COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS AND COMMUNICATION 2018-19 THEME:
**DRONES & DROIDS**

# Personal Efficiencies: Apps & Strategies

www.TerryEwell.com        by Terry Ewell        September 2018

**T**here are several ways in which technologies can be applied to one's daily life to save time for more important things. These include better management of your digital documents and reducing the time to access them. It is important to examine things you do repeatedly and figure out if there are ways to do the tasks more efficiently. Also, it is equally important to avoid wasting time with lost files and hacked accounts. Foresight, planning, and use of new digital applications will ease your burden and avoid catastrophic losses.

First, I have set my browser to automatically open two webpages. Any browser can be configured to save a set of "homepages." One webpage is for LastPass, which is discussed below, and the other is a webpage with links to frequently used webpages. My webpage is properly configured so that with one quick click I can access multiple email accounts, a calendar, social media, "My TU," the undergraduate catalog, Blackboard, SharePoint, Cockeysville community library, the TU Cook Library, the TU academic calendar, a fitness center, multiple news sites, weather, online banking, etc. No passwords, however, are stored on this webpage in case someone else gains access. Anyone at Towson University can create a webpage such as this through WordPress. The little bit of effort it takes to create your personal "quick links" site will save time over the year and create greater security.

The way to keep your email, Facebook, and financial accounts safe is to have unique long and unmemorable passwords for each. If one password is stolen, then the other websites are still secure. However, remembering many long and difficult passwords (such as A4mv&93*shen32-Ym) is near impossible. I make use of LastPass, which just requires a single master password. This is software that securely stores and later fills in the passwords for websites when you log onto the sites. Currently this software is free for use on a single device. For use on multiple devices and all functions, however, the dollar or so a month fee is well worth it. I have the LastPass application loaded on my computer, tablet, and smart phone. There are other excellent commercial alternatives as well. All of these password storage sites will allow you to quickly change your passwords, something that is recommended everyone do every month or so.

Many of us spend time accessing information on the Internet. You might be surprised how many extra key strokes or screens you go through to get to an online location you want. While routinely I will access about twenty websites, I like to have quick access to well over fifty so that with a simple point and click I have arrived at the webpage. I use this method on my computer, tablet, and phone. The alternative, leaving multiple tabs open in a web browser, is not only inefficient, but less secure than the solution below.

Consider what would happen with your documents, pictures, and other digital items with a power surge, theft, fire, ransomware, etc. Technology can be employed to archive and backup your work and personal items. Adopting the "rule of 2" means that all of your documents, an original file and a copy, are backed up in different locations. There are free and paid services that will do this for you automatically and save work on the "Cloud." If your files are small and just contain Word and Excel documents, for instance, you could manually save the backup files on Dropbox, Google Drive, or Microsoft OneDrive. Thumb drives or larger external drives are another option if you work with large files such as video. Whatever your choice, however, make sure that every digital item is saved in at least two locations. The time you have taken to create them is too valuable.

Having safely secured your documents is one issue, however, being able to retrieve them later is another. Consider filenames that are descriptive and that you will remember later. It is also a best practice to repeatedly save your files with different file names while you are working on them. Make sure each file name is unique! For instance, you might save a file with the date at the end or a number: filename_1, filename_2, filename_3, etc. Save documents with the new files names at least every 30 minutes. You will be thankful, if you have a power outage and lose your current work. Also, sometimes when working on files you might change them radically or the file gets corrupted. Having earlier versions of the document will mean you don't need to start over again. Digital storage now is very cheap. Your time is not! There is not a problem with having 20 backup files, it is a disaster, however, having none.

*For on-screen demonstrations please visit:* ***Personal Efficiencies video***