "I'm the creeper, catch me if you can!" on the screens of the infected machines. Scooby Doo fans may also remember this name from another campy 70's creation. A villain named The Creeper made an appearance in the animated film Scoobie Doo and the Ghoul School.

Bad 70's jokes aside, and trust me with those hairstyles and mustaches this reporter could go on for at least another 500 words, this virus was the beginning of the digital war that we are living in today: where companies try harder and harder to shore up the holes in their operating systems while the creators of [malicious code](#) work their hardest to exploit them. This war is about more than simple exploitation, it is a numbers game as well. When you consider that viruses have grown from 1,300 viruses in 1990 to over 200 million computer viruses on the web currently, we can see how things have grown exponentially.

And while the amount was changing, the nature was too. Early viruses were simply an annoyance, done mostly to prove that the designer could. Current models are usually designed with another type of crime in mind, usually identity theft or creating a [botnet](#). The first virus to really exploit the commercial potential of the virus was the Melissa, which ran rampant in 1999, and the first virus to make botnets came about in 2005. It was named MyTob.

You may be wondering, on this anniversary what will be the next frontier for the virus? Most experts predict that it will be smartphones.

More information: You can find more information about the most intriguing viruses over the last 40 years and how they've evolved over time [here](#).

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