

Training a new breed of hacker

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Barcelona is home to an innovative new project designed to combat hacking.

The Hacker High School is at the University of La Salle, in the same department that churns out some of the best of Barcelona's designers.

The scheme is not the "devil's workshop" it might sound but, say its organisers, aims to tackle a modern-day taboo.

Likening current attitudes to hacking to old repressed notions of sex, they say many are doing it, but few are talking about it.

Pete Herzog, managing director of the organisation that set it up, says: "If you go back 50 years ago what was sex education? Sex education was 'sex is out there, don't do it, you'll get diseases'.

"We have the same situation now. We can't really tell you what hacking is.

"You'll get worms in your e-mail box all the time. Somebody will probably put Trojans on your computer. Something will happen.

"You'll see it, but everyone who is doing this is doing it illegally, they're bad. We can't define it, but if you do it you'll go to jail. "

Digital self-defence

The programme was set up by the Institute for Security and Open Methodologies (ISECOM), a non-profit computer security outfit that wants to make students streetwise to the hostile neighbourhood the internet can often be.

Children from local high schools get a sort of digital self-defence class, giving teens the moves to tackle fraud, identity theft and attacks on their systems.

Mr Herzog says: "We are taking kids who will see this kind of illegal activity, and showing them how it is done, what's happening.

"This is so they can understand the technical concept, and also, what is their computer doing, how can it be cleaned up, why is this taking over their system, why is their privacy being invaded?"

The A to Z of hacking includes modules in ports and protocols, malware, digital forensics and e-mail security and

privacy, showing how to send an e-mail that looks like it comes from someone else.

Teacher Xavier Cadenas says: "The students should be able to distinguish if the user who sent them an e-mail is a known person and they are who they claim to be, if the e-mail is legal or not legal.

"They should always be suspicious and not believe everything they see."

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