

Passwords

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Last month I looked at how you can generate a more secure password of random letters, but I also left you with the problem of how to then remember those passwords. This month, I will introduce you to a solution to this problem - the password manager.

I have accumulated a fairly large number of passwords over the past 10 years or so of wandering the www pathways, and I had to find a solution to remembering different usernames and passwords. The simple solution that I used was a SimpleText file (replaced by a TextEdit file in MacOSX) in which I recorded website URLs, usernames and passwords. In a slight acknowledgment of security, I wrote the passwords in a private code. In the same file I also kept the serial numbers of all the software and hardware that I bought - on the basis that if someone was going to the bother of stealing my life, they may as well have everything! I then colour-coded the file to make it easy to find.

I wonder how many people have used a similar solution?

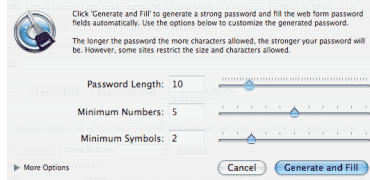
Well, the good news is that there is a better solution, and it really is easier. Hidden in the depths of MacOSX is a password manager. It is called Keychain. You have a Keychain file on your computer to keep the passwords that you enter to Appleshare, Mail, Safari and so on. You can look at the Keychain information using the program Keychain Access in your Application/Utilities folder, however, you will find that you will be asked for your password many times as you look around the data, as MacOSX protects the passwords with a high level of security - using 3DES level encryption.

Now the solution and the easier part. A small company, Agile Web Solutions Inc, in Canada have developed (and are continuing to develop) a great little program, 1Passwd. This program is really “just” a very usable interface for you to store information in Keychain. The name of the program says it all - you remember just one password, and the program will access its own Keychain file of all your other passwords. But wait! There is much more. 1Passwd actually plants an interface into your web browser so that it can capture the web page URL together with all the data items that you have entered on a form, and it saves them all. When you revisit the same page later, 1Passwd can retrieve all those data items and automatically fill in the form for you - including the password. No more typing name, email address, password and so on for that website. One important thing to note is that all the 1Passwd information is kept in the one Keychain - no matter which web browser you are using. As you surf the internet, all your passwords (and other data) are stored on the fly. If you visit the



same website, even using a different browser, all your saved information is instantly available. How easy is that?

Adding new information is a simple procedure. Find your website, enter the details but before you submit the password click on the save menu in the 1Passwd drop down menu and 1Passwd will ask you a brief description of the web form you want to save. That's it. Could it be any easier? If you don't do the save and the form contains a password, 1Passwd will pop up a form to ask if you want to save the web form. (You can disable this if you want, and either automatically save or don't-save the form.) And as for the password itself? Just select the 1Passwd password generator menu. From the drop down menu you can specify password length, minimum numbers and minimum symbols.



1passwd is even able to store multiple username/password combinations for the same website, and have instant access to any of them. (How many gMail accounts do you have?)

In addition to saving and retrieving web forms, 1Passwd includes a general form filler. With the Automatic Form Filler built in to 1Passwd you can generate multiple identities on your mac. Categories include Name, address, web site, email and even credit card details. One click on the Use Identity drop down menu, select the identity and most of the form is completed in a fraction of a second. Those annoying address forms are a thing of the past.

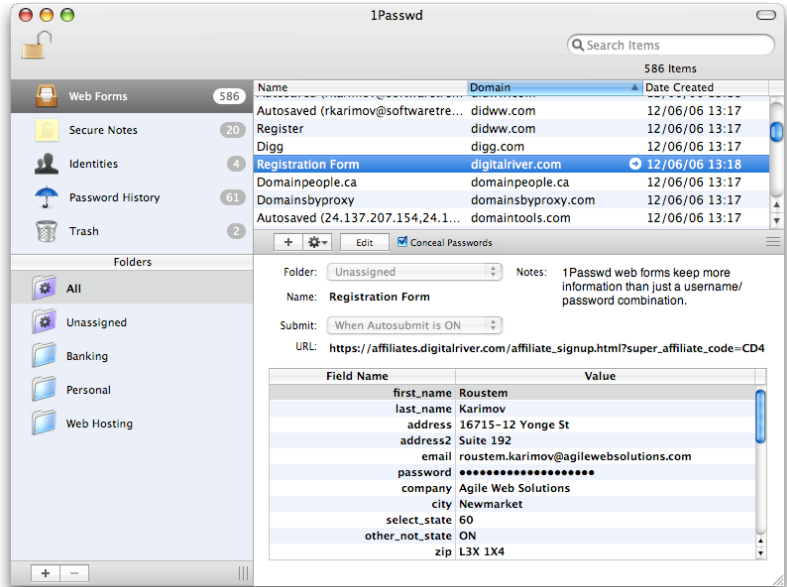
You are also protected against most phishing. What? Phishing - the latest technique to try and steal your important information and thus cause mayhem to your life. In a nutshell the way it works is like this. You get a bogus email from some undesirable that looks like an authentic email from eBay, Bank, PayPal to name but a few. You then click on the link in the email but instead of taking you to the official site it takes you to some obscure web address. You innocently enter your login and password details, and bang, the deed is done. They now have your personal login details! You just got phished, hook, line and sinker!

But with 1Passwd, things are a little different. Remember that 1Passwd saves the website URL along with your password details. When you end up at the plishers website, the URL will not match, and 1Passwd will not retrieve your password and other details. Ingenious, and something that makes 1Passwd so much more than just a password manager.

Another potential scam is for a virus to hook into the software and log all the keystrokes. Luckily, we don't have to worry about these too much at present, but 1Passwd has that base covered as well - 1Passwd is menu based, and the data items are entered into the web forms programmatically - no keystrokes are used.

There is no such thing as absolute security, but this is getting pretty close. The protection can be broken if someone gets access to both the 1Passwd Keychain file and the one master password.

What else can I mention? 1Passwd is integrated with Safari, OmniWeb, DEVONagent, Firefox, Camino, and Flock web browsers. You can take your passwords with you on your Palm / Treo. Integration with .Mac accounts allows passwords to be synced across machines. You can import old password information easily from Safari, Firefox, Web Confidential, and RoboForm (PC programs). By default, preferences are set to make you secure.



But wait, there is still more. (This is starting to sound like a TV commercial!) Remember all those serial numbers that I have? Yes, I can also add those into 1Passwd as Secure Notes. Again fully encrypted, but available for whenever I need to look them up.

The developers of 1Passwd are very enthusiastic in not only keeping their program up to date, but they readily listen to their users, and are continually providing suggested new features. When Apple announced the beta version of Safari at the WWDC recently, the developers worked overnight, and released a new version of 1Passwd the following morning that supported the new version of Safari. Now that is service!

This is a great little program, and yes, I think it is well worth the \$29.95 requested. For more information including demo videos, visit

<http://1passwd.com/>

and while you are there, consider buying yourself a copy. There is even a user-group discount until August 31, 2007. See last month's magazine.