

California Computer Care

News,
Views,
Tips and
Cool Techniques
for CCC Members

April 2002
Vol. V, No. 4

We
speak
Geek,
so you
don't
have to.

Backup, again

What is the call we fear most at California Computer Care? "Help! Something happened to my hard disk and now all of my files are gone!"

It will happen to you!

It's inevitable. Hard drives break (they only last about five years on average), a file gets thrown away by accident, a file gets renamed and copies itself over another important file, your Mac gets stolen or a power surge fries your machine. Ouch!

Backing up means...

making copies of all of your important files. If you would be unhappy to lose a file; back it up! It's best to back up to a removable disk like a CD-R, Zip disk or tape system. With removable disks or tapes, extra sets can be kept off site to protect against theft and fire. A safe deposit box is ideal (mine is full of Zip disks and CD-Rs).

Be Pro-Active.

There are utilities like *Norton Utilities* and *TechTool Pro* that can sometimes recover erased files and modestly damaged hard drives, but why wait until you have a problem; that's too risky. Get ahead of trouble by establishing a healthy Back Up Routine.

Back Up Tools.

There are dozens of ways to back up your hard drive. It doesn't matter which you use as long as you keep to a regular schedule.

If you have a calendar or appointment program, set it to remind you to back up. Daily back ups may be necessary if you produce lots of work each day, weekly is sufficient for most home users and light users may be safe with monthly back ups.

If you don't have an appointment program, consider *Palm Desktop*. *Palm Desktop* is included with most Macs. It is free, easy to use and will take all of your appointments

and time critical to-dos and send you nagging reminders to do them. *Palm Desktop* will also nicely organize your contacts and mailing list.

Back ups can be accomplished by simply copying new or changed files to another disk as you create them. Unfortunately, few of us are disciplined enough to do this without fail (Murphy's Law says that if you forget to back up a file, that will be the file that will become damaged or go missing.).

Some excellent commercial back up tools exist such as *Retrospect* and *Retrospect Express*. Both are fully featured though *Retrospect* (\$179.95) is best used by large, cross platform offices with very, very heavy back up needs. *Retrospect Express* (\$49.95) is for the small office and home user.

Back up software like *Retrospect* has a flaw that I don't appreciate: back up files created by *Retrospect* can only be used after passing back through *Retrospect*. In an emergency, you can't take your back up disks to your friend's Mac, school or Kinko's and use your files unless that Mac also has a copy of *Retrospect*. For this reason I use back up software that mirrors the original files as perfect, usable copies.

Synk (\$15.00). *Synk* is small, fast and very easy to use. Assign a folder on your hard drive to be the Source folder. Fill the Source folder with all of the files that you want to back up. Next, create a Destination folder on the disk or cartridge that you want to use for back up. Double click on *Synk*, choose Go from the File menu and *Synk* does the rest. After the first back up, *Synk* will only copy new and changed files so subsequent back ups happen quickly. *Synk* works with Mac OS 8-9 and Mac OS X. Under Mac OS 8-9, *Synk* can be made to run whenever you Mac starts-up or shuts down.

This forces you to backup at those times. Mac OS X is designed not to be shut down and started up frequently, so the OS X version of Synk is not easily automated.

QuikSync 3 (\$39.95). The Iomega Zip drive folks make this back up option. *QuikSync 3* works similarly to *Synk* but with much more flexibility and the option to automate the process. *QuikSync* can back up whole hard drives not just individual folders. For Mac OS 8.1-9 and OS X.

FWB BackUp Toolkit (\$49.95). Works like a combination of *Retrospect Express* and *Synk*. Very flexible and straight-forward in use. For Mac OS 8.6-9 and OS X.

Carbon Copy Cloner (\$5.00) is a one-trick pony for Mac OS X only. OS X has a limitation that makes it impossible to copy it onto another disk and have that disk be capable of starting your Mac. *Carbon Copy Cloner* can copy an OS X system and turn the copy into one that can start up (boot) your Mac. This is must have software for those using Mac OS X with multiple hard disk drives.

Available from the web.

Purchase information on these back up applications and many others, is available online. You'll find this at:

<http://www.versiontracker.com>. Use the search function to search on the application's name.

California Computer Care

P.O. Box 9445

Santa Rosa, CA 95405

(800) 540-8989

help@calcompcare.com

Like an
auto club
for your
computer.

Software Update

Included with the Mac OS since OS 9 is a control panel called *Software Update*. The Mac OS 9 version is shown here:



The Software Update control panel is used to find new versions of the Apple software that you have installed on your Mac. Click the Update Now button and a list of new, “improved” versions will be presented. You could then choose an update to automatically download and install.

Please note the quotation marks surrounding the word *improved* in the preceding paragraph. Use the information provided by the Software Update control panel cautiously as not all new software is improved and almost none is bug-free. If you have questions about an update, please contact me for the latest information. Thanks.

April Tip—

Don't optimize that Mac OS X hard drive!

Mac OS X, being a UNIX operating system, organizes files very differently than previous Mac OSes. If you run a disk optimizer application like *Norton Speed Disk* or *TechTool Pro*, they will report that your Mac OS X disk is severely fragmented. *It isn't*.

If you then optimize your Mac OS X drive, you will break the pre-bindings that link the components of the operating system with themselves and your applications. The result is that your Mac will slow way down.

This isn't fatal because, fortunately, Mac OS X will recognize the problem and slowly repair it. So if you make this common mistake, it will be automatically fixed in a day or two.