

Tuesday, December 6, 2005

MAC FACTS

Slack up on backup, and you could lose more than your data

DAVE HORRIGAN

A few weeks ago I wrote about Mac users who didn't back up their drives and then experienced the heart-wrenching trauma associated with the loss of many years of e-mail.

However, e-mail isn't the only thing that can be lost when you don't back up. On the same day the fellow who lost his e-mail wrote in, another reader experienced a similar catastrophe and almost lost his wife.

The second reader wrote: "I have an iMac that seems to have `eaten' about 3,000 photos. I upgraded to Tiger OS and also upgraded iPhoto so I could store continuous film shots from my digital camera. While doing all of this manoeuvring, I seem to have lost about 3,000 family pictures, including those of our daughter's wedding, and my wife is really, really upset as I have no backup. I have tried second tier Apple support several times and they claim the photos are gone!"

I queried the reader as to what version of iPhoto he started with and he was unsure. I suspected that he had updated from version 2, which requires that you reinstall version 2 to open and export the photos to version 5.

I also mentioned that he could rebuild the iPhoto database by holding down the Option and Command keys while starting iPhoto. This is the key to accessing iPhoto's data repair and recovery tools.

In this reader's case, he had no luck with these fixes. Since I knew him and I knew his wife was upset with him, I decided to use his machine as a test for the latest version of Prosoft Engineering's data recovery application, Data Rescue II (www.prosoftengineering.com).

Data Rescue II's claim to fame is that it is the very best data recovery application for the Mac and they have a version for PCs as well. The latest version recognises 10 times the number of file types as its predecessor, and is much faster and more effective. I say faster, but the full scan took 24 hours just looking for and identifying only orphaned or erased jpeg files. Actually, that is a lifesaving feature of the application - it lets you select the specific type of file you want to recover.

As it was, the recovered files amounted to more than eight gigabytes.

Once the program identifies the lost files, they are saved to a disk that is separate from the drive the previously lost files were on. It doesn't touch or repair the old disk. It just reads the lost or erased files, identifies them, renames them and records them on the safe drive.

In my friend's case, the application recovered 40,000 jpeg files, which I culled down to 7,000. These were all his lost photos plus their thumbnails and a ton of Apple's system images used for previous system functions such as desktop pictures and screen savers.

I left it up to him to sort the rest into those he wanted to keep and those he had previously deleted. I'm sure he will spend the next 10 to 15 hours viewing and sorting. And of course, his lovely wife will never let him forget his one-time lapse in judgment.

I was going to suggest that he mention to his wife that he doesn't have a backup wife and that backing up just isn't in his nature, but I don't think he or his wife would see the humour in that.

Of course, because of the wealth of solutions, Mac users are even less inclined to back up on a regular basis. I, on the other hand, learn their lessons for them.

After sending off the advice, I checked my Entourage database size and it was 3.989 gigabytes, which is close to the 4-gig limit. I practised my own preaching and archived most of the e-mail just in the nick of time and was rewarded with a much speedier *computer*.

E-mail Dave [Horrigan at horrigan@electriciti.com](mailto:horrigan@electriciti.com) with your Mac queries.