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Spiraling Importance of Backup

In the brave new world of computers there are only those who have lost unrecoverable data, and those who will. The primary question is, how important is that to you? A recent article in Forbes magazine (excerpted below) helps put it into an updated perspective.

Keeping Our Bits About Us

Stephen Manes, 02.27.06

When it comes to preserving your digital heritage, backup is only the beginning. Is that photo album you stored on DVD going to be readable in 20 years?

You just used your high-powered digital camera to take wonderful pictures of your kids romping at the petting zoo. But unless you're both careful and lucky, your grandkids may never get to see them. "People are accumulating digital photos and music and tax returns and personal correspondence," says William LeFurgy, digital initiatives project manager at the U.S. Library of Congress. "Eventually the disk's going to fail. If you haven't backed it up, it's gone." Multiply that problem by a billion or so and you begin to understand the challenge of preserving information "born digital"—anything and everything that began its life as electronic ones and zeroes.

A 2003 University of California study estimated that new information in electronic form amounted to about 17.7 exabytes per annum—17.7 billion gigabytes. The number has only grown since. Nowadays information—whether document, photo, architectural rendering, high-def video or aircraft design—starts out as bits. And preserving those bits for posterity isn't as easy as sticking a sheet of paper in a drawer.

"It's not at all uncommon to have people looking at printed records that are 200 years old," says Clifford Lynch, executive director of the Coalition for Networked Information. "In the traditional world many things would survive for an awfully long time just through benign neglect. For digital things, they will survive only if people plan and think systematically about their survival on a continuing basis." The issues surrounding our digital heritage have become so complex that intense academic, institutional and corporate efforts are under way to develop means of preserving digitally born data and having a chance of understanding it decades and centuries from now.

Just storing bits may be the easy part. Making them usable can require the hardware and software that created them. The multimedia BBC Domesday project, a record of life in Britain, cost (at historic exchange

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Broadband Competition

We sometimes receive a call or note asking if we know there are other companies in town who are also providing broadband service, asking if we will be lowering our prices soon?

We of course are aware of the local competition and their pricing, but we believe that a comparison between their services and what OCS provides is really apples and oranges in many respects.

We have a regular stream of new customers from DSL, cable, and other wireless providers who tell routine stories of impossible customer support, declining speeds, random disconnects, pricing that creeps up after the introductory specials, no easy way out due to locked-in contracts, and billing that can add a variety of extra fees and surcharges.

But for those who sometimes leap before they look and decide to go with another service, it can be too late once they've discovered that the grass is not really greener on the other side of the fence

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Backup Importance

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rates) \$4.2 million to develop in 1986; restoring it only 15 years later required reconstructing an obsolete computer and laser-disk player, reverse-engineering software data structures and writing a new program. The Washington State Archives maintains a legacy library of old hardware and software and is beginning to collect some oft-overlooked missing links: manuals and how-to books.

What's the best strategy for making sure what's here today won't be gone tomorrow? Consider the 5-inch floppy disk. A friend involved in a lawsuit frantically called in search of a compatible drive. The used one he eventually found could read only the disks' directories. High-priced data recovery services may have better luck.

The old-style floppy is a classic reminder of the need to regularly move bits from older platforms to newer ones. It's a nuisance, but any reasonable archiving strategy has to allow for it.

But which media should you use now? The usable life of recordable CDs and DVDs is subject to debate. A U.S. National Institute of Standards & Technology study suggests that some disks can hold data for "several tens of years." Adam Jansen, digital archivist of the Washington State Archives, disagrees: "The truth of the matter is we don't know. I've had CDs after a year start to suffer from CD rot; I've had CDs I created back in 1994 that are fine." NIST is currently planning a more detailed study.

Competition

Continued from Page One

but that contractual lock-ins prevent an easy move to (or back to) OCS.

In terms of performance, virtually all other services deliver much slower upload speeds than download. OCS speeds are symmetrical, the same in both directions, and our reliability is underscored by an astonishing overall long-term >99.9% uptime record.

And while virtually all services are fast when they're new and have few subscribers, they can and do slow down as more subscribers are added (we've actually been hearing that often about DSL lately). However, at OCS we've gone to considerable lengths to maintain our rated system speeds even as we've continued to grow.

Once everything is added up and the various extras we include but others do not are factored in (like our superb firewall and virus and spam filtering), and after the introductory specials are over, and after adjusting for speed differences – in other words, an apples to apples comparison – we find that differences in pricing are negligible and that OCS is not only competitive but the clear winner in any local service comparisons.

Is this article a bit of tooting our own horn? Well, yes! We're proud of our service and our record, and we think that's occasionally worth making a little noise. We also have lots more Fan Mail, which will return in this space next month.



NATIONWIDE OCS SERVICE for
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VOIP
is definitely
coming
soon!



OACYS INTERNET SERVICE PLANS

Plan Name	Average Speeds			B-M-W ¹	One-Time Fees			Monthly Service
	Min	Typ	Max		Service Activation	Install/Configure	Equipment Deposit	
1 Bandwidth-Mailboxes-Webpace (see notes)								
DIALUP	26K	40K	53K	1-5-5	25.00	-	-	24.95
Accelerator	Typically 2-5X faster			-	-	-	-	+5.00
WIRELESS STANDARD 2.4 GHz								
24 Basic	125K	500K	750K	10-5-5	25.00	100.00	100.00	49.95 ^{2,3}
24 Premium	250K	1M	1.5M	15-5-5	25.00	100.00	100.00	79.95 ^{2,3}
24 Business	375K	1.5M	2M	20-10-10	25.00	100.00	100.00	129.95 ^{2,3}
2 Add \$10 per month amplifier fee for locations beyond 5 miles from nearest tower 3 Add \$10 per month for locations in designated remote service areas								
900 Basic	125K	375K	750K	5-5-5	25.00	100.00	100.00	59.95 ^{4,5}
Special "mission impossible" cases are those where obstacles such as trees or buildings between the wireless tower and the customer site normally make wireless service impossible. OACYS can now use new technology to provide service in some cases, sending signal around or through the obstacles. Individual circumstances will vary and this plan may not be available from all towers. Our free site survey will determine whether 900 service may be feasible when standard 24 service is not.								
4 Add \$10 per month amplifier fee for locations beyond 5 miles from nearest tower 5 Add \$10 per month for locations in designated remote service areas								
WIRELESS MISSION CRITICAL 5.8 GHz (where available)								
58 Premium	250K	1M	1.5M	15-5-5	25.00	100.00	100.00	99.95
58 Business	375K	1.5M	2M	20-10-10	25.00	100.00	100.00	129.95
58 Professional	500K	2M	3M	25-25-25	25.00	100.00	100.00	159.95
58 Corporate	750K	3M	4M	30-30-30	25.00	100.00	100.00	199.95
58 Enterprise	1M	4M	5M	40-40-40	25.00	100.00	100.00	249.95

Notes. All plans include automated central email virus scanning, email spam filtering, and website parental controls. Some plan types permit webspace for personal use only. Wireless installation and deposit package may be paid in installments upon request. All speeds are symmetrical (same for upload and download) within the OACYS network only. All plans terminate at OACYS Porterville headquarters and transport to the Internet via dual T3s over dedicated OC12 fiber optic circuit. All plans subject to change without notice. Pricing and terms are current at the date of this newsletter and supersede previous versions. Please check with our office for additional detail regarding any of our Internet service plans.

I Didn't Know That!

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