

Backup, Access and Share Your Files From Anywhere, Anytime

Paul Allen Hill, M.B.A.

This is the first in a series of technology based factsheets focusing on helpful web 2.0 applications you may not be aware of. While technology is constantly changing and there are a variety of cloud-storage applications available—this particular factsheet detailing the advantages of utilizing Dropbox will help you become more productive in sharing information among colleagues and collaborators in Extension as well as family and friends.

The Problem

Anyone who frequently uses multiple desktop computers, laptops, tablets and smart phones can relate to needing to access a file only to realize the file is stuck in some other location. Many of us resort to saving information on memory sticks, or emailing files to ourselves, or back and forth between our family, friends and colleagues in order to share and collaborate. While each of these methods work, each method leaves many loose ends that make more work for you. There is an easier, more efficient way to simplify this area of your life, and it is free.

The Solution

Dropbox.com looks like a simple folder on your computer, but it does something remarkable. Whatever you put into your Dropbox folder is automatically and instantly backed up into the internet cloud making it accessible from all your computers. Everything in your Dropbox folder is

now effortlessly accessible from your computer where there is an internet connection.

With Dropbox, the problem of having all your files scattered across multiple computers is solved. You no longer have to email files to yourself or transport them on a memory stick.

The Dropbox folder will update your work across any type of desktop or laptop computer, as well as tablets and smart phones. Once you set up a Dropbox folder, your files automatically sync between all the devices you have specified.

If you make a change to a file while at work, the file will instantly sync your changes to your tablet, smart phone and desktop PC at your house. Conveniently, settings or configuring are no longer a problem. The documents you work on between home, work and on-the-go will always be the same. Dropbox works across a variety of platforms making backup and syncing easier than you could have ever imagined.

Syncing goes beyond just your computers, everything in your Dropbox folder is also available from the Dropbox website. In the event your computer crashes, or your laptop is stolen or you lose your phone, your files are still safe on the Dropbox website.

Dropbox simplifies your life. It is currently the most efficient way to backup your files and access them anywhere, anytime.

The Features

Accessibility

- Any file saved to your Dropbox folder also instantly saves to your computers, tablets, smart phones and Dropbox's website.
- Dropbox gives you the first 2GB free, and then you can pay a monthly fee for more space. Up to 100GB is available.
- Dropbox syncs just the parts of a file that change (not the entire file)
- No matter where you are, your files are always available from Dropbox's secure website.
- You can work offline. You'll always have access to your files, even when you aren't connected to the Internet.
- What do you have? Mac, Linux, Windows, iPad, iPhone, Blackberry or Android? Dropbox is compatible with them all.

Collaboration

- Invite your family, friends or coworkers to a folder. The folder sharing option allows you and your contacts to work together on the same projects and documents. It is like saving the folder to their computers too.
- You can see other people's changes instantly.
- Share a public folder by simply sending a link to any file in your Dropbox.

Mobility

- Apps are available for all your mobile devices: iPad, iPhone, Blackberry and Android.
- Take, edit, upload, and share your files in your Dropbox on the go, wherever you go.

Security

- Your files are safeguarded which eliminates worry.
- Records a one-month history of all the edits to your work.
- Edits to documents can be undone, any file can be undeleted.

Conclusion

Web 2.0 applications, like Dropbox, allow you to harness the efficiency and speed of the Internet, thus enabling you and your collaborators to work together despite being separated by distance, which is frequently the case in Extension work. These applications can save on your limited time and travel expenses for Extension staff meetings and other gatherings where you might gather to work on scholarly projects. Efficient collaboration through Dropbox, wikis, and GoogleDocs, to name a few, is especially critical for Extension administration, tenure track Extension agents, their mentors, and tenure committees (Kinsey, Carleo, O'Neil & Polanin, 2010).

References

Retrieved October 15, 2011, from:

<http://www.dropbox.com>

Kinsey, J., Carleo, J., O'Neill, B., & Polanin, N., 2010. The wiki as a time-saving mentoring tool. *Journal of Extension* [On-line]. 48(2) Article 2TOT2. Available at:

<http://www.joe.org/joe/2010april/tt2.php>

Utah State University is committed to providing an environment free from harassment and other forms of illegal discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age (40 and older), disability, and veteran's status. USU's policy also prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in employment and academic related practices and decisions.

Utah State University employees and students cannot, because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or veteran's status, refuse to hire; discharge; promote; demote; terminate; discriminate in compensation; or discriminate regarding terms, privileges, or conditions of employment, against any person otherwise qualified. Employees and students also cannot discriminate in the classroom, residence halls, or in on/off campus, USU-sponsored events and activities.

This publication is issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Noelle E. Cockett, Vice President for Extension and Agriculture, Utah State University.