

Sound booth (cont'd from page 20)

turned the system on at the start of the session.

In one calm moment, at 5 p.m., I realized that it had to be the sound card that breathed it's last breath. Everything else was fine.

Fortunately, we'd retired the office computer a couple of months ago. It was only seven years old - less than half the age of the dinosaur we'd been using for the music! Rallying a few screw drivers, we did surgery on both machines.

After extracting the second hard drive (with the music) from the relic PC, we transplanted it into the less-aged computer, re-connected all the cables and installed MusicMatch. Then we created a playlist for the evening session, barely in time to open the doors. With sweat pouring off our brows, there wasn't even time to see if it would work!

In the course of the session, it became apparent that my antique

MusicMatch was not playing well with the much younger Windows XP. When I'd move a song, it froze and I'd have to end-task and restart the program. It was like walking on eggs, even though I babied it along. During the short silences the kids started singing. At least they didn't riot! It was the same story on Sunday.

Monday was spent inside the computer, juggling memory, etc. and trying to get the new set-up behaving, but to no avail. Finally, I went online to get a more up-to-date version of MusicMatch only to learn that the company didn't exist any more. However, I did learn that vintage MusicMatch versions can be had reasonably - or free - for downloading.

After downloading version 10 (the latest available at the time), we found that we couldn't save different "libraries" for our different sessions (like organ music, Top-40, Oldies, etc). That wouldn't work for us, so it

was back online to find a somewhat older version that might have similar features to the one we were accustomed to.

(At the time of this writing, in late 2012, a free download of Music Match 8.1 solved our dilemma.)

In retrospect, I realize we had seen symptoms of this impending problem. Over the previous couple of weeks leading up to the incident, the sound would blank out briefly, once or twice each session - it was only a couple of seconds, but I innocently thought I brought it back by tapping here or trying some switches on the mixer. I never did know how I "fixed" it.

The moral of this tale is: HAVE A BACKUP PLAN so your computer glitch doesn't turn into a technological nightmare!

We learned that external sound cards are available. They plug into a USB port. Cheap insurance that would have been a quick fix in our case.

Always use a second drive to store music. An external hard drive is an excellent idea and in an emergency it will quickly plug into a back-up computer (if you have one). They're really reasonably priced today, so that's on the top of my "wish list."

Don't get rid of a working computer, even if you don't need it any more. It will save your sanity in a pinch.

While you're at it, install your music program and try it out before the day arrives that you actually need it.

If your system blanks out occasionally, it may be a symptom of an ailing sound card. Check it out and make sure you are prepared.

Familiarize yourself with the innards of your computer and get comfortable with installing memory, etc., so you can fix simple things without calling in the experts. It will save you money, but more importantly, it will save time in an emergency.

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