

TechTime: Planning for Next Year

Four things you MUST DO before September



Clean your computers.

Hopefully your district will take care of this in their yearly maintenance for you but if they don't, try to budget some money to have it done. If you can't afford it, you can do it yourself, but be careful. Opening up a computer case can void the warranty (if it is still in force). If you want to clean your own, check out the websites on Page seven.

Dust is the Number one enemy of all electronics and for some reason computers can be the world's biggest dust magnets. We cannot stress enough the importance of this cleaning. Nothing kills a computer faster than dirt.

While we are on the subject, if your computers are stored for more than a week, cover them if possible. This will help prevent dust buildup, especially if there is any construction going on in your building this summer.

Back up all of your work from this year.

In today's computer world, most of us have a CD-ROM writer. If you do, make two copies of your 2003 Yearbook folder and then delete it from your internal hard disk and/or server. This accomplishes two things: it gets you ready to install YearTech 2004 and it frees up much needed hard disk/server space you will need to create your next yearbook.

If you really want to make sure of the safety of the CD-ROM backups, store them in two separate physical places. Maybe one in your school and the other at home.

Upgrade your hardware.

If you or your district have a budget for upgrading computers, consider allocating it in the following priority:

- 1) RAM. Nothing will make your computer run better (other than getting an entirely new computer) like adding RAM. Things run faster and crash less often.

- 2) Storage. Adding a CD-ROM writer if you don't already have one is one of the smartest thing you can do. Blank CDs are the floppies of today. You can buy them at any warehouse store for less than 50¢ in most cases. Another storage option might be an external FireWire or USB hard disk. See more about this in the column at right.

Upgrade your software.

Do any software upgrades you want (or need) to do. This would be the best time to try out InDesign if you are thinking of going in that direction.

Beating the Server Blues

One of the biggest problems my schools have run into this year concerns their servers. For those of you who don't do yearbook on a network, you can skip this part. You don't have the problem.

For those of you who do, we are going to offer a partial solution to some of the problems that a server can give you.

We want to suggest buying an external disk drive. You can currently get an external firewire or USB drive that will adequately back up your entire yearbook for less than \$250 at almost any of the big computer chains or discount warehouse stores.

Try to get one with at least 100 gigabytes of storage that runs fairly fast. While you are at it, see if you can find a drive that includes backup software.

The goal here is to guard against server downtime and crashes. Each night (either using backup software or doing it manually) back up your entire yearbook folder (2004yrbk PC/2004 Yearbook Mac) to your new external hard disk.

Benefits of doing this are numerous

- 1) You always have a copy of your latest files should something happen to your server.
- 2) If your server is down (for scheduled or unscheduled reasons) you can still work on pages from the external hard disk. On a Mac it would be easy to share this drive if all computers are networked. But even if you can't share it, at least you can work correcting proofs or submitting pages.
- 3) Many times working off of a servers can be very slow. Most of the time that is the price you pay to be able to let everyone on your staff have access to the entire yearbook at one time. But there are times when your whole staff does not need access to something and working them off the external hard drive would make much more sense. Proofs are a great example of this. If one person is correcting all of your proofs, why slow them down by having them work off your shared server, when they can do the entire job from a single, dedicated hard drive that is in your room.

NEED HELP?

If you have problems with PageMaker or YearTech, never hesitate to call Jostens Technical Support line at (800) 328-2435. Or better yet, e-mail them at ytsupport@jostens.com or go to YearTrack and click My Contacts and then the e-mail link for YearTech help.