Cloud Backup
Protect your Valuable Data

Several of our past newsletters have focused on backing up your data to a physical hard drive. Storing your data online, or in the "cloud" is an easy and reliable way to back up your data, without purchasing additional hardware. It's a service, so all you have to do is sign up for a monthly or yearly plan, install the software and the service provider will do the heavy lifting from there. The advantages of cloud storage are that your service provider ensures that your data is safely backed up and stored in a different location than your hard drive, and you don't need to buy additional hardware.

Carbonite is one company that offers cloud storage. Individuals can purchase the Basic Carbonite Plan for $59 annually, which is for unlimited backup space. Carbonite Pro is for businesses and its pricing model charges based on how much total data the business is storing, from $10 per month for up to 20GB to $250 per month for 300 to 400GB. Once you download the program, you can pretty much forget about it, it operates in the background but will not affect the performance of your computer.

Files can be retrieved from your primary computer, and if you're on the road, you can access your files remotely.

Safety Concerns

One of the biggest concerns is security- regarding hackers who access your data maliciously and data center staff who have access to your files. Cloud storage providers have a number of security measures in place to ensure that your data is secure. Most providers encrypt your data with bank level security and your files are transmitted to data centers via Secure Sockets Technology- which is the same technology used by financial institutions for on-line transactions. Once stored, the files remain encrypted and you can choose not to allow data center employees to have the encryption key, so no one else can access your files.

Regarding managing your data, the cloud providers monitor their equipment, and if a problem arises, they are able to address it quickly without disrupting your service. Most Cloud Storage service providers schedule downtime for maintenance, and

this generally happens in the very early hours over the weekend so as to impact users as little as possible.   If there is a major problem at one data center, (for example, a hurricane), the providers can temporarily move the data to another center, ensuring that all files remain protected and available.

You can backup data such as documents, pictures, video, email, executable files and settings. You cannot back up operating systems or applications.

About the Author
Jennifer Ohl is a maintenance and reliability consultant based in Miami. She was Regional Manager of Consulting Services for a leading maintenance software manufacturer and subsequently founded her own company, Midwest Software Specialists in 2001. For thirteen years, Jennifer has been helping companies implement maintenance systems that reduce costs and increase profits. Jennifer has an MBA in Finance and Operations and a BA in Business.