

# Childproof Your Mac

by Malcolm Davidson

ARE YOU getting weary of hovering about anxiously while your children pound at your keyboard, career through your file system, show no respect for your DeskTop organisation, and furthermore fail to understand what your problem is? Your concern is particularly acute with pre-school age children who can't be expected to leave this or that alone. It would seem unfair to ban the youngest from using the Mac when older brothers and sisters can do so. What's to do? Well, it is possible for both you and all your children to co-exist using a single Mac—it's all a matter of organisation, as I have discovered. The following is an account of procedures which I have found useful. If readers have any helpful tips of their own, why not send a note to the Editor?

The first thing to do is to create a separate hard disk partition (or more) for yourself (I use SUM, but there are other utilities which will do this) which you lock with a password. In here you put anything that mustn't fall into curious hands (eg. ResEdit, SUM etc), together with any other files which are important to you, like last night's programming effort, or the copy of that letter you sent to the taxation office. Also, make sure that there are no potentially destructive DA's installed under the Apple menu.

The remainder of the hard disk contains the System Folder and all the childrens games, Hypercard (they seem to like that), a word processor and a graphics application so they can "publish" items from both school and home. You will need to protect all the Hypercard stacks which come with your system. If you have pre-school age children you will need to password protect them as well. The System Folder presents a potential problem but my children seem to ignore it (although the youngest did try trashing everything once, but I will come to that later). Locking files so they can't be altered or trashed is a possibility, however, this can be a great nuisance, particularly if their use requires that they be unlocked.

Of course, the most important thing to do is to maintain a recent backup (carefully checking that all is well BEFORE you do a new backup) so you can conveniently recreate some or all of the children's

file area should it get really screwed up. For example, I have needed to re-install Hypercard at least three times in the last 12 months. I now password protect the important stacks.

Items under the Apple menu (the Control Panel in particular) seem to hold a great attraction: Control Panel settings are always different every time I regain use of the Mac from the children. This is a nuisance in the case of cdev's such as QuicKeys or SUM Shield. A convenient solution is to change the file type from "cdev" to "INIT". This removes the cdev from the Control Panel without changing its functionality. For example, your QuicKey shortcuts still work as before, but they can't be changed from the Control Panel until you reset the file type to "cdev" (although, QuicKeys allows you to invoke the Panel with a hot-key).

The above precautions have worked well for me, but there was still a major loophole which my daughter, aged three and a half, uncovered for me in dramatic fashion. Recently, she summoned me. "Look at this" she said gleefully as she tried unsuccessfully to trash the system file. I was looking at an almost bare desktop. She had trashed everything possible. I had the mandatory backup, and my own private partition of the hard disk was safe, but there were a few recent files we wanted retrieved which hadn't yet been backed up. SUM's undelete capability is quite good under normal circumstances, but it couldn't cope with the wholesale trashing of about 12 megabytes of files, and SUM's general file recovery application could not retrieve the files I wanted. This prompted me to write TrashDisable, an INIT/FKEY combination now available from the BBS, to prevent the above disaster from happening again. When it is switched on, the TrashDisable INIT prevents files from being trashed from the Finder, while the TrashDisable FKEY toggles this capability off and on. I had my daughter's imaginative use of the Mac under control again!

Best of luck.