The IT Geek's
"Tip of the Week"

Should You Keep Your Passwords In Your Wallet?

Do you have too many passwords to remember? At Cal Maritime, you may need to keep track of your Windows, WebCT, and Peoplesoft passwords. In addition, you may have another dozen web-related passwords to remember.

Bruce Schneier and some others have recently advocated that you write passwords down on a piece of paper (yes, really!) and putting it in your wallet for safekeeping and easy retrieval. In theory, most people safeguard their wallet and will seldom (if ever) lose it. However, should your wallet become lost, someone may gain access to your network resources as well as your identity.

If you must do so, however, keeping your passwords in your wallet is not a bad idea—provided you devise a system that permits only you to determine what the actual passwords are based on "clues" you have written. For example, you might write the following on the paper you keep in your wallet:

Yahoo bsanders [Pet]2[vessel]$

…which you interpret as meaning that your Yahoo username is bsanders and your password is Rover2USSEssex$ (assuming that your pet's name is Rover and that your father served on the USS Essex). As you can see, the braces are not included in the password… and anything not contained in braces is literal. Go ahead--use your imagination to come up with a scheme of your own will be difficult or impossible for anyone else to decipher should they find that piece of paper in your wallet (which we hope NEVER happens!)

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