In my last article, I introduced the process of keeping multiple computers synchronized; in my case, I need to ensure that a home-office tower system, a laptop computer and a tower system at my university office all have the same files in the same versions. The first solution I found was Laplink, which I have used happily for many years.

Recently I tried a different approach that I might eventually be easier for my purposes: private a peer-to-peer network for synchronization. BeInSync <http://www.beinsync.com/> provides a simple, inexpensive solution that happens to fit my needs perfectly. The software works for systems that can be left plugged into persistent Internet connections; in my case, both my home-office system and my university system are always connected to the Internet through a satellite connection and the university T1, respectively. The portable can be plugged into either network as required.

Once one establishes an account with a userID and password on BeInSync, one can define _shares_ on each machine to define precisely which folders are supposed to be synchronized. In my case, almost all of my functional data are in a folder called C:\Data, so it’s easy to define the shares. Having installed the software on all three systems, one simply loads the program on the computers to synchronize and activates the synch process. In my case, I left the initial synchronization run over a weekend because there were about 40 GB in the shares. The process worked flawlessly and without human intervention.

I used to have to remember to manually synchronize the portable from the home-office system before I went the university, and then use the portable to synchronize the university-office computer. In the evening, I’d reverse the sequence by synchronizing the portable from the university tower and then the home tower from the portable. With BeInSync I don’t have to do anything special at all. I can simply leave BeInSync running on all three computers all the time and they remain in synch all the time.

BeInSync uses 256-bit AES encryption <http://csrc.nist.gov/CryptoToolkit/aes/rijndael/> on all Internet transfers, which is good enough protection for my purposes. Additional functions that one can enable include secure Web-based access to one’s own computer files from any browser and the ability to define group shares for defined sets of people such as colleagues, clients, and friends.

Unfortunately, the program version I tested repeatedly crashed, interrupting the transfers and significantly slowing the synchronization. At one point the estimated synchronization time reached 503 days. I hope to see a resolution with newer versions. In the meantime, the product is still worth testing and following to see how it develops.

In my next article, I have information from a reader who tells us about another approach to
sharing information among multiple computers – this time using client-server technology.

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