

## Rich's Ramblings for January 2006

Let's say those infamous words once again **BACKUP! BACKUP! BACKUP!**

There now I have said it for the first time in this New Year. I still receive messages and phone calls from people who ask whether their data can be saved from a crashed system. Many times it is possible but it requires a bit of a techi ability. Many times the data can be recovered by removing your existing hard disk from your computer and attaching it to another computer as a secondary hard disk. It is pretty easy to do for a techi but, not for the faint of heart. This way, the data can be copied to the 2<sup>nd</sup> computer and/or a cdrom copy of your data can be created and you are back in business.

Remembering that many times your data is saved in a deep sub directory of your username directory in the "My Documents" directory. Under windows XP and Windows 2000, you can many times boot the cdrom that came with your system and execute a repair of your system. This is a fatal error with some Dell and other computers as their solution is to reformat your hard disk and re-install the complete system, just as you purchased it. Including all the trial software junk that they install. If you have copied all your data then you should be fine but I always recommend purchasing a new hard disk and then re-installing the operating system. Of course, if you purchased your system a couple of years ago, it is really behind the times in security updates and you will need to update your windows with the latest security updates.

If your computer is over 2-3 years old, Many times it is best to make sure that you are not throwing good money after bad. Memory, Processor/speed and hard disk space are the options you will need to look at. Sometimes it is better to bite the bullet and get a newer system. They are really getting pretty cheap with more memory and larger hard disks. The techi's will of course disagree but I write for both techi's and the average user who just wants their system to work.

### **On-Line banking warning.**

I know several people who do on-line banking, which is great and makes paying your bill pretty simple. Most banks try to get you to participate as it makes their operation much cheaper. They don't have to mail out statements and that is a lot of postage. One caution is that if your spouse or SO (Significant Other) is not a computer person and something happens to you. They will be in a real pickle trying to sort out your financial affairs. One, they won't have your userid and password and the bank probably will not allow them to access your accounts without the correct userid and password. After all,

there are privacy laws that they have to follow the rules. (This applies to your E-Mail and website userid and passwords) Even though their name is on the account, your userid and password are private.

### **My Recommendations:**

You need to write down the URL of the bank accounts, Your UserID and password. You should share this information with your spouse or SO. This way they can take care of your financial affairs with a minimum of aggravation. If you want to insure your privacy, Write all this down and put it in a sealed envelope in a safe place. Make sure that they know where it is located and keep it up to date as you change your userid or password. It is a very trying time when someone dies and an inability to straighten out their financial affairs can make it much harder.

I would recommend that you not opt for email only statements, this way at least your survivors can figure out where everything is located.

### **Wireless Router warning.**

I guess that some of you have received some computer goodies for the holiday season and one of them happens to be a new wireless router for your Cable, Fios or DSL line.

I digress, I have a couple of friends who live in Leasure World and some of them have either Cable or DSL high speed internet access. I was visiting one of them in the past couple of weeks so I took my Toshiba portable that has a wireless Ethernet card installed. I thought it would be interesting to see what some of her neighbors were using for their internet access. I booted up the Toshiba in the parking lot in front of their building and immediately I had 7 or 8 local wireless networks available. 3 of them were free and open to anyone to use and I was able to actually see the computers on one of them. I did not try to access their hard disk but I might have been able to. I was able to get on the Internet via their wireless networks..

A caution. Please setup at least the simple security of only allowing specified Network Interface Card address's to use your wireless network. There are several other security features that you can turn on and enforce. Do it now and you probably will be pretty safe and secure. Ask a techi if you don't feel comfortable in mucking around in the router configuration. Also while your at it. Change the password and System ID for your router.

You do have a router on your High Speed Internet access, Don't you?

If the cable or DSL person hooked the Cable or DSL modem directly to your computer,

you are living on the edge of disaster and unless you have an up to date security firewall, you could be open to being hijacked by a computer Trojan horse or virus.

A router gives you some protection for your computer from the idiots on the internet who scan internet addresses for unprotected computers. The router provides what is called IP translation. In a normal setup. Your Internet Service Provider gives your computer a internet address which allows you to access the internet. Installing a router will protect you from those afore mentioned idiots. The IP address assigned by your Cable/DSL modem is given to your router and then your router assigns a separate IP to your computer. The router keeps this all straight and only allows incoming information to your computer if you have requested it. In other words it protects you by translating the Internet information to your PC, allowing only what information you requested.

Routers are available at local computer stores. CompUSA has advertisements each Sunday which almost always includes routers. I buy mine from the computer place in Gaithersburg. [Tcponline.com](http://Tcponline.com) is their website address and they are located across from NIST in Gaithersburg. They are very friendly folks and their prices are very competitive. I am not financially connected with them in any way. Outside of they receiving a good majority of my computer purchase monies.. <G>

Rich Schinnell is getting closer to his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday which means he should be slowing down but for some strange reason, he keeps learning and exploring new things. Rich has been a CPCUG volunteer for over 20 years and enjoyed every one of them. A few small business's keep him on retainer to make sure that their office systems keep working properly. He can be reached via email at [schinnel@cpcug.org](mailto:schinnel@cpcug.org) and he has a crummy web site at [www.schinnell.org](http://www.schinnell.org) where he has most of his past Ramblings columns available. He can be reached by telephone at (301) 949-9292