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TECHNOLOGY &amp; YOU

By Stephen H. Wildstrom

## Bless Both of These Backups

Here are two ways to protect yourself from data disaster, each with distinct advantages, if your hard drive dies



The hard drive on an aging desktop computer at home had been sending distress signals for months, but I was busy and ignored them. Then one day it took off for hard-disk heaven, taking with it, among other things, thousands of digital photos. But what could have been a real problem was no more than an annoyance.

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That's because I practice what I preach: Everything on that PC was backed up -- twice, in fact. So when my new desktop arrived, all I had to do was reinstall applications from their disks and download the data from backup. (I could have restored the applications from backup, too, but that might have reloaded all the junk the old computer had accumulated.)

**ALTERNATIVES WITH ADVANTAGES.** The standard backup method used to be to copy everything onto removable media, such as floppy disks. But with the accumulation of photos, music, and video on today's massive hard drives, even the 4.7-gigabyte capacity of writable DVDs is too small.

A reasonable alternative is to use an external hard drive linked to your computer with a USB or FireWire connection. One good choice is the Maxtor OneTouch II series, with models for Windows and Macintosh starting at about \$150 for a 100-GB version. The included EMC Dantz Retrospect Express software, like any good backup system, both automates the process and allows restoration of both the latest version of a file and copies backed up earlier.

Instead of this, I chose two different routes to security, both somewhat more expensive than a simple external hard drive but each with distinct advantages. The first is continuous backup, which creates a copy of a file whenever it changes; the other is online backup, which stores the information in remote data centers.

**STASHED OFFSITE.** Most backup systems copy files once a day, so any work you have done since the last backup could be at risk. I used a Seagate Technology Mirra Personal Server that plugs into a home or small-business network. Software, which can run on every Windows PC on your network, synchronizes files whenever they are changed, so your backups are always up to date.

And you can use Mirra to give others on the network -- or on the Internet, if you enable the feature -- password-protected access to files of your choice. Prices range from \$400 for a 160-GB version to \$800 for 400 GB.

My second backup was Connected DataProtector from Iron Mountain. The software runs a daily audit of all the data on my computer, then encrypts the files needing backup and sends them off over the Internet to be stored at a secure data center. Connected offers a variety of plans, based on the amount of data transferred, starting at \$80 a year. As we have been cruelly reminded, catastrophes happen. Off-site backup is currently the best defense against disasters such as floods or fires.

When I was ready to load files onto my new drive, I first retrieved everything backed up on the Mirra, because a local network is far faster than the Internet. But I had failed to include some key files -- such as my Adobe Photoshop Album catalogues -- in the Mirra backups, and I was able to download these from Connected.

**PRICEY RECOVERY.** Had I been less scrupulous about backups, I still might have salvaged my data -- at a price. Just to check that out, I sent my damaged hard drive off to Kroll Ontrack, which is a wizard at data recovery. It was able to reconstruct most of the data on the drive. But there were two disadvantages: The recovery would have cost about \$2,000; and Ontrack could not recover the directory structure, so I would have faced some hours of work in getting files back into the right folders.

If Ontrack's recovery had been the only way to save that data, the \$2,000 might have been well worth it. But the experience

was a strong reminder that prevention in the form of regular backups is a lot better than the cure.

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**Nickname:** Susan

**Review:** I bought a better solution. It is an external solution that creates a mirror image copy that is bootable. It backs up new/modified files automatically in the background, runs up to 8 backup schedules simultaneously so I can copy my business files selected once a day, my personal photos & music weekly etc. Best of all, an can restore in one step, 100% of my system! Have Maxtor or others do any of this. The solutioun I bought is EzBackup-sa which is available at Tiger Direct.

**Date reviewed:** Oct 5, 2005 5:25 PM

**Nickname:** kintol

**Review:** To all parents of college and graduate students and to all college and graduate students: Check out [www.STUDENTBACKUP.com](http://www.STUDENTBACKUP.com). It is an online, automated, unattended daily backup of all a student's critical work files. Great product, great service.

**Date reviewed:** Sep 30, 2005 9:48 PM

**Nickname:** SoftwareDesignerMBA

**Review:** Software developers such as myself often maintain multiple backs-up of critical source code. Having an offsite backup, as the author states, is a critical part of any back up strategy. I also use Mirra, but Mirra suffers from the inability to update its software easily. I'm still at version 1.0 because I would have to wipe the Mira disk out to load new software. This was a bad design on Mirra's part. A better alternative, which the author didn't mention, is to add another hard drive and use Norton Ghost to mirror the entire drive. In the event of a hard drive failure, you can restore the ENTIRE system. The time to re-load an operating system and restore directories properly can take days. Disk mirroring is really the way to go for backups and hard drives are cheap.

**Date reviewed:** Sep 29, 2005 12:07 PM

**Nickname:** Robert Juch

**Review:** Your solution is pretty good, but I go one better. I have an lomega USB drive that I first close then run QuickSync on all data files. That way I'd lost at most 15 minutes of data if my internal drive crashes. What about disasters, you say? I have two and swao them weeklv. putting the older one in my office drawer. If we have a disaster big enough to take both out. I don't think I'll be

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