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CyberSpeak

John Wilen

10/19/2001 - Updated 03:46 PM ET

Week in Review Oct. 15-19, 2001

Anthrax infects cyberspace

File this one under: It had to happen. A computer virus purporting to provide information about anthrax and its side effects was discovered circulating on the Internet this week. The new computer virus, technically a worm because it's self-propagating, is spreading through e-mail systems and online instant relay chat channels. Is there any major news event that computer virus writers won't try to exploit? Separately, government agencies and other groups that monitor online drug sites say you shouldn't believe too many of the claims such sites make about anthrax drugs. "Most of the ads we've seen, we feel are illegal," said Carmen Catizone, executive director of the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy.

Week in Review features

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- ⌘ [New computer virus preys on anthrax jitters](#)
- ⌘ [Web ads monitored for false anthrax drug claims](#)
- ⌘ [Will e-mail providers benefit from anthrax scare?](#)

Judge to Microsoft, Govt.: 'I SAID SETTLE!'

Talks to settle the Microsoft antitrust case appear to be going as expected. Mere weeks after U.S. District Court Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly warned lawyers for the software giant and the federal and state governments suing it to settle the case or she'd appoint a mediator, she appointed a mediator. Boston University law professor Eric Green was appointed the thankless task of trying to convince the parties to budge from positions they've refused to abandon in previous rounds of settlement talks and court-enforced mediations. If there's no settlement by Nov. 2, Kollar-Kotelly will begin sanctions hearings.

- ⌘ [Will mediator make a difference in Microsoft case?](#)

Terrorism: The technology connection

Well, at least one scary terrorism-and-technology story was debunked this week: Despite media reports earlier this year, U.S. scientists now say they have found no signs that Osama bin Laden and his al-Qa'eda terrorist network have used technology to hide secret messages on the Internet. A group of researchers at the University of Michigan say a program they wrote to detect secret messages hidden in photos posted online has come up empty-handed. This little tidbit of news didn't seem to placate the fears of many people, who are increasingly turning to telecommuting to reduce their risk of becoming the victims of a terrorist attack. Other uses of technology to fight terrorism: Oakland's airport will become one of the first in the nation to use facial recognition technology to try to catch terrorists before they can do harm; and the U.S. military is using unmanned drone aircraft in Afghanistan to attack Taliban targets.

- ⌘ [Researchers: No secret bin Laden messages on sites](#)
 - ⌘ [Worried workers turn to telecommuting](#)
 - ⌘ [Oakland airport: 'Smile for the camera'](#)
 - ⌘ [Speed crucial in 'Information War'](#)
 - ⌘ [Tech visa workers feel heat from attacks, layoffs](#)
 - ⌘ [Can technology help detect biological weapons?](#)
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Read their lips: New Net taxes

Well, Congress fiddle-faddled around the Net tax issue for years — and were chased from their offices at the last minute by an anthrax scare — so the moratorium on Net taxes will end Sunday with no extension in sight. "I don't think Western civilization is going to end" because the moratorium was not immediately renewed, said Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden. But he admitted that, beginning Monday, local and state governments will have a clear avenue to perpetuate what he called "considerable economic mischief."

- ⌘ [Congress fails to extend Net tax moratorium](#)
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Porn czar thinks porn is bad

Paula Houston keeps porno magazines and lewd advertisements in her desk at work. No, she's not a pervert. She's Utah's porn czar. Not as in 'king of porn,' but as in 'person charged with combating porn.' Which points to one of the downsides of her job: Nobody's really sure exactly what she does. She has no power to prosecute people; she really just spreads her message ("Porn Kills Love") and tries to shame advertisers into toning down explicit ads. At least one person thinks Houston's campaign isn't working: "She's focusing attention on pornography, and that is good for us," says Larry Flynt, publisher of *Hustler* magazine.

⌘ ['Porn czar' fields 1,500 complaints](#)

Record labels may get theirs

The tables appear to be turning on The Man. On the heels of their recent successful takedown of free online music-swapping site Napster, the major recording companies are hoping to launch their own for-pay online music-swapping sites. But the Justice Department is now investigating whether these upcoming ventures will stifle competition in the online music market.

⌘ [Online music services under investigation](#)

'Hey baby, I was a SEAL'

Who ever said the Internet isn't useful? Has anyone every bragged to you about how they used to be a Navy SEAL? Well, thanks to an enterprising former Navy photographer named Steve Waterman, there's now a way to check up on him in a matter of minutes. Waterman is one of a few people around the country with access to a database listing all 9,600 graduates of the basic underwater demolition course soldiers must complete to wear the trident of the elite Sea-Air-Land force.

⌘ [SEAL wannabees unmasked online](#)

Hot Site of the week



Flag Run

Flag Across America is intended to be a practical demonstration of the nation's resolve following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. This Web site lets you follow the course of the flag as it's carried from Boston to Los Angeles on a mission to support victims' families.

⌘ [More Hot Sites](#)

Fun Site of the week



Daily Joke

When daily life seems to get a tad too serious, **Comedy Central** comes to the rescue with an aptly named Joke Of The Day feature. (Not, of course, for the easily offended.)

⌘ [More Fun Sites](#)
