

# Object lesson in info control

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I bought a pair of laptop computers at a yard sale this week. Toshiba Satellites, one with an OS problem that wouldn't boot up; the second with a damaged screen. I figured it was worth \$5 apiece to see if I could combine them into a good unit to send to my daughter.

Anyhow, the consolidation went well and I had some surprises exploring the results. The biggest surprise was that it's filled with personal information and other files from the lady who sold it. I'll reformat the HD after I stop by her house tomorrow and give her a "pep talk" about information security. Meanwhile, I have, among other things, her and her father's medical records and history, her own resume, the letter of acceptance from the health management firm that hired her (\$85K plus perks sure looks nice for someone with an MA), client information, her complete address book, her financial records, two years worth of corporate e-mail, confidential corporate information from her current and previous employers, about 36,000 temporary internet files, and tons of other stuff. It apparently never occurred to her that having a defective display doesn't clean out the hard drive. In fact, I found all this by hooking it up to a monitor before I even started working on the thing. All I can say is that she's fortunate that I'm an honest person, since I pretty much bought her whole life from her for five bucks.

Anyone who gets rid of a computer needs to either reformat the hard drive, use a good scrubber program or, if you can't boot it up for some reason, dismantle and destroy the hard drive if it has anything more than games and recipes on it.

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