Radio Days – 2010-09-04

Tip of the Week – Current Programs

I had an urgent call from a client. She had just received a document from a relative which held the eulogy for another relative who had just died. Unfortunately it was created in an old program, and her computer could not read it. The computer used to create the document did not have a working printer and there was, as usual, very little time to find a solution to the problem. I managed to get most of the text printed but it was all jumbled up. This would probably have been in the correct order if we had had the program used to create the document.

This is a problem which is only going to get worse as we move more and more to keeping all our documents on computer: old programs will not be around to read our old documents. There are a number of solutions, perhaps the most time consuming is to convert all old files to a new format each time you get a new program on your new computer.

A better solution, and one which is now starting to be used with the latest programs, is to use a storage method which can be read by people. This storage method uses a file format called XML (eXtensible Markup Language). Using XML means that governments (which need to keep documents for decades or even centuries) can, at last, have confidence that all their documents will be available for future generations. This will help people who are researching their family history as more of the data will be available to future generations. Unfortunately we are stuck with the current situation where much data is either missing or unreadable.

Deleting the Wrong Files

Last week I deleted all the files on the USB drive which I use to carry my toolkit. This would not have been such a disaster if I had not also deleted the main copies on my hard disc! The resulting panic would have been quite interesting if you had been watching! It was at this time that I realised the joy of having some sort of backup routine (if only I had had another backup of my toolkit!) and also the realisation that there are many programs (some free, some commercial) which can recover data after it has been deleted.

I recalled that I had previously recovered 621 photos from a client's formatted camera card, and assumed that the same process would work on my drives. The answer, as I soon found out, is that my favourite file recovery program has its limitations. It took me about two days to get back most of the programs which I had on my hard disc, but I was missing the latest ones from my USB toolkit. I have now changed my backup routine to ensure that I have another set of copies of my toolkit!

I used Recuva to restore the deleted files on my hard disc. This was mostly successful: there were some files which it did not restore so I used Recuva on my USB drive. This was mostly unsuccessful so I tried another restore program called Easeus. This was less unsuccessful, but gave me enough hints about the files which it could not restore so that I could download them again. Having a working backup is absolutely essential, as I have just discovered!

As usual, do as I say not as I do!

Websites

Recuva	www.piriform.com
Easeus	www.easeus.com

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