Sweat the small stuff when making backups

computer notes
from the road
by WILMA MELOT

One of my all-time personal favorite topics to write about is backups. It's near and dear to my heart because it effects each and every one of us.

Maybe you've heard it before but, trust me, some people still aren't listening. So here we go again…

Even if you think you're backing up, you may be missing things you use every day. For instance, do you backup your e-mail settings? Do you print the settings out and keep them beside your computer where you can always get to them? What about your e-mail password? Do you know what it is? What about all those e-mails you keep in your e-mail client folders that are no longer on the server? Do you have a print out of the ones important to your business? How about all the bookmarks you've created since you bought your computer? Are you beginning to understand what you might not be backing up?

While it's true that your computer can remember passwords, you still need to keep a record of them somewhere besides the computer.

Most newer computers can backup the entire drive to an external drive. If you have that capability, use it. Do a backup when you first set up your machine and then get on a schedule of backing up at least once a month. You can even have

your Macintosh backup once an hour, but that's probably overkill.

On a Vista computer, use the backup and restore center found under *all programs>system maintenance* or in your control panel's backup and restore center. You need an external backup drive to do a backup of your entire drive.

In addition, I recommend backing up personal files and favorites to a DVD or CD. This gives you the ability to reinstall those files if they encounter minor problems.

Setting restore points is always a good idea on an XP or Vista computer and includes an automatic file backup. It's important to remember that encrypted files may not be backed up, unless you have the service pack for Vista.

On a Macintosh computer, use Time Machine, located in your system preferences. This little program can even back up every hour for you, but doing it that often might wear out your external drive. I recommend running it once a day, or week, to make sure you have a good backup.

Getting a backup of your settings is as important as backing up your files. If you can't do a whole system backup, burn a DVD or CD or put your settings on a jump drive.

What else should you backup? Internet settings, which can take hours to recover if you haven't saved them as a screen shot or written them down somewhere. Passwords – find out your password and write it down. Taking a screen shot and printing it out is a good idea – in addition to backing the files up to a CD.

How you go about this depends on the Web browser or mail client you use.

Let's look at bookmarks. In Safari, go to "show all bookmarks," then go to file, export bookmarks. In Firefox, go to "organize bookmarks," then to "export bookmarks" under file. In Internet Explorer, look in *C drive> documents,* then *settings> your user folder> favorites.* Back up that file along with other settings stored in this location.

To backup mail settings, look under *preferences> account settings* or under *tools> account settings.* Make a record of your incoming and outgoing e-mail servers, port numbers the computer uses and whether it requires authentication. Did I mention passwords? Make sure your passwords are available in several places. It's easy to re-set mail settings if you've spent a few minutes recording the settings.

How about all those passwords for Web sites you get art from? Or any sites you use to pay bills. Record the account numbers and passwords that go with them.

Don't forget to backup all your standing art and template files, as well as the grandkids' photos. Software downloaded from the Internet should be burned to a disk immediately. It could be hard to find the correct version when you need it. And don't forget to record serial numbers for all those programs so you don't have to rebuy them.

That's just off the top of my head. The key here, folks, is make sure you back it up - all of it. It will save you time, money and headaches in the end.

plugged IN

Font Book trick

We often end up with duplicate fonts on Macintosh computers. For example, Times.dfont and Times (TT).

If you don't have a font management program then you need to find a way to activate the font you want to use and turn off the one you don't want.

To do this, use Font Book. If you select the fonts in Font Book and tell it to resolve duplicates it will switch the active font for the one that is not being used. Don't like the results? Repeat the process and it will switch to the next font in the list. You can also deactivate a font.

Newer versions of Font Book work well on machines that no longer use OS9. If you're on an OS9/OS10 computer, don't use Font Book at all. Your fonts are controlled by OS9 and you want it to stay that way.

Keychain lockout

OSX10.5 came with more ways to make your Mac safe, but it can also create headaches.

If someone turns on the file vault and the keychain lock and you only have one login, you're going to encounter a big problem if passwords are lost.

Before OSX 10.5 we could get around this by resetting the password with the system disk. But now if file encryption has been turned on and you're locked out, you're going to have to clean install a new user – and often the software as well.

To get around this I recommend putting an administrator account on all OSX 10.5 computers and giving the password to the owner. This gets you on the computer with some control without reinstalling everything. You can get to files on other user log-ins and keep on working – even if you lose their login.

On Windows machines it's a good idea to have an extra user account that has administrative privileges – just in case.

And write down those passwords.

Ready to upgrade? Creative Suite 4.0 available soon

You may experience sticker shock when you see the price of Creative Suite 4.0. It's not out yet, but Adobe's Web site is already promoting it.

Looks like the standard version will retail for $1,399. This is the package I recommend, unless you're building your own Web pages. If you need Dreamweaver, select the Design Premium version for $1,799. Upgrade prices start at $500 and go up.

Adobe support said any program more than three years old is not eligible for an upgrade.

I've known some papers that only upgrade single programs due to the price. However, Adobe caught on to this and will now only let you update a Suite to a Suite or program to program.

They're happy to let you upgrade from a single program to the whole suite, but

from then on you'll be upgrading at the suite price.

If you plan to watch from the sidelines for awhile, read up on changes to the PDF print engine. Looks like Adobe is trying to get PDFs made with newer software to reproduce without unexpected results.

This means the PDFs we receive will hopefully reproduce better with cleaner results.