Oh, No - My Photos Disappeared!
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Not mine, actually, but my son's. Sam had recently returned from a 3 1/2 week vacation in Oregon and was organizing his digital pics. One memory card had about 71 photos on it. He was importing the pics into iPhoto when something went wrong. The import failed. Worse yet, it was Sam's habit to enable the Image Capture checkbox option to delete the files from the memory card after importing. That part of the operation, unfortunately, succeeded. Sam couldn't find the photo files anywhere on his hard drive and couldn't attempt another import. He called to ask if I had any ideas. We had already made plans to spend the following day together, and I told him I'd bring something with me that might help.

That "something" was Data Rescue II, by Prosoft Engineering (http://prosofteng.com). As its name implies, Data Rescue II is software designed to recover files. Unlike most disk utilities, its mission is salvage rather than reconstruction. DR II doesn't attempt to bring a crashed hard drive or corrupted directory back to life. Rather, it attempts to extract from the wreckage the stuff that may be truly irreplaceable -- your work, your photos, your music. You can always reinstall system software and applications, but your Word files, email, iTunes library, school assignments, etc. are another story.

DR II is an easy drag-and-drop installation. However, if your data loss has already occurred before deploying DR II, you will want to run the software from the CD to avoid overwriting the files you're attempting to recover. For the same reason, DR II requires that you designate a destination drive for your recovered files other than the drive you are attempting to recover the files from. You can also run DR II from the CD if your startup drive will not boot.

Other disk utilities, such as Tech Tool Pro, have file recovery components, but these are usually more difficult to set up and heavily rely on background tracking software that periodically takes digital snapshots of your hard drive.

The DR II interface is straightforward. The PDF manual and integrated on-screen explanations do a fairly good job of explaining the various recovery options that the program offers. With bated breath Sam and I launched DR II with his camera connected to the laptop. Sure enough, DR II recognized the camera's memory card as a volume. We exhaled.

I was pretty sure that a deleted files scan on the memory card would be the best strategy. The reason is because deleting a file from a volume only deletes a reference to the file from the file's directory (or so I continually read). The actual file remains on the volume until it is overwritten by new data.

I was surprised when this scan was unsuccessful. I then ran one of DR II's other recovery modes, and voila! All of the lost files were recovered to the external Firewire hard drive that we had connected to Sam's laptop. He then imported the recovered

pictures from the external hard drive into iPhoto. Vacation memories saved!

DR II carries a list price of $100. On line prices range from the low $80s to $90. This is for a personal license that allows use on any computer owned by the purchaser. A license for business use costs $249 from Prosoft. Prosoft also markets a more limited product called Picture Rescue, for the recovery of picture files from memory cards. This product offers a subset of DR II's capabilities and lists for $59.

The latest version of Data Rescue II is now a universal binary for owners of MacTel machines. The application update is free for registered users, but a bootable CD with the latest version costs $5 for a downloadable disk image or $10 for physical media.

Prosoft also markets Drive Genius, a Macintosh disk utility; Data Backup, a Macintosh backup utility; plus other software tools for Macs, iPods and PCs.

**STEVE - HERE'S A SCREEN SHOT FOR INCLUSION IN THE ARTICLE. THE CAPTION SHOULD BE "GETTING STARTED IN DR II'S ASSISTANT MODE."**