

## UNDELIVERABLE MAIL: AM I INFECTED?

**Question:** *I have received email notices indicating a message I sent did not get to its recipient. However, I never sent a message to this address. Is this an indication that I have a worm or other problem with my machine? Is this anything to be concerned about?*

**Question:** *I have received a notice that indicates I sent a virus to someone. However, I never sent a message to this address. Is my computer infected with a virus?*

**Answer:** If you receive unexpected responses to email messages that you know you did not send, then you are likely an innocent victim of one of the many variants of viruses and worms currently polluting the Internet. It does not mean that your computer is infected.

Many current viruses and worms try to propagate by sending themselves via email. It has become a standard tactic of malware writers to scan the infected computer for email addresses to which it can send itself. These addresses can be found in many places, including address books, mailboxes, and cached web pages. Sometimes the virus even makes them up, often by attaching variants of common names to common mailhosts (bob1@aol.com, bob2@msn.com, bob3@yahoo.com, etc). It is also a standard tactic to "spooof" the From: address by inserting one of these names as the sender.

If your address is used as the sender, you might receive either a non-delivery message when the mail cannot be delivered or a notification from a virus scanner program that your message contained a virus. If the message is able to be delivered you might also receive a response from the recipient claiming that you sent her or him a virus.

All this means is that some infected computer somewhere in the world contains a file with your email address in it. It does not mean that your computer is infected. Of course it does not mean that your computer is *\*not\** infected either -- if you ever suspect that your computer has been infected please call the Help Desk to have someone scan it for you.