Crossing the Digital Divide (v91)

"Stress Not"
by Joseph Feigon

for the Observer

It's been a busy week, and the year is coming to an end. We can be sure, twenty-eighteen is bound to be full of surprises. Let's see what we can do to minimize computer surprises.

Backups: you've heard me talk about backing up your pictures and documents and financial data, how are you doing? Backups are critical, particularly that information (data) that you could never replace, e.g., pictures. PC or Mac, having a secondary (external) drive for backup is essential. Let's consider a backup routine and device your first priority if you have no existing backups.

If you use a Mac, learn about Time Machine. If you use a PC, get a copy of SyncBakFree or use the native tools that came with the backup device you purchased. HP, Lacie, etc., all include a software package, with an easy-to-setup configuration guide that will enable you to backup your photos, documents and other important information without too much effort.

Let's assume you do have a backup device, let's consider what happens when that unit dies. Please note, external backup devices are boxed hard disk drives. A disk drive is a critical component in any computer, and they will fail, it's just a matter of time. Don't wait until you can't recover data to consider a tertiary (3rd) backup destination.

Consider the Cloud for your secondary or tertiary backup. Dropbox, Google, Microsoft, Apple all offer free, 5-15GB of secure storage. I'm a fan of Google's "free" suite of services. Dropbox offers 5GB gratis, as does Apple and Microsoft. Google Drive is 15GB! Do you have a gmail account setup yet?

If you're planning or requesting a new computer this holiday season, consider a minimum of 8GB RAM, and opt for solid state storage (250GB or so) instead of 500GB, 1TB, or larger traditional disk drives. Having large, slow disks make for bad habits, including poor backup strategies. Large capacity drives fail as often as smaller ones. Backup often, archive (remove from computer) old pictures/files/forms if they're not needed routinely, plan for disk failure and minimize potential lost data.

Control those things you can, and keep the surprises to a minimum!