Coffee and Computers
Newsletter

The Friday "Coffee and Computers" sessions can be a real challenge. Some of the questions are real mind benders. From time to time questions come up where there are no fast answers. These newsletters will attempt to answer some of these questions. This time we will look into HOW TO COPY PROGRAMS AND FILES TO A NEW HARD DRIVE.

MORE STORAGE SPACE ON AN EXISTING MACHINE

You almost have filled up the current drive on an existing machine and want to do something to get more storage space. With the cost of hard drives as low as they are, it's easy to get a "jigabyte" drive for a hundred dollars or so. So what are your choices?

One choice simply is to get a second hard drive and install it on the existing machine, leaving the old hard drive alone. This has a distinct advantage since you can leave existing programs and data files alone and just put new files and programs on the new drive.

Installing a second drive is very simple. Of course, just follow the directions that come with the drive. The only thing different that you must do is change a jumper on the new drive to "slave," leaving the original drive jumpered as the "master."

After following the installation instructions, Windows will recognize the new drive with the next letter in sequence, probably "D."

When you go to save data, or install new programs, just indicate that you want it saved or installed on the "D" drive and all will be okay.

REPLACE A DRIVE ON AN EXISTING MACHINE.

Possibly you don't have the physical space in your machine to add a second hard drive. You want to put in a new, larger drive and remove the original drive.

The easiest way to do this is first install the new hard drive like in the previous section. Make it the "slave" by connecting it to the same cable as the "master" drive. You can do this because the flat cables that connect the drives inside the computer have two connectors, even though only one is used when there is only one drive installed. Again, follow the installation directions.

Then, after the new drive is recognized as the "D" (or whatever) drive, you can transfer the contents of the old drive to the new one using a couple of methods.

My friend, Con Tran, of Universal Computer Service, said that many of the new hard drives come with software that not only handle the installation chores but have a program that lets you copy the contents of the old drive to the new one. This makes things very easy. Follow the instructions that come with the software and you are finished.

If the new hard drive doesn't come with the copy software, there are a couple of programs that Con and others use to transfer the contents of one drive to another. One program is "Drive Copy" by Power Quest ($49.95) (www.powerquest.com), and the other is "Ghost" by Norton (Symantec) ($69.95) (www.symantec.com). You must install these programs on your machine and then follow the instructions.

Since these programs are expensive, you might want to take your computer and new hard drive to Con, or other computer professional, and let them do the copying.

In any case, once the programs are copied, the new hard drive is rejumpered as "master" and the old hard drive can be removed.

MOVING PROGRAMS FROM AN OLD MACHINE TO A NEW ONE

You just have purchased a new machine and want to move programs and data to the new one. Here the problem of compatible operating systems arises. If both machines use the same operating system, or you are happy with the operating system on the old machine, it might be easier just to remove the hard drive from the old machine and install it on the new machine. Everything will look the same.

However, say the new machine has Windows XP and the old machine has Windows 98. Now there is a problem.

In the "old days," when all but Mac's ran DOS, copying programs from one machine to another was a snap. With the advent of the Windows 95/98 series of operating systems, things became complicated. Installing a new program on a Windows machine caused copies of information to be placed into a couple of Windows files called the "Registry." These Registry entries tell Windows how to handle the programs. But this meant that you no longer could copy programs from one computer to another because the Registry information stayed with the original operating system.

To get the same programs on the new machine, you better have the original diskettes or cd-rom's. Then you can reinstall the programs on the new machine. They will make new Registry entries and all is okay.

Of course, your old data files, like your Microsoft Word letters and your Quicken checkbook files can just be copied to the new machine from a floppy or zip drive. Data files don't make Registry entries and simply can be copied.

INSTALLING A NEW DRIVE AFTER THE OLD DRIVE FAILS

You must start from scratch here. When the old drive fails, you no longer can access it. You have no access to Windows or anything else. Here you need your RESCUE DISK. This might be a cd or diskette that you either created yourself or received from the manufacturer of your machine.

The important things on the Rescue Disk are a small program that lets you access a new drive and another program that lets you access your cd drive. You have to be able to access the cd drive because almost all new programs come on cd's.

You follow the instructions to install the new hard drive. The new drive will come with installation software on diskette. Put in the diskette and follow the instructions that come with the drive. Then you have to start all over with your cd's and install Windows and all your programs. This can be time consuming.

Norton "Ghost" lets you make an image of your original hard drive that can be used to configure a new drive, but you have to have something on which to leave the image. I'm have no experience with "Ghost," but I understand that it can be useful.

Back in the "old days" we could backup a complete hard drive on a tape system and reinstall everything from tape in case of a drive failure. With large hard drives, this no longer is practical.

I hope this has answered some questions. Probably the best solution to any of the above is to visit Con at Universal Computer Service, or other computer professional since they have the tools to accomplish all this with little expense and anxiety on your part.

See you all at "Coffee and Computers" any Friday.