

Seminar to focus on cyber crime and promote awareness

With a surge in cyber crimes worldwide, especially around online banking and identity theft, a full house is expected for a cyber security seminar at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University on 30 October.



Prof Rossouw von Solms

The morning-long seminar forms part of the official launch of the Centre for Research in Information and Cyber Security (CRICS) in the School of Information and Communication Technology. With presentations around the extramarital Ashley Madison exposure case and various high-profile cyber crimes investigated by the Hawks, the new Centre will further highlight its role in educating the public as to the realities of cyber crime.

"It is important for us to point out to people what to look out for and what they can do to be more aware of their safety in cyberspace," says CRICS director Prof Rossouw von Solms, who has worked in this field for the past 25 years. "Our niche research area is the human aspect of information security."

Four presentations will be given

In July 2015, a group calling itself "The Impact Team" stole the user data of Ashley Madison, a commercial website billed as enabling extramarital affairs.

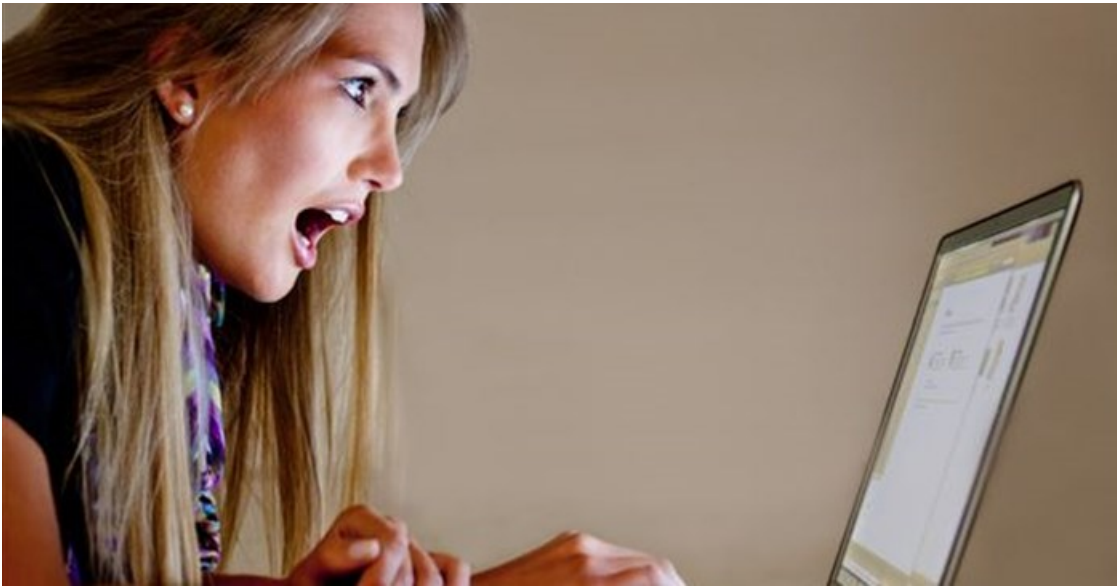
The group copied personal information about the site's user base, and threatened to release users' names and personally identifying information if Ashley Madison was not immediately shut down. In mid-August, the group leaked more than 25 gigabytes of company data, including user details. This hack put the cat among the pigeons as far as online privacy is concerned.

Four NMMU staff members of the School of ICT - Profs Reinhardt Botha, Johan van Niekerk, Kerry-Lynn Thomson and Mariana Gerber - will cover the privacy perspective on the incident, explain how the hack occurred, share the lessons learnt about online consumer behaviour and those about the governance of online businesses.

Prof Basie von Solms from the University of Johannesburg will review the epic cyber security attack on Target, a huge US retail group, as well as the downstream consequences, like the firing of the CEO and the massive class action legal case now being made against the company by customers who lost their data.

In addition, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research's Dr Jackie Phahlamohlaka will discuss the recently published *Draft Cybercrimes and Cybersecurity Bill* as well as other South African initiatives to protect South African interests and stakeholders from cyber-related risks.

Von Solms says that because cybercrime is such a real problem in South Africa, Brigadier Piet Pieterse, head of the Electronic Crime Unit from the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (Hawks) will discuss a number of prominent cyber investigation cases in South Africa.



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Ongoing research a necessity

Von Solms says that there has been an increase in cyber crimes resulting in, among others, an increase in online banking fraud and identity theft. "That is why it is significant that information security research be ongoing and that the promotion of the awareness of these crimes and the preventative measures be made public."

The seminar will conclude with the opening of the CRICS by NMMU Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Engagement Prof Andrew Leitch.

Enquiries can be directed to Prof Rossouw von Solms at rossouw@nmmu.ac.za

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