

Personal Narrative Essay

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Personal Narrative: The Goal

When I was younger computers and the internet in general were relatively new. Most people had dial-up internet, this was very limiting on what you could accomplish. You could just dial in one day and get a virus from your isp, plug in a thumb drive or floppy disk that was already infected. File sharing contained every form of virus hidden within real files and dummy files, kids on AOL instant messenger could make your cd drive tray open at will with basic windows commands contained in a hyperlink. I never realized it but I witnessed so many aspects of what modern cyber security works to prevent and accomplish, come and go. The exploits and security issues I saw in the late 1990's and early 2000's have been patched through windows updates or software updates but made room for more advanced attacks and manipulations. We are at the point now where there is no end to cyber attacks and the only real defense is skilled people working on new ways to mitigate damage, make things harder for the attackers or catch them in the act and stop them in their tracks.

In "Eportfolio as a living Portal" by Celeste Fowles Nguyen, the author states "The ePortfolio holds potential for the creative process of expressing oneself in relationship to the other and describing identity through narrative. In a more applied sense, an ePortfolio serves as a "living portal," through which students may continually re-articulate their ideas of self to others, bringing about new understandings and ethical intentions" (Nguyen, 2013). For the rest of this essay my goal is to look back and understand how I got interested in cyber security and why it is important to me. I hope to be able to apply some of Nguyen's concepts to understanding and developing how I look at my own path, goals and how I can make this reflect on my ePortfolio or at least express myself and personal narrative to someone who is interested.

The Start of My Story

My interest in computers and tech started when I was fifteen years old and got my first computer in 2001. It was a Dell desktop with a Xeon 1.3ghz CPU, 128MB's of RD ram, Geforce2 MX200 32MB GPU and the worst operating system ever released Windows ME. This led me to start buying barebone systems off of Newegg and building old cheap computers that me and my friends could use at LAN parties. I was able to use ebay and other online resources to get cheap computer components and then tweak them to fit our purposes. I remember building several computers with 400 mhz Pentium 2 CPU's, 128MB's of ram and MX200 GPU's which were easy to find and cheap. By tweaking Windows XP I was able to make the 733 mhz Pentium 3 requirement for Battlefield 1942 irrelevant. Since I only had access to dial-up internet I became interested in Digital Media storage and compression. I studied file types and learned everything I could about file types and data. I played with routers and switches, learned about networking and just tinkered to learn. In high school the only two real classes I took that were tech related were "typing" and "video editing". My plan at the time was to go to college to become a computer programmer. Though in Junior year we were given job statistics, what stood out was that the job hiring and paying the most was for pharmacists. Computer programmers were graduating at higher rates than employment opportunities by a huge amount so that was pretty discouraging for me. In my Senior year (2004) in high school I was 18 and joined the Army as a Cavalry Scout. After 12 years in Service, 3 years in Iraq I came back home to Virginia to start over.

College

When I first started college I took biology and was on track to test and qualify for a nursing program. Though after taking biology I realized I wasn't interested in biology and I wasn't going to be able to stay focused enough to do well. So, I decided that I would need to do something I actually enjoyed or I just wouldn't do it. So looking through the possible tech degrees I came across cyber security. Cyber security was a broad degree covering many aspects of computers and technology. At the time I felt I knew the least about Internet security and defense measures so I chose cyber security because I felt that I would learn new things. After my first year in community college I entered into an articulation agreement with ODU to finish a cyber security associate's degree and then transfer.

Reflection and Direction

While in college I came across several things that sparked my interest and would point me in the right direction. There were several courses that have had an impact on how I think about my future and what I want to do with my time. The courses were Cybersecurity Ethics, Cyber Law and Digital Forensics. Cyber Law was a course where I researched Supreme Court decisions and laws that dictate how we see privacy and security. These laws and decisions are essential to understanding Cyber Law and cybersecurity principles. In Cybersecurity Ethics, researching attacks such as "Stuxnet" and "Flame" showed me how cyber attacks are affecting every aspect of our lives online and can be used to control whole countries. The Digital forensics course rekindled my interest in data and media storage. Learning about forensic

procedures and the way a crime scene analysis as well as data recovery are done, was very interesting to me. These courses and maybe my background in the military has led me to wanting to contribute my skills towards law enforcement or the government in some way.

Conclusion

Cyber Security is a field that provides me with an endless amount of knowledge and skills to develop. The environment of cyber security is changing daily and the goal is to be ahead of things and prepared for things before they happen. Cyber security will allow me to be creative and always interested in the next problem or issue affecting a system or systems whether locally, in the cloud or from a hostile nation the possibilities are endless. In the article “The two kinds of stories we tell about ourselves” by Emily Esfahani Smith the author states “People who believe their lives are meaningful tend to tell stories defined by growth, communion and agency” (Smith, 2017). I feel like the story I have portrayed of myself shows that my current outlook and future contributions will hopefully be positive and show growth, due to my enthusiasm in starting a career in cyber security.

References

- Nguyen, Celeste Fowles. (2013). The ePortfolio as a living portal: A medium for student learning, identity and assessment. *International Journal of ePortfolio*, Volume 3, Number 2, 135-148.
- Smith, Emily Esfahani. (2017). The two kinds of stories we tell about ourselves. TED Conferences, LLC. 2017.