

Be Cyber Smart
By LeRoy Harris
Programming & Technology Services Librarian

October was National Cybersecurity Awareness Month. With more people working online and many students participating in school online, it is important that we all take the time to consider how secure and safe our devices and digital information are. Just about every week here at the library, we have a patron come in who has forgotten a password, gotten locked out of an account, or something similar. Your passwords are your keys.

We all know how frustrating it is to forget our keys or accidentally lock ourselves out of where we would like to be. Many of us also remember how easy it was to open a push pin lock with a variety of long, thin objects. The point is that a password only does you any good if you have it and it is too complex to guess. Most websites encourage a password that is at least 8 digits long and contains lowercase and uppercase letters, a number, and a symbol. However, the more complex your password, the more difficult it might be to remember or input correctly.

Security is a double-edged sword, just ask any horror movie character who has locked themselves in with the monster. This is why it is important to have your passwords written down along with user names and site information in an organized way. Writing all your passwords down in one place doesn't do you any good if you don't know which password goes with which account. It's just like having a bunch of similar keys on the same key ring and not knowing which order they are in so you have to try them all every time. Be organized, and it will save you time and headaches later.

Many websites offer the convenience of a 'stay signed-in' feature for your personal devices. It is really convenient to not have to enter in your username and password every time you access your accounts, but it has two major drawbacks. First, since you aren't entering your password each time, when you do need to do so on a different device, you might forget it. Second, if you don't need to enter your password to access your account, neither does any criminal who gains access to your device either through theft or remote connection. It's like leaving your back door unlocked or window open when there's a burglar on the prowl.

Outside of password security, there are a lot of other important factors relative to keeping your information, and yourself, safe in your online actions and interactions. Never open a link or attachment you are not expecting. Cyber criminals have the capability to mask their phone number in a text message or make the 'From' name in an email appear as someone you know. Companies will never ever ask you to send them your username, password, social security number, or other personally identifying information via email, text, or social media.

There is no delete button on the internet. Once you post it, like it, share it, or upload it, someone with the right skills and equipment can find it. That cute post about using your

birthdate to come up with a super hero name? You just gave away your birthday to identity thieves. That selfie in front of your favorite coffee shop? You just gave robbers and stalkers clues about where you live. That like and share you did for that political or activist post? You just paid advertising companies to have that statistical data. Remember, before you click it, open it, or download it, stop and think. Most internet sites begin with the prefix 'www', which stands for world-wide-web. And just like a web, one tiny action on your part can have rippling consequences you never intended. Be safe. Be cyber smart.

The Friends of the Library 2024 Used Book Sale will be held November 7-9 at the library. Friends of the Library members may shop early on Thursday, November 7, from 5:30-7:30 pm. Sign up or renew your membership at the door. The public is invited to shop the sale from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm on Friday, November 8, and 9:30 am to 3:00 pm on Saturday, November 9. Fill a bag for just \$2.00 Saturday until noon. All remaining items will be free until close, but nominal monetary donations are welcome and appreciated. All proceeds from the sale benefit New Ulm Public Library and its programs, collections, and services.

The library will be closed on Monday, November 11 for Veterans' Day. The library is located at 17 N. Broadway and is open to the public Monday-Thursday 9:30 a.m.-8 p.m. and Friday-Saturday 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m.