

Computer Observer

March 2008

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BACKUP YOUR FILES!

by Adam J. Richter M.S.

It is imperative that you back up any files that are important to you.

Imagine if your computer were to crash right now. Ask yourself – are there any files that you wouldn't want to lose?

Backing up files has become extremely affordable and easy to do.

Here are a few ways to backup your files.

- 1) Backup to a Thumb Drive (Jumpstick). These small USB drives only hold around 1GB – 2GB worth of data but can be great for the average user that has a few important documents. Normally around \$40+ you can simply plug these drives into your USB connection and your files directly to the drive.
- 2) Backup to an External Hard Drive. External Hard Drives have become significantly more affordable than previous years. An 80GB external hard drive is only around \$70 and can be used to backup your entire computer. This option is especially good for those of you with a lot of files to backup and no technical knowledge of how to backup your files. With an external hard drive, software can be installed that will automatically backup your files for you.
- 3) Backup to the Internet – Services like MediaMax offer the ability to backup to the internet. Backing up to the internet has the following advantages: Your files are located offsite, your files are accessible from anywhere, and you can e-mail large files to friends. The only CON is that there is usually a monthly subscription fee.

Ann's Tips for March 2008

by Ann Dodderidge

What are Internet cookies? When you brows a website they leave a cookie in a folder on your computer so that when you return it will be easier to see what you are interested in but it is also a way for them to give you advertising that they think you would like to see. When enough cookies are stored on your computer the people on the Internet can collect and store information about your web surfing habits. I am sure you really don't want this to happen so be sure to delete those cookies every day after you are on the web. How do I do this you are asking. While you are on the Internet click on OPTIONS, then general, then Interfiles and Settings and hit delete. If you are off the Internet then go to Start, Run and type in inetctl.cpl go to general and browsing and Internet Properties then find Temperate files and cookies and hit delete.

Do you want to convert your audio files to MP3 to be used in your slideshows or on your MP3 player? First you need to get them on your computer. If it is on a CD then select a program like RealPlayer to import the audio as a wave file. Open RealPlayer and click Tools>>Preferences. Click CD and select Wave (.wav) in the top box. Click OK. Now you can use Audacity to edit the files. After that save to an MP3. You'll need the LAME encoder. Click File.. Export MP3#, Name the file and click Save. Use the following links to download Audacity and the LAME encoder. They are both free.

<http://audacity.sourceforge.net>
www-users.york.ac.uk/~raa110/audacity/lame.html

I usually save all my downloaded files to a folder on the desktop and when I get several I burn them to a CD so that I have a backup should anything go wrong. Doing this preserves the program installation files so you do not have to download them again.

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Are You A Computer Pro?

If you know a lot about computers send me an e-mail and I'll include your article in the next Computer Observer.

Articles are proofread and edited upon final publication.

Send to Adam
adam@computerpros.cc

Snowbird Computing

By Adam J. Richter M.S.

If you're in Florida part time, you are still going to need internet. Avoid committing to long term contracts (i.e. Verizon). Companies like Comcast and Brighthouse have options available for part time residents. Also ask about the ability to put accounts on hold while you are away. This can save you considerable time when you get back because they will already have the account setup and will simply reactivate it.

Note: If you have a high speed internet setup, it is a good idea to call your provider a few days before leaving to let them know when you are leaving. The providers can pickup the equipment for you so you don't have to return it.

If you only need basic internet and e-mail, you may be able to use dial-up internet. If you decide to use dial-up internet consider the following. With dial-up, your phone line is in use while you are on the internet. You cannot receive or make phone calls. This makes a considerable difference for someone wanting to make a lot of phone calls and be on the internet a lot. AOL is one of the best dial-up options. You can cancel any time and unlimited internet is about \$9.95 per month.

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Tech Support Tips

by Adam J. Richter M.S.

Tax Software

Tax software can streamline processing your tax return and can save you a lot of money.

The two best software packages for doing your taxes are: TurboTax and TaxCut 2007.

Both are relatively easy to use and have a lot of features for getting the maximum return possible. Be sure to investigate the features of each package and choose the one that best suits your needs. Features are usually clearly advertised on the package.

Each tax package charges for different features. You may be able to save additional money by choosing the software package that is less expensive for commonly used features.

Demo Software Beware

New computers come loaded with demo software. Programs like Norton, McAfee, Microsoft Office, Games, etc...

At one time, computer manufacturers included a lot of software on the computer for FREE. This practice no longer occurs because to include so much FREE software greatly increases the price the manufacturer has to charge for their computer.

Now computer manufacturers have taken the exact opposite approach. Now, no software is included and you have to buy the software you'd like to use.

By doing this, manufacturers can minimize the price they charge for their computers.

Windows Vista SP1

Windows Vista Service Pack 1 is nearly ready for download. You should get it once it's available because it provides a lot of important security updates. If you have Automatic Updates enabled Service Pack 1 will be downloaded automatically.

Goodbye HD DVD – Welcome Blu-Ray

This week Toshiba has aborted promoting its HD DVD format after losing the support of a few major studios and retailers.

Sony's Blu-Ray will now be the standard High Definition DVD format.

How Often Should You Defragment?

Once a month should be fine.

Fragmentation occurs when while using the computer. Files get split up into small pieces and spread out on the hard drive. This process occurs continually while using the computer and eventually causes the computer to run slower than it should because every time the operating system needs a file it has to find all of the pieces.

When you run the Disk Defragment program it puts all of the pieces back together.

You can get to the Disk Defragmenter by doing the following:

Start Menu>Programs>Accessories>System Tools

Downgrade from Vista to Windows XP

You cannot downgrade from Vista to Windows XP, but your files can be backed up, Vista can be removed, then Windows XP can be installed. This process works on a lot of computers but not all computers.

The PROS: Windows XP can be more stable for some business applications.

The CONS: It will cost you between \$200-\$300 to get Windows XP installed on your computer because you will have to buy a copy of Windows XP and then have it installed.

Sometimes the computer is only Vista compatible and will not support Windows XP. You should contact your computer's Vendor before investing in a downgrade.



The Venice Area Computer Users Group

The Next Meeting is Monday March 3rd 2008 at 4:00 p.m. Venice Library
www.thevacug.com

The VACUG is a non-profit organization designed to help its users become more adept in using computers. This is accomplished through classes, Q&A sessions, and through the networking of members.

Presentation meetings are held the first Monday of each month. Family, guests, and the general public are welcome. Meetings feature high quality demonstrations on the latest software and hardware available.

A one year membership is \$35.00 and includes a one year subscription to Computer Observer and admittance to each General Meeting and Class.

Invite a guest to the next meeting FREE. Non-members may join at the meeting or may print and bring an application from www.thevacug.com

Meeting Schedule

- 4:00-4:05 PM.....Sign-in
- 4:00-4:45 PM.....Forum – Computer Pros
- 4:45-5:00 PM.....Break
- 5:00-6:00 PM.....Guest Lecture
- 6:00-6:15 PM.....Prizes and Raffles

Meeting Location

Venice Public Library (in the auditorium)
300 Nokomis Ave S
Venice, FL 34285



COMPUTERPros
8392 S. Tamiami Trail
Sarasota, FL 34238

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