

Modern technology, is it convenience or hindrance

The recent crash of computer servers at the Kansas Department of Health and Environment highlighted one of the problems with putting our important records on computer: what happens when the computers go down?

The department found out in August when 85 percent of its servers went down. Officials were quick to reassure people that no data had been lost, but all the state’s birth certificates just as easily could have gone the way of the dodo.

The crash ended up being no more than an inconvenience. It took weeks to fully restore the servers and the department is working through the backlog of records request now. Although the situation was well handled, it raises a lot of concerns over the shift toward putting all records online.

This shift has been slow but inexorable. Court records, business filings, taxes and more are all on computers now, and many are accessible from the Internet.

But is this a good thing? Sure, sometimes. It’s great to have the information at your fingertips. Press a few buttons and you can call up your birth certificate or your court case – or someone at the agency can do it for you.

However, computers and software are not perfect, as the health department found out. They are vulnerable to both glitches and malicious attacks. Hardly a month goes by that we don’t hear about some hacker getting access to credit card or bank data.

Software can be too complicated for its own good or operators can lack the training to use it.

What’s the solution? Unfortunately it’s hard to predict when computer software will fail. By and large, the first sign that a server is going to crash is when it crashes. What was good about the situation is that the department knew where the physical records were – in this case, a salt mine near Hutchinson.

That’s the lesson we can take away from this. Keep the backups. Like the health department, we need to make sure we keep both paper and electronic documents. This is something that consumers, business and public agencies can do.

Physical records, of course, are vulnerable in their own right. You can lose them in a fire or they can be stolen. But physical records have persisted since biblical times.

We are quickly becoming a much more technological society. It infiltrates every aspect of our society, and that’s not always a bad thing. Technology is good, it can help make our lives easier, but we need to be informed and cautious users. We need to remember that there is value in keeping both physical and electronic records.

We let technology take over, and we’re asking for trouble.

Kevin Bottrell



Thumbs up to the Norton Community High School cheerleaders at Friday night’s game. Really great job and appreciated by all the fans. Emailed in.

Thumbs up to Steve Haynes’ article in the Friday, Sept 10 Norton Telegram. The very liberal benefits of public employees is embarrassing to the rest of us and we are paying for it. Emailed in.

Thumbs up to the owners of three great homes which were on immaculate display Sunday. Emailed in.

Thumbs up to the Norton City workers for all their efforts in getting the city back up and running with water. Emailed in.

Your political connection

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The good life can be found in first class

I may never want to fly “coach” again. You know...how could I be satisfied back there with “the little people” after I’ve tasted the fruits of “first class”.

Last week my brother, Bob, and I flew together to Orlando, Fla., to visit our sister, Kathryn. As a former United Airlines pilot Bob gets several passes each year and he shared one with me. Plus, with his seniority he was able to upgrade our tickets from Chicago to Orlando.

I had never flown first class but, I quickly got accustomed to my cushy, leather seat with its own telephone and the cutest little lap tray that pulled out of one of the armrests. Each passenger also had their own headphones with a selection of music ranging from jazz to country.

We were barely airborne when the steward came down the aisle with a tray of hot washcloths. He handed one to each passenger with a pair of silver tongs. After you daintily washed your fingers and tapped around your mouth, he retrieved them the same way.

When flying coach I was used to the stewardess tossing you a bag of peanuts like one of the pitchers at a major league baseball game. In first class we were

Out Back

Carolyn Plotts



served a gourmet breakfast of an omelet with perfect hash browns, a croissant, a pat of real butter, a fruit cup and Star Buck’s coffee. Yes. I could get used to first class.

But, honestly, I don’t think I would make a very good world traveler. We only crossed one time zone and it still took me two days in Florida to get caught up. And, now I’m home for four days and still feel tired.

We didn’t do too many “touristy” things. Mostly looked at pictures, talked and ate. I made my stuffed jalapenos and chicken enchiladas. One sight we did see, however, was the oldest cypress tree in the world. Aptly named “The General” this monster tree towered over all the other trees in a state park dedicated to “Wild

Florida”. The undergrowth was so dense you could barely see past the wooden walkway built through the forest. The heat and humidity kept us from doing many things outdoors.

Kathryn is well and settled into her home. She was an apartment dweller in New York City for about forty years so she had some adjusting to do. Although, even in the city, she had a green thumb. She lived on the top floor of her apartment building and always had a container garden on the roof. Now, she has a big yard to dig in and she proudly named off all the trees and flowers she has planted. With promises of more to come.

One thing about visiting my sister: you always come home with more than you brought. Generous to a fault, she had gifts for Bob and me.

Chicken plates, a nightgown and a pair of bejeweled sandals for me. Bob brought home a huge crossword puzzle book and a stack of magnetized stainless steel balls which he uses to hold grandkids’ pictures on his fridge.

As much as I like to go, the best thing is coming home. “There’s no place like home. There’s no place like home.”

Kansas started Food for Peace years ago

By John Schlageck, Kansas Farm Bureau

Television, newspapers, magazines and the web are filled with images of starving children - skeleton-like figures crouched like dogs on their haunches while their mothers wail in anguish. Sometimes these pictures from such far-away places as Mozambique, Ethiopia or Angola also include children eating bread, bowls of rice and other staples that may have come from food produced on the fertile land of Kansas farmers and their counterparts across the United States.

Food aid for these hungry people started nearly 60 years ago right here in Kansas. It was named Food for Peace and this program was an outgrowth of this country’s foreign-aid policy.

A few years after the conclusion of World War II, the United States implemented plans to help countries devastated by the war. The Marshall Plan in Western Europe became the cornerstone of this newly emerging program.

While some of the funding was used for reconstruction, most was used to help feed starving people left homeless and unemployed by the war. During this same period, the United States enjoyed bumper crops and began stockpiling huge commodity surpluses.

In September 1953, Cheyenne County Farm Bureau (in northwestern Kansas) held a countywide policy development meeting. In that meeting, Peter O’Brien, a young farmer and rancher, suggested that it would make more sense to give aid in the form of food items rather than in the form of money.

Insight

John Schlageck

Cheyenne County Farm Bureau drafted a foreign-aid resolution that called for exporting grain to other countries. The northwestern Kansas farm leaders believed that if underdeveloped countries were able to secure food - once they became more prosperous - they would become major buyers of U.S. commodities.

The Kansas farmers also saw this as a “sure-fire” method to help reduce grain inventories and realized that increased shipments of U.S. agricultural products could generate more business for American processors, packers, shippers, railroads and ocean vessels.

The county Farm Bureau resolution became a state resolution at the Kansas Farm Bureau annual meeting and later part of the official policy of the American Farm Bureau Federation at the national level. In ‘54, Kansas Sen. Andy Schoepel sponsored legislation known as “Food for Peace” that passed both houses of Congress and was signed into law by Kansas’ own native son, President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Since its early beginning in Cheyenne County, Kan., PL 480 has gone through many changes. Today it remains a key ingredient in our overseas plan to aid countries with food rather than money.

Using food for humanitarian relief programs helps everyone. PL 480 helps feed hungry people around the world

while helping American farmers reduce surpluses.

While there have been many new laws and farm bills introduced during this period, not many have been as significant to agriculture and feeding the world’s hungry people as Food for Peace. Without this humanitarian vehicle and the output of Kansas producers and their counterparts across the United States, millions of people continue to go hungry.

Each year millions of people need millions of tons of food to fill their hungry bellies. In 2008, an estimated 963 million people remained undernourished.

That same year, more than \$2.8 billion was donated worldwide from U.S. aid programs to developing countries, reaching tens of millions of people. This aid is essential in emergency situations and included drought in the Horn of Africa, conflicts in Sudan and Congo, hurricanes in Haiti and drought in Afghanistan. Approximately 43 million in 38 countries benefited from emergency food aid provided through Food for Peace.

At the same time, non-emergency programs continued to focus on increasing agricultural production and supporting programs to address health, nutrition, HIV and others aimed at investing in people. More than 7.2 million people in 28 countries benefited from USAID non-emergency food assistance.

John Schlageck is a leading commentator on agriculture and rural Kansas. Born and raised on a diversified farm in northwestern Kansas, his writing reflects a lifetime of experience, knowledge and passion.

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