

Backing Up Your Stuff Part 1: The Problem

By Richard Lowe

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I don't know about your, but I depend upon my computer system daily to help me survive and prosper. I keep everything there:

- My daily journals
- My writing
- Letters and memos
- Documents for personal and work issues
- FAXes
- My photo album (over 10,000 photos)
- Graphics art that I've produced

In addition, if you are anything like me, over the years you've downloaded thousands of different things off the internet. You may also have installed some files from CDs and floppy disks, as well as receiving numerous files via email. Some of these downloads include such wondrous things as:

- Paint Shop Pro tubes, brushes
- Photoshop filters
- desktop themes
- outlook stationary
- Screensavers
- Wallpaper
- ICQ skins and sounds
- Fonts

- Sounds
- Videos
- Innumerable other things

In fact, this is one of the activities that makes the internet so enjoyable - being able to download and install new features, plug-ins and cool stuff as often as you can.

These files tend to take up massive amounts of space on your hard drives. On my system, my outlook stationary alone requires over 150 megabytes, my desktop themes are getting close to a gigabyte and I have over 200 megabytes of Paint Shop Pro tubes.

This phenomenon is made even worse because most people (myself included) never throw anything away. I have kept just about everything that I've ever put on my computer, until today I have over 100 gigabytes of lord knows what!

Add to that yet another issue: many of us store files on remote systems. Many people use their free hosts editing tools to create and modify their web site files directly on the internet. The files are never downloaded to their author's hard drive. For example, I receive at least a couple of emails each week from someone asking how they back up the files on Geocities or MSN or any number of other hosts.

I used to create a backup of my entire system to a Zip drive once a week. This soon required two zip disks, then 3 and then a dozen. I switched to tape, which helped for a while. Before too long, however, I found my backups took all night long and required several tape changes. This was getting out of hand - not only did the backup require an incredible amount of time, but the system was slow while it was running and it was obvious that it would be very difficult to do a restore if it became necessary.

At this point, many people make the fatal decision to stop performing backups at all. This is not a good idea, as there are many hazards to the health of your computer.

- Hundreds and even thousands of new viruses are created monthly. Any one of these could destroy your system and erase years of work. Even if you have the best antivirus software on the planet, there is still the possibility that a new virus could get through your defenses.

A hacker could penetrate your firewalls (assuming you have one) and do whatever he pleased. He could, if he wanted, delete files, modify them or even download them to his own system.

- Your system could be damaged or destroyed by more mundane threats such as water leaking from the upstairs bathtub or mice chewing on the disk cables.

- You could accidentally delete files yourself.

- A new installation of a program or an operating system upgrade could render your system unusable.

- I have heard tales of lightning striking nearby power poles and rendering systems completely unusable.

So if your system is getting so crowded that it is difficult if not impossible to perform a full backup, what do you do to protect yourself?

An answer in Part 2: A solution

<http://www.internet-tips.net/System/backup01.htm>

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