

macCompanion

YOUR GUIDE TO ALL THINGS MACINTOSH

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Masthead

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Our special thanks to all those who have allowed us to review their products!

In addition, thanks to you, our readers, who make this effort possible.

Please support this effort by going to the back of the magazine and to our website and clicking and purchasing from our affiliates and advertisers. **THEY WILL APPRECIATE IT EVEN MORE THAN WE DO!**

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Letter from the CEO

New Beginnings

By Robert Pritchett

There will be a lot to look forward to in 2007 and we are no exception here in macCompanionlandia.

You will be witness to format and graphical changes and improvements to the magazine while we retain content that we think you will both enjoy reading and learning about regarding the Macintosh environment.

As part of our appreciation of you, our readers and listeners, we are promoting the “*I Love My Mac*” campaign in February on the **Mac ReviewCast** with Tim Verpoorten – <http://www.macreviewcast.com> as we “gift-away” books, software and other items by those in the industry who either solicited us, or who we asked this time around to join us in our love for you, our beloved readers!

Go to <http://www.maccompanion.com/IloveyMacGiftaway.html> and sign up and perhaps your name will be selected for one of the many items we will be gifting away.

And we will continue to be experiencing staff changes as we move forward, so stay tuned!

2007 may very well be the “Year of the Mac” and we hope you and yours are active participants in this wonderful computing experience.

Come join us in the celebration and please let your friends and family know about us at <http://www.maccompanion.com>

It’s going to be a great year!

By the way, we are going to begin a “**Product the Month**”, as a product that stands out for us. This is a tough choice, but this month the stand out is really InfoVox and VisioVoice by Assistiveware Software. You’ll find it in the Software section.

Next Month’s Issue

February is *macCompanion*’s 2007 Mac Expo special. We will cover products released or updated during the show, as well as continue our software, hardware and book reviews. We will review more O’Reilly books, updated software like Montague and Mathematica, and a cover few new hardware goodies as well.

While rumors abound, we expect this show to be of great interest to the Mac community and look forward to reviewing more exciting products in 2007.

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Columns

Section 1 contains *macCompanion*'s regular monthly columns. Writers from the US and Canada offer their insight into a variety of issues affecting Mac users. These columns cover commercial and shareware software, games on several platforms, hardware and books.

This month's issue includes:

- ✚ According to Hoyle, by Jonathan Hoyle
- ✚ Views from the Ivory Tower, by Ted Bade
- ✚ MacFevre, by Wayne Lefevre
- ✚ The Mac Night Owl, by Gene Steinberg
- ✚ Macsimum News, by Dennis Sellers
- ✚ Musings from Mars, by Leland Scott
- ✚ The Northern Spy, by Rich Sutcliffe
- ✚ Applemacpunk's Mac Security 101, by Kale Feelhaver

According to Hoyle...

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Cross-Platform Software Development from a Macintosh Perspective: Multi-Compiler Strategies with C/C++ (Part II)

By Jonathan Hoyle

jhoyle at macCompanion dot com
macCompanion
January 2006

We continue into the new year with our investigation of cross-platform strategies from a Macintosh perspective. The following are the topics we have covered so far:

- **Intro:** http://www.maccompanion.com/archives/september2005/Columns/According_to_Hoyle_1.htm
- **Qt:** <http://www.maccompanion.com/archives/october2005/Columns/AccordingtoHoyle.htm>
- **wxWidgets:** <http://www.maccompanion.com/archives/november2005/Columns/AccordingtoHoyle.htm>
- **CPLAT:** <http://www.maccompanion.com/archives/december2005/Columns/AccordingtoHoyle.htm>
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<http://www.maccompanion.com/archives/july2006/Columns/AccordingtoHoyle.htm>
- **Basic compilers (Part III):**
<http://www.maccompanion.com/archives/october2006/Columns/AccordingtoHoyle.htm>
- **C++ Application Programming with REALbasic:**
<http://www.maccompanion.com/archives/november2006/Columns/AccordingtoHoyle.htm>
- **Multi-Compiler strategies with C/C++ (Part I):**
<http://www.maccompanion.com/archives/december2006/Columns/AccordingtoHoyle.htm>

This month we continue with C/C++ coding techniques for multiple compilers. In this installment, we will be looking primarily at C code and how to make it run properly with a C++ compiler.

C, once the *lingua franca* of programming languages, is now overshadowed by its more powerful successor, C++. Development environments which compile C only (without C++) are becoming rarer and rarer with time. Authors of C code need be cognizant of this fact, particularly if they wish to keep their code maintainable moving into the future. At some point, it is likely that your C code will need to be able to run on C++ compilers, even if you have no intention of porting to C++. Fortunately, there are some basic guidelines to follow that will keep your code running happily under the watchful eye of the C++ parser. These guidelines not only bulletproof your C code for C++, they also make it better C code:

Always Use ANSI Function Prototypes and Declarations

This is the 21st century for Pete's sake. It is inexcusable and downright negligent to use these deprecated pre-ANSI declaration in this day and age. Sadly, the ANSI C99 committee chose to keep these old K&R-style function declarations legal. In case you haven't seen what they look like before, below is an example of a function declaration, followed by a function definition (something that might have been written by your grandfather 35 years ago):

```
/* Declaration of foo() - requires no parameters, implicit in return */  
foo();  
  
/* Definition of foo() - requires no parameter types */  
foo(x, y)  
x;  
float y;  
{  
    ...  
}
```

For this shameful code above, a C++ compiler will report an error, and a C compiler with reasonable integrity will at least generate a warning. First you'll notice a lack of return type; this means (bizarrely) that an **int** (not **void**, as you might expect) is being returned. Although C90 still allows the implicit **int**, C99 does not. Secondly, you'll notice that no parameters are displayed in the declaration. Using this format will prevent your C compiler from being able to performing type safety checks.

The modern version of this function declaration and definition looks like this:

```
// Declaration of foo() - prototype identical to the definition  
int foo(int x, float y);  
  
// Definition of foo() - prototype identical to the declaration  
int foo(int x, float y)  
{  
    ...  
}
```

Use `extern "C"` for C Function Declarations

Since name mangling rules differ between the languages, it is useful to wrap your function prototypes with the `extern "C"` declaration, so that the C++ compiler knows to use C naming conventions, as so:

```
#ifdef __cplusplus
extern "C"
{
#endif //__cplusplus
    void foo(int x);
    double bar(const char *p);
#ifdef __cplusplus
}
#endif //__cplusplus
```

Note the use of `#ifdef __cplusplus` wrappers, since a C compiler won't understand the invocation of `extern "C"`.

Take Advantage of C++ Features Now Available in C

ANSI C99 introduced to the C programming language a number of very nice features that was formerly available only to C++ compilers. No longer does your C code have to look cumbersome from a C++ perspective. Usability and readability are greatly improved with these new features. Here is a small list of recommendations to keep your C code in the 21st century:

1. Use the C++ style `// comments`, reserving `/* comments */` for multi-line documentation only.
2. Move your variable declarations down closer to the code it belongs to.
3. Use conditional expression declarations, such as `for (int i = 0; i < 10; i++)`, rather than declare `int i`; in the body of the code.
4. For performance, `inline` your small functions (rather than using awkward macros).
5. Use the standard `bool` type, rather than an `int`, for boolean expressions (you may need to `#include <stdbool.h>`).

Avoid C Behaviors which are Incompatible with C++

Although C++ was designed with C in mind, there were some necessary modifications made to certain parts of C++ which behaved differently than it did from its C beginnings. Some of these can be subtle, and newer programmers (who are likely to be more familiar with C++) may be confused by your code if you rely on special C-only behavior, it is simply best to avoid them.

Here are a few of these subtle gotcha's;

1. Using `sizeof()` on character literals: in C: `sizeof('a') == sizeof(int)`; however, in C++: `sizeof('a') == sizeof(char)`.
2. Do not rely on `enum` constants always being `signed int`'s.
3. Remember that a global variable declared as `const` in C++ is implicitly `static`, so you will not be able to link to it from a separate file. For this reason, it's best to declare all your `const`'s as `static const`'s and place in the headers. C++ won't care about the redundant `static`, and now your behavior will remain the same despite which language you are compiling under.

Be Wary of C99 Features which Conflict with C++

In a move that can only be considered reckless, the ANSI C99 committee introduced a couple of new features into the language which were completely incompatible with C++. Why these committee members chose to make your lives more difficult, I cannot say. However, it does mean that there are some unfortunate workarounds you may have to make, lest your C++ compiler come to a screeching halt:

1. The C99 `complex` keyword is incompatible with its C++ usage. In C99, `complex` is a suffix modifier for the `float` and `double` data types (analogous to the modifier prefixes `long` and `short` used for the `int` data type). To declare a double precision complex variable `z` in C, the language syntax looks like this:

```
double complex      z;
```

In C++, `complex` is a templated type, and thus the same declaration would appear as:

```
complex<double>     z;
```

Sadly, neither one of these declarations can compile in the other language. With no safe way to arbitrate, it is often best to avoid this keyword altogether when you can. However, since complex types can be extremely useful in mathematical operations, this simple workaround can be used:

```
#ifdef __cplusplus
#include <complex>
typedef complex<float>      single_complex;
typedef complex<double>    double_complex;
typedef complex<long double> quad_complex;
#else
#include <complex.h>
typedef float complex      single_complex;
typedef double complex     double_complex;
typedef long double complex quad_complex;
#endif //__cplusplus
```

At this point, you can then safely declare the variable this way:

```
double_complex          z;
```

2. Do not `#include <complex.h>` wherever `#include <iostream>` may be found. In addition to C99's new complex types are the complex versions of standard mathematical functions, each with a added `c-` prefix, such as `cpow()`, `cexp()`, `csin()`, etc. All of these functions are compatible with C++ with the exception of one: the complex logarithm function `clog()`. Its name conflicts with the C++ `iostream` object `clog`, used for logging data to the error stream. If this very common C++ header file `iostream` gets compiled into the same module containing `omplex.h`, a compiler error will occur:

```
#include <complex.h>          // clog is a function  
#include <iostream>         // clog is an iostream object
```

Therefore, you will need to avoid the collision of these two header files.

C++: You will be Assimilated. Resistance is Futile.

The power of languages like C++, make continuance with C a less attractive proposition with each passing day. Many C programmers may even think they are still writing in C and not even realize that they have the C++ language interpreter turned on. Some of these programmers would be surprised to find that their code wouldn't compile if they even bothered to turn it off. And why should they? C++ gives them far more flexibility and power than C does. In the end, C++ is still a better C than C, so it's best to turn on the C++ flag as soon as you can.

Coming Up: Even more multi-compiler tips and additional best practices for cross-platform code. See you in 30!

Views from the Ivory Tower

By Ted Bade - January 2007

Wow, a new year. Happy 2007! January is always an exciting month for Apple fans, since this is the month that the MacWorld Expo in San Francisco takes place. It is usually a month of interesting if not exciting announcements, new products, and often some sweet deals on computer stuff. If you are interested, be sure to check out Apple's web site during the show, you will learn what Apple is up to. We will cover the more interesting things that come from the show in the next edition of MacCompanion. Will we see the iPhone? Or perhaps the ultimate gaming Macintosh? Or will Mr. Jobs show us the next big thing in technology?

Tivo shows on your Mac - You probably have heard me bemoaning the fate of Macintosh users concerning features related to the Tivo, a very popular Digital Video Recorder system. Briefly, if you want to watch shows recorded on your Tivo on your computer or burn them to DVD for watching later, you need a Windows based machine. The Tivo people keep promising to release the software that gives these abilities to Mac users, but it has been a couple of years and we still haven't seen the software released. (Although I have seen a demo of it, so I know it is in the works). More then likely, the major stumbling block is with its release is due to Digital Rights Management issues.

Coming to our rescue, a group of programmers also got tired of waiting for the software. In December they released a free program that converts the unusable MPEG-2 video the Tivo creates into standard MPEG-2 format. For a great blog on the whole process visit:

<http://www.zatznotfunny.com/2006-12/tivotogo-on-your-mac/>.

The programmers created a small UNIX utility that translates the Tivo video to standard MPEG-2 video. Initially it required using the terminal to run. This method requires that you download a show from your Tivo to your Macintosh. This is easy to do, although it takes some time, since TiVos have only USB 1 connection that can be adapted to 10BaseT Ethernet.

If your Tivo is connected to your home network you can use Safari to access the files on it. You need your Media Access Key (which you can get from Tivo.com) to log onto your networked Tivo. Once logged onto the Tivo, you can use the network to easily move the **.tivo** files to your Mac. This ability is provided by Tivo to allow people to store files on their computer hard drives, which often have a lot of free space. This way you can save a show (the file can be uploaded to the Tivo later to be watched), and make space for more shows in the meantime. However, these **.tivo** files are unusable.

With the **.tivo** file on you Macintosh, you can use the Unix utility to convert it. It wasn't long after the release of the utility that someone wrote a front-end script that lets you drop the file onto it to convert it. This script is called Tivo Decoder. It can be found by visiting:

<http://inik.net/node/97>). This site contains a lot of good information about the conversion process. To use this utility, just drop the **.tivo** file onto it to convert it. Sweet!

The converted file is standard MPEG-2. Believe it or not, QuickTime doesn't support MPEG-2, unless you spend \$20 for a special codec. It's a surprise that MPEG-2 isn't even part of QuickTime Pro. Luckily there are a couple of free solutions. There are two **free** media players that support MPEG-2, one called VLC (<http://www.videolan.org/vlc/>), and the other MPlayer (<http://www.mplayerhq.hu/design7/dload.html>). I am familiar with VLC and have used it for a while to watch those odd Windows based multimedia clips friends send in emails. It is a terrific program and has been released in Universal Binary so it works on both PowerPC and Intel Macs. (I am not really familiar with MPlayer.) To watch the converted video, drop it onto the player of choice and you are watching your Tivo file on the Mac!

If you have a video playing iPod, you might want to put this converted show onto it to view on the road. There are a couple of programs that will convert video into an iPod compatible format. I tried a program called iSquint (I just love that name in regard to iPod video!). It worked without flaw and now my show is sitting on my iPod.

Another more complex script was also released called TivoDecode Manager (<http://thebenesch.com/tdm/>), which can access the files on the Tivo as well as decode them. This program is more convenient, since its one step to perform the entire action.

I haven't researched how to get the video on a VCD or DVD yet. I believe it is only a matter of converting the MPEG-2 file into something that a DVD or VCD program will work with. I expect to see more freeware and perhaps even some shareware programs to help the whole process along.

My hat's off to the crew of people who did the reverse engineering to make this utility work. Well done guys! Thank you so very much for the hack. Also a fond thank you to the people who built the two scripted front ends to this utility!

The best part of being part of the Mac community are the members of that community. You can always depend upon someone to be interested enough to write some code, utility, or a thorough description for even the most esoteric things! From the bottom of my heart, thanks!

Universal wants a piece of the iPod - Middleman company Universal Music Group seems to want money for nothing. If you recall, last month I included a piece that told of how Universal Music Group worked a deal with Microsoft to get money from Zune sales. It doesn't appear they are getting very much on that deal ;-)

In a statement, the CEO of Universal Music Group indicated that people who owned any player other than the Zune, were pirating music. Well either he wants to convert the pirates (the remaining 99% of the music player market) or he has forgotten that he insulted all us iPod owners. Take a look at this new piece from Reuters (http://today.reuters.com/news/articlenews.aspx?type=industryNews&storyID=2006-11-28T205408Z_01_N28267036_RTRIDST_0_INDUSTRY-MEDIA-SUMMIT-UNIVERSALMUSIC-IPOD-DC.XML&WTmodLoc=EntNewsIndustry_C2_industryNews-1)

Essentially, he wants Apple to work a similar deal with Universal as Microsoft did. While Microsoft, the new guys on the field needed every bit of help they could get, I don't think Apple does. Apple might even be in a position to refuse to sell Universal music artists, causing them to lose significant funds and PR points.

I hope Apple doesn't give in to them for nothing. I suppose if Universal agreed to invest some advertising dollars on the ITMS site, perhaps Apple might justify this, but I don't think it is a good idea. The middlemen of the music industry have had a free ride for too many years. While they do promote artists, their actions also kill the careers of artists they don't like. (This death having little to do with what music **consumers** would like, but what middlemen like!). In the new digital age of entertainment, companies like Apple let the consumer find and purchase the music they like. I like that model a lot better! I don't want to travel hundreds of miles to buy a CD of a small regional group I like because the big guys won't let them sell in my area. I want to do this right from my Mac. A loud juicy raspberry to Universal....

Speaking of the Zune - I think it is really too soon to tell, but it doesn't seem that the Zune is giving much competition to the iPod. As a matter of fact, the last article on it I read showed the Zune wasn't really giving much competition to other MP3 players either. I expect that Microsoft will use a little of its corporate muscle to work some interesting deals to get Zune sales up. But even with all its slightly better features, I don't think that people like it as much as the iPod.

I have read a number of snippets, complaints, and even a few wows. Overall I think people just view the Zune as what it is, Microsoft's copy of the iPod. I found one really fair article that reads like it really wanted to be Pro Zune, but encountered just too many issues to do that. Take a look at the following:

http://www.betanews.com/article/Zune_Has_Too_Many_Issues_to_Compete/1165255868.

Well done, Guys! - You have probably seen and perhaps even enjoyed those new Macintosh commercials with the two guys, Mac and PC. Well I just read that they won Garfield's "Bobby" awards honor for the year's best performance by an actor in a commercial. An award that is given by Advertising Age magazine. (http://adage.com/columns/article?article_id=113944).

Well done guys, you are my heroes!

Happy New Year to everyone. Let's hope this is a new and very interesting year of technology for us all!



MacFevre

Mac Expo 2007 vendors...

By Wayne LeFevre - January 2007

Who are the Little Guys?

So, welcome to the New Year! Are you tired of the rumors about what will be coming out yet? I'm not really quite sure of what the prize is; you know, when you come out with a rumor that is close to the truth. It has got to be something really special, though, because there are plenty of websites and columnists that are trying for it. Personally, I like to live for the day. If I tried to figure out what Apple would do next, I wouldn't get much real work done.

What we can do is make New Year's resolutions we'll never remember to do, much less live up to them, and wait until the second week of January. That, I believe, will determine a lot of what is to happen for the rest of the year. It's MacWorld Expo 2007. What I would give to be able to attend! My personal schedule aside, *macCompanion* will have people on the floor. That will be exciting for us, because there will be a lot of vendors there. A whole lot! The mainstream magazines will cover most of it, and you might even see a few pages about it come the March issue or so. *macCompanion* will, however be able to tell you all about it in our February issue. That's one of the advantages of having an online magazine.

Now, in the next couple of weeks you will hear a lot about the Expo. MacWorld will have coverage on their site, as will everybody else and their neighbor. But let me tell you another advantage of *macCompanion*; the little guy. The ones that won't be in the mainstream press. They won't get the blog headlines. You'll hear plenty about Apple, of course. Microsoft even has two booths! They'll be covered. O'Reilly will have a large booth with a lot to do and a lot of action going on. I could probably stay a couple days just at their booth alone. But how much press will they get? How many magazines cover printed material in their reviews? Here at *macCompanion*, we averaged 9 books a month in 2006.

Back to the little guy; there will be hundreds of the little guy booths all over the place. Many of these small companies will expend their entire capital and then some, just to let someone see their product, hoping to be the next *Parallels*. It's these guys that do the MacZots, the MacHeists, and other similar campaigns to try and let people know who they are and what they offer.

Most of these companies spend so much at this one event that they can't afford to advertise, so are forced to do the give-aways. That is whom we are trying to help here at *macCompanion*, and in return that helps us. Sure, we'll be glad here at *macCompanion* to bring the larger companies into the advertising fold. In fact, it's my job to try and get them to, hoping to land that big one that will take care of the hosting and bandwidth that we shovel into the maws of the corporations each month. You do realize that we all volunteer here, right? There's no salaries to take care of, no printing costs to make up. Of course, that's why we too can help with the little guys. We don't charge tens-of-thousands of dollars for one ad for one month. We want the little guys to succeed, and want them to know that there is really an outlet to let their product be seen without costing thousands of dollars.

Take, for example, a little company called *Pleasant Software* for the people. It doesn't look like they will be able to make it to the Expo, probably because they are out of Germany. They make a little known application that is in beta known as *Übercaster*. They are the ones that are the epitome of the little guy, who, in my opinion, will make it huge (at least I hope so). *Übercaster* is the greatest piece of podcasting software I've ever seen. Unfortunately, they do not have the large budgets for big name advertising and booths at the Expo. As a matter-of-fact, they have been pre-selling their beta in hopes to stay alive. I hope they make it as big as *Parallels*, because the quality of their software deserves it, and I hope to review it when it gets out of beta. That's the Little Guy.

So, if you make it to the Expo this next week, take your time and go to all the halls. Try and look at all the booths. Don't just stop at the big guys, hoping to get goodies and free stuff. Look into those booths in the corner, with just the one or two developers standing behind a table with nothing on it but a computer doing a demo and a bunch of brochures. These are the guys who are going to bring the next big hardware, like the *Quicky* from QuickerTech, or the application that is on every Mac in the world. Here's to the Little Guys!



The Mac Night Owl

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Mac Reality Check: Welcome to the World of Spin

by Gene Steinberg - Originally published December 21st, 2006

It's very easy to forget that pretty much all the companies I write about and you read about in these columns are profit-making enterprises. So naturally they want good press, and will do what they can to get those favorable write-ups.

At the same time, a real journalist, as opposed to folks who just regurgitate press releases, will try to separate the facts from the corporate spin, sometimes without much success. If a company truly wants something secret, they can often succeed. You see, there's not a whole lot of real investigative journalism in the tech world. We're usually too busy just keeping up with what's going on to actually separate the wheat from the chaff.

Take Microsoft, our favorite whipping boy — or whipping person if one wants to be politically correct about it. When they were immersed in that antitrust conflict with the U.S. Department of Justice, they said they only wanted to be free to innovate. But how often has Microsoft truly innovated, and not just imitated or made lavish promises they couldn't keep?

You can take a look at the original promises for Longhorn, now known as Vista, to see about missed shipping dates and abandoned or repurposed features. But that's nothing new for Microsoft. Back in the 1990s, they talked about something called Cairo, advanced operating system technologies that would ultimately match and surpass anything else on the market. It was all a bait and switch, however. A few of the technologies showed up in various shapes and forms, but many are still missing in action.

Apple had its own flirtation with this sort of thing, although I gather they did make an honest effort to produce Copland, an ambitious plan for an industrial-strength operating system that went nowhere. In the end, they bought NeXT, which brought back Steve Jobs — and the rest is history.

Well, not completely. How often did Steve Jobs demonstrate Rhapsody, the precursor to Mac OS X, and make promises before they could really be fulfilled?

Today Apple, for the most part at least, doesn't make promises they can't keep. In fact, they hardly make promises at all, keeping most of their strategies and product road maps close to the vest. Only when it needs to bring in third parties — such as presenting a new operating system version or that change to Intel processors — does it deliver any specifics about future products and technologies. Or if it serves some future (usually unannounced) master plan, witness the introduction of the wireless television interface device that was code-named iTV.

Certainly, Apple will still engage in the proper amount of corporate spin. Whenever there's a new version of Mac OS X in the offing, they'll rag on Microsoft as nothing more than a blatant copycat. They are correct to a large degree, but don't think that Apple is above cribbing a few ideas from others too if it suits its purposes.

When Apple isn't around to spin a few tales, there are always the Mac rumor sites. Sure, some of what they say is true, sometimes so close to a real product that you have to wonder about their sources and who at Apple or one of its suppliers might be spilling the beans. At other times, though, when real information isn't available, it almost seems as if they are tossing out lots and lots of claims, hoping a few might stick.

The mainstream press gets into the act as well. How much prose have you read about that iPhone? No, not the Internet phone recently introduced by Linksys, but Apple's alleged entry into the mobile arena.

Of course, we all know that Apple has yet to announce any such thing. Sure you can find a few tidbits at the patent office, but just because Apple registers something doesn't mean it'll end up in a full-fledged product. Quite often the patent is applied for just to give them rights to a concept or technology should they decide to go to the next level.

You may want to tell me that there's little doubt Apple will introduce a phone based on the iPod in the very near future — and I've begun to call it the iPod Phone for lack of a more imaginative title — and you may be right. But don't assume anything about what form it'll take. Remember, when it comes to creating corporate spin, Apple ranks with the best of them.

Comments on this article: <http://macnightowl.com/2006/12/21/mac-reality-check-welcome-to-the-world-of-spin/#comments>



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'Twas just days before Macworld

By Dennis Sellers - January 2007

In the spirit of the season, I'd like to present a special poem that I wrote. It's called "Twas just days before Macworld" (or "A Visit from Steve Jobs"). My apologies to Clement Clarke Moore. By the way, you can see me actually reading the poem in my Santa cap on this week's Video Sandbox.

'Twas just days before the Expo and all over the world
Imaginations were stirring in each boy and girl.
Our earbuds were hung from our iPods with care,
In hopes that an new model soon would be here.

The analysts were nestled all snug in their beds
while visions of iPhones danced in their heads.
My wife in her housecoat, I in my Homer Simpson pajamas
Were as warm and comfy as fur-coated llamas

When out on the roof there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like the Flash
Tore open the shutter, and threw up on the sash.

The moon bounced from the breast of the ground down below
(Hey, I live in Nashville and we ain't got no snow)
When what to my blood-shot eyes should appear
But The Man himself in a jet, twas a Lear

He was a middle-aged man with charisma aglow
And I knew in a moment it was the Apple CEO
More rapid than eagles, his teammates they came
And he patted their backs and called each one by name.

I won't try to list 'em, not at this time
Namely because their names just don't rhyme
Still, I did hear Steve Jobs' clarion call:
"Now innovate! Innovate!
"Innovate all!"

He was dressed in a turtleneck as black as the night,
Tennis shoes and jeans that fit him just right.
A bundle of ideas he had stuffed in his noggin
(which was slightly balding, he should've worn a toboggan)

Then I could feel it—the Reality Distortion Field
And I could feel my credit card beginning to yield
For new Macs and iPods and perhaps an iTV
and certainly for marvels that were yet to be.

Jobs jumped in his jet, to his team gave a whistle
and away they all flew like a guided missile.
But I heard him exclaim, yes I heard him sing,
“Happy Macworld to all, now just one more thing!”

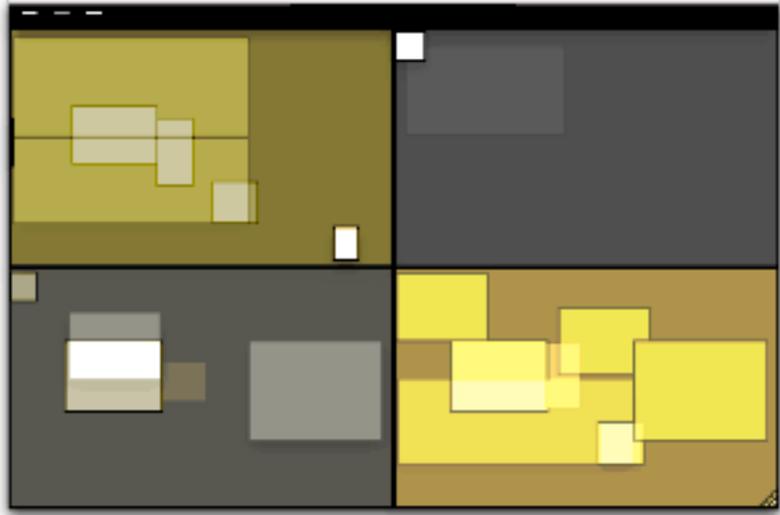
Musings From Mars

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Leopard's Spaces: Virtual Desktops for the Rest of Us?

By Leland Scott – Originally published December 23rd, 2006

I've been intrigued by the concept of Virtual Desktops since encountering them in a Unix system many years ago (I think it was an SGI Irix system), and then later when I set up Linux about 5 years ago to play around with that OS firsthand. Then, a couple of years ago I saw an early build of Virtue Desktops and thought it was pretty cool. I really loved the nifty transition effects and all the desktop customization you can do with Virtue.



However, Virtue seemed pretty flaky at the time, so I looked around to see what other virtual desktop environments there were for Mac OS X. To my surprise, there were several in addition to Virtue... including some commercial implementations. After trying all the free ones (I wasn't interested in paying for this feature, since I didn't even know if I'd like it), I decided Virtue was the best of the bunch.

But I also decided that Virtue's flakiness was simply adding more time to my routine rather than helping me organize my work, and I finally broke down and decided to try You Control Desktops. Now, it may be a total coincidence, but just after I installed Desktops and restarted my system, the whole OS began to flake out, and I ended up having to trash my hard drive.

Needless to say, whether that was You Desktops' fault or just a bad hard drive kicking in, it soured me on the whole idea of virtual desktops for awhile.

Then, when Apple announced in August that one of the premier features of its forthcoming Leopard OS would be a virtual desktop system called Spaces, I thought that maybe someone would finally get this thing done right on Mac OS X. Maybe the problem has been that the implementations I'd tried just weren't intuitive enough, or right-featured enough, to be useful to me. I even said this out loud in an article of video snippets from the WWDC keynote that I published in mid-August. Apple's initiative with Spaces also made me question my previous conclusion that virtual desktops were not worth the effort. If Apple is investing the energy to bring virtual desktops to "the rest of us" someone at Apple must believe that they are a user interface enhancement that will really benefit "us".



So, I opened my mind once again to the idea of virtual desktops. As a member of the select Apple developer group, I've been getting the Leopard "seeds" as they're released, and I've taken the opportunity to try out Spaces along with other new features of Leopard. Given my nondisclosure agreement with Apple, I'm not going to say anything about Spaces that isn't revealed in Apple's own presentation of it on the Leopard website. Instead, I'm going to spend a few minutes sharing my impressions of virtual desktops in general and of four other specific VD applications that are already available for Mac OS X:

- * CodeTek VirtualDesktop Pro
- * Desktop Manager
- * Virtue Desktops
- * YouControl: Desktops

At the outset, I'll confess that my note-taking for this exercise wasn't as rigorous as usual... I didn't test for the same set of features in each application. Unfortunately, I can't go back now and refresh my memory for the commercial products, because their demo licenses have expired. The reason for my relatively sloppy approach probably reflects my renewed conviction, after thoroughly testing Spaces, that for most computer users, virtual desktops are a waste of time and effort. Simply put, they're an idea whose time has passed.

That's a pretty harsh judgment, I realize, and one likely to make a good number of fellow geeks stop reading right here. After all, some users of virtual desktops feel strongly that they are highly valuable and necessary—for them. And I suspect that's true. Given the probability for misunderstanding when expressing an opinion on a topic like this, I want to begin by exploring why virtual desktops arose in the first place and what benefits users get (or believe they get) from them. I also want to explore the expectations users have of virtual desktops like Spaces, in the very likely event that they've never actually used such a system themselves.

From what I've read of the history of virtual desktops (VDs) and some of the discussions among those who question their value and those who defend their necessity (for links, see the Addendum), I've concluded that the reasons for virtual desktops can be summarized as:



1. They provide a means of dealing with "window proliferation"—that is, they provide a way for users to segregate certain windows of the same application into different compartments, to make them easier to locate and refer to.
2. They are a strategy for compartmentalizing one's work at the computer. For users who perform several discrete tasks during a computer session that involve specific, mutually exclusive applications, VDs can provide a space for each task. In this case, having VDs set up is kind of like having several computers in one.

3. They are a way of eliminating visual clutter, both from windows and from desktop icons. Even with tools like Expose and Dashboard, and with the rise of tabbed applications like Safari, window clutter can easily become both distracting and visually unpleasant. And if you are the type who likes to be able to see your beautiful desktop picture now and then, nothing beats escaping to a VD without all the desktop clutter for a few minutes.
4. Closely related to (3), VDs provide a way of dealing with small laptop screens. Visual clutter on laptops is almost unavoidable, but perhaps if you use VDs, you can effectively enlarge your desktop several-fold.

All of these arguments seem perfectly reasonable, and they do hold out intriguing possibilities to the rest of us. However, I've concluded that relatively few users will actually benefit from a system like Spaces. Further, I think there's a much simpler, less complicated solution to some of these problems that Apple would do better to concentrate on. The solution I refer to is already used by a select few who discovered it on their own, whether by accident (like me) or while seeking a more OS-9-like windowing system.



The users who actually might benefit are probably the same ones who developed virtual desktops to begin with. Remember that VDs proliferated as a desktop paradigm on Unix systems, where most of the users were system administrators working with X-Windows if they were running any GUI tools and with text-based Unix shells, each of which were holding a session with (most likely) some remote system. For system admins who need to monitor multiple systems on one console, I can tell you it's pretty difficult to distinguish one shell window from another. Further, if you're responsible for managing and monitoring performance on system X and system T at the same time, it's much easier to keep a set of windows for system X segregated on a VD and switch back and forth than to try to arrange windows for both systems on one relatively small monitor screen. If you are a real super user and have responsibilities for many more than 2 such systems, VDs become more than just a nice trick—they become a real necessity. Of course, if you switch to using a tabbed terminal app like iTerm together with a tabbed browser, some of the problems system admins faced in earlier years disappear.

I'm sure there are some other types of jobs that fall into this kind of situation—where each VD really does represent a totally different task with its own unique environment and applications—but it's hard for me to think of any others right now.

Most of us have several applications that we use throughout the day for all the tasks we do, and if you fall in that category, I think you'll just find VDs confusing. As an example, if you're someone who needs to keep an email client close at hand for pretty much your whole day, don't make the mistake of trying to pin that client—or one of its windows—to a particular desktop.

Another such application for many of us is our web browser. I found it impossible to segregate one browser window and its tabs for “task A” and another window for “task B” and one for “personal” etc. Browser tabs and windows are just too unpredictable and hard to control. And the minute you find yourself wasting precious moments trying to remember which desktop you left Gmail on, you’re using up whatever goodwill you allocated to virtual desktops at the beginning of your experiment. Besides, let’s recall that VDs arose before web browsers supported tabs, and now that they do, it’s easy to use tabs to create multiple “desktops” within your browser itself.

And what about apps like Activity Monitor or Disk Utility? Do they get pinned to a particular desktop, or are they free to float among them? Depending on which VD tool you try, you may or may not find it confusing to get a particular window to show up on all your desktops, and even more difficult to erase it from one while keeping it on the other three. From my experience, the minute you start trying to custom-assign windows to particular desktops, you might begin experiencing flakiness. As I said, if you find yourself going from desktop to desktop searching for a tool like Activity Monitor, you’re working too hard at the whole virtual desktop thing.



There’s also a bit of a catch-22 involved if you have several applications (as I do) that you need to have at your side throughout the day. On the one hand, if you try to put all your “always need them” apps in, say, one desktop, you end up just making them harder to reach than they are now. How? Well, think about it... Using a VD is kind of like using Dashboard: Getting to it requires first some keystroke or mouse movement and the time for a transition effect. Unlike Dashboard, if you use more than one VD, you also have to remember exactly which set of keystrokes will get you there. If you use a “pager” you have to first invoke the pager and then click on it with the mouse or use a keystroke.

One of the main reasons more people don’t use Dashboard, from what I’ve read, is that it exists on a separate layer from the desktop: You have to “travel” to get there, as well as to get back. Not much effort, you say? I fully agree. And yet, it presents an obstacle that many would rather avoid. As much as I love the Dashboard, I don’t keep anything there that I need to refer to more than once or twice a day. Instead, I use the developer mode and move any truly critical widgets to my desktop.

OK, suppose you decide to let your critical apps show up on all of your VDs. So that each VD will have a Finder window or two, a browser window, a mail window, a chat window (if you partake), your VOIP client (ditto), a word processor or spreadsheet, and so on. If you take that route, you’re back to where you started: Window clutter and everything all cozy together on one desktop.



If you then have discrete tasks like photo editing or moviemaking or audio processing or animation or programming or whatever it may be, you end up with separate virtual desktops for each of these tasks, with each desktop differing only in the one or two apps associated with those tasks. Now, if this is the case, and if you don't actually need Soundtrack open when you're using Photoshop, or you don't need Smultron open when you're using Aperture, or iMovie can simply sleep when you're blogging with Ecto, then why not just close them when you're done and reopen them? Wouldn't that be easier on the old virtual memory and processor? Keeping a set of applications

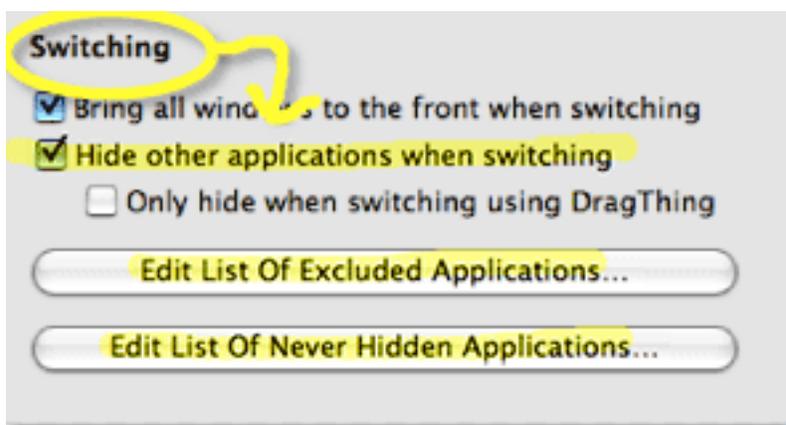
open just so they're ready for you when you visit once a day merely puts stress on CPU and ties up virtual memory, thereby reducing efficiency in the applications you're currently using. On top of that, doing this consumes an extra brain cell or two to remember which desktop applications "belong" in.

So, what did I hope to get from virtual desktops like Spaces? I had most of the hopes expressed in the four rationales stated earlier, but here's what I learned and the alternatives I've adopted for each.

Reducing window proliferation

My solution for window proliferation is Single Application Mode (SAM). SAM isn't an "official" part of Mac OS X, but there are quite a few tools that support it. What is SAM? Basically, it's a mode that causes the active application (and all of its windows) to hide automatically when you switch to another app. There are a multitude of applications and utilities that enable this mode, and all of them that I've tried define the Shift key as a default override, so that if you don't want the active app to hide, hold the shift key while you select the next one.

After beginning to write more about SAM at this point in the article, I've decided that the topic is too big—and too interesting—to distract from the main topic of this article. So look for another article soon that will take an in-depth look at SAM and its history and uses on Mac OS X.



The bottom line is that SAM keeps your workspace clean and uncluttered. You never have to worry about seeing multiple app windows sprawling across the desktop and trying to find the right one. With SAM, you just use the application switcher (Alt-Tab) or Dock to switch apps, and all apps are readily available on the same desktop. If you need a better way to organize related apps than either the Dock or Finder provide, most users will do better to try one of the many “dock replacement” apps that are out there—apps such as Drag Thing, Overflow, Drop Drawers, or the freeware Yada — or go with a full-service menubar utility like Butler, ClawMenu, MenuStrip, or You Control, which let you easily define your own custom groups of apps and access them from the menubar.

Keeping work spaces separate

This is one of the motivations for VDs that I thought had the most promise starting out. I began by considering the distinct work processes I engage in both at home and at work:

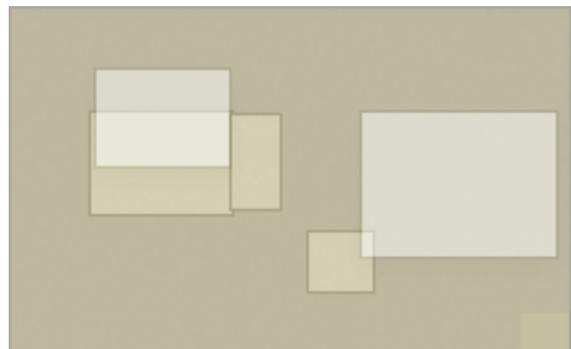
1. Blogging (writing articles)
2. Programming (writing code)
3. Designing (mostly for the web)
4. Researching (for any of the above)
5. Processing Classic 45s orders
6. Adding Classic 45s inventory
7. Testing software
8. Communicating (with staff, family, friends, colleagues, managers)
9. Managing projects (mostly software development)
10. Shopping (for work and pleasure)
11. Recording music (mostly from my 45 collection)
12. Screencasting (mostly for the blog).
13. Managing websites (various at work at home)

Contemplating setting up 13 different VDs, however, seemed like too much work... at least until I was convinced of the value of doing so. Instead, I tried starting with three desktops: One for non-Web activities, one for web-related activities, and one for personal activities. The problem with this was that so much of my life got crammed into the web-activities desktop that the others seemed superfluous. The main benefit to this arrangement was that when my manager would pop in, I could quickly switch from my personal desktop to one of the other two, thereby hiding activities I might not want the upper types to know about. :-)

I really couldn't think of a logical way of dividing my activities into discrete desktops in a way that made sense, because so many of them are interrelated—at least, in terms of the applications they rely on. Let me go through my analysis of this, starting with the above activities list:

Blogging

- * Safari/WebKit (research)
- * Ecto (writing)
- * DevonThink Pro
(research/testing notes)
- * Photoshop (illustrations)
- * TextEdit (HTML tools)
- * Constrictor (screenshots)



Even if I had only one window for each of these applications open in my Blogging Desktop, it would be so cluttered without SAM as to be no better than no VD at all. Typically when I'm blogging, I keep all of these apps running, as well as some other tools like Activity Monitor, Observation Post, Skype, Ovolab Phlink, and Remote Desktop. And that's just the ones that have windows! I never know when I'll need to refer to Activity Monitor, and Observation Post lets me know via Growl when USB connections, network ports, or Bonjour services come and go. Skype is my VOIP phone, and Phlink notifies me via a small bezel who's calling on the land line. Remote Desktop is just part of my continual duties as household system admin.

Programming

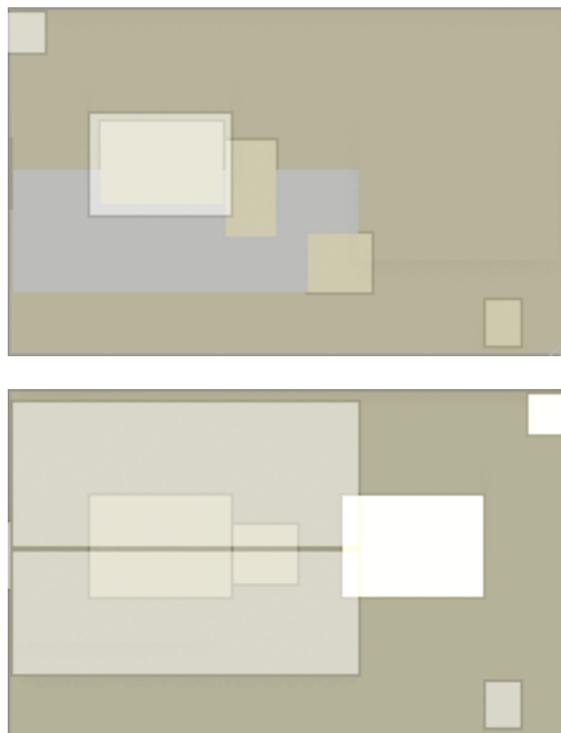
- * Smultron (text editor)
- * WebKit/Firefox/Opera (testing)
- * Photoshop (graphic design)
- * PixelStick (graphic design)
- * YummyFTP (file transfers)
- * CocoaMySQL (database tool)

And that's just for starters. If I'm working on a Dashboard widget, I might be also running Widgettopia or Dashcode, and if I'm doing heavy CSS coding I'll have StyleMaster open, as well as a couple of Dashboard widgets running on the desktop (e.g., my PHP reference widget, CSS reference, etc.). Again, this is way too many windows to fit onto any one desktop, and to separate them onto different desktops would make my work harder—not easier.

Designing web graphics

- * Photoshop (graphic design/editing)
- * Constrictor/SnapzPro (screenshots)
- * Safari/WebKit (preview)
- * Smultron/TextEdit (HTML editing)
- * PixelStick (graphic ruler)

Again, just the basics. This comes closest to working, but if you try to have all of these visible on the same desktop, you'll either find yourself constantly arranging the windows to keep your environment from looking like a bad Windows desktop, or you'll understand why Windows users yearn so for a "true" maximize feature in Mac OS X so they can make the other apps hide by basically creating a full screen view of each app. Sorry, in my book "true maximize" is just another way of achieving single-application mode. Only, you no longer have any desktop real estate for anything else, either aesthetic (like a desktop picture or background Quartz composition) or functional (like Activity Monitor or Dashboard/Yahoo widgets). If what you want is SAM, then do SAM the Mac way!



I think you get the picture by now... certainly, talking through it has only convinced me of the fallacy behind this particular rationale for virtual desktops. And that's without even considering what to do with apps like iTunes, System Preferences, Mail, and Preview that I'm likely to have open most of the day no matter what I'm doing.

Eliminating visual clutter

Isn't this the same as "window proliferation"? Well, it's certainly very closely related. However, when people talk about using virtual desktops to eliminate visual clutter, they're typically thinking of easily enabling an environment free of desktop icons as well as application windows. Many users need this in order to take clean screenshots of their desktops, while others just want to escape for awhile to a specially designed desktop picture or movie that isn't compromised by unnecessary visual elements. Unfortunately, from my tests, none of the current crop of virtual desktop apps can eliminate desktop icons, and they don't let you define specific desktop items for each desktop. Your desktop folder is still your desktop folder, and it shows up even if you can customize the desktop picture for each VD.

To eliminate desktop icons, there are numerous alternatives that are easier to implement and use than virtual desktop software. My choice at the moment is an application enhancer called DesktopSweeper, which simply sweeps away all the desktop icons whenever I navigate away from the Finder. It's highly customizable and does its thing automatically, without me having to worry about it. This means my one desktop is always free of clutter, unless I'm working in the Finder. And even then, it's my choice to see the desktop icons when Finder is active. If you don't want to run *Unsanity's APE*, there are other options. One I just discovered recently comes in the unlikely form of the Mac OS X maintenance/customizer utility *MacPilot*, which has "Show icons on the desktop" as the first checkbox in its Finder pane. Just deselect this checkbox, restart Finder, and you'll find that all your desktop icons are gone... even when you're in the Finder! This may be a little extreme for most folks, so I strongly recommend DesktopSweeper.

If you want to temporarily switch desktop pictures, there are again a large number of options. For a fee, you can use *DeskShade*, which works quite well and also lets you run QuickTime movies on your desktop. A terrific freeware tool that I use is *PictureSwitcher*, which has pretty much the same basic features as *DeskShade*, but is actually a bit more convenient to use. If I need to switch to a standard Mac OS X desktop picture, or to a plain white background, *PictureSwitcher* lets me do this with a couple of clicks on its menubar icon menu. There's also a fairly new Dashboard widget called *Imperium* that will do much the same thing.

However, lately I've found myself doing that less and less for simple screenshots. Since discovering *Constrictor*, I don't need to live by *SnapzPro X's* rules anymore. *Constrictor* has the very neat trick of letting you specify a background color for your screenshots, and it can preserve transparency when saving a TIFF screenshot. This lets you take standard-looking screenshots no matter what desktop picture you're currently using. In fact, if you use *Constrictor* this way and set it to open its saved files in Photoshop, you'll discover that they have no background at all! You have the application window and its generated shadow against a transparent background. From here, you can put whatever you need to in the background when finishing up the shot.

Enlarging small laptop displays

Oops! I said I'd tell you how I've dealt with each of these rationales for virtual desktops, didn't I? I was mistaken... I've never used a laptop for any length of time, so I can't advise you on how to deal with this. I'll bet having a 15- or 13-inch display really sucks!

If I were in this boat, as I may be if I finally take the laptop plunge in 2007, I'm pretty sure I'd still find SAM a big help, and I know I'd also keep my 23" monitor for use at home. Nothing beats a large monitor, and you're going to be mistaken if you think Spaces or any other virtual desktop application can save you from this basic truth. :-)

Conclusion

I still think the concept of VD's is cool, and the most rewarding aspect of using ones like Virtue Desktops is getting to see all those stunning animations as you change desktops. But as a practical tool to make me more productive, Not!

If you've read any of my past articles on Mac OS X and Apple, you know I'm not a knee-jerk critic of the fine company in Cupertino. However, in this case I think they've chosen the wrong "cool new feature" to promote. That's not just because the current, pre-release version of Spaces has failed to wow me: It's because I don't think VD's are the answer to anyone's window clutter problems. In fact, VD's have the potential to make Mac OS X more complicated than necessary, which isn't the way the company usually leads. If someone like me, who lives and breathes Mac software and computers in general, finds VD's confusing, I can only conclude that they don't have much potential to enhance the overall usability of Mac OS X.



As far as innovation is concerned, there's also nothing innovative about Spaces, as it turns out. The one innovation I assumed was Apple's idea was the ability to drag windows and apps around in the "pager", as the August WWDC demo showed. Certainly, that elicited a lot of "oohs" and "aahs" from the developer audience that day. What I didn't realize is that both of the current commercial VD implementations—CodeTek VDTP and You Control: Desktops—incorporate that feature. So, Apple doesn't even have decent bragging rights with Spaces. (It's true that Spaces shows live thumbnails of windows in its elegant pager, which is a distinct improvement.)

Of course, there's always the possibility that I'm totally off-base here, and that VD's are a lot more valuable than I'm giving them credit for. Perhaps I just haven't figured out how to use them effectively. Whether I'm right or wrong about them, I promise to keep an open mind, which is just the way I was brought up here on Mars. :-)



The Northern Spy

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By Rick Sutcliffe - January 2007

Last year's Northern Spy prognostications

Turned out about as one might expect, given their pedestrian nature and the relative predictability of the market these days. The Intel switch went faster than most people expected, beginning with the portables as we expected. New iPod models, and software versions were also served per the menu, though the Spy's forecast of designer colors for portables stopped at black and white. Perhaps this was only a first step and there's more to come, but if so, back-to-school or Christmas markets are the ones to target, so we won't see apple green cases for a while.

For 2007

Leopard is on the immediate horizon, and Apple has apparently taken delivery of quad core chips. It would make sense to introduce a high-end desktop and/or server simultaneously with the new OS cat. A dual chip quad, that is an eight-way tower, would be an easy prediction for the near future. A nifty suite of applications to sweeten the pot would also go a long way toward selling to a whole new group of buyers. Face it. POVNM (plain old vonNeumann machines) are out.

The reason manufacturers are going with multi-core and multiple CPUs is that chip makers have hit the wall on speed with current and foreseeable technologies, with 4GHz apparently the glass ceiling for now (heat, quantum effects). Thus a multi-core approach is the only way to increase total system throughput. Under the hood, the OS (and some programs) factor their tasks and farm them out to the various processors to work simultaneously, then reassemble the pieces of the solution afterwards.

However, all this has limits. First, not every program can make use of multiple processors, either because it has not been coded to do so, or because the nature of the problem is not suited to factoring processing this way. Second, the real bottleneck in many, if not most applications, is not processing speed but I/O. Since there are already separate I/O coprocessors, adding more CPUs can scarcely relieve this aspect of traffic congestion. Third, the overhead involved in doing the factoring and reassembling increases with the number of processors and for some types of problems is an appreciable fraction of the actual processing time, so that beyond a certain point, adding more CPUs slows the system down. Thus, barring radical changes in chip technology, we cannot expect that throughput will continue to improve at historic rates, and indeed, there may be overall system limitations in view. Moore's law may be suspended or repealed.

With respect to market share, Apple still appears on track to reach the eight to nine percent range by the end of 2007 and the ten percent figure as early as July 2008. However, any new product breakthrough (iPhone, iReader, iSonOfNewton) or any new MS stumble (yet another Vista delay, more security problems, continuing employee morale declines) could dramatically accelerate Apple's gains. Moreover, the market reaction to Leopard vs. Vista in a new hardware environment could swing things Apple's way too. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine a scenario favoring MS over the next few years.

Oh, and a couple more things. 2007 is likely to be the year of Blu-Ray and e-ink, thus possibly heralding a return to prominence for Sony. Expect to see both in Apple products sooner rather than later.

Software noted in passing

Include version 5.7.1 of *Drag Thing* (reviewed here last month in version 5.6) and available from the manufacturer or Northern Spy's download site as a free upgrade. This version introduces dock themes and fixes Intel and application compatibilities. Still recommended.

Another venerable utility recently upgraded is *PopChar* from Macility, now at version 3.1. PopChar has been rewritten from the ground up, is now universal, and sports an improved user interface, with easier access to characters and fonts. The Spy cannot remember a time when he hasn't had this program installed, though he won't offer it on his site for download because it isn't shareware but commercial. Still, it's well worth the \$29.99 (online price--includes two years' updates) because when you need a special character in a document, you don't want to have to look it up. Just move the cursor into the menu bar, pull down the PopChar menu, and select the character you want typed into the front window.

Of lesser utility

The strength of small programs is that they do their chosen tasks. All-stars, like *PopChar*, *Graphics Converter*, and *DragThing*, don't try to be Swiss Army knives. They deploy a single blade to do what they do very well indeed. Would this were so for all specialized utilities.

LogoDesign Studio from MacWare purports to be just what it's called--a specialized graphics utility for designing logos. The Spy picked up a copy to design new ones for some of his web sites. Not so easy.

To start with the preferences are grayed out. Is this a bug, or are there no program preferences? When making a shape, even a triangle, an attempt to have a border more than one pixel results in no border at all. Changing the properties in such a case does not take effect until the cursor is moved over the palette area, whereas, when changing the border thickness with a rectangle, the change is instant. There is no copy and paste, and there is no undo! If you cancel a save, the work sometimes vanishes (as in the window goes away without the work being saved). The use of the text tool to add taglines is completely non-intuitive. If you select the text tool, you have to click on the work area, then resize a text box to create a text object, but the resizing function is stuck "on" and no combination of keys will stop it. The "right" way (found by accident) is to select an area with the text tool active. Then the text box handles stay put. There is no way to guess this behavior. The printed document is a slender book that tells the user little.

The online documentation is extensive, but alas, suffices itself by saying how to do some things, but not giving any examples to determine what the instructions mean. For instance, it's not clear what the Marquee is for. Bottom line: give this one a pass until it becomes a finished product. As it, it's unusable.

New books this month

And, as the last time we reviewed programming books, both are from O'Reilly.

We begin with *Learning JavaScript* by Shelley Powers. This one's title says it all. The book is designed to get a newbie JavaScript programmer reasonably up to speed in 315 pages. Knowledge of HTML and to some extent, CSS is assumed, but the reader need not be a programmer. Powers takes the reader from JavaScript's history and basic premises through the fundamentals of the language to an overview of AJAX and a discussion of some free libraries. The history discussion is especially good. Not all JavaScript authors even know that the underlying standard is ECMAScript.

There's more soup than meat here, but it is a beginner's book. Recommended for its purpose. Read it first, practice, then graduate to a more substantial JavaScript tome for extended examples and a comprehensive reference.

The second O'Reilly offering this month is *Java Generics and Collections* by Maurice Naftalin and Philip Wadler. This book covers the most important addition to the Java notation since it was first devised.

Generics have roots in ML and Haskell, and in more modern times, in C++ templates, Ada generics, and Modula-3. During his time with the ISO SC22WG13 standards committee, the Spy devised the Modula-2 generic library module and refining modules, then wrote the standard for both, so he knows how useful this paradigm can be.

Strictly speaking, generics aren't necessary if a language has OO. However, they are very useful in creating parameterized data structures and algorithms. Why write the code for a queue of reals, then repeat all that work for every other data structure you also want to queue? Why write a complete quicksort for every type of date? If a language supports generics, one set of code, suitably parameterized, handles all such situations.

Naftalin and Wadler do a good job of explaining how this all works in the recent addition to Java, correctly noting that although Java generics looks like C++ templates, the semantics are quite different (more lightweight) as only one set of code is generated, not one for each refinement. Personally, the Spy thinks of Java as Smalltalk dressed up to look superficially like C++. They authors also run the reader through the supplied collections. (These play the same role as the STL in C++, but appear to be cleaner and simpler.) Another good book, though only time will tell how robust these collections libraries are.

It's a pity the Java language itself has suffered so much under the stewardship of Sun (inventor of the notation). Had Sun chosen to cooperate with (instead of stiff) the standards community years ago, their notation might have gained greater acceptance and become more truly cross-platform. Perhaps Java generics and going to open source as they have now done will help on both counts, but the Spy suspects it might be a case of too little and too late. If you are a big time Java user, however, buy this book. Generics are the right solution to the two classes of problems it tackles. Would that more language designers knew this.

The Lord bless y'all in the New Year.
--The Northern Spy

Rick Sutcliffe, (a.k.a. The Northern Spy) is professor of Computing Science and Mathematics at Trinity Western University. He's written two textbooks and several novels, one named best ePublished SF novel for 2003. His columns have appeared in numerous magazines and newspapers, and he's a regular speaker at churches, schools, academic meetings, and conferences. He and his wife Joyce have lived in the Aldergrove/Bradner area of BC since 1972.

Want to discuss this and other Northern Spy columns? Surf on over to ArjayBB.com. Participate and you could win free web hosting from the WebNameHost.net subsidiary of Arjay Web Services. Rick Sutcliffe's fiction can be purchased in various eBook formats from Fictionwise, and in dead tree form from Bowker's Booksurge.

URLs

The Northern Spy Home Page: <http://www.TheNorthernSpy.com>

The Spy's Laws collected: <http://www.thenorthernspy.com/spyslaws.htm>

The Spy's Shareware download site: <http://downloads.thenorthernspy.com/>

WebNameHost: <http://www.WebNameHost.net>

WebNameSource: <http://www.WebNameSource.net>

nameman: <http://nameman.net>

opundo: <http://opundo.com>

Sheaves Christian Resources: <http://sheaves.org>

Arjay Books: <http://www.ArjayBooks.com>

Booksurge: <http://www.booksurge.com>

Fictionwise: <http://www.fictionwise.com>

PopChar: <http://www.macility.com/products/popcharx/>

DragThing: <http://tla-systems.co.uk/>



Mac Security 101

<http://www.applemacpunk.com> applemacpunk at cox dot net Copyright ©2006 Kale Feelhaver

2007 in Mac Security, 10 Predictions

By Kale Feelhaver aka Applemacpunk – January 2007

As the New Year is upon us, I'd like to take this chance to make a few predictions for Mac Security in 2007. With the eminent release of Leopard, and the Mac's growing popularity, 2007 is sure to be a big year for Apple and Mac OS X. More importantly, I think the coming year will be a huge year for Mac security products and services. The Mac will never be as big of a target as Windows, but with each passing year, it becomes more and more of a target for exploitation.

According to a recent Gartner article, Apple is the #4 computer manufacturer in the industry. They are behind hardware giants Dell, HP, and Gateway. Apple has surpassed Toshiba at #5, and is trailing Gateway by a very small margin. It is reasonable to think that Apple may soon pass Gateway and slide into the #3 spot. This is great news for Apple stockholders, but growing popularity also means a growing need for security. Apple's growing popularity is due to several things; among them are the iPod's "halo effect", Apple's slick marketing campaigns (I'm a Mac commercials), and the general public's overall frustration with Microsoft Windows. Nobody can argue that there are more Mac users now than ever before. Due to this fact, 2007 will be a year of more cross-platform (and Mac specific) malicious software than ever before.

Here are my predictions for Mac Security in 2007:

1. The first "real" Mac OS X virus will be released into the wild (many users will have a bad day due to this one)
2. All the major PC anti-virus software vendors will release Mac versions of their software (if they haven't already)
3. The number of cross-platform worms will increase dramatically (this means worms that will affect Mac OS X and Windows equally)
4. The first exploit that will specifically target Mac OS X through Windows (Boot Camp, Parallels, etc.) will be released into the wild
5. Mac OS X 10.5 Leopard will include more robust firewall/security settings, showing an increasing awareness of Security by Apple
6. Apple will add a Security division headed by a CSO. This will also result in a Security page/site on Apple.com
7. More and more security firms will begin using Mac OS X on desktop/laptop systems
8. The first Darwin-based network appliance will debut in the IT industry
9. Apple will partner with a software vendor to produce a proprietary technology powered by Mac OS X (i.e., Apple/Blackberry Server)
10. Every major Linux-based security tool will be ported to run natively on Mac OS X
- 11.

So what does this mean to the average Mac user? It means make sure you're running anti-virus software and a personal firewall (see Mac Security 101, November issue). More importantly, the old adage of "Macs don't get viruses" needs to be put aside in favor of a new one... Mac OS X is more secure than ever, but the Internet isn't.

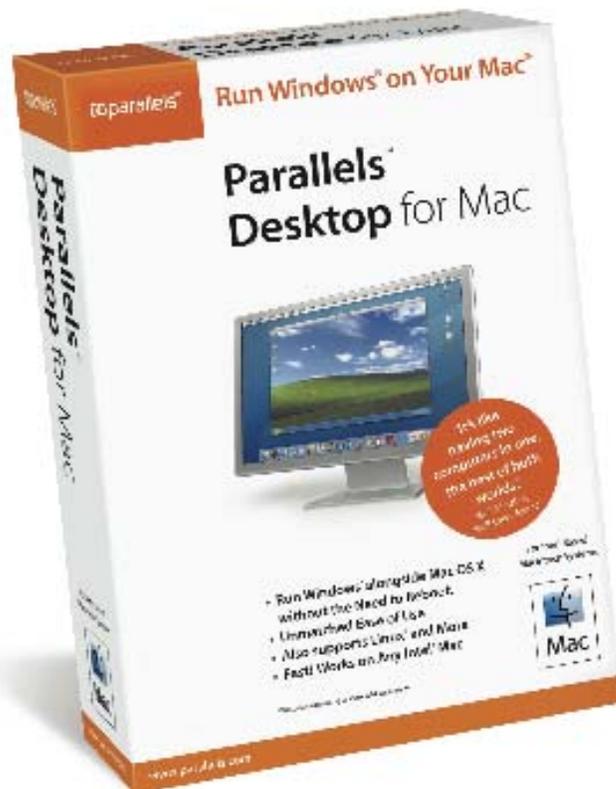
Software

The **Section 2** software reviews in this issue of *macCompanion* are:

- ✚ **Animusic 2** – fun computer-generated 3D music product, reviewed by Robert Pritchett
- ✚ **Infovox iVox and VisioVoice** – two products to help hearing-impaired Mac users, reviewed by Wayne LeFevre
- ✚ **Encyclopedia Britannica 2007** – new version of Britannica’s flagship reference software, reviewed by Mike Hubbartt
- ✚ **iDrum** – a drum machine/virtual instrument for the Mac, reviewed by Daphne Kalfon
- ✚ **Kid Pix 3X** – flexible and simple software for working with images, reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad
- ✚ **Mind Manager** – an application to organize complex projects, reports and activities, reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad
- ✚ **Starry Night Pro v6** – Imaginova’s excellent Astronomy software, reviewed by Dr. Eric Flescher
- ✚ **ToonTown** – an online Disney game based on the concept of a cartoon universe, reviewed by Ted Bade
- ✚ **Translation Service** – replace selected text with a translation into one of several languages, reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Software Tip: On 12/21/06, Microsoft released an update to Office for Mac – 11.3.2. It is available for download from the Microsoft website. This update requires the previous installation of 11.3, so if you bought and installed 11.2, first download the 11.3 update, then install 11.3.2.

The first solution
for running Windows on Intel-Macs...
**now available
at the Apple Store!**



Parallels Desktop for Mac is also available
via direct download at www.parallels.com.
Buy either way for only \$79.99!

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sales@parallels.com

Parallels
<http://www.parallels.com>

Animusic 2

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett



Animusic, LLC
317 Nye Rd.
Cortland, NY 13045
— Or —
2007 Wychwood Drive
Austin, TX 78746
866-692-6468

info@animusic.com

<http://www.animusic.com>

Demos: <http://www.animusic.com/dvd-info-clips.html>

Released: 2005

\$20 USD DVD, \$13 Soundtrack CD

<http://www.animusic.com/online-store.html>

Requirements: DVD player.

Strengths: Shows off 3-dimensional animation tied to music.

Weaknesses: None found.

Previous Review of Animusic 1:

<http://www.maccompanion.com/archives/february2005/Audio/animusic.html>

Other Reviews: David Pogue –

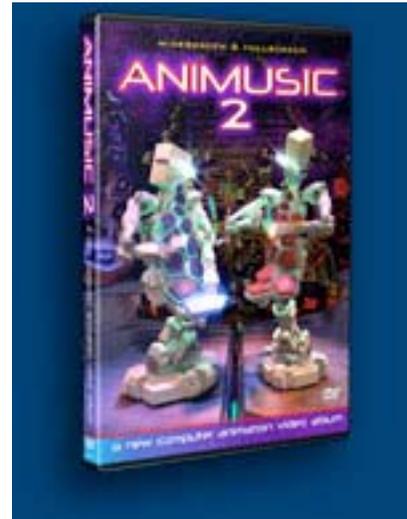
<http://www.animusic.com/press/nyt-review.html>

<http://www.animusic.com/reviews-media.html>

Prepare to be wowed by some of the most awesome “computer generated 3D music” imaginable. This DVD is the latest release from Animusic and yes, there will be an Animusic 3! I’d personally like to see it released in 2007.

Want to learn more? Try here: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animusic>

You have to see it to believe it so go watch the demos and then support these guys. It is fun to watch and even more fun to sit back and fill the senses with this futuristic virtual band.



Similar to Animusic 1, this DVD has 8 more flawless animations that are just fun to watch! You'll get an idea if you watch the demos. I noticed there is a difference using a DVD player and TV vs. using an iMac G5. Believe me, the view on the Mac is simply incredible! A lot of Mac displays could be sold using this DVD as a demo. The detail is phenomenal and after playing each video, I could not find any flaws whatsoever.

The Starship Groove has drummers using fluorescent light sticks as drumstick, while two robots beat drumpads that are really keypads on their "chests" and laps while bobbing with the music. You are going to so like the starship they groove on though!

The Pogo Sticks cruise around on "boardwalks" that remind me of matchstick racecar tracks.

I could picture my dad wondering how they got all the fingerings to work in the Resonant Chamber as robotic fingers plucked strummed or chorded all kinds of tied-together stringed instruments. He is going to have a lot of enjoyment watching this one during the Holy-days.

And speaking of "holy", the Cathedral Pictures almost made me feel like I was watching a glorified Mormon Tabernacle Organ with all the embellishments only a musical artist could dream up.

Animusic 1 has a segment with pipes and balls bouncing around creating music as they bounced off different chimes, soundpads or whathaveyous. They took it way up a notch with Pipe Dream 2.

Perhaps my favorite, because I'm a sucker for optical fiber, is the Fiber Bundles lightshow.

But you really have to hand it to the creators of the Gyro Drums. What a great way to show off 3D! Drums and cymbals moving around on gimbals in time with the music. Just way cool!

And of course, the *pièce de résistance* is the Heavy Light that looks like something that was inspired by a Mayan Temple for a foundation to pull off a fantastic laser light show. Tre bien!

Infovox iVox & VisioVoice

Reviewed by Wayne LeFevre

Assistiveware

<http://www.assistiveware.com>

Van Speijkstraat 73-D
1057 GN Amsterdam
The Netherlands

fax: +31-20-6128266

email: info@assistiveware.com

Released: September 2006

Infovox iVox \$199 USD, € 219 Euro

VisioVoice including Infovox iVox \$/€ 249

Requirements: Infovox iVox runs on Mac OS X 10.3.9 and higher. Mac OS X 10.4 or higher is recommended for optimum performance.

Strengths: The Acapela group voices used by Infovox iVox are some of the best synthesized voices I've heard. They are as natural sounding as you can get in a synthesized voice.

Weaknesses: Infovox iVox is terribly complex to register if you purchase the CD. You have to send them the code off the CD, and they will send you the "real" license through e-mail! The voices do the best they can with today's technology being the only holdback.

Infovox iVox

It all starts with the Infovox iVox. While not an application by it's own right, it actually provides the voices that is used. It's main function, really, is to install the voices used and process the licensing of those voices. There are two main qualities of voices used for the available languages. The first is HD, which uses a high density sampler for quick work that can take advantage of pitch, but isn't very natural sounding. HQ is for high quality that cannot change pitch, but sounds very, very natural sounding.

Once installed, the iVox voices become available for use in every standard Mac application. The languages available are: Dutch, English, Flemish, French, German, Italian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Spanish and Swedish. The love languages are particularly fluent and sound great!

You can select one of the iVox voices as your default system voice in the Text to Speech tab of the System Preferences' Speech pane. The Infovox iVox voices can also be used with Apple's VoiceOver screen reader for people with low vision, or as we are about to find out, VisioVoice.



Infovox iVox was developed by Acapela Group in collaboration with AssistiveWare. AssistiveWare provides the worldwide distribution of Infovox iVox.

VisioVoice

VisioVoice® is an application that enhances access to Mac OS X for blind and vision-impaired users. It adds multilingual support to Apple's excellent VoiceOver screen reader technology for a number of languages, as well as providing several other speech and vision-related features to enhance access to Mac OS X. VisioVoice comes bundled with Infovox iVox, but you can get Infovox iVox separately from VisioVoice.

There are many things that VisioVoice can assist with, and you can set it up all depending on your disability and what you would like to do with the program. In the Configuration Wizard, you may select to use VisioVoice as a text reader by a sighted person, use with VoiceOver by a blind person, and use without VoiceOver by a vision impaired person. You can always use the preferences to change exactly the way you want it to behave.

VisioVoice has two text readers. One for reading documents and one for reading the selection. By reading documents, you can open from VisioVoice any Word, HTML, PDF, RTF, or text document. This will extract the text into VisioVoice's Reader, where you can Play, Rewind and Fast Forward as well as Stop and pause. The text being read will be highlighted as it reads along. There is no save function, however, in this window. You can though export the audio and save the speech as respectively and uncompressed AIFF file or as an iTunes track. You can read just a selection, if "Enable access for assistive devices" is turned on in the Universal Access panel of the System Preferences.

Vision Impairment Functions

VisioVoice has a number of features geared towards people with various degrees of vision impairments. It comes with an Image Enlarger, a Text Enlarger, a Talking Interface preference and large cursors. The Image Enlarger provides a zoomed view of the area around the cursor. The Text Enlarger shows a magnified view of the title or text of the interface element below the cursor or the focused interface element. When Talking Interface is on VisioVoice will speak the text associated with the interface element below the cursor or the focused interface element in case full keyboard access is used. In the Voice tab of the VisioVoice preferences you can indicate whether the interface element type should be spoken, whether VisioVoice should only speak when one or modifier keys are down (handy when you do not need the speech feedback all the time) and set a delay before VisioVoice should speak (so that it won't speak if you just move over an element. Options for the Enlarged Cursor can either be a region or a box that the Image Enlarger will show. There is the Target, which is like looking through a Scope, and there is the Cross-hair, the big + sign.

Summary

Though I don't have much of a sight disability, yet, that can't be corrected by glasses, I am glad that there is software out there that does what this combination can. The voices from Infovox iVox are top of the line, and VisioVoice brings them all together. Although a little pricey for play, it is well worth it for those who it is intended for.

Encyclopedia Britannica 2007 Deluxe DVD

Reviewed by Mike Hubbartt



<http://www.store.britannica.com> or

<http://www.avanquestusa.com>

\$29.95 USD

Requirements: Mac OS 10.4.X; PowerPC or Intel processor; 512 MB RAM; 1.7 to 2.3 GB drive space; DVD-ROM or CD-ROM

Strengths: Updated content, tons of good online reference material, very reasonable price.

Weaknesses: Does not locate/replace earlier versions of the encyclopedia.

Encyclopedia Britannica has been around a long time. The printed versions cost quite a bit, but helped many a student through rough homework assignments. When the encyclopedia finally made it to the computer, it was clear it found the appropriate market for the material. Reference materials need regular updates, and the high costs of reprinting are avoided when the distribution media are CDs or DVDs. The new Encyclopedia Britannica for 2007 is \$29.95 on CD and \$39.95 on DVD, a true bargain compared to \$1395 for a printed set of the encyclopedia.

Older versions of the encyclopedia are nice, but writers need current research information so it was easy to justify the expense to pick up the 2007 Deluxe DVD edition. Installing Britannica 2007 was simple, however it did not look for an earlier version to remove or install over – a minor inconvenience but worth mentioning for those with limited hard drive space. The 2007 DVD version has 82,000+ articles, 166,000+ magazine and web links, 700+ video clips, and includes Merriam-Webster's Dictionary and Thesaurus. Writers, fiction or non-fiction, will appreciate the Atlas and Time line charts.

The only issue I had was after going to the Explore main page to watch some of the videos and noticed a probable mistake. Under the title for the page (Explore), the text was "Take an exhilarating ride through media, country statistics, classic Britannica articles, and our coverage of the events of 2005". 2005 for the 2007 product? Granted I bought the product in the fall of 2006, but shouldn't a reference product for 2007 have 2006 titles?

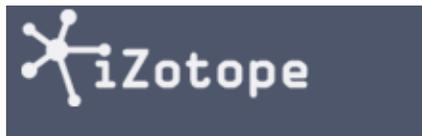
Conclusion I will continue to update to the newest version of this application each year, and recommend others do as well. It is reasonably priced and packed with valuable and reliable data.

Recommendation: At this price, a good buy.



iDrum

Reviewed by Daphne Kalfon



<http://www.izotope.com/company/contact.html>

<http://www.izotope.com>

<http://www.izotope.com/products/audio/idrum/>

\$69.99 US, \$80.00 CAD, £35.00 GBP, €52.50 Euro

iDrum can be downloaded from the company website here:

<http://www.izotope.com/products/audio/idrum/download.asp>

However, without authorization (i.e. purchase), the program will only function for 10 days.

iDrum is a drum machine/virtual instrument for your Mac. It can be used either standalone or as a plug-in within the host program of your choice, be it GarageBand, Logic, Pro Tools or Ableton Live.

Requirements: OS X 10.3.9 or later. Universal Binary.

Strengths: powerful, versatile program, high quality sounds, endless possibilities for creativity and variation of drum kits and samples.

Weaknesses: navigation could use some improvement.



Soapbox – the copy protection protocols that are integrated into the installation process only serve to unnecessarily annoy the people who actually intend to legally use the product. For those who intend not to - as the expression goes, “if there is a will, there is a way” - they will find a way around those protections. As a result, the whole installation process was very “geek” oriented and confusing in all the various steps that were required to have it authorized and installed, and not artist/creative friendly at all.

Also, iDrum used to be owned by a company called Glaresoft. If you previously were running the Glaresoft iDrum, then when you install the Izotope one, it will not copy over the files from the Glaresoft version into your Izotope version. This was the case for me as I was previously using a Glaresoft version, so after I had installed the newer version from Izotope, I realized that I might have inadvertently done some damage to one of my songs that I had used iDrum in. Well, I opened my GarageBand project and listened to the song, and the iDrum track was indeed no longer the same. Panic!!

What I had to do was do a spotlight search for iDrum, which showed me where the Glaresoft original folder was with the patches that I had used in that song, and bring those presets from that folder into the folder of presets in the new program so that it could find them. Once I did that, my song sounded fine again, with my iDrum track restored to the patches I had originally chosen. That was a relief, but not explained anywhere I could see during the installation process.

Whereas GB has a way of allowing you to choose which jumpack you want to work with, iDrum doesn't have that easy differentiation between the kits in regards to the XRB kits vs. the iDrum kits. After scrolling through them all and looking them over several times, the one thing that defined one set from the other was that for the loops/kits in the XRB library, there was a number (representing the loop's default tempo) and the letters "bpm" (beats per minute) preceding the name of the loop, while the iDrum loops each had names followed by a number which indicates the preset tempo for that loop.

The built-in "help" section explains what all the various controls on the iDrum interface do and how to go about accomplishing what you want to do with iDrum, and goes into more detail on various concepts for those who wish to delve deeper.

It found it to be generally quite helpful, although for those who are entirely new to iDrum, at times it assumes a little bit too much "prior knowledge" on the part of the new user.

Lets look at a few key features of iDrum. The interface is made up of what are called "channels", each representing a different sound in the chosen kit. You can physically move around the various channels that make up the iDrum interface, which is handy if you want to arrange certain sounds in a certain order.

If you click on the actual name of the drum sound on each channel, you can view the entire list of sounds to which you can change that sound. There's also an up and down arrow button which allows you to simply choose one after the other, and there is also a little file button which when you click on it, brings up a window which allows you to not only see the sounds, but to also choose, if you wish, a sound from a different folder of sounds. In the iDrum folder, you can choose between different samples/sounds such as hi-hat, kick, percussion and snare.

There's also a sample folder called "aM samples", which if you open it, also gives you a wide range of choices to choose from in each folder of hats, kicks, percussion and snares. The most recent addition to iDrum is the XRB library which allows you to choose from claps, cymbals, sound fx, percussion fx, hi-hat, hi-hat open, kicks, percussion, snares and toms.

Navigating around to find the individual samples for the XRB and iDrum libraries was not exactly straightforward, so I would say that finding one's way around was a little hard to get used to at first.

All of these choices mean that you can completely customize your drum kit to whatever sounds you choose, and editing them in all kinds of way, within iDrum.

Clicking on the little forward arrow to the left of the sound name allows you to instantly listen to the sound you have just chosen. As well, you can either mute or solo each individual channel of iDrum. There is also a pan dial and volume slider for each track, plus you can physically go in and adjust the volume where it shows in the individual sections or “steps” to the right, of which there are 16.

“Slave to host” allows iDrum to be controlled by the transports in GB and to play at whatever tempo is set in GB. Changing the tempo in GB results in a corresponding tempo change in iDrum, for example.

The “midi drag” feature is really cool – it allows you to bring your drum loop from iDrum, directly into your GB project, and from there, now that it has been turned into midi, you can edit its component parts in edit mode just as you would anything else midi that you’ve recorded in GB.

Speaking of drum loops, in addition to individual sounds, iDrum comes with lots of drum loops as well. There are iDrum drum loops and XRB drum loops. I was very impressed with the sound quality of the XRB library as these drum loops are much larger in size than the iDrum kits.

The preset tempos for each drum loop can be changed by clicking and holding on the little “tempo” window in iDrum and dragging upwards or downwards.

Each drum loop comes with a preset number of patterns which, using the “pattern” window, you can scroll through and listen as the drum loop plays in iDrum. If you have “song mode” chosen, iDrum will arrange the patterns in a way that are suitable for use in a song, and you can drag and drop these patterns into your GB arrangement in whichever order you like, to suit your song.

If you create a drum loop you really like, you can save it and then you’ll have it as your own preset that you can use again some other time in perhaps a future project – allowing you to build on the loops iDrum came with, and create a library all your own.

There’s still a lot more to iDrum than I can cover here, but these are the main features to keep in mind if you are considering getting iDrum.

Altogether I would say that iDrum is an extremely versatile and powerful program and I would highly recommend it to anyone who wants to add to their drum arsenal in terms of samples, kits, and many hours of creative fun.

Kid Pix Deluxe 3X 1.1

Reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad



Developer: Software MacKiev

Publisher's Website:

http://www.mackiev.com/kp_key_features.html

Support: Via a Technical Support Request to MacKiev or info@mackiev.com

\$40 USD

Requirements: Mac OS X 10.1.5 or later, including 10.4 Tiger, universal binary, G3-266 MHz or faster.

Release Date: July 12, 2006 Download Size: 11.1 MB

Audience: All user levels, but aimed at kids and kids at heart

Strengths — An almost perfect interface, adaptable to both pre-school crowd and those who can read. Flexible and easy to use tools allow you to draw, paint from scratch or mess images you download or have stored on your hard disk.

Weaknesses — Why has the port to OS X and now Tiger taken so long? I discovered this product when I was using a Performa 6300 or perhaps earlier system.

The software was tested on a 1 GHz dual processor PowerPC G4 Macintosh with 2 GB DDR SDRAM running under OS X 10.4.8.

Product and company names and logos in this review may be registered trademarks of their respective companies.



Software Overview

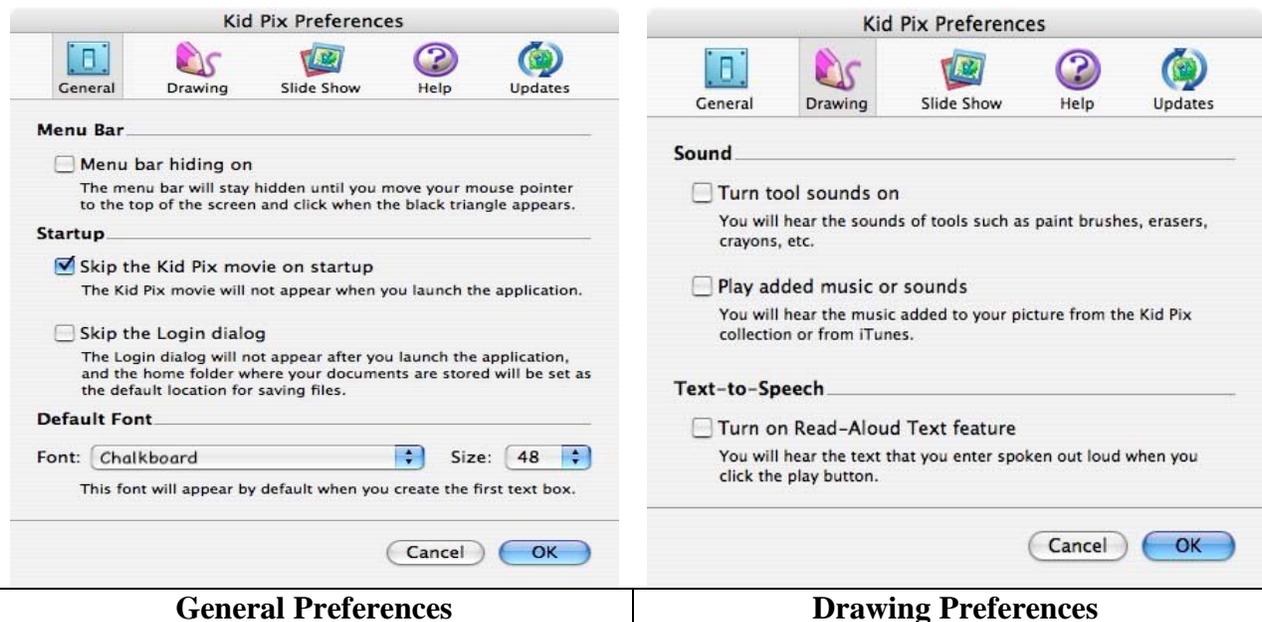
You'll be amazed at what your kid can create with this all-new Mac OS X edition of Kid Pix Deluxe 3 for Mac OS X created by Software MacKiev. Tightly integrated with Apple's iLife, this all-new Kid Pix edition makes it easy to put together animated projects with music imported from your iTunes playlists and backgrounds brought in from your iPhoto albums. Kid Pix Deluxe 3X is a full featured creative suite for kids (and wannabe kids) that allows them to use their creativity on the Mac to create artwork. The best thing about Kid Pix is that it makes it really fun to design. Tools can have different sounds, and there are a ton of pre-installed stamps, sounds, backgrounds and more.

Introduction

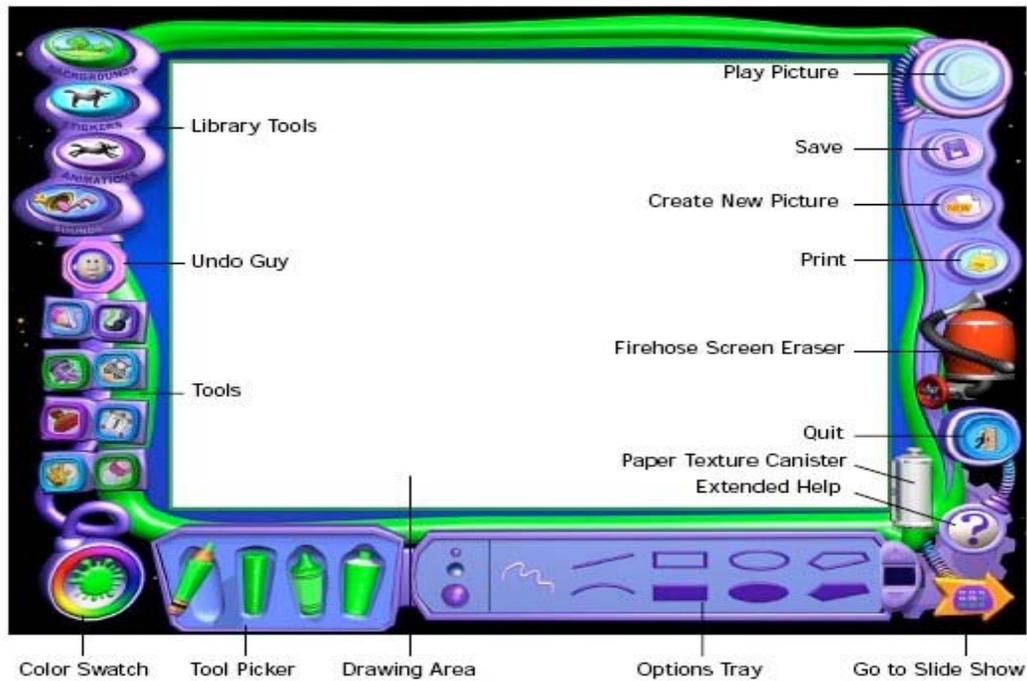
Years ago in the late 80's, for use on an earlier Macintosh, I'd purchased a copy of Broderbund's Kid Pix. My grandson (in elementary school) and his mother loved it, despite the clumsy interface and frazzled dot matrix printer output. Several months ago, I had a chance to work with another MacKiev product, and working with the graphics features of Print Shop 2.0.4 reminded me how much fun it was to use Kid Pix, hence this review.

Working With

Installing this application is simple. Open its .dmg, and drag it to your applications folder. I suggest that depending on the age of the user, you tweak the preferences to their most useful settings for a given user.

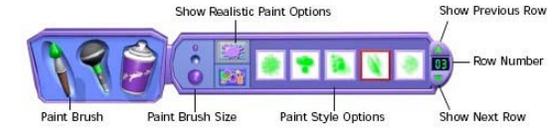


Okay, you've installed the software, told the product your name, so it can keep track of you and your preferences, and your ready to make great "art" or just generally have fun designing cute – interesting – weird – useful and otherwise fun graphics. Here's the interface.



There's a great 80 page Kid Pix User Guide with a hyper linked extensive index for grownups, and this lets you find those things your kid want to do, that you can't figure intuitively. There is no manual for young children, but they won't need one. As noted by Paul Vaughn [http://www.mackiev.com/kp_reviews/kp_expressnews.html] "Pop-up tool tips and kid-friendly audio coaching will have users fluent in no time. For younger children there is a Small Kids Mode that is even simpler."

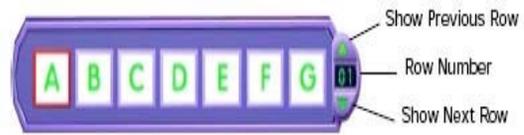
And it's all easy since the Kid Pix package provides you with:

<p>2200+ Stamp images – Stamp away to enhance your picture</p> 	<p>700+ Background images - There's no moonscape or did I miss it? Then there's all the pictures you've downloaded or stored in iPhoto to use in either the background or foreground</p> 
<p>900+ Sticker images – They float over your creation. These are like the ones I used to put on my guitar case so folks would know where I rambled.</p>	<p>100+ Ambient sounds and music clips – A must for those who don't turn the sound off. You can also cherry pick your iTunes Collection, but first need to import an audio clip into iTunes to access it.</p>  <p>Paintbrush Tools</p>
<p>26 Custom fonts – I wonder where these are hidden? Never the less, all the 287 fonts I have installed on my hard disk were available to me. [...Such abundance!]</p>	<p>100+ Animated images – Yuck, but the kids love these!</p>

The Program Grows With You — Use menus or keyboard shortcuts, the program grows with you. There are lots of sophisticated graphic effects that one can grow into, since trial and error is so easy that there no penalty for just fooling around... after all Picasso had to start somewhere.

Have your Text Read, Aloud — Even my dead ears could understand what the computer said, but I had all the background music turned off. I did not test the read tome feature with background music activated. But it's a great feature for preliterate kids who can play with the stamps and brushes while ignoring the text features.

Typing and Spell Checking Text — The product is child friendly, and can be set for readers or nonreaders using the Alphabet Text Tool with the mouse, one letter at a time. For young readers (or the rest of us), work from the keyboard. And for people like me who can't spell or type, there's a Spelling Checker. [When Kid Pix checks spelling, it checks all the text boxes in the drawing area. You cannot check the spelling of rubber stamps, but who wants to – the developer spelled stamp imbedded words correctly.]



The Rest of the Story — As I was working with the product, I came across a number of features I had no interest in and therefore did not test. These are listed in the next section. However, their presence in this program makes me suspect something diabolical is going on at MacKiev. A vast conspiracy is at work. This product is not only for young kids, or bright and Mac-centric teenagers, but is also aimed subliminally at grownups. Grownups who aren't ashamed to admit they can have more fun easily creating graphics that please than they can when using the usual Adobe products.

Other Package Features

The MacKiev product has all the creative functionality one would expect. It allows you to select from an array of art mediums (paint, watercolor, airbrush, pencil, crayon, marker, chalk, etc.). You can use various techniques to create a finished look to your creation that range from (pasting on stickers, adding a bit of diversity by using the provided stamps, getting truly bizarre by mixing typefaces, and more.).

In addition, the software can add special effects (animate, smudge, smear, warp twist, etc.) for a wacky look, use the hints feature to suggest ideas, change image backgrounds — all of which to help get creative juices flowing, whether your 6 to 60 or 90.

The following up features serve to enhance the product. I had no use for these therefore did not test them.

Sound Art — Paint using the sound of your voice. – No I did not test this; I had enough of lights and sound during the 60's.

Integration with iPod® Video — Kid Pix projects can now be exported in iPod Video format! The video file will be automatically placed in a Kid Pix Videos playlist folder in iTunes. Just drag it to your iPod and play!

Import from GarageBand — Create your own music for Kid Pix projects! Make a sound track in GarageBand and then import it directly into Kid Pix.

Enhanced integration with iLife — Choose between the legacy iMovie® and modern iMovie HD formats when exporting to iMovie - great for iLife'05 and iLife'06 users! You can also browse folders that you've made in your iTunes and iPhoto® libraries!

Strengthened Slide Show Options — With the new Loop (Play Continuously) option, you can have Slide Show projects play continuously until you stop them. Another new feature allows you to make Slide Show projects advance to the next slide after the sound attached to the current slide finishes playing.

Minor Discomforts

No Samples on the Web Page – For adults who are getting their youngsters an introduction to Kid Pix, a representative set of examples would have been helpful.

Saving Modified Customized Rubber Stamps — Couldn't find information on whether or how you could keep an edited rubber stand image for future use. All I could find was *Click Undo/Redo to undo or redo your last action, or click Restore Original to go back to the original stamp view.*

Integration with MacKiev's Printshop — I could figure out whether or how I could access the Printshop graphics and stamps and graphics for use with Kid Pix, and didn't have time to do a side-by-side comparison.

Conclusion

The good news – Kid Pix is the number one children's drawing program I've worked (or played) with on my Macintosh. Its full complement of painting and drawing tools, including pencils, chalks, and paintbrushes to use to create your own artwork from scratch or to modify the included graphics to your liking. Your creativity is not limited by the graphics MacKiev provides - you can import any image on your computer and use it as the start of a project.

As Dr Bob "Dr. Mac" LeVitus pointed out in his review "Kid Pix Deluxe 3X is aimed at young folks (ages four and over, according to the box), but it's so clever, cute, fun, and addictive that even older folks will truly enjoy it. ... I have spent way more time than necessary with this version of Kid Pix, and it's not just so I could review it. I keep launching it because it's just so darned much fun. If you have a kid who is at least four years old (or even if you don't), I can't think of another program that provides this much enjoyment."

http://www.mackiev.com/kp_reviews/kp_houston.html/.

The Bad News – I keep finding new reasons not to use my new Photoshop Elements 4.0 or other higher-end graphics creation tools. I wish Adobe Photoshop elements had some of these drawing tools; I might use it more often and even learn to become expert at the product.

Addendum

There is a Windows Version Kid Pix 4.0 available to PC users, but I am at a loss to know who is the current developer. Originally the product was developed and supported by Broderbund, but now it seems as if its been passed to Riverdeep, which released it under the moniker, "Kid Pix Deluxe 4 for Schools". http://www.riverdeep.net/products/kid_pix/kpd4.jhtml

A reviewer who installed both of these versions on my Mac to see which one he wanted to install throughout his elementary school's computer lab. In my opinion, the MacKiev version is a much better buy - don't be fooled by the fact that it is called KP 3 as opposed to Riverdeep's KP 4. [Source: Wednesday, October 20 2004; <http://www.yourmaclife.com/article.php/20041020075147798/print>.



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MindManager 6.0 and 6.0.490

Get organized by easily mapping the things you need to do, flying solo or with a team

Reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad



Mindjet, Inc

<http://www.mindjet.com/uk/>

Support: Online via the Mindjet Service-Center.

\$229 List, \$190 Street, \$130 Academic USD, List £149 GBP

Released: 27 November 2006

Download Size: 41.0 MB



Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4.x Tiger or greater, universal binary. Recommended: G4, G5 with 1.25 GHz or greater or Intel Core Duo 1.67 GHz or greater. There is also a PC version; the file types between the two platforms are compatible.

The product comes with a free program called MindManager Viewer that allows others to read maps, despite not having the MindManager software.

Audience: Anyone interested in quickly and painlessly organizing complex projects, reports or activities in a manner that is visually clear and understandable to all who work with you.

Strength — A clean easy to use interface that has you producing useful Maps in hardly any time at all.

Weakness — Lack of a formal manual and advanced tutorials will slow down your ability to take full advantage of this full-featured product.

The software was tested on a 1 GHz dual processor PowerPC G4 Macintosh with 2 GB DDR SDRAM running under OS X 10.4.8. Product and company names and logos in this review may be registered trademarks of their respective companies.

Overview From Jeffery Battersby's September 25, 2006 MacWorld Review: "MindManager 6.0.4 Mac is a visual organizational tool that you can use to collect and organize—or web—a variety of ideas that may have a single obvious theme, but that may not have obvious, direct relationships to each other. Similar to NovaMind Software's NovaMind, MindManager allows you to sequence complex ideas into an easily understandable form and gives you the ability to link documents, images, timelines, and organizational charts to your idea maps, making a range of information available in a single document.

“MindManager 6 is the Mac version of a product that’s been available on Windows for about 12 years. Rather than doing a straight port from the Windows version to the Mac, Mindjet built a brand new application, paying strict attention to Apple’s design guidelines, making MindManager feel as familiar as Apple’s Pages and Keynote.”

<http://www.macworld.com/2006/09/reviews/mindmanager6/index.php>

Introduction

Over the last several years I’ve tested a number of brainstorming (e.g., mind mapping programs for macC. These included: Inspiration 7.5, now X 8.0 [\$69.00 USD] a project development planning and management tool for business which can be used to brainstorm; and NovaMind 2.4.4, now 3.2.6 [\$99.00 USD], which is a key tool used to conduct and record the outcomes of brainstorming sessions.

I’ve also looked at, but not formally reviewed, ConceptDraw MINDMAP 4.5 [\$119USD], a tool for brainstorming, mind mapping and visual thinking best used for documenting ideas, making decisions and planning projects. [There are also many PC tools available for this purpose.]

Mind Mapping, Duh — If you’re not sure you know what mind mapping or brainstorming are check out their Wikipedia descriptions. As you dive into brainstorming and mind mapping you need to remember that *a map is not the same as the territory it represents*. It is a way to better visualize the details of some of the important groups of trees without getting lost in the forest.

You can think of a mind map as sort of a two-dimensional outline of ... whatever. You start from a central topic or theme and start adding (pasting) subsidiary topics around it where they occur to you, gradually building up a network of ideas.

As mind mapping gurus often note, when you start mapping, you don't have to have the full structure of the information in your head. You can just get ideas down on screen as they occur to you and see how they all fit together. At the end of a session, you cleanup inputs by tossing those that don't.

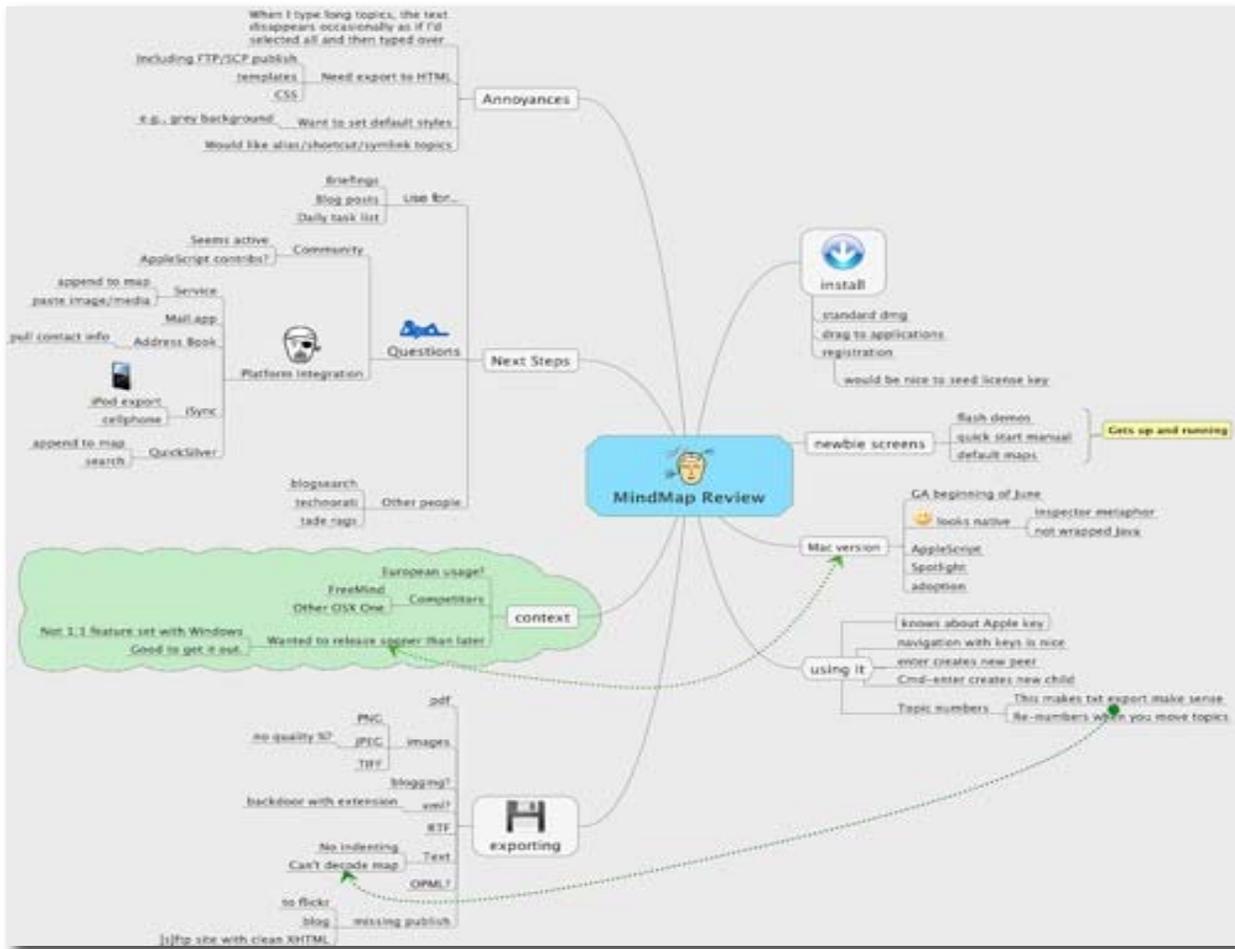
Back in the pre-PC days we did this with colored PostIt notes on a white or blackboard. Why PostIt notes, you ask? So we can move thing around easier.

As your map evolves you can highlight critical parts in colors or by changing font, add icons and images to help you visualize what’s going on. Then on your computer, annotate the topics and subtopics with notes, links or attachments containing additional supporting information. All of this helps you keep track of what's going on in your project and to provoke added refinement to the ideas in your head.

Looking Backwards, Mind Mapping and Me — I've over the years, had to plan complex events; sometimes not associated with my professional work. At work, planning, mostly of R&D projects or plant implementation of chemical process and flowsheet development efforts, we used the PERT software mandated by our IT types, all of who were PC or mainframe addicts.

In my volunteer work, neither the software nor incentives existed in our organizations to use such "complex" planning tools. Although to generate ideas, we did hold brainstorming meetings. Information capture and even draft in-meeting documentation were done with a combination of flip charts, PostIt notes and PC based word processing using MS Word's outline feature.

For my own volunteer efforts, well before I discovered MindManager, I stumbled along using outliners. I'd tried the products mentioned above but they were not intuitive, and therefore comfortable to use. This was especially true on the rare occasions I need a combination brainstorming and planning tool. I decided to give the product a try after I checked out MindManager 6, read the publisher's description and a bit of what others were saying about the product.



As an Aside — I actually found this map on the Internet that illustrated Cote’s mapping of his own MindManager Review. Cote is using MindManager’s graphics feature and isolating parts of his map by using the product’s boundary feature — The green cloud.
[http://www.redmonk.com/cote/archives/2006/06/mindjets_mindma.html]

Testing MindManager

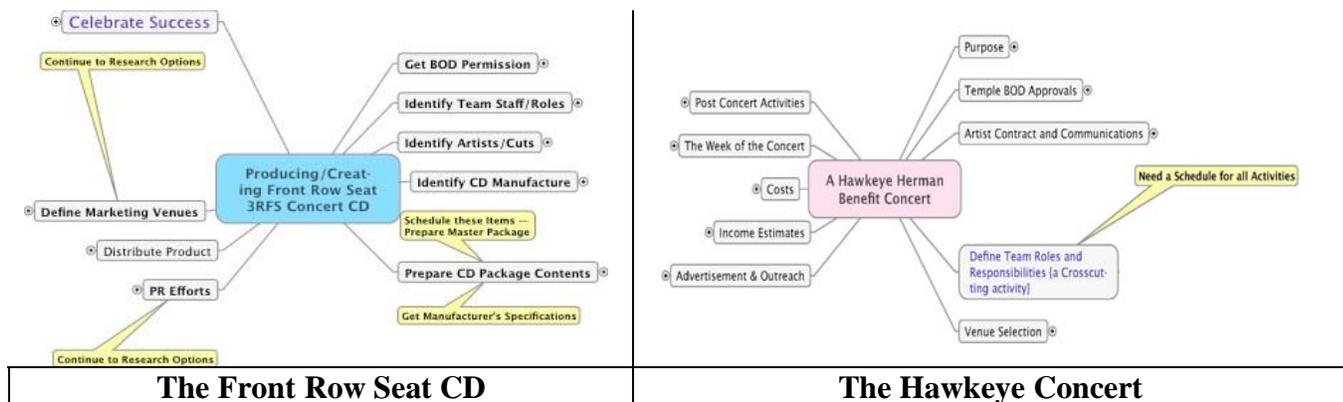
I’ve been playing around with the product over the last week or so and enjoying the experience more than with other *comparable* products. Mind mapping - brainstorming provides me a great means for capturing and then organizing my specific-project oriented thinking. It allows me to establish relationships between parts, actions needed, implementation alternatives or to-dos. This is especially valuable for someone like me who suffers from (actually I rejoice in) “non-linear reasoning.”

Testing, Testing One-Two — My focus in the review details that follow is on how an individual or very small team *could* have used the product to plan two activities; a releasing a CD set and a community concert. Specifically to: [1] Create a guide on how to produce a 2 CD Concert Sampler for the 3 Rivers Folklife Society; as a fundraiser for our annual music festival; and [2] Map the process and constraints for producing a Community Concert as a fund raiser for my Synagogue featuring a talented and well know blues-singer and educator.

I have based my two MindManager test mapping exercises on the meeting minutes, notes and other data [To-Dos] I colleted during the planning and implementation efforts for these two projects. In both instances I’m using my lessons learned and post mortem notes as a surrogate for the results of actual team brainstorming inputs, which didn’t occur. [All results in the maps are 20-20 hindsights.]

Both of these projects, completed earlier this year, were, for me, a first of a kind effort. The usual volunteers in both organizations – are folks who typically were all busy with other earlier due-date projects. They provided email feedback and telephone support as they could. However, like most volunteers, they were saturated. So I had to come up to speed fast – there was no one to pass the buck to. [This is not a dig at the support I got, it’s as you who volunteer know, just the state of our universe. Folks who actually volunteer effectively are always saturated.]

The Project Results — Both projects were a success but with some picky reservations on my part. The concert was profitable but with lower income than we’d projected, and the CDs were created on time, under cost, and with great sound. But, in a typical oversight, we hadn’t figured out in advance how best to market 1,000 of them. [The low break-even point meant that selling fewer than the number printed would keep our risk low.]



With better planning using brainstorming techniques and tools to capture the results, we might not have had as many surprises and might have somewhat improved the outcome. But then I used to believe in the tooth fairy, a real silver dollar under my pillow, would you believe – three if I used the doorknob and string trick to pop the loose tooth.

In any case, had I had the software when I planned the two events, I certainly would have had a way to present complex concepts in a visual form—an aide when presenting information to time rushed boards of directors.

Working With

Installing this application is simple. Open its .dmg, and drag it you're your applications folder and follow instructions. Spend a few minutes with the tutorial, read quick start guide. You might even review the benefits of "mapping" found on the vendor's webpage.

The tutorial and quick start guides are accessible from the MindManager 6 start-up dialog. You can kill this dialog, when it no longer serves your purpose. Then you're ready to start using the product.

Implicit in the MindManager metaphor is that you are going to plan something, a project, a day, an organizational structure, a book chapter, a detailed lesson plan or an audio blog. 'S wonderful, notice that all of these items are projects, stuff you want to do.

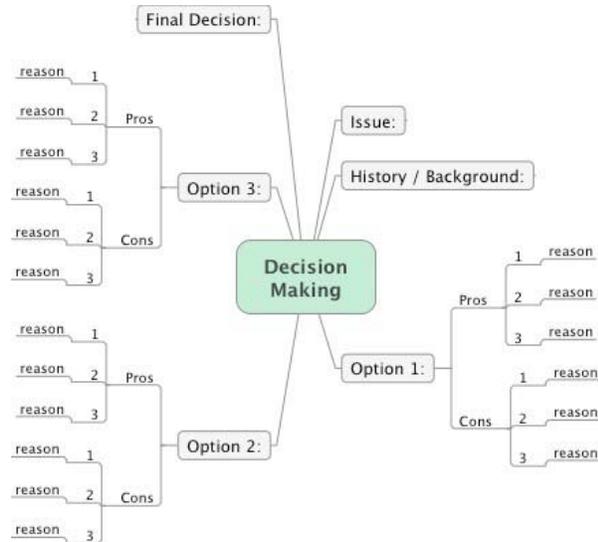
Why not just jump in and work with the MindManager software, as Macintosh users so usually do? My reasoning: brainstorming and mind mapping including detailed planning are conceptually different from the tools most of us usually work with. Soft software is also more complex than the shareware we install to enhance our computing experiences. I've always assumed that I could grab any non-graphics related program and jump in running... but hours later, frustrated as hell, I was often back to the help files or manual to learn programs with different functions than I normally use.

Advice — For this product, despite its smooth and well thought out interface, take a minute or three to learn a bit more before starting to work on your own projects, especially if you have a deadline to meet. [Enough preaching doc...!]

Working with the product is easy, especially if one of the templates Mindjet provides meets your needs. MindManager ships with seven pre-defined templates. In addition to having access to a blank map, you can create a company organizational structure or create its organization chart, work on decision making needed to be successful in a project. You can outline the contents and layout the scope of a meeting, or formulate a resume. You can even set up ToDo lists or create a week at a glance to let you project your up coming activities.

In order to speed up my learning of dealing with subsets and links, I actually used the generic decision making template provided, but did not use it for avowed titled purpose. Although the templates was not focused at the focus of the project needed to map, using it saved me time by avoiding the need to manually set up nested subtopics.

The strength of the program, as Jeffery Battersby noted in Macworld, “is really unleashed when you start with a completely blank document and let the ideas roll out of your head and onto the page. Hitting the return key creates new sub-topics from the main topic. Holding down the Command key while pressing return creates a new sub-topic from the currently selected sub-topic, making it easy to let the ideas flow. This is similar to features found in other mind-mapping programs, which often have hot keys for creating new topics and sub-topics.”



Your main idea (focus) is written in the center of the map. Supporting items (ideas) are added to your map around the main idea, in a clockwise fashion.

After you capture the first level of details (subtopics), you can subdivide each item further, add links related to them to the Internet, or link to folders or documents containing supporting documentation for that part (task) of the project. A second subtopic set that supports the named project plan associated with more in-depth particulars can then be added. It’s all about documenting (mapping) what you have to know before you can go much further with your project.



Think about it – who does what to whom when always applies to projects. Obviously each of the subtopics to your top-level map can generate as many new maps as needed, allowing greater details — each with its own subtopics.

No this is not perpetual mouse motion or a Parkinsonian effect. [See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parkinsons_law.] You’re supposed to stop adding layers or peripheral details when you have enough to get on with the job.

The Balance Map Tool — When I was done laying out the maps, I used the Balance Map to automatically distribute topics to visually balance your map — pretty-pretty neat. I also found the Fit Map function useful when working. It allowed me to save mousing time by instantly resizing my map to fit my main screen window. I thereby required navigation screen movements as I worked my way around the various subtopics and their subtopics.

Exporting and Sharing — Once you've created your map, as Jeffery Battersby further noted in his Macworld review, "you can easily share it by exporting it as a PDF, JPG, TIFF, or PNG file. Or, you can export the entire map in outline form, including all your notes, as text.

Better yet, Mindjet MindManager® Viewer 6 is free software [14.5 MB] that enables you to easily view MindManager maps on your desktop. Navigate through the map by expanding and contracting branches, zooming in and out, and searching for specific words or icons. You can even follow hyperlinks to related content. It is available on the Mindjet website under downloads.

Details-Details-Details — No I'm not going to bore you to tears with details. [My editor won't let me.] The level one results from my work are show below. My completed full three-level details are provided at the end of this article. It is important to note that had I had more time I could have more fully integrated all of my copious notes, into these maps, or at least abstracted the details. The might have constituted a fourth level of detail.

I could have also established some scheduling details. That would have been initially difficult because it's not what I was concentrating on as I learned to use the program.

Review Limitations

I have not yet become comfortable with using map markers, relationship lines, or boundaries, nor with all of the parts of the *Task Information* pallet. Using timeframes or some of the other elegant Inspector tools will take a little more practice. But with additional map I draw, I get more adventuresome and dig deeper into the software's features.

Other Package Features

Use Drag and Drop — Rearrange your maps by dragging and dropping Topics. [This feature on my slightly underpowered dual processor 1000 MHz G4 Macintosh was slower then I would have liked.]

Create Hyperlinks to Websites — Insert Hyperlinks to websites or files on your hard drive. You can link to any website, map, or file, including graphics, spreadsheets, documents.

Add Notes and More — Add notes and PDFs and more to your maps. This allows you to keep all your important information in a map for easy retrieval. A useful tool that enriches the MindManager interface w/o cluttering up you view of relationships.

Link to Attachments - Attach multiple files to a Topic. [What I tried worked well, especially for tying all of my working notes on the Hawkeye concert to my map.]

Search Function — Using Spotlight Find the information you are looking for fast! Topics and Notes within your maps are indexed by Mac OS X Tiger's built-in search utility, Spotlight. [*I hate the current implementation of spotlight so did not test this feature.*]

Inspector Function — Access a wide variety of tools for adding map markers, setting tasks, attaching files, adding hyperlinks, changing formatting, and much more in one convenient location. This pallet acts as an additional centralized location allow fast access for tools for putting the finishing touches or detailing on you map after you've completed a data (mind) dump of input.

Discomforts

Advanced User Tutorials Needed — Lack of samples of images of complex projects on website with supporting tutorial about the techniques used slow down the serious user.

Lack of a Manual – The MindManager 6 Mac Quick Start Guide, and the online tutorials/videos did not do much to allow me to rapidly become comfortable, at the beginner level, with this fine product. Since my needs went somewhat beyond beginner lever, this lack was even more of a disadvantage. However learning what I need to create my first test example, only took a few hours; amply helped by using the robust MindManager Help system.

Too few Templates — I would have like to see more that the eight starting templates [e.g., for project planning, risk analysis, lesson plans, writing complex articles (this review)]. Examples in which the map starts on the left hand side of the page would have been welcome. All of these are possible, but examples speed learning making for contented customers who spread the buzz.

Making a Book of Linked Maps — I could not determine whether I could link several maps to get to create a project book or to create layers of maps that expanded on a first-level product, to allow users to drill-down to get greater detail.

Lack of MS Office Compatibility — The PC version of the product is well integrated with the MS Office Suite. The Macintosh Version is not.

<p>Brook Stein, MindManager product manger shared that “Our Windows version has the ability to export to Word and PowerPoint, but unfortunately at this time our Mac version can not. On Office for Windows, there is a well documented API that allows us to pass information to Word or PowerPoint to be rendered and produce the export into those file formats for our Windows version of MindManager. On the Mac, there is no API for Office for Mac; hence this it is limitation that is not easily or safely overcome to produce the same exports. We are hopeful that the new <i>xml</i>-based MS Office file format will help us on the Mac side, as we are also <i>xml</i> based in our file format <i>.mmap</i> when the next version of Mac Office is released.”</p>
--

Conclusions

Mindjet's MindManager offers a simple to use – Macintosh compliant user interface tool for brainstorming and mapping everything from large projects to your holiday ToDo list. It is easy to start creating maps with which you can both organize your own thoughts and share ideas with others. The program is rich with powerful tools to help define details. It provides you the means to focus on what's important (ideas not documentation mechanics) when trying to layout a project.

As a side benefit allows you to gain clarity of thought as you work to plan complex ideas or tasks. You can indeed take credit for the logical and even attractive easy to understand (etc.) maps you crated, just don't tell others how much initial trial and error you need to get to that grrreat product. *You do remember from High School how much fun it was to ace exams without seeming to study.* This product has such a built in wow factor.

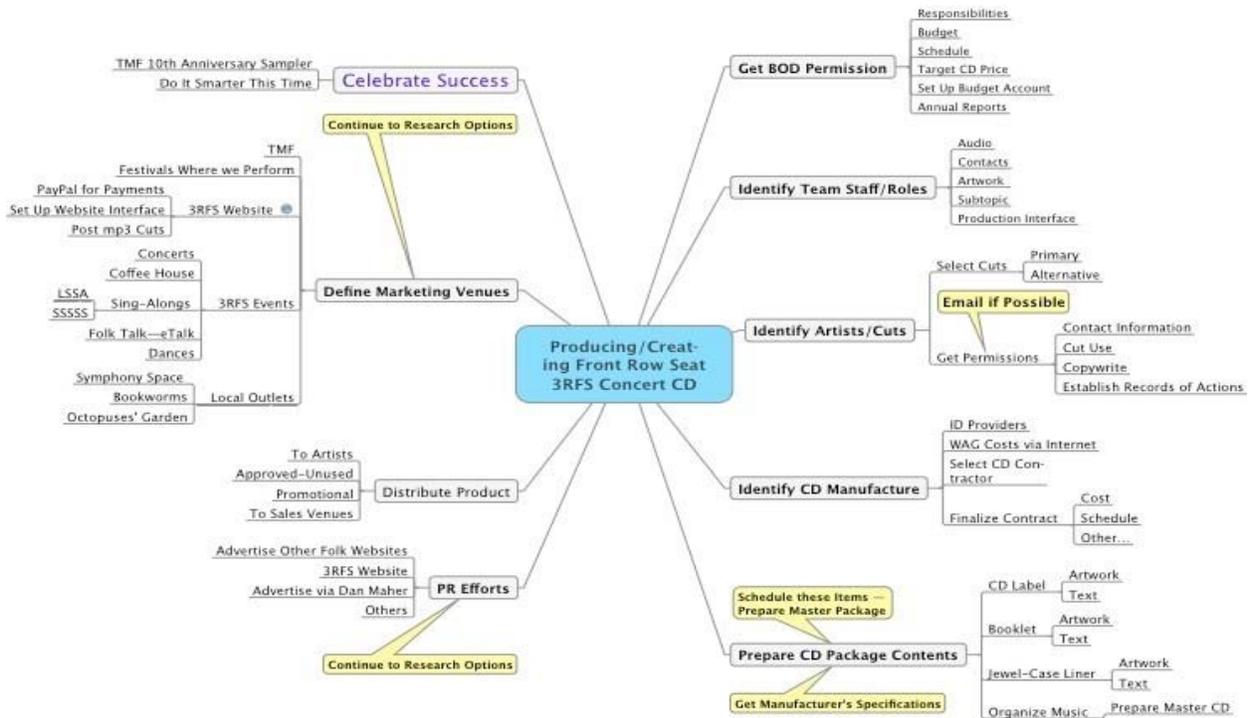
Don't be put off by the fact that the product is somewhat more expensive than some of its competitors. Its ease of use and lack of bugs will rapidly pay for the difference in cost, even at minimum wage.

None of the lacks I've pointed out in the preceding section are significant flaws. All but the compatibility with MS Office can and will likely be easily fixed by the developer. Although the other items I've listed above add to my discomfort with the product, once I got through my first stage learning, the program behaved flawlessly.

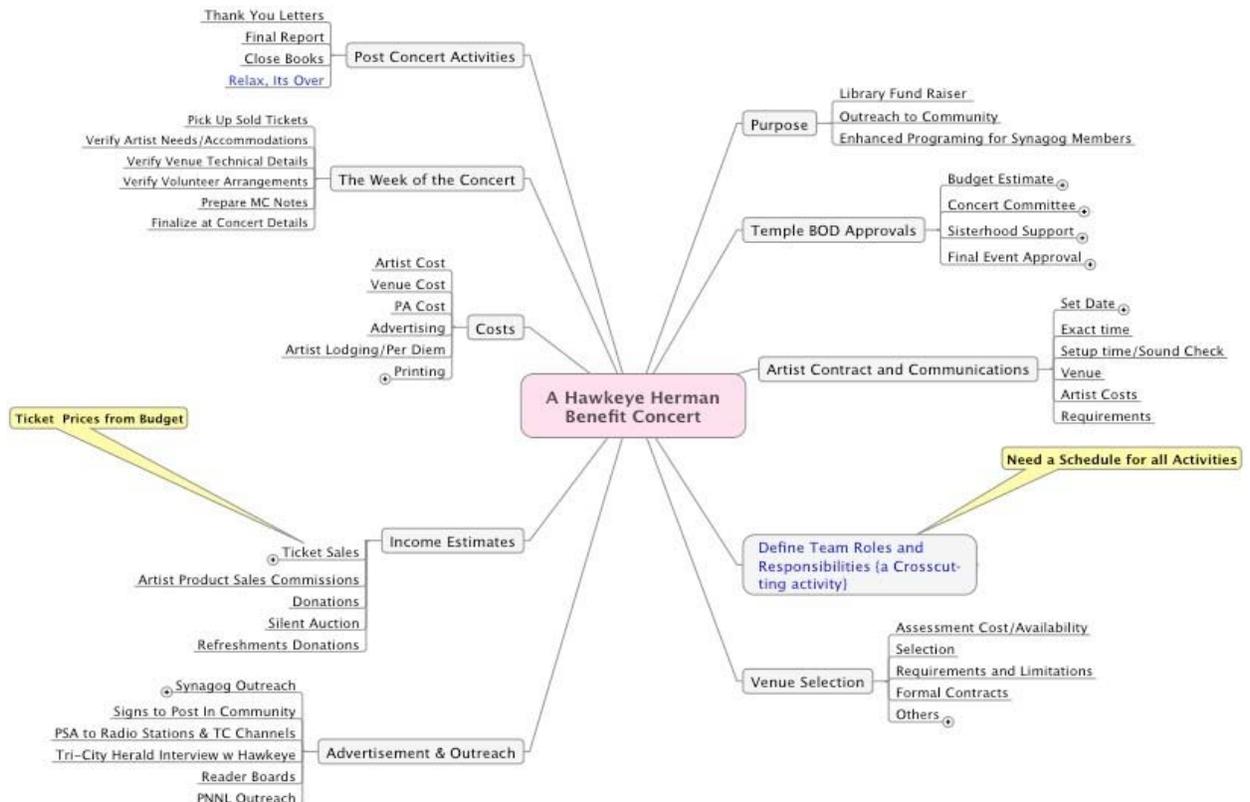
I've learned other programs quirky interfaces such as FileMaker Pro – so learning curve is not a unique MindManager problem. Once mastered – It doesn't take long, its easy to use to free your mind to focus on what's needed to make your project successful. Mindjet made this product, a wonderful and liberating tool – buy it, its well worth the money. I rate this product **4.0 macCs**.

PS

My maps in their *awesome* detail, at least at today's level of effort.



Planning The Front Row Seat CD – In 20-20 Hindsight



The Hawkeye Concert – It Really Did Work Out This Way

Starry Night Pro Version 6

Reviewed by Dr. Eric Flescher

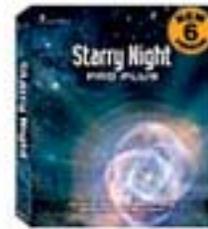
Imaginova Corporation
470 Park Avenue South
9th Floor
New York, NY 10016
212-703-5800

Fax: 212-703-5802

info@hq.space.com

<http://www.starrynight.com/>

Released: August 2006



\$150 USD, \$20 off Version 6 Upgrades

Novice/Intermediate/Advanced

Strengths: Extremely flexible with a wealth of features that can be used novice, intermediate and advanced users. Save your own sky chart setting files. Ability to take QuickTime movies of your work. Many features to customize your sky for viewing pleasure. The Finding Objects display can find and guide you to any one of millions of celestial objects. Update feature will upload (internet must be on) and integrates objects' coordinates for viewing at the right updated coordinates. Sky can be viewed in the past, present and future, so it can act as a time machine. Software has different grades for novice to more professional. All grades of the software can be updated. Anyone can try it out online before the time is up to pay.

Weaknesses: Labeling options are difficult to locate. The myriad of options can be overwhelming but learn about the options with the handbook and select the ones you want.

Viewing the heavens has mesmerized man since he first looked up at the night sky. Venturing to a planetarium or using one of the online website programs however allows astronomy buffs to “look at the stars” in a different way that can add perspective to your view of the universe. Budding astronomers can upgrade personal experiences by using astronomy software that simulates viewing of the heavens. These popular tools, for amateur astronomers and hobbyists, assist with viewing the Universe in different ways and allows for the observing the heavens in many ways not normally possible. There are many planetarium software programs on the market - commercial, shareware, freeware - and even some for PDAs. Some of these planetarium packages include a wide range of features, numerous multimedia applications and allow for a variety of user needs. Whether you are a novice, intermediate or advanced user, there are many good ones to try, but I recommend one of the versions of Starry Nights.

This review covers the Pro version 6 (a more advanced version is Pro Plus - essentially the next to the highest version). Pro version 6 comes with Skytheater CD, the Pro DVD-ROM, in dual versions: one for Windows- XP and one for Mac OSX (OS9 not supported in this version). The software is easy to install.

Starry Night Pro v6 includes more than the software, includes additional resources, multimedia capabilities and more. Included in this version is the very nice Starry Night Companion book - a 192-page guide by John Mosley – with a wealth of astronomical information for the novice and intermediate astronomy buff. The Version 6 DVD comes with Windows and Mac versions, include the User's Guide which explains the features, and the All Exclusive "SkyTheater" DVD with over an hour of original movies about space is also included.

This version retains many of the popular tools that intermediate and advanced users have used from previous versions of Pro. There is SkyCalendar, built in Ephemeris Generator (where moving objects are at certain times with their coordinates), a helpful observation planner and tools to log information. Star charts are printable in 180 degree format. There is a customizable equipment list, computerized telescope control (plug-in), Conjunction tools, and a useable Equipment list. There are viewable settings for Altitude -Azimuth, Ecliptic path and the Galactic grid. There is also the Dynamic Hertzsprung- Russell diagram chart with 8 options from labeling the stars to limiting the brightness or distances of the stars for your diagram. Nice!

The program controls most popular brands of robotic telescopes, including Orion SkyQuest Intelliscope, Meade LX200 and Autostar, Celestron Nexstar series and all ASCOM compliant scopes (additional cable required). The remarkable accuracy allows the exploring of 65,000,000 stars, accessing 500+ million stars online, exploring PGC Catalog of 980,000 galaxies as well as choosing from over 30 photorealistic horizon panoramas (which can give a nicer view of the sky). Custom field of view indicators display the sky as seen through your telescope, eyepiece, binoculars, CCDs or DSLRs.

Some planetarium programs have some multimedia effects, but Starry Night excels at multimedia. Version 6 has 100 interactive tours (other versions of SN include 50 tours), new joystick-supported spaceship mode, allows saving and exporting color images and creating QuickTime movies of your celestial simulations. If you want a more multimedia-based view of the universe, Starry Night is the application for you.

Advanced users who require use of telescopic operations will notice that in this version (missing from Windows only version of Pro plus version 6) is the integration with the Maxim DL/CCD for astrophotography - a popular non-Mac astronomical program which can steer a telescope.

See the real night sky in full-color photographic detail from any place on Earth. High Resolution Earth Graphics allow the user to appear as if he/she is hovering above the Earth for a detailed view of our Earth planet before exploring deep space. Nebula outlines make it easier to spot the diffuse edges of nebulae you're observing.

For the advanced amateur astronomer, the full-color AllSky CCD mosaic, sophisticated telescope controls and comprehensive observational tools included in Starry Night Pro Plus version 6 will engage you in the hobby like no other software.

The biggest single addition to Starry Night software since its inception is the full-color AllSky CCD image mosaic of the entire night sky visible from Earth weighs in at 6.44 billion pixels in size. Named AllSky for its uniform coverage from pole to pole, it's a single picture of the whole sky that has been precisely mapped to Starry Night's computer generated stars and databases. The AllSky CCD mosaic is comprised of about 20,000 individual images, originally imaged at a resolution of 12 arc seconds per pixel with a scientific grade, custom built AP9E CCD camera. This consistent resolution, color and depth of coverage eliminates the uncertainties of comparing images from many and varied sources. Zoom from the widest possible view of 180 degrees to 0.5 degree field of view.

See a better image on your Mac than the best-trained human eye can capture in real-time viewing through a telescope on a "good seeing" night. See the entire Milky Way in exquisite detail and then zoom in to explore dust lanes and nebulae. Instead of dots and circles, you will see an actual photo of a star or a deep sky object.

If you have the processing power, set the AllSky image to be more precise and a better match between the photographic stars in the AllSky image and the Starry Night stars. For the highest quality AllSky image, you will need a video card with a minimum of 96MB VRAM.

I also found that Version 6 includes an additional 6 GB of the AllSky image in DDS texture format, which enables the AllSky image to load up to 20X faster. But, you will need a 64 MB OpenGL 2.0 (which is the graphics simulation software used both PC and Mac versions) capable graphics card (PC) to see this phenomenal improvement.

New Features for version 6 include Plan observing sessions with the Event Finder, which can instantly displays celestial events like lunar and solar eclipses and conjunctions for months in the future. Create observing lists of astronomical objects using a variety of filters such as magnitude, altitude above horizon, type or database. Quickly see what objects you have observed and which ones you still need to hunt down. Recognize 1000+ craters, valleys and more instantly with surface feature outlines for the Moon is possible while viewing the locations of 160+ extrasolar (planets out of solar system) planets.

New telescopic features also assist Starry Night Pro 6 users. Select your equipment from expanded default database of over 300 Orion, Meade, Celestron and Vixen scopes, binoculars, SBIG, Apogee, FLI and Starlight Express CCD chips. Take advantage of improved Digital Settings Circles Support for non-motorized telescopes like the Orion SkyQuest IntelliScope, NGC MAX, Lumicon Sky Vector, Discovery Digital Star Finder, Orion SkyWizard III, and Celestron Advanced Astromaster. Control your robotic telescope focuser with Computer Controlled Focuser Support (Windows only – no Mac support yet). Supported models include AstroOptik telescopes, Astrophysics GTO mount, Finger Lakes focusers, Gemini equipped mount, JMI Smart Focus, Meade LX200 and Autostar, Optec TCF-S, and PCFocus. Smoothly track and follow satellites with the Meade LX200/RCX400 telescopes (Mac only).

The panoramic horizons views are nice. First, set your location and save it in the folder so it loads when the software starts. Also, the presence panel tells you to update the data upon booting (you must be online), so your data immediately is updated – I find this most helpful for comet watching. The updated data also helps locate satellites, asteroids and other items that need additional data updates, especially if you plan to photograph one or more.

I increased the default setting for the numbers of asteroids, comets and satellites. The labeling features, which I don't find as easy to use as previous versions, allows you to add colors to the celestial objects names. For example, I set the comets to an off yellow color.

In the past, I made simulations of several eclipses and captured in QuickTime video. It was interesting to see a view from Earth's orbit as well from the ground to compare my real observations. I also "went back in time" to investigate whether Venus was close to Jupiter in 2 B.C. for research on the Star of Bethlehem. Using this software, I could see that both planets were extremely close to each other in the sky. Years ago I used Starry Night to find comets and actually found a dim comet in 2001. This software ultimately let me photograph 38 comets so far, and create and coordinate the Comet Observers Award for the Astronomical League.

Conclusion

I think you get the idea that I am hooked on this software. Not only is it fun, it is educational and is extremely versatile for doing all my astronomical activities. It is fairly easy to use. You just need to read up on all the different options, many I have listed and more that you will find. Selecting this software is a "no-brainer" as it is not only a handsome piece of software, it also works on both Mac and Windows computers. Try it out first online or buy this version or one of the other versions of Starry Night. You will not be disappointed.

Note: Imaginova released a new update to Starry Night Pro - version 6.0.3 – available at the company website starting 12/21/06.

The fixes and product enhancements in release 6.0.3 are:

- ✓ OpenGL now starts correctly (as in 6.0.0) for low-capability video cards.
- ✓ Opening and closing the side panels no longer resizes the FOV!
- ✓ Several significant fixes to Calendar event adding and display. Events are now correctly added and displayed in local times.
- ✓ Added new buttons to set Calendar date to date shown in Starry Night view.
- ✓ Saved presets now load correctly when saved with no file extension and selected from menu.
- ✓ Printing in CSAP fixed. No longer centers pole.
- ✓ Ambient Sounds fixed. Now turn on correctly on first try.
- ✓ Correct object limiting magnitudes set for PGC catalog.
- ✓ Fixed adding log entries to an item after deleting them.
- ✓ Fixed significant leak (sometimes causing crash) when using HUD.
- ✓ Fixed horizon pinning when in non-local orientations.
- ✓ Fixed FOVs "(this chart only)" printing
- ✓ Changing locations no longer changes object lock, including locks on random RA/Dec.
- ✓ Preferences dialog no longer hidden under menu bar on some Intel Mac systems.
- ✓ Several spelling mistakes corrected in locations database.
- ✓ Cursor keys now move view correctly in non-local orientations.
- ✓ Planet ordering in Find panel re-establishes correctly after find.
- ✓ Asteroid diameters correctly reported. Were showing as 2x actual value.
- ✓ 3DS models now load significantly faster.
- ✓ 3DS models no longer look washed out after zooming in on sun.
- ✓ Limit stars by distance and other fields like this now work correctly.
- ✓ Prevented annoying redraw of Calendar panel when changing locations in space.
- ✓ F8 in spaceship mode no longer used to show/hide the legend. Uses 's' to prevent conflict with toolbar.
- ✓ Highlighted text now correctly turns white in events or lists.
- ✓ Satellites can again be added orbiting the Moon.

ToonTown

Reviewed by Ted Bade

Disney Corporation

<http://play.toontown.com/webHome.php>

Cost: To play it is \$10/month, with discounts if you pay ahead for 6 or 12 months.

Requirements: PowerPC 450 MHz or any Mac with an Intel processor; 256 MB of RAM; 300MB free space on your hard drive; A 32 MB video card; A 56K modem, or a faster Internet connection ; OS X 10.4.6 (Tiger) ; Safari Browser

Universal code support: Yes

Equipment used for testing: G5/1.8 GHz single processor with ATI 9600 graphics card.

Experience needed: Minimal. Some parental help with permissions via the web might be needed.

Strengths: Small download. Fun, easy to learn interface, child-safe. Safe online interaction.

Weaknesses: Graphics could be a little better. Some audio features are annoying.



Toon Town is an online game (similar to World of Warcraft or EverQuest), that is based on the concept of a (car)Toon universe and is designed for children. (Think back to the “Who Framed Roger Rabbit” Movie. It has an easy interface just about any child in the 8 year or older category can learn. It’s a great game, it’s fun, and it’s easy to play. Take a look at this complex yet deceptively simple gaming world.

Toon Town is a massive online RPG (Role Playing Game) designed for the younger crowd of the 8 to 12 year olds. It is based on the cartoon characters of Disney, so you’ll see references to Mickey, Minny, Donald, and the rest of the crowd. There are six different themed areas that make up the Toon Town world. Each area is related to a particular Disney character. For instance, Donald Duck’s area has a nautical theme and Minnie Mouse has a musical theme, all themes are based on having fun. Each area has a main (and safe area) called the playground, this is where you buy gags (your “weapons), earn jelly beans (the money of Toon Town), turn in your quest items, meet other players, and decide what to do next. Areas are connected by named side streets in which you interact with the bad guys (called Cogs) and other Toons.

The game starts with you creating your Toon. You can change the head, body, legs, and apparel of your Toon. The Apparel consists of a shirt and a skirt for girls or pants for boys. You can change the colors of all these things as well, creating a wide variety of very interesting creatures! Although you can type a name for your Toon, the program has a fun name creator feature. You can select from a title, first name and last name. The choices are very diverse and all a lot of fun. After viewing a variety of choices, I settled on Noisy Ricky Thundersocks for my Toon’s name.

One could spend a lot of time just naming their Toon.

The game then brings your new character into a tutorial that teaches how the game and its interface works. The tasks begin easy and become harder as your progress through the game. Instructions are pretty clear, but it does involve a lot of reading.

The basic idea of most games is to defeat the “bad guys”. In Toon town the bad guys are called Cogs, they are robots that can’t take a joke. Slowly the Cogs are trying to change

ToonTown from a fun and colorful place into a boring rigid place with metallic colorless buildings. The object of playing is to defeat the Cogs. You defeat a Cog by playing jokes on it, such as a pie in the face, a flower that squirts water, a bottle of seltzer, and so forth. Think of all those cartoons you watched as a kid, the gags those Toons used are all here! (There are over 40 different gags to learn).

The Cogs attack back by doing stiff boring things like an accountant Cog will make a bill do, or a Name caller Cog will flip business cards at you. The health or vitality of a Toon is measured in happiness. If ones’ happiness drops too low, that Toon is teleported to the playground so they can have fun and get their happiness back. Spending time in the playground increases happiness and there are various activities that can speed the process up. After a Toon loses all their happiness, they mope around, head drooped, until some happiness returns.

As the player progresses through the game, they gain experience and can then learn newer and better gags or other abilities that help with playing the game, for instance, making a sad Toon happy. But jokes aren’t free. The Toon needs jelly beans to buy gags. You earn jelly beans by taking part in several different activities.

First of all you can hop on the trolley and play a game. Inside the trolley game area there are several different games to be played. For instance, you might catch falling apples, swim through hoops, or try shooting your Toon from a cannon into a bucket of water. The better you succeed with these tasks the more jelly beans you win. As with most aspects of Toon Town, other players can join in the trolley games with you. Another way to win jellybeans is to go fishing. If you manage to catch fish, you can sell them for jellybeans. The fish you catch have fun names and descriptions. Fishing is east, although it costs to play.



Once you collect jellybeans you can use them to buy gags to use on Cogs. Since your Toon can only carry 40 beans, you will need a place to store the extras. The Game's solution is to give each player a "house" which contains a place to store jelly beans in addition to other things. The house starts off with the basics, some furniture which can be rearranged, but has no real function, a fireplace, and the jelly bean dispenser. You get two rooms, a main room and a sleeping room.



Oh yeah, there is also a Toon telephone which can be used to call Claribell the Cow to order things for your Toon pad. There are a lot of interesting things in Claribell's Cattelogs! You dial her up using the telephone in your house and can purchase items. I haven't yet tried this feature (lacking sufficient beans as I write!)

To get the player to explore Toon Town and to help them gain experience, the player is given various tasks to accomplish. It usually involves defeating a number of a certain type of Cog and/or finding a particular Toon and interacting with them. While the tasks are usually within the abilities of the single player, sometimes finding the area you need to go to can be a challenge. some younger players might not have the patience to search around. However, since this is an online game with other people, one can always ask someone else.



The process of battling a Cog is simple. First of all, you bump into (or get close to) one. When you do he makes a snide comment then you pair off. Battle sequence is easy. The Toons get to select which gag they are going to play in the Cog. If you are playing with a group, everyone needs to select a gag before it starts. The Toons do their gag and the Cog gets a chance to return attack, if he hasn't been defeated. His attack is related to the type of Cog he is.

If the Cog is defeated, he spins around faster and faster then explodes. Explodes like a machine falling apart, gears flying in all directions, not like a body exploding. Remember, this is a Kids game! Participating Toons have a window showing what they gained in the interaction, such as skills with a gag or if they completed all or part of a task.



A major aspect of Toon Town is interaction with other players. While it is possible to progress through the game alone, you are better off working with others. You can either go after the Cogs alone and hope someone comes by to help or you can bring friends along as you go. When players work together each player gets full credit for every Cog defeated, unlike many other games where "experience" is shared proportionately.

Interacting with other players is interesting. There is a "speed chat" feature to let you select a canned phrase from a long list. The list covers a variety of topics and can serve to complete many interactions. It also keeps conversations safe. Players cannot type out vulgarities or other unnecessary things that only detract from the game. There is a way to type chat with another player. You can only do this with a "Secret Friend". The Secret Friend option includes parental controls. The Parent has to turn this feature on and can turn it off.



If you are a parent letting your child play, you will need to spend a little time learning the use of turning on and off permissions and how to log into the web site to do this. The makers of this game put a number of controls into it to make it safer for kids, but it is up to the parent to make sure they are set properly. The game defaults to the safest mode, so if nothing else the parent will have to deal with being asked to turn things on.

The graphics of this game are cartoonish, as would be expected. I had expected cartoonish, but expected a bit better. Having played other on and offline games, I have come to expect terrific graphics. The 3D graphics in Toon Town are okay, not terrific. However, this makes the game significantly smaller than World of Warcraft. So the download time is a lot less and it take up a lot less space on the hard drive. (ToonTown takes about 1 MB on my hard drive, WoW uses over 5 GBytes!).

The audio aspects of this game are mostly fun. There is a fun Cartoonish music track that plays in the background and there are a variety of sounds things make. All very toonish and appropriate for the game. When you interact with other players or game Toons, they make small creature sounds like monkey calls or animal squeaks and squawks. While this is fine for players, I was surprised that the Toons that are part of the game don't include some speech. You have to read the text in the balloon over the Toon's head and you need to press a small right arrow to continue to the next balloon, as each new bubble opens the Toon squeaks, grunts, or whatever. The squeaks can get a bit annoying as you read through several balloons of information.

I found the Toon Town online environment very friendly. I "assume" most of the other Toon there, were being played by kids, although I am sure there are a few adults there as well. What I found was an environment that was open and friendly. Players seemed very willing to help out if asked or even jump in when not asked. Players seemed as willing to help out as they are to ask for help. When one is wandering about the playground, other players will often come up and just say "hi!"

The speed chat interface can be a bit cumbersome until you get a feel for it. Pulling down a series of menus to find just the right statement seems to take longer then simply typing something. There have been a couple of times when I accidentally let the wrong phrase go. Still, it is a fun and safe way to interact with other players, and it works.

There are many aspects of this game I didn't cover. For instance the player can customize a race kart and adopt then train a pet "Doodle". There are a lot of places, quests, and aspects of this game available to be explored. It is up to the player and his or her imagination to take full advantage of all aspects of this game.

Toon Town is just terrific! It is an enjoyable, relatively non-violent, and very friendly game. It is fun to play and easy enough for a younger child to play. It would make a great gift for any kid, from 8 to, well heck adult! I had a great time during my visit there and look forward to playing some more. If you are looking for an interesting present for a child, definitely consider Toon Town. It's a real hoot!



Translation Service 1.2.7

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

<http://www.kavasoft.com/TranslationService/>

Released: November 23, 2006

\$10 USD

http://www.kavasoft.com/store/index.php?translation_service=1

Download: 663 KB file.

Requirements: Mac OS X 10.3.9 or later.

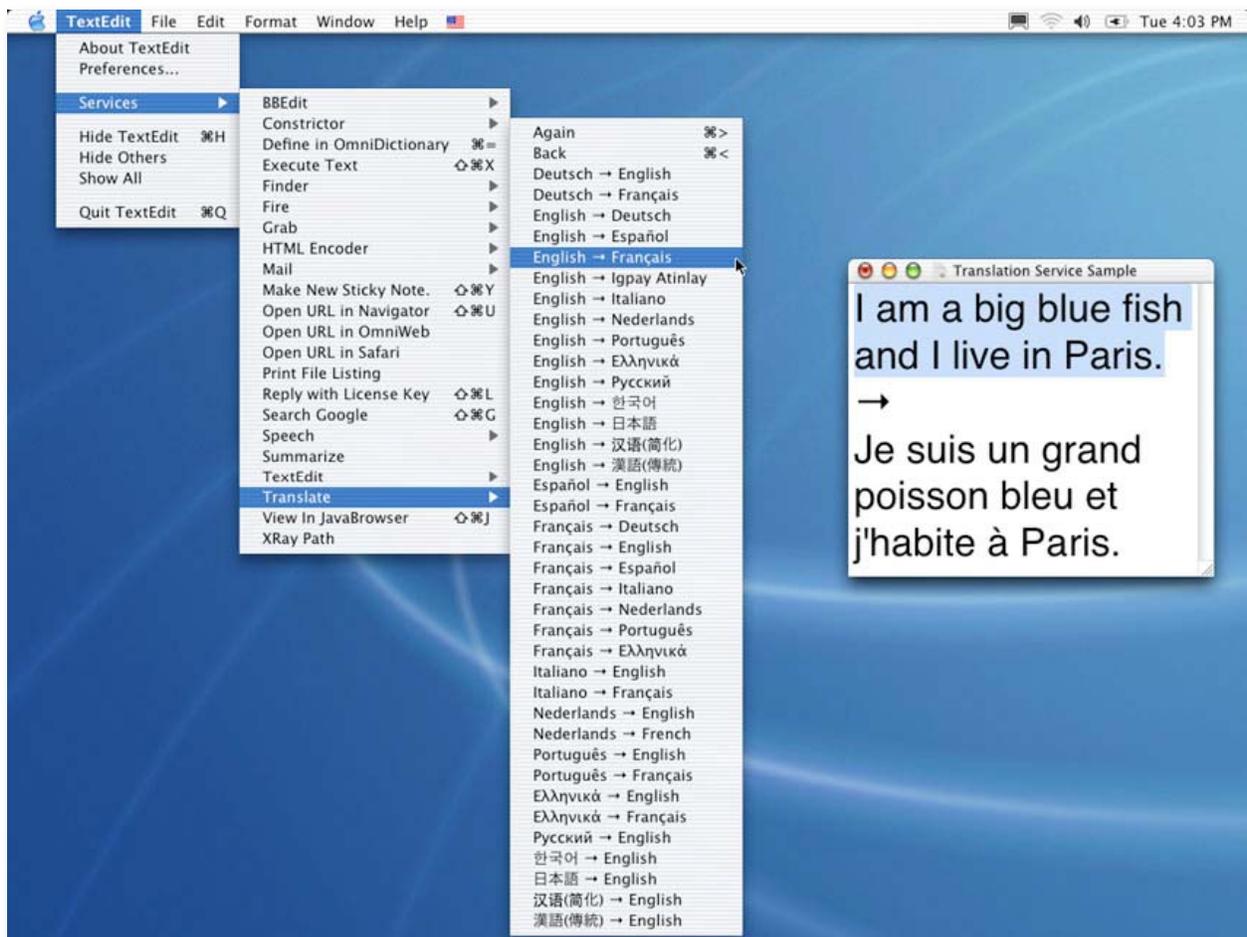
Strengths: A \$10 app that can translate within Cocoa-based editable text-based apps. Ubinaried.

Weaknesses: Does not work with apps ported from OS 9 or Carbon apps, websites, Email or PDFs. Unintelligent machine translation service only.



Translation Service

Translate text in any application.



What is Translation Service?

Translation Service allows you to replace the selected text with a translation in any of several languages—in just one click. It works in any Mac OS X program, so you don't have to copy and paste text back and forth.

What's a Service? A Service is a Mac OS X feature that allows programs to exchange data with one another. Services are available in the Services submenu of the application menu. For example, Translation Service replaces the selected text with a translation.

How do I install Translation Service?

- [Download](#) Translation Service and copy the icon to your Applications folder.
- Open the Translation Service icon in your Applications folder.
- Choose "Update Services Menu" from the application menu. Translation Service will be available in programs launched afterwards.

How do I use Translation Service?

Select the text you would like to translate. From the application menu in the current application, choose:

Services Translate [language] → [language]

The text will be translated in place. That's it!

To quickly translate text again in the same direction, choose:

Services Translate Again (>)

To quickly translate text again in the opposite direction, choose:

Services Translate Back (<)

Note: Sometimes it may be necessary to choose a command from the menu before the keyboard shortcuts will work.

Which languages can be translated? You can translate text back and forth between the following languages:

English ↔ Deutsch	English ↔ 日本語
English ↔ Español	English ↔ 汉语(简化)
English ↔ Français	English ↔ 漢 (傳統)
English ↔ Italiano	Français ↔ Deutsch
English ↔ Nederlands	Français ↔ Español
English ↔ Português	Français ↔ Italiano
English ↔ Ελληνικά	Français ↔ Nederlands
English ↔ Русский	Français ↔ Português
English ↔ 한국어	Français ↔ Ελληνικά

In the Preferences, you can choose which languages appear in the Translate menu, and assign your own keyboard shortcuts.

Which applications does Translation Service work in? Services work in applications that were designed for Mac OS X ("Cocoa" applications), such as TextEdit, Mail 1.x, Stickies, OmniWeb, Safari, Keynote, and Xcode.

Services do not work in most applications that were ported from Mac OS 9 ("Carbon" applications), such as Microsoft Office, AppleWorks, or America Online. However, services do work in some updated Carbon applications, most notably BBEdit and the Finder.

Further, the selected text must be editable, since Translation Service replaces the selected text with a translation. For example, you can't translate the text in a web page, an incoming mail message, or a PDF. In these cases, you should copy the text to a compatible program, or use the [translation window](#). To translate an incoming message in Mail, just hit reply and translate the quoted message.

Can I translate text directly using Translation Service? If you prefer, you can translate text directly in the Translation Service application. Choose File → Translate (⌘T) and the translation window will appear.



Enter your text in the top field, choose languages to translate from and to, and click the Translate button. The translated text will be displayed in the bottom field.

How reliable are the translations? In general, machine translation should be regarded as an aid, but it is up to you to double-check anything that you translate. KavaSoft is not responsible for the accuracy of the translations.

What does the icon mean? The icon for Translation Service is 譯, the Traditional Chinese character for "translate".

What I Say

This is a direct "machine language" translation and you might be better off using Systran <http://www.systransoft.com/index.html> for localized translation services. Translation Service connects to the Internet and ties into a service located at

unknown.servercentral.net on TCP port 80 (hppt)

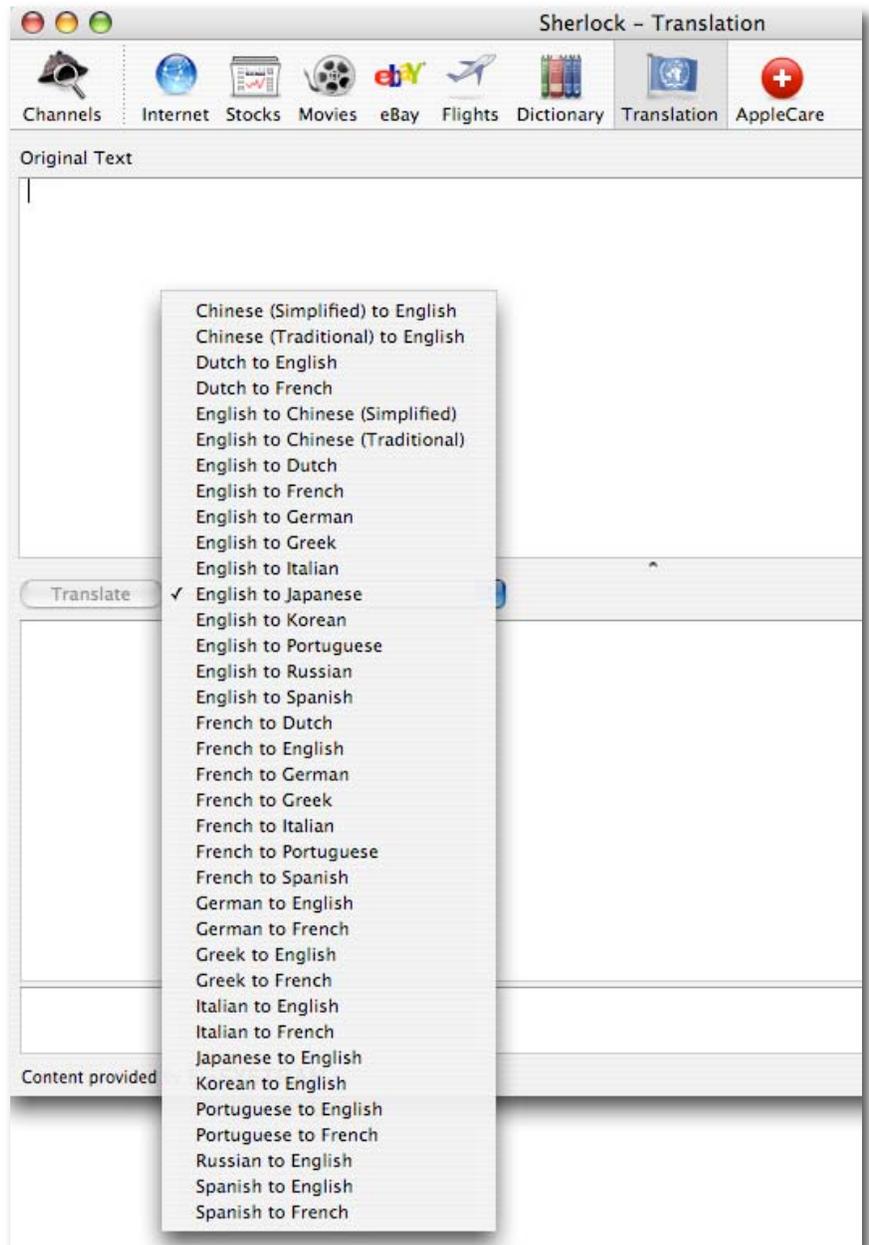
Did you know there is a similar service in Sherlock for free? Also check out our other services for translation at

<http://www.macompanion.com/services/translation.html>

Translation Service does not work with every application, just those that are Cocoa-based and the translations are literal word-swaps, nothing more, so don't count on the selected text being "translated correctly".

Translation Service is a "work-in-progress".

If you want to support it, go ahead and pay the \$10 USD, or continue using Sherlock's Translation instead.

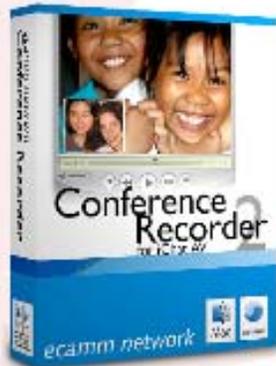


Hardware

The **Section 3** hardware reviews and articles in this issue of *macCompanion* are:

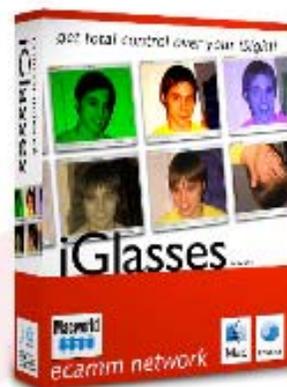
- ✚ **Dual XDVD 8182 In-Dash Mobile Video** – a DVD player for the car, reviewed by Wayne LeFevre
- ✚ **Logitech S 530 Cordless Keyboard and Mouse** – a wireless keyboard and mouse set, reviewed by Wayne LeFevre
- ✚ **Miglia Microsound** – portable external speakers for iPods, reviewed by Robert Pritchett
- ✚ **Sport Command** – wireless and weather-resistant control for iPods, reviewed by Chris Marshall
- ✚ **TuneTalk** – microphones to record audio clips on iPods, reviewed by Chris Marshall
- ✚ **Life with the Mac Mini** – an article on the experiences of using a new Intel-based Mac Mini, by Ted Bade

*use your USB webcam
with iChat AV...*



*record your iChat audio
and video chats...*

*adjust iSight settings
and apply effects...*



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Dual XDVD8182 In-Dash Mobile Video

Reviewed by Wayne LeFevre



Dual Electronics Corporation
<http://www.dualav.com/indashvideo/xdvd8182.html>
Namsung America Inc.
250 International Parkway, Suite 230
Heathrow, Florida 32746
1-866-382-5476
cs@dualav.com

Released: September 2006

\$699 USD Retail, \$809 CND, £352 GBP, €534 Euro

Advanced or a Professional Installer only project.

Strengths: Great Video capabilities, many formats, many inputs and outputs from back-up cameras to game consoles.

Weaknesses: iPod integration abysmal.

Ease of Installation

Installation was straight forward, with a harness and dash kit purchased from Crutchfields. The receiver is a standard single din type unit. If any hesitation about installation is encountered, I would immediately take it to a pro installer. It shouldn't cost more than \$100 – \$125 to have it installed.

Manufacturer Interaction

Had a slight problem with the iPod cable, which the manufacture promptly replaced without hesitation. Great vendor responsiveness.

Accessibility

Website has lots of information, PDF manuals and statistics. You can't order from them, however. The standards in the business all carry this model, including Crutchfields, and if you buy from them they include the pig-tail and dash kit.



Instructions

Hardcopy comes with unit and you can get PDF copy online. Between that and the instructions that come with the pig-tail harness from Crutchfields, you really can't mess up. Though again, I have to warn you if this is not your bag, it's easier to take to a pro. It's a lot easier not having to take the entire front fascia off your dash!

Interaction

It takes some getting used to using the onscreen touch controls. The screen is divided into sections that you must remember controls what.

Effectiveness, Ease of Use, and Recommendation

I was getting pretty excited when the included metal sleeve slid into place, and I was able to lock the tabs and slide the unit into home. The harness that you solder, or crimp, onto the wiring supplied by your favorite supplier will plug right into your vehicle. You'll need to supply a wire to the parking brake, but that is all explained and easier done by a pro. There are optional jacks to plug in front, rear, center and sub power amplifiers, sub woofers, 2 optional video outs—for headrest LCDs and overhead mounts. Aux video in, for say a game console. An optional backup camera in, and, of course what's made me excited about the whole thing and the reason it's in this magazine, the iPod input.

When the screen is inside the unit, the unit will operate like every other radio/CD player. Sound quality is OK, not great enough to get a true audiophile excited, but enough for most people. Of course, I did not have the multitudes of amplifiers and speakers in my Commander, but it was really OK.

The CDs that you can play are almost as impressive as the DVDs. CD/Rs, CD/RWs, WMA and MP3 discs can all be used. The display is a thin line, and not a lot can be seen besides track, position, etc.

Press the open button, and the magic happens. The 7" touch-screen motorized TFT LCD widescreen display comes out of the front and tilts up. All audio functions that you were unable to access with the screen down is now available including EQ controls, ID3 information, etc. When playing CDs, the songs will be displayed and you can touch-select each song, page down to see more songs, and see artist information. So I was excited as I plugged in my iPod through a standard iPod plug and saw my iPod screen on the LCD.

Unfortunately, that's where the magic stops. If you pull up artists or playlist your presented with 6 whole selections. Fine, just scroll with the wheel or use the onscreen scroll bar, right? Nope. You will have to page down, screen by screen, 6 songs at a time to find what you're looking for. It will take awhile to get through long lists. Another disappointment is that the screen is really not all that responsive. Sometimes it takes a few taps to finally make it respond.

In order to watch video, the car must be in park. State regulations, I believe. (And you have to prove it's in park by engaging the parking brake a couple of times in sequence, then leave it engage for the video to respond.) Once it's in video mode, though, the video quality is impressive. Another plus is the number of DVD's it can play including DVD+R/RW and DVD-R/RW. It won't, however, do DivX, AVI or MPG. It will play in 4:3 or 16:9 in all sorts of modes. Pan & Scan, Fullscreen - too many to mention here.

There is a wide variety of setup that can be done onscreen, from picking radio stations to putting passwords on R-rated movies so the kids can't plug them in while your in the store. The remote works well from the rear seats, working surprisingly better than trying to punch the screen with your finger. The screen also has preset tilt settings for viewing.

All-in-all it's a decent radio/CD player and a great video player, and a really lousy iPod controller. I would much rather use my Belkin and control the iPod itself rather than try and use the screen. So what I was personally most excited for turned up a dud, but the other features are pretty cool. I would definitely shop around, though as you can get it for hundreds off of list.

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Logitech S 530 Mac Cordless Keyboard and Mouse

Reviewed by Wayne LeFevre



<http://www.logitech.com>

6505 Kaiser Drive
Fremont, CA 94555 USA
702-269-3457

Released: February 2006

\$99 USD, \$114 CND, £50 GBP, €75 Euro

Requirements: Mac OS X 10.2.8 or newer. 1 USB port.

Strengths: Spot on accurate mouse. Responsive keys. Only uses one USB port.

Weaknesses: Drivers

Ease of Installation

Installation was a snap. You install a dock into an available USB port, which you then insert the receiver into the dock. The dock looks mainly to be an extension for the USB port so that the receiver will always be on the desk and not have any interference. Place batteries into the mouse and keyboard, press a button on the receiver, press a button on the keyboard and one more on the mouse. It all finds each other and acts great from there on out.

Manufacturer Interaction and Accessibility.

Logitech has a forum section that you can go to for help, but it could use a little help. The biggest issue is Logitech seems to have forgotten to keep their drivers updated.

Instructions

Instructions on installation are provided on CD, along with drivers. There is a getting started pamphlet.



Effectiveness, Ease of use and Recommendation.

I've pretty much grouped all of these together for a reason. My old Logitech keyboard that I brought with me from my PC to my Mini was finally giving up the ghost. The keys were starting to stick, and no amount of cleaning would help. If there is nothing worse in this world it's having to type a lot on a sticky keyboard. After looking around a lot, I finally decided on this S530 combo. I've always had good luck with Logitech keyboards and mice. The Apple keyboards seemed a tad on the mushy side, and I can't stand the old IBM type keyboard that lets out a resounding clack on every keystroke. This keyboard uses a scissor action that gives just the right amount of resistance and feedback before and after every stroke. It's not loud, but lets you know you actually pressed the button.

The keyboard is actually quite thin - about 3/4 inches with a palm rest. It does come with legs underneath to bring up the rear of the keyboard, but I found them to angle my hands a bit too much. The keyboard comes with buttons on the left and right edges known as media buttons. On the left side you can launch your e-mail client, scroll through documents and your browser, go to your home page and an efficient back button to go back a page. When you pressed the recessed power button, a dialog box pops up asking if you want the machine to sleep, turn off, etc. There is a small battery indicator to let you know if your battery is getting low.

The right side includes multimedia keys. One to bring up iTunes, play, pause, forward, back volume and mute. There is also a button to bring up iPhoto and one for a separate spotlight window. The buttons can be remapped, but more on that later. The function keys go to F15 plus an eject and help key.

The mouse is a laser mouse that is sculpted to fit the right hand. It has a standard 2 button arrangement and scroll wheel. The scroll wheel can also act as a button when pressed, and has a tilt function for scrolling horizontally left and right. Unfortunately, the mapping on the tilt is limited to the horizontal scroll or moving through applications, similar to the Control Tab. There are 3 small buttons on the top of the mouse that control Up and Down volume and Mute. They are a little awkward to use, but work well enough. Two thumb buttons are provided for your standard forward and back controls. The actions of the mouse are precise. There is no jumping around usually associated with the older trackball-less mice that use just the LED. Pixel precise editing is not a problem with this setup.

The mouse also has a battery indicator light. Both the indicators on the mouse and keyboard start to flash when you have approximately 10 days of battery life. The batteries included are standard alkaline, since there is no dock for recharging. One of the advantages of this is even less cables, since you don't have to power the dock. The batteries are supposed to last up to six months, though I haven't had the chance to test this. The mouse has an option to work on only one battery, making it lighter and more efficient? Maybe for portability?



If it only stopped there, it would just about be the perfect set-up. For some reason, Logitech doesn't seem to want to support the Mac, even though it does. It used to have web-cams that were Mac compatible. You can't seem to find them anymore. They're new speakers, that look fabulous, aren't for the Mac's! (There is a work-around for it, but it takes extra steps and work.) And driver support is just abysmal. Everything seemed to work fine until Apple release 10.4.8, and that broke the Logitech Control Center, converting all extra buttons to nothing but extra space. It was well documented on the Logitech boards, but mum was the word from the company. For some reason, when Apple released the next update, if you un-installed, then re-installed the LCC software, it actually ran and you could set up your keyboard and mouse.

As of now, every once in a while, all of a sudden for no apparent reason, the buttons on the mouse will stop working. If you bring up the LCC, it will not find any devices. Again, all known on Logitech's own forums. It takes a re-boot to correct everything back to normal.

Otherwise, when everything works, the whole set-up is pure art. Both pieces are great looking, and work exceptionally well. Even though the drivers are flakey, I would highly recommend this combination and would buy it again. But please, Logitech, if you're listening, please work on your Mac drivers and make more Mac compatible products.



Miglia Microsound

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett



<http://www.miglia.com/products/audio/microsound/index.html>

Released: August 29, 2006

\$30 USD, £17 GBP

Weight: Just over 1 ounce.



Strengths: Portable external speakers for iPods.

Weaknesses: Anemic sound quality with the shuffle.

Other Reviews: <http://playlistmag.com/products/complete/579-detail.php>

What They Say

Who could have imagined that speakers could be so small and yet so powerful? MicroSound is a stunning display of a slim, ultra-light and ultra-modern speaker, which delivers great sound in a revolutionary space saving design. Simply plug MicroSound into the headphone jack of your iPod Nano (new or original versions) or iPod Shuffle (new or original version) and enjoy all your favorite tunes to the max. Feel the music and take the party with you wherever you go thanks to its flash ultra-portable design. With up to 12 hours of battery time there really is no limit to what you can do with your day.

It is the perfect companion for any outdoor activity. It is compact, reliable and unbelievably easy to use. It allows you to share and enjoy music with your friends, complementing your daily lifestyle in every way.

Key Features

- Small in size, yet powerful
- Compact, reliable and easy to use
- Sharp, clear sound quality
- Up to 12 hours of battery time available
- Portable, fits in your pocket.
- Available in black or white

Small in size

Microsound may well be tiny in size but it's far from tiny in terms of the possibilities it provides. It is presented within a compact ultra-slim case that fits neatly and discreetly within your pocket. It is the ultimate must-have to accompany your iPod Nano or iPod Shuffle.



Long battery life

Microsound has up to 12 hours of battery life using a standard alkaline battery (not included), so it is ideal for those long journeys or an afternoon in the park with your friends and family. Enjoy hours of music and take the party with you.

What I Say

Our daughters used the Microsound on their shuffles and promptly returned both the black and white units back to me, saying they would stay with their earbuds. Why?

Tinny and anemic sound quality – like no bass or midrange. So it is named correctly – Micro – Sound.



I don't think this will be a boombox killer. Nor should it be. My thinking is that iPods were meant for private listening. Each speaker is independently controlled and there is an on/off switch – Thank you! And the stereo 1/8" miniplug plug can fit any device that has a headphone jack so this isn't limited to "just shuffles and iPod nanos".

If for whatever reason you need an external speaker for your Shuffle or iPod, just be aware that this unit is not for audiophiles. But then again, Audiophiles would be wearing professional stereo headsets, right?

SportCommand for iPod

Reviewed by Chris Marshall

BELKIN.

<http://www.belkin.com>

http://catalog.belkin.com/IWCatProductPage.process?Product_Id=298896

Released: December 2006

\$79.99 USD, \$90 CND, £40 GBP, 60€ Euro

Audience: Any iPod owner who is into serious outdoor sports and must have their iPod with them at all times

Strengths: Easy to attach, sturdy simple to use, effective quality and neat options.

Weaknesses: Possibly over priced, remote receiver can snag and pull out at times



What They Say

The Belkin SportCommand for iPod lets you wirelessly control your music while your iPod stays protected. Strap the fabric remote to your arm, store your iPod in your backpack or jacket, and then listen to all your jams while you snowboard or bike. With its weather-resistant durability, the SportCommand is perfect for outdoor activities, such as snowboarding, mountain, biking, and hiking.

What I Say

The SportCommand for iPod is a great product, but I was a little shocked at the price.

What does it do? "The Belkin SportCommand for iPod lets you wirelessly control your music while your iPod stays protected. Strap the fabric remote to your arm, store your iPod in your backpack or jacket, and then listen to all your jams while you snowboard or bike. With its weather-resistant durability, the SportCommand is perfect for outdoor activities, such as snowboarding, mountain, biking, and hiking."

Sounds great - but I don't snowboard, I am not a mountain (I actually have no idea what they mean by an outdoor activity been a mountain, but I am going to assume they mean mountain climbing). I do bike, but to be honest I have always got by with the iPod stuffed into some belt or armband, and unless staggering from one bar to another qualifies as hiking then I technically have no need for this product.

That is a shame as it is very clever and well constructed. Basically you connect the remote receiver into the bottom of your iPod (any model except a shuffle and some of the older iPods) and then you can control it from the robust "panel" that either Velcro's onto the armband, or snaps onto the belt ring. The controls are large enough and easy enough to control even with the largest gloves on. Well almost, my wife struggles to use it during her kick boxing class. She was also disappointed when she realized that it wouldn't work with her Nano and Nike + sports kit, but that wasn't a concern to me.

So do I use it - yes, you bet I do. How? On my Harley! I can Velcro the control pad onto the console in front of me, tuck my iPod deep inside the winter jacket and control it even with the thickest winter riding gloves on - truly excellent!

In Summary

I am a sucker for iPod accessories and this is particularly attractive albeit to, probably, a niche market. It is well designed, does exactly what it sets out to do, but could do with been about \$20 cheaper in an ideal world.

TuneTalk Stereo for iPod

Reviewed by Chris Marshall

BELKIN.

<http://www.belkin.com>

http://catalog.belkin.com/IWCatProductPage.process?Product_Id=277661

Released: June 2006.

\$70 USD, \$80 CND, £35 GBP, 52,50€ Euro

Audience: Any iPod with video owner that needs to record voice or sound clips.

Strengths: Easy to attach, simple to use, effective quality and neat options.

Weaknesses: Only works with iPod with video, record button slightly inconveniently placed



What They Say

The new TuneTalk Stereo from Belkin features two high-quality omni-directional microphones for recording memos, lectures, interviews, or conversations in full stereo. Review your CD-quality audio later by using earbud headphones or computer.

Advantages

- ✓ Offers CD-quality, stereo recording
- ✓ Charges while recording with included cable
- ✓ Fits most cases
- ✓ Includes external microphone adapter (3.5mm stereo)
- ✓ Features one-touch navigation for quick memos
- ✓ Operates hands-free with included stand
- ✓ Offers real-time adjustable gain for changing noise levels
- ✓ Includes clipping indicator

What I Say

Belkin has long been a favorite company of mine and TuneTalk is a good reason to continue loving them.

It is a well-designed neatly packaged add-on to the iPod, with video that works a treat. My only real issue with it related to the positioning of the quick record button the side of the unit. It is very easy to depress this when you are attaching the unit, which can start you recording before you actually want to. A bit of practice and care connecting and disconnecting the unit and you are fine, but intuitively the button is in the wrong place. For some the fact that it comes in black will be disappointing, although it doesn't look that bad with a white iPod, but as I have a black iPod with video I was absolutely delighted with the color match and form factor.

Oh yes, the plastic fold out stand that comes with it is functionally, but tacky.

I am not a fan of reviews that just explain how to use the product, but for those of you that want that stuff they have a good [manual](#). For everybody else, you clip the unit onto the bottom of your iPod, click record and talk away. You then click to stop, dock the iPod and the file transfers to iTunes. What else do you need to know?

I am no audio expert, and my use was purely recreational rather than professional, but I was more than satisfied with the quality.

In Summary

I love the form factor, was impressed with the ease of use and had great fun with it. I am not sure that I will use it that much but find it great to have with me “just in case”. I particularly enjoyed recording my wife without her knowing when we sat “quietly” reading the Sunday papers in the marina – boy she can talk, a comment or observation on every article she read 😊 24 questions in a row that I never got a chance to answer!

Life with an Intel MacMini, Year One

By Ted Bade

I decided to buy an Intel based MacMini right after they came out. There were two main reasons for doing this. First of all, it was going to replace a slowly fading “Soccer Ball” iMac that my wife used, and secondly, because I wanted to see how this Intel chip Macintosh worked first hand. Luckily, my wife was very reluctant to let the old iMac go (that was by far her favorite Macintosh form factor), which meant that I had several months of being able to play with it before it moved into her study.

We purchased the first generation Dual core Mac Mini. The only thing I added to it was additional RAM. My friend, the Apple store owner, pointed out that adding RAM to this machine after market, could lead to marks on the case. Having the RAM added at the factory meant the machine would arrive with no physical scars. So I decided to pay for to factory installation of the extra RAM.

The Mac Mini arrived in a little box, not the type of box one would expect to find a powerful computer in! If you have never experienced the size of a Mac Mini, you might be surprised by just how small they are. I sure was. Having it on the table before me I can easily realize why people see them and decide to use these machine inside of other things. They are tiny!

While it is definitely not a muscle machine, it is powerful enough. If you are upgrading from an older Mac,(not last year’s model, but a few generations back), it will be significantly more powerful then what you had. It is a terrific basic machine. The Mac Mini comes decked out with just about everything a Mac user could ask for. Built in wireless, Bluetooth, four USB 2 ports, FireWire, a super drive for recording CDs and DVDs, and even optical audio out! It lacks mouse, keyboard, and display. I had the necessary keyboard and mouse available, not a problem in this house. We decided to buy a nicer LCD monitor for it, which is another tale in itself.

Side note: [One of the reasons the old iMac wasn’t leaving is that we could not find an LCD monitor that was even in the same universe as that attached to the soccer ball iMac. It’s clarity and wide usable angle are important factors, but the range of motion of this display is unmatched. You might not have any idea how impossible it is to find an LCD monitor at any cost that has the ease of use of the old soccer ball iMac’s monitor. They just don’t exist. Most LCD monitors don’t even go up and down! They simply angle in and out, this includes the newer iMacs. None I could find were designed to slide left and right without moving the entire base. We settled on an HP monitor that at least went up and down, although it wobbles.]

Once the machine was home, it was easy to fire it up, get on the Internet, and give it a whorl. The package includes all the standard Macintosh software, including the newest version of iLife and iWork. As for the rest of the software we were going to use on it, I needed to find Intel version if they existed. Even at the early date that I bought this machine, much of software we were using had been rewritten for Intel. But there were a handful not redone to support Universal Binary, including Microsoft Office. This fact gave us ample opportunity to see how the Apple’s Rosetta features work.

One of the main draws of the Intel based Macs is the ability to run other x86 type OS's. Since I already wrote a complete article on this, I won't say a lot on this topic. You are welcome to read my article on running Windows on this machine for an idea of how it worked. Briefly let me say I was quite impressed with how well all the solutions I tried worked. Apple's Boot Camp is probably the best solution for power hungry applications. However, on this machine, you won't play many Windows based games, as the graphics hardware on this machine just isn't up to snuff. Which means in my eyes the Parallels software solution is the all around best one for the Mac Mini. It allows you to run Windows (or any x86 based OS) side by side with Mac OS X. It was a great solution when I wrote my review, and they have made several major improvements on it since then. If you have need to run an occasional Windows based application, I highly recommend it. If you need to move output from the Windows environment to the Mac side, again, the Parallels system is the best. It allows you to cut from one side and paste into the other. Very, very nice.

I was disappointed with the Windows Apps I ran on this Mac Mini. Not for how they ran or that I had problem installing them. It is just the standard poor quality of the applications I ran! The ease of use inherent in all Macintosh applications just isn't there in Windows applications. It's pretty much a free for all and every one does the interface their own way. This lack of a standard makes a user always feel like they just don't understand what is going on. But that's a Windows world problem....

One noticeable lack with this machine is the lack of a graphics card. Using a "feature" of low end PCs, this machine has an Intel graphics chip on the motherboard shares the computer's RAM for its video work. Which means it can get sluggish when you are trying to run a large application that work with graphics and that high end games don't run very well on it. However, this graphics system doesn't get in the way of basic applications, even web browsing or watching a DVD.

The other problem with any Intel based Mac is that not all software has been recoded for the Intel chip, so there are a few problems in that regard. If you remember the move from the 68000 Motorola chips to the PowerPC chips, you might recall some of the hassles involved running the old applications on the PowerPC chip. With the Intel chip there is a LOT LESS hassle in this regard. Older applications run, although they don't run as fast as they would if the program had been recompiled for the Intel chip. This is because Apple created an interesting piece of technology.

As you might recall, Apple created an instruction interpreter they call Rosetta. What this application does is, in real time it converts PowerPC instructions to Intel instructions, very similarly to what a spoken language interpreter would do. It is a credit to the power of the Intel chips that PowerPC applications run almost as fast as they would on a moderately powerful PowerPC Mac! From the perspective of a home user, most applications run fine, although at some points they might appear sluggish or unresponsive. For the most part, in my experience with this machine non-Intel applications run fine (including Microsoft Office). There are a number of good articles that quantify the speed of an interpreted application. My perspective here is from that of a person who used a PowerMac G4/700MHz iMac as the reference machine and concerns regular home applications. Games and graphics applications are another matter.

There have been a few problems with the Mac Mini. Although the Mac OS X code has been converted to Intel, there are a few items we found that just don't work well. One little problem is with the "Character Palette" feature. In case you don't know about this little gem, let me explain. When you turn it on, a little flag icon appears in the menu bar (representing the country whose language you use). If you pull this menu down, you can open the character palette. What this does for you is to give you the ability to easily search for symbols contained in your font files. What makes this useful is that it organizes the symbols into groups like mathematical, currency, technical, arrows and more. If you are looking to include any symbol in your text, this application is the easiest means of finding it. It also lets you create a list of favorite symbols, which you can access even more quickly. Really cool if you use certain symbols regularly.

When we turned on this feature on the Mini, it worked okay for the first few minutes. Then it blew up. The box showing the palette went blank and whenever we looked at a document the dead blank palette would interrupt things. It was very annoying. Luckily, turning off this feature and rebooting corrected the problem, but the palette is not usable on the Mini. It might have been a one time thing, but I haven't had the courage to try turning it back on. The Mini is my wife's machine and if something doesn't work right, I definitely hear about it.

The biggest pauses we observed are due to not having an Intel version of an application, it is especially noticeable when you shift from one application to another. The computer usually stumbles and pauses while it shifts. There is often a considerably longer pause than one would expect. It is annoying from the aspect that we have grown use to the Mac OS X smoothly shifting from one application to another. True to the fashion of the impatient computer user, we usually find ourselves clicking a number of times trying to get the machine to respond, only to find it doing a number of things we didn't expect as it slowly accepts the clicks! Since this isn't the normal situation, when it happens, it is even more unexpected.

Another aspect of the Mac Mini we discovered is that it makes a great "portable" computer, provided, of course, that the place you are going to has the necessary mouse, keyboard, and display. It is actually easier to carry around than a PowerBook! For demos at our computer club, where we have an overhead projector, it is easier to carry in than the laptop!

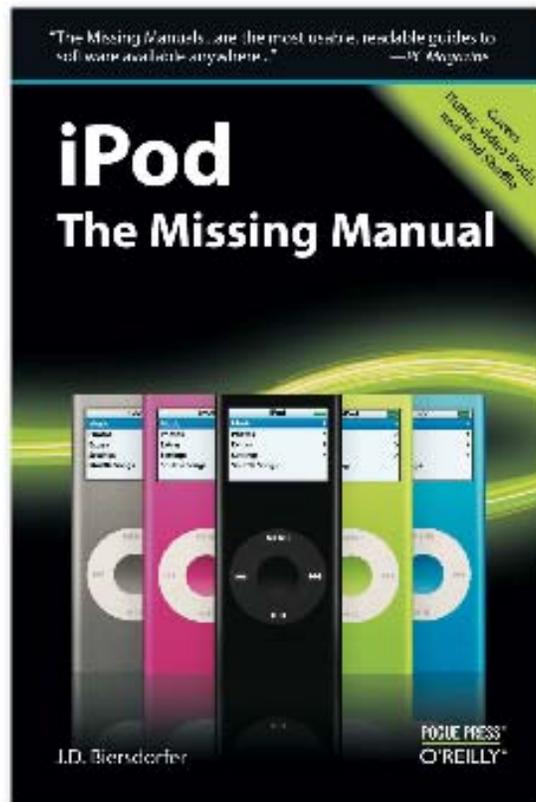
All in all, the Mac Mini is a good choice for the basic home user. It performs well enough, has plenty of power and, as time goes on and one upgrades their software from PPC to Intel, the applications will get faster! It makes an excellent choice for a second machine or a machine for someone with basic computer needs. Most Mac home users will probably have the necessary keyboard, mouse, and even a monitor stored somewhere in the house! It is also a great deal from a cost standpoint. At \$800 it is easy to justify.

Books

The **Section 4** book reviews in this issue of *macCompanion* contains:

- ✚ **Art of SQL** – an excellent O’Reilly book that offers best practices experienced SQL users should focus on (strategy rather than specifics), reviewed by Robert Pritchett
- ✚ **JavaScript: The Definitive Guide: Fifth Edition** – an update covering newer language updates from O’Reilly, reviewed by Mike Hubbartt
- ✚ **Network Security Hacks** – tips and tools to protect your privacy, reviewed by Robert Pritchett
- ✚ **Digital Video Production Cookbook** – a how-to-do-video-production guide, reviewed by Dr. Eric Flescher
- ✚ **Macintosh Efficiency** – learn how to be more efficient using your Mac, reviewed by Chris Marshall
- ✚ **GIMP 2 for Photographers** – a guide to using open source software to do image editing, reviewed by Wayne LeFevre
- ✚ **Photoshop Blending Modes Cookbook** – instructions on improving digital photos with Photoshop, reviewed by Dr. Eric Flescher

Empower Your iPod.



ISBN 0-596-52978-3
256 pages
\$19.99 US / \$25.99 CAN

With the new iPods, Apple has given us the world's smallest entertainment center. Sleek, powerful and somewhat addictive, these little gems can do far more than play music. To make the most of your iPod's capabilities, pick up a copy of the new *iPod: The Missing Manual*. This new edition thoroughly covers the redesigned iPod Nanos, the video iPod, the tiny Shuffle and the overhauled iTunes 7. Each page sports easy-to-follow color graphics, crystal-clear explanations, and guidance on the most powerful and useful things your iPod can do.

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The Art of SQL
Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

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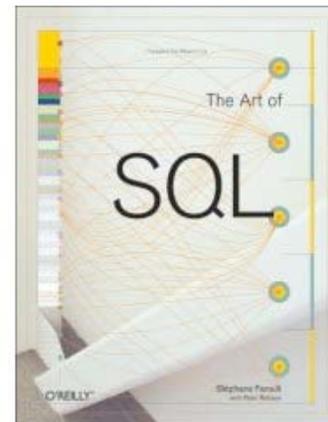
Author: Stéphane Faroult and Peter Robson
<http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/artofsql/index.html>

Released: March 2006.

Pages: 367

\$45USD, \$63 CND, £32 GBP, 45 € Euro

ISBN: 0596008945



For DBAs and SQL code-slingers.

Strengths: Takes a militant stand towards SQL issues and conquers.



Weaknesses: None found.

What They Say

With all the buzz about trendy IT techniques, data processing is still at the core of our systems, especially now that enterprises all over the world are confronted with exploding volumes of data. Database performance has become a major headache, and most IT departments believe that developers should provide simple SQL code to solve immediate problems and let DBAs tune any "bad SQL" later.

In *The Art of SQL*, author and SQL expert Stéphane Faroult argues that this "safe approach" only leads to disaster. His insightful book, named after *Art of War* by Sun Tzu, contends that writing quick inefficient code is sweeping the dirt under the rug. SQL code may run for 5 to 10 years, surviving several major releases of the database management system and on several generations of hardware. The code must be fast and sound from the start, and that requires a firm understanding of SQL and relational theory.

The Art of SQL offers best practices that teach experienced SQL users to focus on strategy rather than specifics. Faroult's approach takes a page from Sun Tzu's classic treatise by viewing database design as a military campaign. You need knowledge, skills, and talent. Talent can't be taught, but every strategist from Sun Tzu to modern-day generals believed that it can be nurtured through the experience of others. They passed on their experience acquired in the field through basic principles that served as guiding stars amid the sound and fury of battle. This is what Faroult does with SQL.

Like a successful battle plan, good architectural choices are based on contingencies. What if the volume of this or that table increases unexpectedly? What if, following a merger, the number of users doubles? What if you want to keep several years of data online? Faroult's way of looking at SQL performance may be unconventional and unique, but he's deadly serious about writing good

SQL and using SQL well. The Art of SQL is not a cookbook, listing problems and giving recipes. The aim is to get you and your manager to raise good questions.

Conclusion

If you follow *The Art of War* by Sun-Tzu, then you have a template to follow regarding the approach Stéphane Faroult and Peter Robson take in attacking this topic. And in this case, the approach works.

The O'Reilly logo, featuring the word "O'REILLY" in a bold, sans-serif font. The letter "O" is significantly larger than the other letters and has a red apostrophe and registered trademark symbol. The remaining letters "R", "E", "I", "L", "L", "Y" are in black and smaller.

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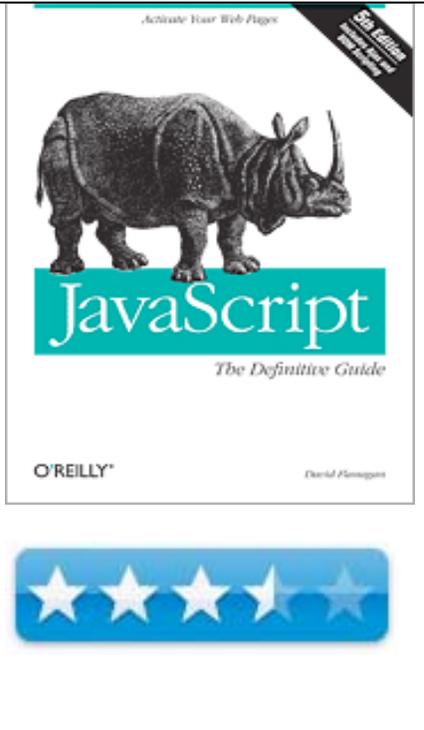
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JavaScript: The Definitive Guide, Fifth Edition

Reviewed by Mike Hubbartt

<p>O'REILLY[®]</p> <p>Author: David Flanagan</p> <p>http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/jscrip5/index.html</p> <p>Released: August 2006</p> <p>Pages: 1018</p> <p>\$49.99 USD, \$64.99 CND, £35.50 GBP</p> <p>ISBN-10: 0596101996</p> <p>ISBN-13: 978-0-596-10199-2</p> <p>Intermediate/Advanced</p> <p>Strengths: Good reference book, covers cookies, Ajax and XML.</p> <p>Weaknesses: Not as many Ajax coverage as I'd like, continues to devote a considerable amount of space to teaching JavaScript basics, and a bit on the pricy side.</p>	
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The web has evolved over time, as newer and (sometimes) better technologies arose. O'Reilly released the fourth edition their JavaScript guide in 2001, but decided the expanded use of Ajax and other programming developments justified an update.

David Flanagan organized this 1000+ page book into four sections. The first section introduces JavaScript programming, a good starting point for people new to the language. Developers not needing to learn about libraries can skip ahead to section two, otherwise a stop at chapter 10 is worthwhile, since libraries are useful for large projects, as they help keep code organized and insure it is easy to update.

Programmers already experienced with JavaScript should go directly to section two to read about client-side JavaScript. The first few chapters in section two are interesting, however I liked Chapter 16, where the author covers CSS and DHTML - not enough information to replace books dedicated to either topic, but still worthwhile. Chapter 17 addresses events and event handling, chapter 18 covers forms and chapter 19 gives good coverage of cookies. Chapter 20 discusses Ajax, but only provides a single example. Section three cover core JavaScript reference material, and section four is a client-side JavaScript reference.

The first two sections of this book help people learning JavaScript, while the last two sections provides good reference materials to people involved with development projects.

Conclusion

This book is a handy JavaScript reference for programmers working with JavaScript and wanting to update their skills regarding Ajax. My favorite chapters were 16 (CSS and DHTML), 19 (cookies), and 20 (scripting – covers Ajax).

If you already own previous editions of this book, or want to learn about JavaScript, this book belongs on your bookshelf. If you want a lot of in-depth coverage on CSS, DHTML or other subjects lightly covered in this book, O'Reilly has books dedicated to those subjects. A good example is O'Reilly's CSS Cookbook by Christopher Schmitt, reviewed in the February 2007 issue of *macCompanion*.

Network Security Hacks: Tips & Tools for Protecting Your Privacy, 2nd Edition

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

O'REILLY®

Author: Andrew Lockhart

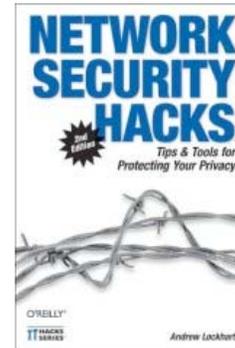
<http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/netsechacks2/index.html>

Released: October 2006.

Pages: 455

\$30 USD, \$39 CND, £21 GBP, 24 € Euro

ISBN: 0596527632



For System Admins and Security Specialists.

Strengths: Covers Linux, BSD and Windows security issues and what to do about them.

Weaknesses: None found.

What They Say

In the fast-moving world of computers, things are always changing. Since the first edition of this strong-selling book appeared two years ago, network security techniques and tools have evolved rapidly to meet new and more sophisticated threats that pop up with alarming regularity. The second edition offers both new and thoroughly updated hacks for Linux, Windows, OpenBSD, and Mac OS X servers that not only enable readers to secure TCP/IP-based services, but helps them implement a good deal of clever host-based security techniques as well. This second edition of *Network Security Hacks* offers 125 concise and practical hacks, including more information for Windows administrators, hacks for wireless networking (such as setting up a captive portal and securing against rogue hotspots), and techniques to ensure privacy and anonymity, including ways to evade network traffic analysis, encrypt email and files, and protect against phishing attacks. System administrators looking for reliable answers will also find concise examples of applied encryption, intrusion detection, logging, trending and incident response. In fact, this "roll up your sleeves and get busy" security book features updated tips, tricks & techniques across the board to ensure that it provides the most current information for all of the major server software packages. These hacks are quick, clever, and devilishly effective.

Conclusion

If you want to master security issues regarding Unix variants, BSD variants or Windows variants, you've come to the right place, because this you can peruse 125 different "hacks".

Very few of the hacks discuss Mac OS X – and that is a good thing! There are 12 chapters on Unix and Windows hosting, privacy and anonymity, firewalling, encryption and securing services, network, wireless security, logging, monitoring and trending, secure tunnels, network intrusion detection and recovery and response, so nearly all, if not all, bases are covered under one cover.

Digital Video Production Cookbook

Reviewed by Dr. Eric Flescher

O'REILLY®

Author: Chris Kenworthy

1005 Gravenstein Highway North
Sebastopol CA 95472 USA

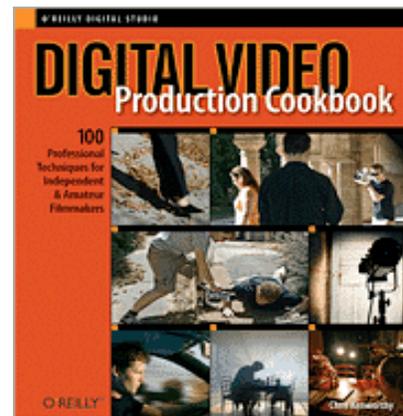
<http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/digvidprod/index.html>

Released: 2006

Pages: 192

\$30 USD \$42 CND, £48 GBP, 24 € Euro

ISBN: 0596100310



Intermediate/Advanced

Strengths: Well-illustrated, great step-by-step instructions and good photographs. Exceptional listing of techniques used in major studies that can be used in some of your own videos.

Weaknesses: To product some of the effects, some third party software may needed (none is listed in the book).

Video production has been an easier affair since the advent of new and affordable software and video camcorders. Computer users are still possibly looking for additional ways to “spice” up their videos and make them more professional looking. If so, 100 professional techniques for independent and amateur filmmakers found in the book, Digital Video Production Cookbook, will help improve your video making endeavors.

The author has crafted a series of nice techniques that can be selected to improve your videos in different ways. He has written, produced and directed award winning films, writes a special effects columns for Computer Arts magazine and is a contributor to the magazine MacFormat. What is nice about this book is that the author literally takes engaging and sophisticated effects that are normally used in major studios and films, and demonstrates how these special effects can be used to transform your own video productions.

The introductory section does not begin with information about how to use your camcorder, work with videocassettes or software. This book is taking your work to the next level after your have learned to use some of your technology. Because of this, Macintosh as well as PC users can use this book along with different types of equipment and software. If you are a novice at video creation computer user, the book might help after one learns the initial use and tries some tips.

The 192 page book has 13 chapter- sections. Each technique - 1-2 pages long - is direct, straight-forward and demonstrated what you can do to create one or more special effects. The book is well designed, nicely illustrated in color with exceptional photos and clear step-by-step instructions to assist you through the techniques.

The Introduction section does not cover use of cameras, software or similar information. The focus is on the special effects. So if you need to start first and find out about software and hardware, go elsewhere and then come back to this boo for going beyond.

This book deals with a wide array of interesting effects that can transform your videos from dull to moderate to very intriguing. Other sections in the book deal with Lighting Effects (backlight, horror lightning effect, colored lights for example) , Camera Illusions (frame within a frame, split focus), Camera Movement (dolly shots, spin, criss-cross walk-in)and Editing Illusions (slow motion, supernatural speed, off- camera action).

Other effects include Production effects (flickering overhead, blood impact, knife impact, chase scenes on foot) and Visual Effects (famous bluescreen effect, explosions, poltergeist, laser bolts). Additional ideas include safe Stunts (punches, breaking down a roof, time travel effects), Advanced Effects (computer screen projections, creating a moonlight forest, faking night outdoors), Night Shoots (rear projection, faking night shots indoors, creating a moonlit forest), Weather (movie rain, fake snow, desert sun, storms), Sound (impact, atmosphere, science fiction) and Makeup (aging, youth, bruising).

Conclusion

If you have your camcorder then you have a head start. There are suggestions for Macintosh and PC software, although the author says that Macs are “computers of choice for moviemaking”. With this book all you need is digital effects help and creative solutions and this book sure has many to choose from. This book is well worth the price and provides a lot of ideas and techniques. While it might not make your movie win an Emmy, this product can make your movie shine and possibly better than the ones you previously created.

Macintosh Efficiency

Reviewed by Chris Marshall



Author: Paul Rego

<http://homepage.mac.com/macocosmos/>

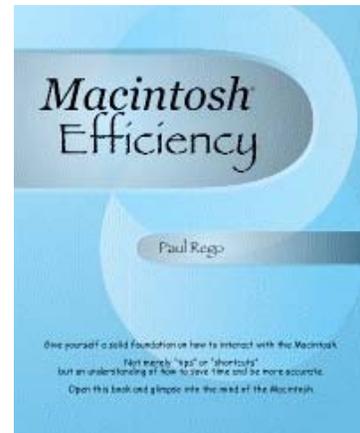
<http://www.cafepress.com/vantages>

Released: 12 September 2006

\$26 USD

Pages: 157

ISBN: 0945876130



Audience: Potential Switchers and Novice Mac Users

Strengths: Well laid out and clearly explained

Weaknesses: Tries to be more than it can be at this level



What They Say

Specifically illustrated for “Tiger”, Mac OS X 10.4, most of the techniques presented within this book apply to all versions of Mac® OS X — some can even be applied to Mac OS 9.

The information inside this book is designed to help you become more efficient in more of your Macintosh interactions. You’ll not only gain some “speed” in working with the Mac, but you’ll be more productive, make fewer mistakes, lose some of that “What just happened?” frustration and diminish a little more of that “technological stress” we can sometimes have.

Why does this book call itself an “efficiency” book? Isn’t it just another book on “tips” and “shortcuts”? No. It really does approach Macintosh usage from a “how the user can be more efficient” standpoint.

The information within this book has been designed to be clear and concise with illustrations at every opportunity and a complete index at the back. Each new “Efficiency” starts on a left page. Because of this two-page- spread approach, you get the maximum amount of information with fewer page turns.

The text is relatively large, so it is easier on your eyes. Secondary titles help to separate themselves from other areas and each “Efficiency” appears in two ways: a short, quickstart section at the top followed by a detailed, step-by-step explanation, including illustrations. For those of you who just need an overview, you only have to read a few sentences. If you’d like a more in-depth understanding of a particular “Efficiency”, you can dig into the added content. The layout of this book will also come in handy after you’ve gone through all the information.

Later, any time you simply need a memory jogger, just jump to an “Efficiency” and read the quickstart section at the top!

What I Say

I didn't really like this book. Having said that there is absolutely nothing wrong with it, it just strikes me as a book for lazy people. By that I mean that pretty much everything that it covers you can either find out for yourself just by trying things out on your Mac, or by spending time in and around the Mac 'cast and blog world.

But, if you are a lazy person you will probably find this very useful, won't mind paying the \$26, and will no doubt love the fact that it is in really big print so you don't have to strain your eyes. Ah, but just think – if the print was normal sized, you wouldn't have to expend so much energy turning the 157 pages. What dilemmas you must face – not least I guess whether you can be bothered to read the rest of this review?

I like the idea of the book, and I fully support Café Press (after all they run my own merchandise store) but I just couldn't really see the point of this book. It wasn't creative or new enough for me. The skeptic in me thinks the large print was really just to pad the book out to 157 pages so they could even start to justify the \$26 price. It has the look and feel of a \$10 “Take Control” type eBook and if they had pitched into that market I think it would have been a much better value, and would have attracted a more relevant audience.

What it does it does well and with admirable “efficiency” – all nine chapters are called “Something Efficiency”, but I just found myself skimming through to many pages to see if there was something that caught my eye. Maybe I am not a “Beginner to Expert” level, but as I have only had a Mac for less than a year and I am no expert I tend to think I am in their target market. My wife certainly is, and she got bored part way through the first chapter.

Conclusion

The book is OK. If you are desperately in need of some advice then it will be fine, but if you have the time (and energy) to shop around a bit or exercise those chubby little fingers on the keyboard and mouse then I would check out the alternatives first.

Gimp 2 for Photographers: Image Editing with Open Source Software

Reviewed by Wayne LeFevre

Author: Klaus Goelker

<http://www.rockynook.com>

Rocky Nook, Inc.

26 West Mission Street, Suite 3

Santa Barbara, CA 93101

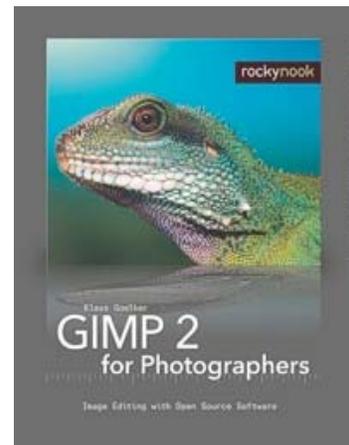
<http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/1933952032/index.html>

Released: October 2006

Pages: 200, includes CD

\$29.95 USD, \$38.95 CND, £15 GBP, 22€ Euro

ISBN: 1933952032



Target Audience: Beginner Photographers, Designers, Illustrators.

Strengths: Nicely formatted and heavyweight pages. Very colorful and tutorials are in easy to follow workshops.



Weaknesses: None.

What They Say

Image editing has become a key element in the photographic workflow. Image editing tools, most notably Photoshop, are usually sophisticated and deep applications - and are fairly expensive. The only open source tool in this market is the GIMP, which has developed into a powerful, multi-platform system running on Linux, as well as OS X and Windows. This book has evolved from the classroom materials which the author developed and taught in courses and workshops on image editing with the GIMP.

It covers the basics of image editing and guides the reader through the functions and tools of the GIMP from simple adjustments to more advanced techniques of working with layers and masks. The more important editing functions are presented in individual workshops. Moreover, the book covers the stitching of panoramic images and preparation of high-quality black and white images.

In GIMP 2 for Photographers you will learn:

1. The basics of image editing.
2. The many functions and tools of the GIMP.
3. How to make simple adjustments.
4. Working with advanced techniques.
5. How to work with layers and masks.

6. Stitching of panoramic images.
7. Preparation of high-quality black and white images.

What I Say

Last month I gave a glowing review for the Ubuntu Linux for Non-Geeks. Using the book made is so easy to install and make your way around the free OS. It was as much a kudos to the Operating System as it was to the book. One of the programs that comes pre-installed on the Ubuntu distribution is GIMP.

GIMP 2

GIMP is an acronym for GNU Image Manipulation Program. It started in the Linux world and is an Opened Source free image editing program. It is touted as the Photoshop of the Linux world. GNU, meaning GNU's Not Unix, and refers to a collection of software based on the Unix OX. Being that GIMP is a free and Open Sourced, it can be difficult to find good tutorials on the app, unlike Photoshop, that has a plethora of video and books on the subject.

Now comes Gimp 2 for Photographers from a fairly new publisher named Rocky Nook, based in California and is closely associated with dpunkt.verlag in Germany. Being focused on mainly on Digital Photography, their books are, so far, few. But if this book is any indication, they will become a major force in the photography field. It's a quality, well put together book full of quality color photos and tutorials.

The nice thing is this book is not meant to be a reference guide, but more of a tutorial that guides you step by step using GIMP and editing your photos like you want. Learn by actually doing and using the examples provided on the CD instead of getting a detailed explanation of every button in the application. (Though, you do find out eventually.)

Instead of starting right out in how to install GIMP, it starts you learning about GIMP and an introduction to Digital Image Editing. After you find out what the differences are in image formats, loading photos and managing them, even explaining RAW Images, then it gets to installing GIMP. So right away, you know that this book doesn't just focus on the mechanics of the program, but the hows and whys. Everything needed to install GIMP is also included on the CD for Windows, Linux and Mac OS X. Windows and the Mac need runtime environments that will need to be installed first. Mac will need X11 on your installation CD.

After going through the install process, you learn the tools and start editing. As an aside, a red-eye tool would sure be a boon to GIMP. As they say in the book, though, GIMP is not a replacement for Photoshop. Photoshop offers features that are not yet available on the GIMP. You may also find that GIMP 2 has been made to look more like Windows, and the book seems to have used the Windows version. It guides you through everything from cropping, to a section on just working with scanned images. A little touch up work that goes well beyond iPhoto, to just freshening up a "Dull Sky".

Conclusion

I found this book incredibly informative. Though I have GIMP installed on my Linux machine, I've never really used it before I received GIMP 2 for Photographers. The main advantage of this book is that not only did I learn how to use GIMP, but I actually started learning about real photo editing. I know that sounds a little funny, but even if you don't use GIMP, and you need to learn about image editing in general than this is a great book. I now find myself comfortable with layers, masks, lighting and more. It just so happens that GIMP is the editor of choice, but not necessity.

The CD includes all formats of the GIMP installations, all the photos for the tutorials, and even includes a PDF of the book for quick reference. I don't think you can go wrong with this one!

Author Klaus Goelker is an architect and photographer who lives and works in Munich, Germany. He also teaches courses on image editing at a local art school. He uses the GIMP to this class because it is free and yet powerful enough to do serious photographic image editing. This beginner's guide to the GIMP has evolved from the classroom materials the author developed and used in courses and workshops on image editing.

Photoshop Blending Modes Cookbook for Digital Photographers

Reviewed by Dr. Eric Flescher

O'REILLY®

Authors: John Beardsworth

<http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/photoblend/index.html>

Released: November 2005

Pages: 176

\$30 USD, \$42CND, £48 GBP, 21€ Euro

ISBN: 0596100205

Novice/Intermediate/Advanced

Strengths: One of the nicest books I have found .Easy to read yet comprehensive and stimulating visually as well reading wise. Covers some complex topics in an easily read manner. Uses brilliant photos, color screenshots and short yet helpful step by step instructions.

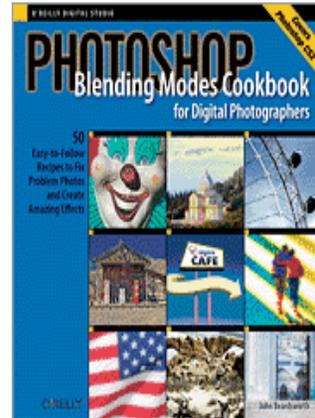
Weaknesses: None found.

Many computers who want to transform their pictures and graphics think about using Photoshop. Many don't understand that you can do some of the graphics related work and slowly build up to more intensive operations. In other words, one does not need to learn the "whole package" to become acquainted with and get started with graphics and picture design. Better yet, if there is good book to start learning Photoshop skills and making your pictures better, then you may be able to improve your photos in no time. Working with the book Photoshop Blending Modes Cookbook for Digital Photographers may help you go farther.

The author, who is an consultant, web designer, writer and photographer brings all of his skills into play by showing step by step instructions for achieving distinctive photographs. As the name implies, this book has a number of recipes cooked up for you in the form of tutorials, helping you complete a wide range of image laden special effects and graphic maneuvers.

This book is one of the nicest books I have seen. Some books have the same staging on pages but this one is different. Each page is distinct in itself with different patterns on the pages which at the same time inspires harmony yet creativity. Brilliant photos, color screenshots and short yet helpful step by step instructions draw you into the learning process. The pastels and light colors set the different parts of the pages apart which makes for easy yet compelling reading even for graphic intensive topics that the book covers.

The author manages to start off with "Blending Modes in Detail". Instructions detail information about dodging, use of light, saturation, luminosity and much more. Learn as you go is the motto here.



Then the tutorials called “recipes,” provide learning about sharpening, use of lens flares, reducing noise, posterization, adjusting lighting, creating surface textures and effects, adding effects to city and landscapes and offers learning about unique methods and techniques that can transform your photos. Finally an appendix deals with blending mode keystrokes, a glossary, index, further sources and acknowledgments.

Conclusion

I can't say enough about this book. Not only does it have great information, it reads easily yet covers easy to unique topics. The coloration of the book is one of the nicest graphics oriented books I have encountered and review. Pleasing to the eye , the author excites the mind with new possibilities for making your digital photos better. Have a look. You will find this book a great one for your collection.

Shareware

The **Section 5** shareware reviews in this issue of *macCompanion* are:

- ✚ Amnesty Singles 1.1.1 – turn widgets into applications, reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad
- ✚ ICeCoffEE 1.4.3 – activate typed URLs in Cocoa applications, reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad
- ✚ Mac Notepad 3.0.2 – yes another note pad app you absolutely must have, reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad
- ✚ RabbitRadio Dashboard Widget – an easy way to listen to your favorite NPR station, reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad
- ✚ The 13 Days of the New Year – Shareware I Want to Find; or Have You Send Me a Hint or Three – new or improved shareware applications we'd like to see, by Harry {doc} Babad

From Assistant Editor Harry {doc} Babad:

macCompanion Help Wanted

Shareware and freeware reviewers for macCompanion

Motivation - There's so much out there to share

Rewards - Seeing your name in print

- Sharing new toys with soon to be friends

Contact - Robert/cc Harry

Expected salary - The product is yours all yours.

macCompanion is looking for a few good people that want to write informative reviews of shareware products. Writing experience is useful, but not an absolute requirement.

Amnesty Singles 1.1.1

No more widgets, I just keep these *WidgiApps* in a folder in my dock and use them as needed.
Reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad



http://www.mesadynamics.com/amnesty_singles.htm

Support: support@mesadynamics.com

\$10 USD

Requirements: Mac OS X 10. Mac OS X 10.4 or later recommended, Universal Binary.

Release Date: September 4, 2006

Download Size: 1.3 MB



Audience: All user levels

Strengths — Great product limited only by the coding limitations of the widget converted.



Weaknesses — Lack of information on widget coding limitations causes one to rely on trial and error when converting widgets to *WidgiApps*.

The software was tested on a 1 GHz dual processor PowerPC G4 Macintosh with 2 GB DDR SDRAM running under OS X 10.4.8.

Product and company names and logos in this review may be registered trademarks of their respective companies.

Disclaimer: When briefly reviewing share-freeware I will often use the developer's product, functions and features descriptions. All other comments are strictly my own and based on testing. Why need I rewrite the developers' narratives, if they are clearly written?

Introduction

I'm not a widget collector; it's the one kind of share-freeware that doesn't turn me on. My Dashboard contains only a few tools, most of which I don't use, at least from the Dashboard. In almost all cases, I've a more comfortable alternative to Dashboard. I've set up nested folders that contain references sites (phone-people directories, dictionaries/thesauri) and tools (calculators food conversion and straight) that sit in my dock – a click away. Alternatively, and better yet, for a few tools, I have a menubar items [e.g., iSeek and shadowGoogle] that are always ready to use.

Installed Widgets — Tools that I mostly ignore		
AccuWeather Weather	AcronymFinder	AmazonPedia
Calculator	Google	Radio Rabbit
Stocks	The White Pages	Ultralingua Dictionary
Unit Converter Tool	Wicktionary	Yellow Pages

I've used and reviewed Beholder, a graphics search tool, from Mesa Dynamics and found the product both useful and stable, so I asked myself why not give Amnesty Singles a spin. I'm mostly glad I did.

Product Description and Purpose

Amnesty Singles is a drag-and-drop-utility that converts any Dashboard widget into a standalone application for Mac OS X Tiger and Panther (10.3.9). There is only one hitch with this application. Only newer widgets, written in the correct code will fully function after conversion. The only way I've found to determine what works is by trial and error.

If you are knowledge shy about widgets, check out the postscript [PS] to this article.

Using the Product

Installing this application is simple. Open its .dmg, and drag it to your applications folder. Open the application, and simply drop a widget file onto the Amnesty Singles window, click a button, and out pops a small OS X application that will open an instance of the widget outside of Dashboard when launched.

Applications built with Amnesty Singles also include features important for running a widget continuously outside Dashboard such as adjusting the window display level (desktop, standard or floating) and setting an "auto refresh" timer.



Amnesty Singles Test Results	
WORKED: FidelityMarketMonitor 1.0 (September 2006) — This widget, which I downloaded from the Apple site worked perfectly. Its interface is more complex than that of the Stocks.wdgt but that's only a minor learning problem.	WORKED: AcronymFinder 1.2 (May 2006) — The widget was completely functional when converted. Type in an acronym, click enter, and it takes you to the Acronym Finder webpage where you can take your pick of definitions
WORKED: RabbitRadio 1.11(August 2006) — This works perfectly. This is a tool to find and listen to NPR broadcasts. See the review in this issue of macCompanion.	DID NOT WORK: AmazonPedia 1.4 (May 2006) – Strange result, the widget is fairly recent. It of course works from the Dashboard

Amnesty Singles Test Results	
<p>WORKED: AcronymFinder 1.2 (May 2006) — The widget was completely functional when converted. Type in an acronym, click enter, and it takes you to the Acronym Finder webpage where you can take your pick of definitions.</p>	<p>DID NOT WORK: Stocks.wdgt (March 2005) — I had problems. The widget itself allowed me to add (or delete) stocks I wanted to follow. Converting the widget to either External or Internal format gave me an application to which I could not add the stocks I wanted to follow. I guess the widget failed the coding test. I did find a product called FidelityMarketManager that worked in both modes</p>
<p>WORKED: Wiktionary 0.9.1a (August 2006) — Just perfect!</p>	

Other Features

Amnesty Singles Modes... *doc's Understanding?* —
External with dependency – The original widget remains in your library > widgets folder and an application is created that ties to it.

Internal (self contained) - A copy of the widget bundled with the application will be crated with the widget loaded into it from its location ion your hard disk. Note that the developer does not explain these choices. Nor are there any reasons given for their use. I've been using the large sized Internal application format for my WidgiApps because I may want to delete the original widget form my hard disk. That I assume will allow me to continue using the new application.

Panther Users — "Independence" from Dashboard means Panther users can – for the first time – get in on Apple's widget experience, using Amnesty's *Widget Browser* to run many third party Dashboard widgets (a library of sample widgets is also bundled with every copy). I'll check out Widget Browner some day soon {doc}.



Discomforts

Amnesty Singles *Widgiapps* Limitations — The applications with bundled widgets can only be run on computers with Amnesty Singles is registered in your name. [I'm guessing that is a limitation for both modes but can't provide since I only own one computer.] This is a needless limitation since almost all the widgets I checked are freeware items bound by fair use conventions. Simply concerting them to a stand-alone application should not be so restricted.

Documentation — The total lack of documentation made it more difficult to effectively use this product. [Its shareware not freeware, sol there's no excuse.] There is neither a readme or help file provided. Such help is crucial to user understanding of both the operating modes for the product and it widget coding related limitations.

Lost in Translation — I wonder why the application cannot keep the preferences (selections) that you've created in a widget when transforming it to an application. That would be especially useful for stock tracking.

Conclusions

Amnesty Singles is an almost perfect for users who don't want widgets running continuously in Dashboard or in Mesa Dynamics [Amnesty Widget Browser](#) (a review for another day) but would rather launch and control widgets just like other OS X applications. And yes Intel Mac owners, widget applications are built as Universal (although all your widgets may not be, so it's best to check first). Had there been some help files, I would have rated the product higher than 3.5 stars.

Addendum

What You Might Not Know About Widgets:

Some of you may not know that Widgets live not in the Dashboard, but rather in your Library > Widgets folder.

In the table below, I've copied two of Apple Help's widget related files. Now you know almost as much as I do.

 <h3>Managing widgets</h3> <p>The Widgets Dashboard widget lets you disable or enable widgets to hide or show them in the widget bar; remove widgets that you've installed in Dashboard; and open the Dashboard Widgets website to download and install additional widgets. To open the Widgets Dashboard widget: Open Dashboard. Click the Open (+) button to reveal the widget bar. Click Manage Widgets. To disable a widget, deselect the checkbox in front of the widget's name. All open copies of the widget are closed and the widget is removed from the widget bar. To enable a widget again, select the checkbox in front of the widget's name. The widget appears in the widget bar.</p>	 <h3>Removing widgets</h3> <p>If you've downloaded and installed additional widgets in Dashboard, you can later remove them. Open Dashboard, and then click the Open (+) button to reveal the widget bar. Click Manage Widgets to open the Widgets Dashboard widget. Widgets that can be removed have a red Remove (-) button after their names. Click the Remove (-) button to remove the widget. Click OK to confirm that you want to move the widget to the Trash. You cannot remove the standard Mac OS X widgets that come with Dashboard, only widgets that you've added.</p>
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If you want to collect more widgets you can either checkout Apple's Mac Help in the Finder Menu Bar [<http://www.apple.com/downloads/dashboard/?r=dbw>], which contains perhaps 3,000 from you to choose from – but some may be duplicated in the index. There are only a mere 970 widgets on MacUpdate. Whether you use Dashboard or prefer to create *WidgiApps*, there are lots of great, or not so great tools to use.

ICeCoffEE 1.4.3

Activate URLs in Cocoa Applications where that function is absent

Reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad

Developer: Nicholas Riley

<http://web.sabi.net/nriley/software/>

Support: icecoffee@sabi.net

Freeware

Requirements: Mac OS X 10.3.9 or later, universal binary.

Release Date: July 25, 2006 Download Size: 1.7 MB

Audience: All user levels

Strengths — Simple and to the point – it either works or it doesn't.

Weaknesses — The documentation could be more easily accessible and I could not link email address to Eudora.



The software was tested on a 1 GHz dual processor PowerPC G4 Macintosh with 2 GB DDR SDRAM running under OS X 10.4.8. I use Safari, Firefox and Eudora for Internet related activities.

Product and company names and logos in this review may be registered trademarks of their respective companies.

Disclaimer: When briefly reviewing share-freeware I will often use the developer's product, functions and features descriptions. All other comments are strictly my own and based on testing. Why need I rewrite the developer's narratives, if they are clearly written?

Publisher's Summary

ICeCoffEE lets you Command-click on URLs in Cocoa applications to launch them. It is modeled after ICeTEe, for classic Mac OS, which provided the same functionality in many Macintosh applications by patching TextEdit.

Command-click anywhere in a Cocoa application's text area. Some Cocoa applications that come with Mac OS X include Stickies, TextEdit, Mail, and Network Utility. Control-click (or if you have a multi-button mouse, click with the right button) on a text area, and notice a "Services" menu at the bottom. This menu works the same as the Services menu in the menu bar.

Introduction

I thought I was done with doing reviews for the January issue when I came across this little Gem. I couldn't resist; enjoy... doc!

Q. "What does ICeCoffEE stand for?"

A. "Internet Configuration Carbon/Cocoa Editing Extension. Or something like that — from the Nicholas Riley's Product FAQ.

Working With

Installing this application is simple. Open its .dmg, Click on the installer. Reboot or restart your Macintosh.

Find a URL (link) you want to open in a document whose application doesn't support activating URLs. Highlight it and then go to the services menu [Found under the application icon in the application menubar. Click open URL. Alternatively, command click on a URL. And there you'll be.

Installation Concerns — Note that some folks may have concern about installing a Application enhancement hack [APE] on their system, but I've done so with items from Unsanity.com and other firms that provide system haxies, so far with no problems.



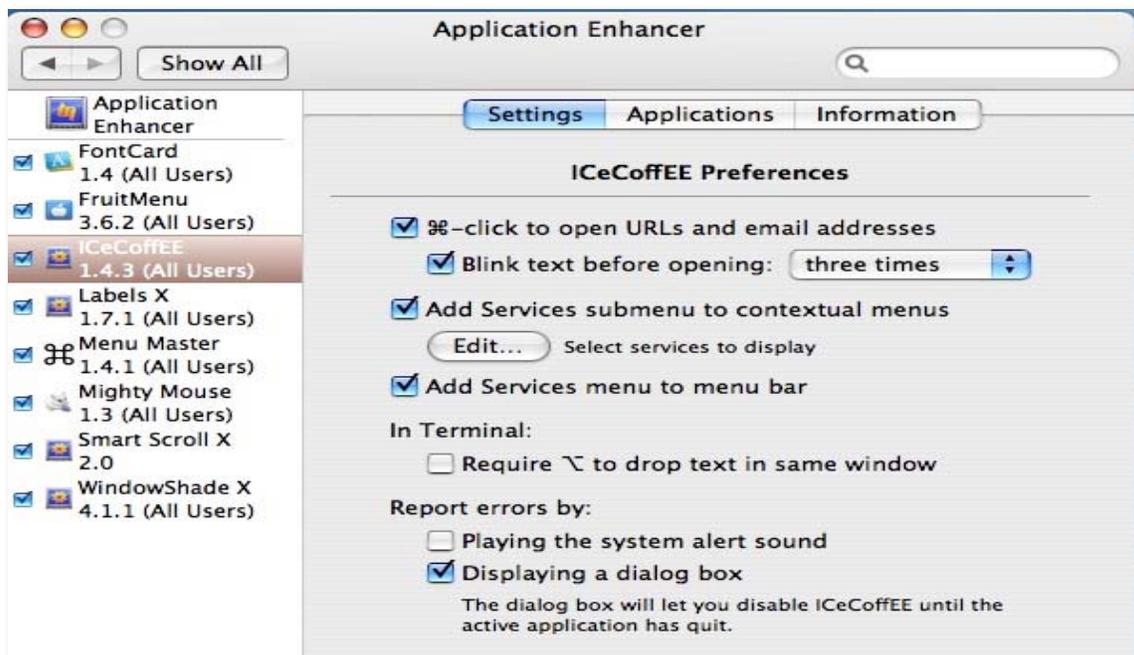
FileMaker Pro Hurrah! — When I used it in FileMaker Pro [FMP] (Version 6; I’ve not updated – the update still sit on my self.) I could activate links, from the service menu, whether they were in a URL field, or in a text box. Formatting the URL full or partial did not mater. However the mouse shortcut did not work in FMP

The native FMP means of activating a link in FMP was clumsy. First the link need full formatting {e.g., <http://www>.} and then I had to remember a shortcut key. Getting to a website could only be done from a “URL” database field. With ICeCoffEE, it doesn’t mater what “text” field the inactive link is in.

Other Weird Places ICeCoffEE Works or Not — The open URL service works for disclabel and Disc Cover, but why I’d want to use it in a labeling software program is beyond me – it was late out and I was playing. I could not get it to work in Apple Works, not surprising since it’s a not a Cocoa application. I also could not, to my disappointment, get it to work in Apimac’s Mac Notepad 3.0, which I review in this issue.

Curiouser and Curiouser — If you attempt to activate an email address you get the web server at its domain name. Although I’ve tried all sorts of alternates, I could not get my system to get me to my Eudora email client via the services menu. I’ve written the developer, but in fairness. 16 hours is not enough time for him to respond – deadlines - deadlines - deadlines.

Configuration — To change ICeCoffEE’s settings, open System Preferences (in the menu). Click “Application Enhancer”, click the Modules tab, and then select ICeCoffEE from the module list. [See the APE illustration above.]



The Settings tab allows you to turn on and off various features of ICeCoffEE. Your changes take effect immediately for all applications in which the current version of ICeCoffEE is active.

Removing ICeCoffEE — To temporarily disable ICeCoffEE, use the Application Enhancer System Preferences pane (see the “Configuration” section below). To remove ICeCoffEE completely, use the “Uninstall” button in the installer, or drag “ICeCoffEE.ape” to the Trash.

A Small Documentation Problem — A minor concern with this product is that I could not print it readme file that was part of the installer. Now why can't the developer extend this service to email addresses? Since much of the information one needs to get comfortable with the product is in this “file” reader would be well served in Nicholas made the help materials a separate readme file in the download. I actually had to copy it out of the installer dialog. Identical information about the program was also in its APE file, but with no direct printing, it was more difficult to access for reference purposes.

No Linking To eMail Addresses — Although both the authors notes and some reviews I found mention the ability to link to address via the services menu, I'm confused why that function didn't work for me. Perhaps it's a Eudora 6.2.4 thing.

Add Services Menu to the Menubar — I couldn't install services as a separate menu item as allowed by the developer. Not a big deal, its there under the file menu.

Conclusions

This product is a lifesaver to FileMaker Pro 6 users and for users of the many applications Apple chose not to use a link activation APE. The price is right and the risk is low. Try ICeCoffEE and check which applications you routinely use that don't allow link activation, get with it.

Command-clicking into URLs is a easy, but the real strength of this product is by way of the Services Menu via the Contextual Menu: if the control click in a document doesn't show the Services menu item; File > Services > Open URL, services does.

Mac Notepad 3.0.2

Taking notes and keeping track of them must be addicting; here's another fine product to practice your craving

Reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad



Developer: Apimac

<http://www.apimac.com/notepad/>

Support: Submit a question (ticket) from the website

\$20 USD

Trial Period, open but the printing features are disabled and no more than 15 notes can be added. Plus those nagging startup windows... Yuk.

Requirements: Mac OS X 10.2 or later, *not* universal binary.

Release Date: August 33, 2006

Download Size: 12.5 MB



Audience: All user levels

Strengths — Mac Notepad helps you organize any piece of text you may want to keep on hand.

Weaknesses — Nothing significant, but the product I now use allows me to work both with text, formatted text and graphics.

The software was tested on a 1 GHz dual processor PowerPC G4 Macintosh with 2 GB DDR SDRAM running under OS X 10.4.8.

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Disclaimer: When briefly reviewing share-freeware I will often use the developer's product, functions and features descriptions. All other comments are strictly my own and based on testing. Why need I rewrite the developer's narratives, if they are clearly written?

Publisher's Summary

Mac OS X is great but it still continues to lack a note pad program into which you can freely paste and copy any piece of text you may want to be at hand. Mac Notepad lets you save and organize any piece of text you may want to be at hand: you can paste it in, drag it from other applications, drop it as a text file from the Finder or, of course, write it yourself.



Introduction

Once again, dear readers, my affair with notepad, ToDo and related products came to the forefront. A year ago I reviewed Apimac's Mac Notepad and found it an interesting and useful, if not perfect program. After reading the developer's descriptions of the improvements made to the product, I knew it was time to test it again.

Working With

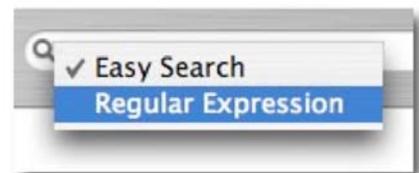
Installing this application is simple. Open its .dmg, and drag it you're your applications folder.

I've previously reviewed version 1.6 for macC July 2005 (3.5 macCs). In re-reading my earlier review, I was pleased to note that many of the issues I had with the program have been fixed, but as you will read further in this review, I turned up a new can-of-worms the made using the product awkward. Not fatal flaws, bur certainly not as good as the product deserves.

Testing by Importing Notes From shadowClipboard — I put the product through its paces by copying about a (RTF) dozen formatted text items from shadowClipboard using the same categories I've previously created. Then I created and formatted a few notes just to test that aspect of the interface. After checking the appearance of the individual clippings, and doing a bit of reformatting, for esthetic reasons only, I was satisfied that I could add material easily to the product.



Using the Find Features — I then tried various variations of the Find feature (see below) to look for imbedded words in my baker's dozen notes. Initially the Find function seemed not to work. However, after I, both rebuilt both the note collection index and database all features of the Find feature worked fine. You access the rebuild function in the products preferences pane; [I just struck out in frustration — updating both; so I don't know which update did the job. [The product has no save command, but perhaps takes a while to integrate new material into its database and indices.]



Where the Stuff is Stored — The location of Notepad's data, useful should you want to backup your notes is the tope level of your hard drive > Users > <you> > Library > Application Support > Apimac/Notepad > Notepad File.

However, we at macC urge all of you to do routine full hard disk backups. Using tools like SuperDuper to create a bootable full backup will keep you out of major trouble when gremlins strike.

A handy *recents* (items) menu will help you keep track of your most recent edited notes. Notes can be edited at will: different by using your choice of fonts, styles and colors. Apimac developers have added a new Align text feature that I found useful, at least esthetically. . All of these formatting tools are available for tuning the text inside a note. If you need your stored text on paper, you can always print it.



I was pleased to find that I could assign a title and a category to each note. This allowed notes to be easily accessed by category from a popup menu, or by content simply typing the text to be found in a search field. [I don't remember the earlier version I played with as having that feature.]

Do Easy And Advanced Searching — Mac Notepad gives you two search options, *Easy Search* or *Regular Expression*.

Easy Search will match any text you entered in the search field even in a not contiguous manner. For example "nice girl" will match "Mary is a nice girl" as well as "Berenice is a little girl".

Regular Expression is an advanced search method based on patterns, for example "nice|girl" will match either "nice try" and "pretty girl". More info on regular expression can be found on many websites such as the dedicated page of Wikipedia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regular_Expression.

Other Package Features

Version 3 of Mac Notepad sports the brand new *Iconize* feature, just a click and your note pad becomes a handy and small window that stays on top of all the other windows so you can find it easily and get again it with a click.



A password check button lets you protect your personal notes with a password. If this option is selected, at the opening of Mac Notepad a password dialog box will be displayed. To gain access to the notes it will be necessary to enter the correct password. [*I've been burned using such features so this aspect went untested.*]



Upgrading from Older Versions — The developer provides a limited manual that provides information on upgrading older sets of notes.

Discomforts and More

This was a particularly frustrating re-review. It was an expectations thing! Although many of my earlier problems with the software were solved, in detailed testing — less than three hours, I found too many items that were inconvenient or cumbersome to use. Let me list the ways! As a result of my findings, I don't know whether to laugh hysterically or cry.

No Undo Feature – I accidentally pasted unneeded material in a note but the tradition Command-Z undo was not available. So I had to scroll though the note deleting material by “cutting” it out.

27 Letters Limit in a Note Title or Category Name — Humbug!

I Can't Color Code Categories — Am I missing something – this is such an obvious feature, common to many applications?

I Can't Create More Than One Blank Note at a Time – The ability to create a batch of notes would be useful when I need to set up more than a single note from a complex source document.

I Can't Select More Than One Note From a List Of Notes — This makes it awkward to assign or reassign categories as my needs change. What ever happened to the traditional grouping items in a list (or window) using Command-Click?

The Ability to Paste a Note's Contents to an External Document is Awkward — I tried, in the absence of a detailed manual, a number of methods of trying to paste my notes into a MS word document. The only way that worked was to first sect all in a note > copy the document to the clipboard > paste the information into my MSW file. I could not drag and drop a note's contents from my notes list. Neither did any of the paste functions add material to my external document, the seemed only to function within the notes collection. Am I missing something?

Exporting Notes — I was initially delight that the new product has enhanced a note's formatting. But also when I exported a formatted note, all I was able to export were the words as plain unformatted text, useless for most of my needs. After all, I'd gone to the trouble of formatting a note, and zap it was gone. I don't know why the developer did not allow expo to RTF, but I sure miss such a feature. [Yes I know I can paste the note into a word processing document and keep the formatting intact, but that's beside the point – awkward, awkward.

A Weak Manual – The lack of either a real help file and an incomplete manual make it difficult for user to learn the functions of the tools the developer has provided. For example what is a *Tab* function? What are the limits on the import and export functions? Enough! To make life easy for a user a manual need to explain all menu and preference items, especially where they are not completely compliant with Macintosh conventions.

A Lack of Ability to Create Link Inside of a Note — Duh, this is the first product I've recently tested that doesn't allow one to designate properly formatted text (a URL or email address) as a functional link.

Spell Checker Needed — Again I must note that most other programs I've recently tested take advantage of Apple's built-in spellchecker, something useful when you're creating a note directly in Mac Notepad? For me such a feature is essential, since I type with two fingers, often hitting between the keys.

Conclusions

The good news – This is a better product than version 1.6.6. The developers have significantly enhanced its interface, and provide features that allow notes to be attractively formatted.

The Bad News — There are a large number of either undefined features or just plain awkward interface characteristics that make this product less pleasing to routinely use than I'd like. For now I'll stick to shadowClipboard, which also allows me to store images. With all of my discovered shortcomings I must rate this product only **3.0 macCs**. Either I liked versions 1.6.6 better or I've become a more detailed reviewer — readers take your choice.

Call for feedback:

Have a favorite shareware app you like better than NotesPad? Let us know (and why) – email Harry with the product, website for downloading and the reasons you like it.

RabbitRadio Dashboard Widget

An easy way to listen to your favorite NPR station

Reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad

Developer: Llew Mason

<http://www.lsmason.com/software/index.html>

Feedback or Support: to llewmason@yahoo.com

Freeware

Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4 or later, universal binary.

Release Date: August 2, 2006

Download Size: 930 KB

Audience: All NPR Listeners or those who'd like to hear advertisement free Jazz or folk or Classical music levels

Strengths — One easier way to access my favorite music one the Internet.

Weaknesses — A less than complete product but properly functioning product — See the section on discomforts.

The software was tested on a 1 GHz dual processor PowerPC G4 Macintosh with 2 GB DDR SDRAM running under OS X 10.4.8.

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Disclaimer: When briefly reviewing share-freeware I will often use the developer's product, functions and features descriptions. All other comments are strictly my own and based on testing. Why need I rewrite the developer's narratives, if they are clearly written?

Publisher's Summary

Sick of dealing with ugly audio plugins? Tired of leaving your web browser open to listen to online radio? RabbitRadio makes listening to (*many of*) your favorite National Public Radio [NPR] stations easy - and it features a minimal modern-looking interface. RabbitRadio currently supports real-time streaming audio from over 40 stations. See the end of the article for an almost current list.



Introduction

Okay, its confession time — I'm a devoted listener and supporter of national public radio. Where else can I find station totally, except for news, devoted to Jazz of folk music programming? Therefore although I am seldom attracted to widgets, I fell for this one.

Working With

Installing this application is simple. Download it, and install the widget. Using the simple controls on the back of the widget set your favorite NPR station. Then tune in.



Better yet after downloading and installing the widget, turn it into a WidgiApp with Amnesty Singles (reviewed in this issue). What you get is a small application that looks identical to the widget.

“The Interface is simple —

What do the buttons do? — The two left-hand-side buttons control the volume. The right-hand-side button plays and stops the streaming audio.

What do the different colored glowing circles mean? — A grey circle means 'connecting'. A blue circle means 'playing'. A red circle means 'failed'. The widget will automatically retry on failures. “

Discomforts

The developer has promised to consider adding other features to make using the program easier and more user friendly.

Adding a New Station Limitation — Llew Mason notes in his FAQ “If you send me email (llewmason@yahoo.com) with a request for a particular station, I'll do my best to add it in the next release of the widget. Currently I can only support stations that stream using a protocol that is supported by QuickTime. I'm looking at the possibility of supporting Real Player and Windows Media Player streaming in the future, but there are some technical issues that make this difficult.”

Features that Would Enhance RabbitRadio —

The developer also notes “I'm considering the following features. To Llew's list I added a few of mine.

- ✓ Allowing the user to increase the size of the RabbitRadio Window. The image in this review is much larger than the actual desktop RabbitRadio application window {doc}
- ✓ Support for adding your own stations to the widget. - *Good*
- ✓ Support for marking 'favorite' stations, and the ability to switch between favorite stations from the front-side of the widget. – *Yes, absolutely needed!*
- ✓ Adding many more stations (including foreign and commercial stations).
- ✓ Increased button sizes on the widget (especially Play/Stop). - *Yes, my eyes are too old for the tiny buttons.*
- ✓ Improved status graphics for connecting, playing, and failed to make it easier to understand the current state of the widget.
- ✓ Ability to get to this FAQ for help directly from the widget.”
- ✓ Doc suggests cataloging the stations by genre (news, classical, jazz, folk...)
- ✓ Being able to drag & drop some of the radio stations, many of which are NPR, from iTunes to RabbitRadio. I'd rather use Llew's product than iTunes. {doc}

Anyway, both the widget and the WidgiApp work exactly as described by the developer, but there's room for growth.

Conclusions

The product is easy to use, even if it is limited to being linked single station with no easy allowance to select from a favorites list. I like it well enough that I've added the product to my MacUpdate keep me posted list.

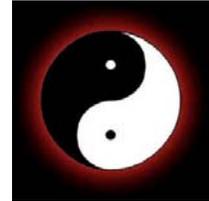
For now, I'm using it, as a WidgiApp. Now the Jazz on KPLU is instantly available to me, without having to go through iTunes. If I could only add one or three more stations, I might continue to ignore my Jazz CD collection in favor of the continuing diversity of a broadcast stream. Actually, I rip my Jazz CDs to allow me to load my favorites songs into iPod, so there's much instant value and gratification left in these, alas soon to be obsolescent, CDs. It wouldn't take much to make it a *four-pint-five* product, one I'd even pay \$10 to use.

Stations Presently Available:

ABC Classical Australia, JJJ Australia, KAXE, KBAQ, KCRW, KDFC, KERA, KEXP, KFAI, KHMD, KJZZ, KLCC, KLRE, KOPB, KPCC, KPFK, KPLU, KQED, KRWG, KSKA, KUAR, KUOW, KUT, KUT2, VPR, VPR Classical, WAMU, WBUR, WCPE, WDET, WDUQ, WFAE, WFAE2, WFUV, WGBH, WGBO, WHYY, WILL, WMUB, WNAN, WNCU, WNYC AM, WNYC FM, WNYC2, WUNC, WUOM, WUOT, and WYEP.

The 13 Days of the New Year - Shareware I Want To Find; or Have You Send Me a Hint or Three

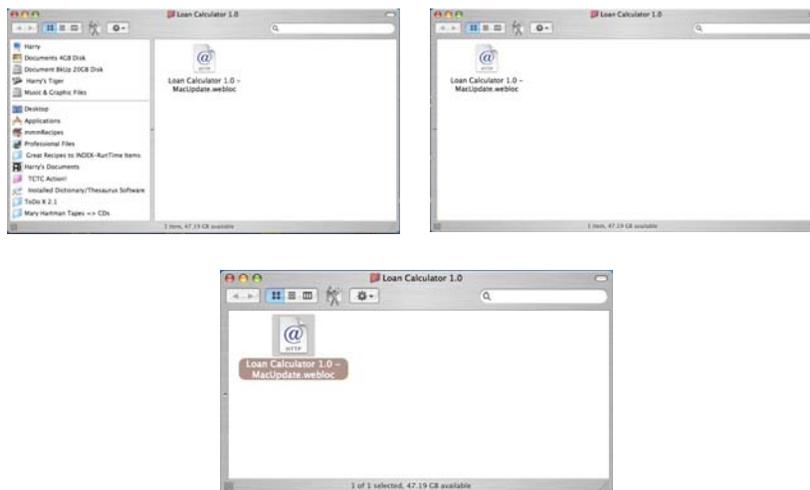
By Harry {doc} Babad



There are those of us who are addicted to shareware – compulsively checking Version Tracker of the MacUpdate site for new toys. But in all of our lives there comes a moment when we realize that even the prolific world of share-freeware development is not perfect or complete. No I'm not talking about product that rate 3.5 macCs or below. I'm talking about tools we'd like that either no one had developed yet or which we haven't found. Therefore this article.

Readers, should you find an application out in the great untamed Internet that meet one of the listed needs, let us know. We'll even give you a chance to review it if you'd like to contribute to macC. So here's the rest of my story

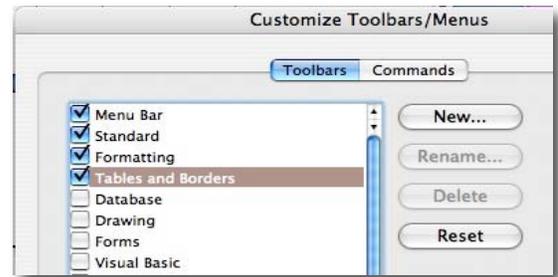
1. A Reward Posted: Wanted a PDF Macro Tool for Reformatting Downloaded items – At time I download a series of recipes from a site. All the recipes are formatted identically. But because the website doesn't have a printer friendly link all of a group of downloads contain too much; any is too much, side bar material. I'd like a PDF oriented macro tool in which I can cleanup one recipe by recording my actions, creating an appropriate template or script. I could then apply the macro to the rest of the recipe set. I've done this in MS Word, now why can't someone help do it in Acrobat or a stand-alone PDF tool. One at a time is a real drag.
2. A Simple Visually Oriented (no shifting pixels) Finder Window Size, View, Location Control — A haxie that forces the Finder to opens new or existing windows either in List or icon view with the with the side bar, as a default setting, closed! But the resulting window should retain the bottom strip that tells the user that there are X items and Y GB available. Item count is more important a GB remaining.



I shrank it

3. A Universal Menu Short Cut Assignment Tool – I'd like it also to be as easy to assign a keyboard shortcut in the Finder or any other application as it is in MS Word. Tools > Customize > Customize toolbars and Menus > Commands > Press the Keyboard Button. Find the item check the present commands and change what you want to customize. Note should I get this gift in '07, anyone who uses my computer will be as dismayed, as those who use shortcuts in my highly customized version of MS Word. [Heck, there's always the restore the original... option. I know there are tools for creating menu shortcuts, but I'd not found one that I liked. Hmmm, something that is so simple even doc in his dotage can handle it without as manual.

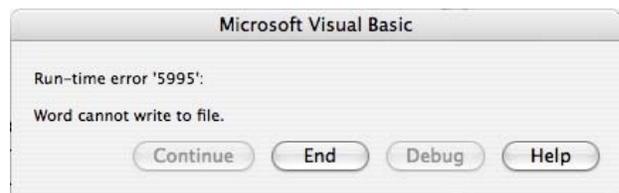
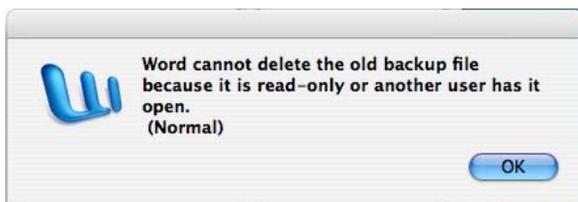
4. A Universal Tool Bar Configuration Tool – I'd like it to be as easy to assign a keyboard shortcut in the Finder or any other application as it is in MS Word. Tools > Customize > Customize toolbars and Menus > Commands. To change your toolbar arrangements drag and drop the items where you want them to be. You can create new toolbars or move any and all toolbar items around to suit your work style. I hope the folks at Unsanity see this... they make great Haxies.



5. Allow Creating a Document In a Blank PDF Page; Just Make it Possible — A tool that allows easy transfers of either graphics or text from any document (PDF or Word processor or graphics program) to a blank PDF page. To reach my desired end result I must not do the layouts in MS Word (or equivalent program) and convert the product to a PDF. I can use the hand tool to paste a graphic image into a blank PDF, but have not figured out how to add text, formatted or otherwise, to the blank PDF page without first converting it to a graphic file. But then resulting text (image) cannot be edited with the touchup text tool. Even using Acrobat's OCR feature will not allow editing of the pasted graphic unless it is put in as a note.



6. A Seeing Eye Dog for MS Word — It seem that every time I add a new security update to MS Office (Word in this case) it seems to forget where it keep backup files. Anyone for a fix, software patch or even a hint would be welcome. More often than not, this occurs after I save a file and then decide to quit Word.



7. Cold Fusion of a PDF Would Be Great — Two half pages Should Equal One but isn't for PDF Files — Wanted, a tool that allows the fusion of two trimmed half page PDFs in to one page document. I've been able: (1) tediously to transfer information from one page of a PDF to another, to consolidate the contents, but I have not been able to simply fuse two pages into one by selecting them and maybe giggling overlays.



8. Eudora Safari Please — Someone make a plugin to allow me to send email via my Eudora client in Safari. Now that Eudora has become an open source product, I have even more reason not to abandon it.



9. Easy Find Enhancements — I'd like to be able to drop a file directly into a folder found when doing a Find File search. At present to do that one need to go to the five (command-R (Apples find original of an alias command) and manually drop the document into the original folder. This is an otherwise great program that I rely upon; conscientiously ignoring Spotlight. Perhaps more difficult, would be the ability to drop a document found in a files-folders search into a fold that it should go in — one identified in the search results window.



10. MS Word Paste Options {Smart Button} Default Maker Tool — MS Word has an annoying habit of asking (it's a little icon) whether a paste should be reformatted to the present document. I've not figured out how to tell this annoying feature to default to *yes* keep my present formatting. Any hints. Where is this sucker needed or do I need a hack, not terminal I hope.



11. PDF Chop-Chopper Wanted — I need the ability to take a long-multipage PDF, say a downloaded web page containing multiple recipes and by placing MS Word" Page break type makers, split it into documents. These individual documents should grab the entire area between individually the capture materials. This is significantly different from simply reversing a combine PDFs action.



12. Print Setup Utility on Small Amounts of Sleep Potion — A simple haxie that closes the utilities window after I complete converting an MS Word document to a PDF using Adobe Acrobat's MS Word plugins via PDFMaker.



13. ShadowGoogle Enhancement — Needed, a mouse-click saver that moves you and a selected system clipboard item to the destination set would be grrreat. The way this otherwise wonderful utility works now is [1] copy something and it adds to the system clipboard, where you can rename it. Since the system clipboard is temporary, ever changing as you cut and paste things, you might want to keep a special clipping in a permanent user defined clipboard, one of many you've created. (2) You transfer that clipping to another set (by option clicking and using the pull down menu that lists your sets) to select the new destination. The clipping disappears from the systems set. To get to your new clipping you must transfer to the selected clipping set, via another, provided, pull down menu. An improvement, reducing the number of clicks needed to get to your new clipping would be helpful. If you could both move the clipping and screen window to the new clipping destination, say by holding down an extra modifier key (lets say the control Option or shift option key) it would be wonderful.



It's your turn. Feedback please.

doc

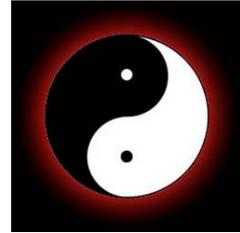
Goodies

The **Section 6** extra goodies in this issue of *macCompanion* are:

- ✚ **Internet Recipe Hunting and Reformatting Tips Pt II** – the second of three articles about food and the Internet, by Harry {doc} Babad
- ✚ **Repurposing Macs and Improving Lives in 2007 and Beyond** – how to donate that older Mac equipment, so less fortunate people can have good equipment to better themselves, by Robert Pritchett and David Phillips - Guest Author.
- ✚ **The iPhone: Welcome to Cellular 2.0** – aspects of the mobile telecomm industry to could affect Apple with their rumored advent into the mobile phone market, by Jack Campbell, Diani Beach, Kwale Province, Kenya - Guest Author.
- ✚ **Google: The Missing Manual** – an extensive review of O'Reilly's useful Google reference, by Harry {doc} Babad.
- ✚ **Mac ReviewCast.com** – a look at the December Freeware picks by Tim Verpoorten.

Internet Recipe Hunting and Recipe Reformatting Tips

A Tutorial in Three Parts - Part II: Take a Shortcut with MS Word
By Harry {doc} Babad and edited by Julie M. Willingham



For this article I'll be working with three of the eight web pages from Darlene Schmidt's *Easy Thai Green Curry Chicken* recipe found at:

<http://thaifood.about.com/od/thairecipes/ss/greencurry.htm>.

To use MS Word for capturing the contents of a Web recipe, you work directly from the web page(s) itself. There is no need to download the recipe as a PDF or HTML file. The objective is to create a good-looking recipe for your files from a recipe posted on the Web. This is so simple that most of you could make it work in a few minutes, but I'd hate to neglect those of you who prefer a bit of guidance.

To Capture Part of A Recipe, Drag It — Create a new MS Word document, then highlight the first part of the recipe you want to capture. Move the highlighted part to your new Word document, using drag-and-drop or cut-and-paste. [Save – Save – Save—Often!] This will give you either text or an image, despite having highlighted both. If you get text in your first drag, capture the image next. Repeat this as often as necessary to get what you want into the Word document. If you want the recipe origin, don't forget to copy the link for the site – I paste it under the recipe title as a live link.

Formatting 101: Donot format pieces as you grab them. It's more work than formatting the new document all at once when you're done. Convert the entire document into the font and size you want for the body of the recipe. [I like Lucinda Grande 12, but it's your nickel.] You can always pretty up the header later.

Ingredient Lists — Often the ingredient list, a when dragged to a MS Word document, appears as a formal bulleted list. By using Word's *Bullets and Numbering* feature, you can convert the list-formatted ingredients to unnumbered and non-bulleted text.

Line Spacing — Some recipes, or parts of recipes, import with large 12-16 point spacing after a line of text, but it's easy to correct this problem. Use the MS Word *Format Paragraph* feature on the whole document. This allows you to remove the unneeded text spacing. You can always add an extra paragraph where you need more white space.

Pictures to Move and Resize — Now you can click on an image in your document to both resize it and to move it. MS Word also allows you, with the text-wrapping tool, to make the image a part of a paragraph, tying the words and image closer together. The tools you'll need are found on Word's *Drawing Toolbar*. When I reduced the image sizes, an eight-page recipe fit onto four pages. Which image size or recipe length pleases you better depends on your sense of esthetics. Traditionally, folks try to keep a recipe on one page; but my eyes are too old for that kind of constraint.



Eenie, Meenie, Miney
Mo



Final Touches — You can now tweak the title, by making it bold, or alter the paragraph structure to create a more attractive spacing. It's your document design, so please yourself. For example, you can change the font of a discussion of background to set off that material. Most of the time I don't bother with multiple fonts, since I want the essence of the recipe, not a copy of its design as displayed on the website.

Other Thoughts — MS Word has a powerful macro feature that can allow you to do most of the detailed formatting of the entire document automatically. Since I have neither the knowledge of how to script or work with MS Word's *Basic* editor, I must create my macro(s) by simply recording the steps. Mostly this works... but occasionally I have to change the step sequences to tune up the macro. Try it! The steps that can be integrated into a single macro for a general reformatting of a recipe in MSW include:

- ✓ Adjusting the body font
- ✓ Removing extra paragraph specific line spacing
- ✓ Reverting lists, artificially created by dragging ingredient lists to MSW, to plain paragraph text format

What a macro can't do is to take a paragraph formatted set of ingredients and turn it into a more traditional list of ingredients. You must do that that hard way by inserting paragraphs breaks after each item you cooking with.

Vinegar Cole Slaw Serves 8

1 large head cabbage, shredded 1 carrot, shredded 1 green pepper,
diced 1 small onion, diced 1/2 cup sugar 1 teaspoon salt 1 teaspoon
celery seed 1 teaspoon mustard seed 1 1/2 cups white vinegar

Vinegar Cole Slaw

Serves 8

1 large head cabbage, shredded
1 carrot, shredded
1 green pepper, diced
1 small onion, diced
1/2 cup sugar
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon celery seed
1 teaspoon mustard seed
1 1/2 cups white vinegar

So remember, there is one weakness to using MS Word to capture recipes by drag-and-drop: You destroy both the layout created by the folks who posted the recipe, and likely will not be able to capture any subtle font design-related features that make parts of a recipe eye-catching.

MS Word to PDF — Finally, if you prefer, you can convert the Word document to a PDF, either by using Acrobat's plug-in modules or by using Apple's OS X *Print to PDF*. Doing the latter does not shrink the file size, however.



Working With Huge Blog Sites

Fortunately, most single recipes are small enough to rework as mentioned above. But sometimes while recipe hunting, I find a treasure trove of goodies in a multipage single link blog. What follows are my thoughts on dealing with such a site.

As I browsed for an image for an Oriental dish, I came across a blog containing wonderful recipes, pictures of recipes, and tales of restaurants and cooking adventures. I became instantly envious, but that is another story.

I did want to capture some of these goodies for future use. See: http://www.stefmike.org/mt-archives/cat_culinary.html/. At first, I merely skimmed this eye catching and well-designed site. It was 342 pages long when printed as a PDF – a very long scroll in Safari. There were hundreds of wonderful, mostly Oriental, food-related items that a normal search would not likely turn up. [A comparably site: check out <http://www.femalebridesonline.com/>].

As an experiment, I downloaded the entire PDF - NOT recommended - just to check its size: it topped out at 11 MB. Surprisingly, when I used Acrobat to capture it as *Website to PDF*, the file was only 10.7 MB, despite retaining its active links. (I kept the level of linking to only one level, otherwise the file gets bloated.) I found attempting to work with the huge PDF, using my normal method of recipe capture [See Part III], both cumbersome and time consuming, so I decided to work using MS Word instead.

When working with a large site, it is easy to get lost. Finding a way to keep track of where you are and have been is essential, especially if you can't data-mine a site in one online session. To succeed, you will need to somehow "bookmark your location, otherwise you'll be forever scrolling along.

So if the recipes you want to capture are contained in a long blog, you can be more selective about material you want to retain by copying desired text and images, one piece at a time, into individual MS Word documents. Just create one document for each recipe or food-related subject.

I find that a focused drag-and-drop into MS Word is a great way to easily capture a "run-on" blog. Although this approach appears to be to be more work, believe me, it's not. It's easy to either copy/paste or grab individual pieces from many parts of the blog to use as additional background for recipe itself. It does take serious work if the target is hundreds of pages long, but is well worth the trouble if you're either picky or just like fooling around. Anyway, it's a great way to collect recipes while tuning into to your favorite music and enjoying coffee in the evening, which you couldn't normally justify.

Warning: Don't try to copy even a short website by selecting it *all* and pasting it into MS Word. By doing so you grab all sorts of HTML artifacts that are too much fuss to delete. Saving a Web page as a *Web Archive* and trying to clean that up in MS Word is also a mess. I have no illustration for this, but try it; you will not like the result. An added disincentive for me to work on a whole web page at once is that I have crashed MS Word many times while working in that mode.

Why Use Only Selective Drag and Drop

Other than that it's usually less work, the main reason I like dragging, or pasting, recipes (and reformatting them) in MS Word is that I can keep the recipe's source-related links and hyperlinks if I desire.

“Other than that it's usually less work, the main reason I like dragging recipes (and reformatting them) in MS Word is that the recipe's source-related links and hyperlinks stay intact. I like keeping some links, especially those to the source URL or to background information I want in the recipe. If I don't need a link, I can always break it using Word's *Create Hyperlink* function.”

In Closing

At any rate, there are indeed several ways to make recipes you capture on the web pretty as you collect them. Dragging to MS Word is easy; tweaking PDF files (Part III) is more of a challenge, but maintains the site's original formatting and style. Practice on one of the sites I've shared in Part I, or pick your own poison. Whatever you do, enjoy!

Remember most of the material you've captured has been copyright protected, but the fair-use clause allows you personal use.

Repurposing Macs and Improving Lives in 2007 and Beyond

Edited by Robert Pritchett and submitted to *macCompanion* by
David Phillips – [President, Apple-MAQ Lions Club](#)
[Brisbane Australia](#) corsica46 at optusnet dot com dot au

In being part of the Macintosh environment, those of us who use Macs can touch the hearts and minds of people around the world for good. David Phillips asked us to let you know what the Apple MAC Lions Club <http://applemaqau.lionwap.org/> in Brisbane Queensland, Australia, has been doing to help repurpose Macs around the world. Here is one that has been nominated for the Lions International Award <http://www.lionsclubs.org/EN/index.shtml> as the first Macintosh User Group to become a Lions Club.



David Phillips wrote:

I realise that the direction our club took was a major change of direction from what most MUGS do. And it started innocently enough by doing up an older Mac and giving to a person in need. From that origin, it has just grown. We have been loaned a large area by the state government. It has a 800m2 shed and offices and workshops on a 2 hectare block of land. We have just packed two containers for Boganville and a third is waiting to be packed. We are sending 54 hospital beds and 100 Mac computers as well as teaching material, books, school desks and Chairs.

Our minimum spec of computer that we send is now 7200/120 64mg Ram and 2 gig HD 9.2.1 We do try and send 128 and some 4 gigs to use as servers. We refurbish ImageWriters and Laser Printers as dot matrix is a problem. In the countries we send to you cannot just go to the local corner store for a cartridge. Getting replacements for Ink Jets is a major problem and moisture causes the ink to run.

Dot matrix for cheap runs and laser for good quality (more expensive) when Quality is required. In East Timor, the unemployment is 70% It cost \$20 aus. to unpack our container. \$5 per day per man.

We do need ADB mice. We have 600 of them, but 1,100 computers that need those mice. With 100 computers going to Boganville and 200 to Samoa, that leaves us with 300 which will not last long. We have promised 150 computers to Uganda educations Department and Rabaul wants 100 also.

We have Macs from II's to iMacs 500 ... 512's, Plus's IICI's VX's and so on.

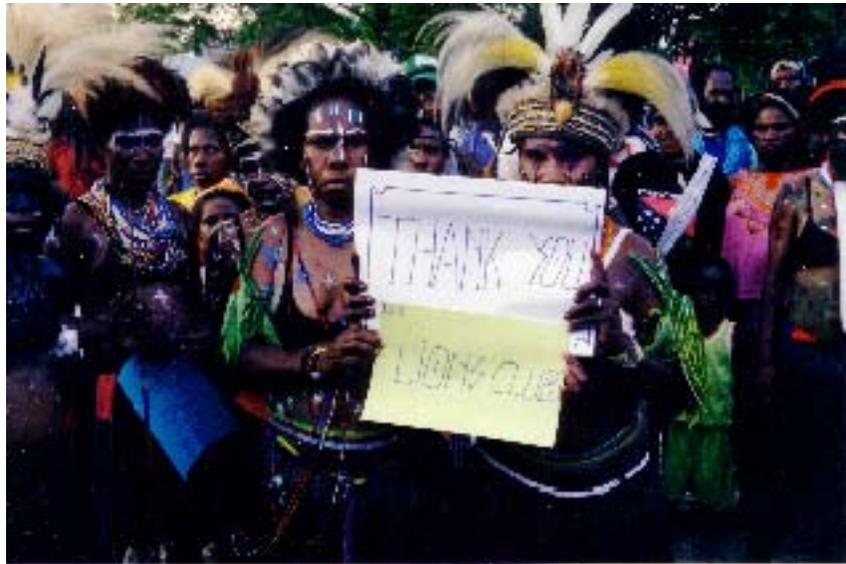


Apple-MAQ Lions Club Mrs. DESLEY SCOTT (Woodridge--ALP) (12.28 pm): A visit to Mission Australia in Logan Central to observe a Work for the Dole program put me in touch with an amazing group of people. Mr. David Phillips has been a member of the Apple-MAQ Computer Club for some 20 years. In recent years he has become a self-funded retiree and looked about for a challenge. He has certainly found one. David and his small band of helpers are now involved in a project to gather computers, school and medical equipment and ship them to countries where they will perform an invaluable service to people who have little hope of ever having anywhere near adequate facilities to support their education and health services. Shipping containers have been dispatched to several countries, including Western Samoa, Solomon Islands, East Timor, Uganda, Sri Lanka and West Papua. They contain computers, desks, chairs, whiteboards, chalk, books, clothing and other more specialised equipment to specific areas--such as a Lucas saw, refrigerators and another generator to West Papua.



Uganda Computers for Schools Last Photo is the Australian Consul for Uganda accepting an offer for another 150 computers for their schools on top of the 50 already sent.

In one communication, Dr Greg Poulgrain of the General Douglas MacArthur Foundation outlined the celebration in West Papua as the goods were unpacked and distributed. He wrote-- 3,000 came to the celebration, including the chief of police, the local media and representatives of seven tribes in the region for a larger than usual pig feast. Dr Poulgrain, who is in charge of the West Papuan aid section, is looking to expand the work there. A demountable building is being shipped to become a medical clinic with volunteer doctors flown up on a regular basis. Two workers from Brisbane will also be trained to dispense spectacles in West Papua from the Lions spectacles recycling depot at Redcliffe. Papua has the highest infant mortality rate in the world, so these measures will go some way to assist these needy people.



West Papua (Irian Jaya)

To support the shipment of computers to Samoa a technician was sent to help with set-up and support in the early stages. While in Samoa Phil Denton, the technician, was able to identify other equipment which would greatly assist the people there, such as at the vocational school, where the boys require an upholstery sewing machine, the girls require an overlocker and there is a need for tools for the automotive class, especially a computer for engine analysis, just for a start. We can see that this is a growing project. The West Samoan government paid for half of the shipping expenses, with the other half paid by Apple-MAQ Lions Club.

Since the tragic tsunami on Boxing Day, six shipping containers have gone to Sri Lanka with aid. (3x20's and 3x40's) On a local level, many computers are made available to the Smith Family for their invaluable work with our students. They supply a computer and printer to students for a \$50 a year contribution. This is becoming an extraordinary partnership as more and more people and organisations learn of this great work. Queensland Rail has assisted with transport, Simon George and Sons offered storage space out at the Brisbane Markets for a time and more recently Q-Build has signed an agreement to allow use of a decommissioned section of Wacol hospital. I understand that Mr. Ermanno Nobilio was most helpful in facilitating this.

BoysTown has also assisted with transporting goods in its truck; Education Queensland has given older equipment for refurbishment and All Hallows gave 400 desks. Further education equipment has been donated by St Catherine's at Mansfield, St Anthony's at Cleveland, St Mary's at Ipswich, state schools at East Brisbane, Buranda, Balmoral, MacGregor High and Sienna College in Buderim. Others have given as they have learned of the need. Golden Circle has donated fruit juice and baby foods. Many items came from the Uniting Church at Moorooka. Financial help has come from Sunland Construction. The people of Norfolk Island sent over 2.5 tonnes of various items.

Following a promotion by 612 ABC Radio, 200 tents were donated. More recently 140 bikes are being donated by the police in Darwin and coordinated by Darwin Lions Club. These are being trucked down and will be done up before being shipped out to Sri Lanka. When there is a superb project such as this one, people are always willing to assist as they are able.



New community centre in Sri Lanka

This project is one of three which have been nominated for a Lions International award, with the winner being announced at the Lions International Convention in Hong Kong in June. Mission Australia has also recommended them for a special Prime Minister's award. This innovative Apple-MAQ Lions Club has created an income stream through its supervision of Work for the Dole computer projects through Mission Australia, Civic Solutions and Challenge Employment and thus this money is poured into this fantastic work.

Would you like to participate? Make a real difference in the lives of others in 2007!

Md 201 District Q1 Apple-MAQ Lions Club of QLD

P.O. Box 7438 East Brisbane QLD 4169

Club Tele: 61 7 3895 8103

applemaqlion@yahoo.com.au

<http://applemaqau.lionwap.org>

<http://www.lionsclubs.org/EN/content/lnn/index.html>

We hope our readers take notice of this good cause and consider using this as a reason to donate old equipment to help those in need. Helping is its own reward, whether it be the holiday season or any other time of the year.

The iPhone: Welcome To Cellular 2.0

By Jack Campbell, Diani Beach, Kwale Province, Kenya, Guest Author
Jack at aboutjack dot.com <http://www.aboutjack.com/>

Apple is about to enter the cellular handset market, but not with a product -- with an entirely new type of communications platform.

And -- it will not be announced this Monday. Why? Because Apple's mobile phone strategy is based on overhauling the entire legacy concept of 'phone' now being applied by all other makers and carriers. This strategy revolves around not viewing a 'phone' as a standalone piece of hardware, but as the centerpiece of a mobile communications lifestyle. And, it requires other bits and pieces to be put into play to make this grander vision a reality.

Such a multi-element platform launch cannot be done by a press release. It will require an Apple Event.

Not Your Father's Cell Phone

Apple has studiously and cautiously sat back and observed the unfolding of the cellular telephone market, and the behavior of cell phone users, smartly choosing to not enter the game until it can do so with a winning hand. Despite being loaded with advanced technology capabilities, today's mobile phone landscape is still very much still running on top of the same Cellular 1.0 topology originally launched in the mid-1980's. Handsets are still all-inclusive devices intended to be isolated islands of technology. Apple has a different vision.

Welcome To Cellular 2.0

Even if we have forgotten, Apple still very much recalls its Digital Hub strategy, and makes this concept the underlying mission driving nearly all of its new product creations. The point for most new non-CPU product Apple develops is to substantially improve the usability of that device by having it operate as a peripheral to a Mac or PC running Apple software or connected to .Mac. The iPod has iTunes. The iSight has iChat. The Mighty Mouse has its unique driver software. The experience Apple thus provides users eclipses the prevailing experience offered by existing products. Some of this experience is Mac-only. Some is available on the Windows platform.

In Apple's vision of Cellular 2.0, the phone handset is a roving peripheral to the computer the user has sitting at their home or office. Apple has intelligently parsed users' various communications activities, and has better enabled each by assigning the component actions to the best qualified device. Some actions are done on the computer, some on the handset. With its grip firmly wrapped around software technologies such as Bonjour, iChat, iSync, and .Mac, Apple is uniquely positioned to slice apart the mobile phone experience, and restitch it into something massively more friendly and usable than today's approach. And, by migrating just a portion of this underlying technology to the Windows world, Apple (again... remember the iTunes experience) gets to painlessly demonstrate its vision of user friendly operation to the sea of Win PC users, and add yet another lure to its bait box of Mac platform promotion tools.

Handset + Software + Service = Bliss

In Apple's Cellular 2.0 vision, the handset is not so smart. Like the iPod it logically emulates, the mobile handset is mostly a repository for data synced from the user's computer. Address book info, media files, calendar data, all are created and manipulated on the computer, and simply refreshed into the handset as needed. This approach allows a tiny device to become enormously useful. And, it neatly smashes a hole between today's ideas of 'just a handset' and 'a smart-phone.' In Apple's vision, the 'just a handset' delivers nearly all of the usability of today's smartest smart-phone, but without most of the data input and processor overhead. Apple still very much believes a computer should be a computer, and a peripheral should be a peripheral. Its cellular handset will vividly demonstrate this philosophy in action.

Apple's cellular handset will sync wired or wirelessly with each of the component software pieces running on a Mac or Win system. The data so transferred to the handset will then be easily usable via the handset's UI. And, upon next docking, any address book data added on-the-go by the user will seamlessly be added into the computer's records. All of this behind-the-scenes activity will be easily monitored and managed through a simple Front Row-like application that provides easy usability among all of the contributing software pieces, and with .Mac. And yes, the new application will run on both Macs and Windows systems, intelligently supporting whatever underlying software or service components are available to that specific user's system.

Shattering An Industry's Practices

Even with millions of joyous customers snatching Apple handsets from store shelves, the greater market impact will be behind the scenes, on the cellular telephone industry itself. By marketing the handset as a computer peripheral, and focusing sales benefits on the various computer-resident software and services components, not on the handset itself, Apple will be introducing a radically new marketing scheme. No existing manufacturer or carrier can easily match up against this holistic approach to mobile telephony, as they simply do not have the software products nor data infrastructure in place to respond. This is Apple's Cellular 2.0 vision: Make the key usability and selling points all live on the computer or the Internet, not on the handset, and focus marketing on those pieces, not on the handset.

By diminishing the role of the handset itself, and focusing customer attention on the computer-enabled benefits, Apple will leave the entire cellphone manufacturing industry in a panic to begin trying to catch up. And, by marketing the handset as an unlocked, carrier-independent device that requires no specific carrier support other than a connection, Apple leaves the carriers in a huge quandary -- how do they respond to suddenly having all of their value-add services reduced to irrelevancy?

The User Is The Winner

Apple's entry will shift the earth underneath the cellular industry. Its user experience focused approach to cleaning up the current mess of incompatible, incomprehensible phone functionality, and too-complex do-everything handsets will announce a whole new way to think of 'mobile phones' to the world. And, its focus on computer-side functionality rather than handset functionality will make its handset the easiest to use, simplest to approach product on the market. In the process, users worldwide gain clarity, comfort, and increased functionality in the mobile phone experience.

The cellular industry is about to be jarringly snatched one giant step forward.

Google, The Missing Manual, 2nd Edition 2006

Reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad

O'REILLY®

Authors: Sara Milstein, J. D. Biersdorfer, and Matthew MacDonald

<http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/gogetmm2/>

Pages: 446

\$25.50 USD, \$35 CDN, £30 GBP, 39€ Euro

ISBN: 0596100191

Strengths — A detailed and easy to read book that guides you through Google's features and will grow you painlessly from newbie to perhaps guru.

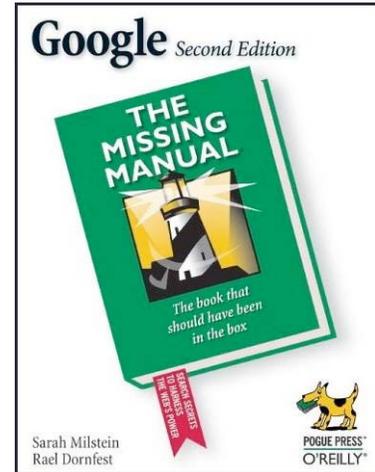
Weakness — In a number of places, there were insufficient examples to aide the greenest of users. I also found that even with my seeing-eye magnifying glass, many of the illustration were hard to read.

Where appropriate the instructions in the book was tested on a 1 GHz dual processor PowerPC G4 Macintosh with 2 GB DDR SDRAM running under OS X 10.4.8 Tests were run using both Safari and Firefox, both the latest update.

Product and company names and logos and illustrations in this review may be registered trademarks of their respective companies.

Audience — All users, search newbies to world-class experts

Publisher's Overview (sort of) — "Google is the planet's most popular program for finding stuff on the Web. Millions of people a day use it to search for everything from apple pie recipes to high school sweethearts to Zimbabwean bus schedules--but it has no manual. And who needs help for such an easy to use program?"



“As it turns out, Google has many hidden tricks and tools that can turn your simple searching into powerful--and successful--discoveries. But you have to know where to look. "Google: The Missing Manual" is your guide, covering: Search techniques and tricks. If you know which search words to choose and how to ask for the special things Google lets you look for--like phone numbers, definitions (define:analgesic), stock quotes, pictures, and other goodies. Read this book — you'll get more of what you want from Googling, more often. This book helps you search more effectively. Use this book to find out how the pros achieve greater Google efficiency.

“Little-known corners of Google. From the "Similar pages" links in your Google results to the mysterious Groups and Directory tabs on the home page, down-to-earth discussions throughout this book explain what these odd items are and when you should use them. Whether you're new to the Web or an Internet aficionado, "Google: The Missing Manual" is a friendly desk-side companion, brimming with tips for getting more out of the world's favorite search program.”

Review Introduction

I do at least a baker's-half dozen searches a day for references for my Macintosh, music and technical writing. I also chase recipes and often need to decorate them with images found on the web. More rarely check out products review and best buys for items for my family, friends and even my Macintosh. As a heavy user, I know I have just scratched the surface of what you can do with the primary search engine and the support features that Google has created. . I already knew about using Google as a dictionary, as a calculator, a phone book, a map, and to look up UPC codes, flight information, and stock quotes. But that's merely scratching the surface.

Every time I read a book on Google, and I've three or four, I find new information to allow me to do faster and better searches (and also get reminded about stuff I've forgotten). This book is one of the better sources of information to keep me in google-ship shape!

Even the contents of Chapter 1, the more or less introductory materials (*Google 101*) just about doubled my search effectiveness. ...And I'd not even gotten to chapter 2 that deals with advanced search methods.

The most valuable part of the book to me was Chapter 2, on Superior Searching. It shows not only how to use the engines' advanced features, but also how to manipulate the Google syntax to get it to deliver what you want. This includes searching by titles, text, anchors, date range, file types and synonyms. It also introduces you to setting your own preferences as you use Google, a way of making the tool more yours.

A Macintosh Specific Note — Those of us who use a Macintosh with Safari, as the authors reaffirms, have been shortchanged by Google. So far neither the desktop search nor the toolbar Internet search features of Google are available on our platform. But don't despair, there's shareware out there-to meet your needs. My favorite access tools, shareware that parks on the right side of the Finders Menu Bar are iSeek 1.1.1 and shadowGoogle 3.0 [previously reviewed in macC]. These and other tools you'll find at either MacUpdate or Version Tracker will serve you well, as will Beholder, a better tool for chasing images on the Internet – it out goggles Google images.

So despite the fact that Part Three focuses on how to use tools, such as the Google toolbar and third-party tools, that make it easier to use Google; tools that don't work with our Macintosh's — don't despair, there's shareware there. Interestingly enough, according to the authors, Google is developing tools for use with Firefox, tools that do work for you if you use it as your browser.

The Book Itself

The book starts out with the necessary discussions on the searching and how to phrase your questions — the language of Google. For those who have never gone beyond a basic search, one yielding a jillion hits, this will be an eye-opener. For people like me who have tried some of the techniques learned from reading other books, including the first edition of this one, *Google, The Missing Manual* serves as a good refresher. A refresher on some techniques I have forgotten or neglected. The book really becomes valuable to me once it gets into the second part, Google Tools. That's where I'm introduced to or reminded about the other less broadly focused features of Google; those that fall outside the normal searching.

CONTENTS:

Part 1 - Searching with Google: Google 101; Superior Searching
Part 2 - Google Tools: Googling Further - Images, News, Maps, and More; Googling with Others - Groups and Answers; Shopping with Google; The Google Toolbar; More Cool Google Tools
Part 3 - Google for Webmasters: Becoming a Search Result; Making Money with Google; Google Analytics
Part 4 - Gmail: Gmail
Part 5 - Appendix: The Google Wide Web
Index

The book reads easily, more like a novel than the information full manual that it is. Don't let that put you off. If the authors had not used colloquial English, making the explanations and tips they share easy to read this book would have been the worse for it.

As written you can search a topic and learn the details whether you want to:

- Its all in the Words — Do better and more accurate searches by wording requests more accurately; and don't be afraid to change the wording order. Word Order matters, especially in complex searches; actually it matters even in image searches for recipes. Google is full of surprises.
- Narrow Your Search With And/Or/Not Type Modifiers — Learning how to use Boolean modifiers, the Google way, to narrow searches
- Syntax as a Search Aide — Narrowing search hit by using syntax to focus the google search engine (e.g., inurl, intitle, intxt, inanchor)



- Google Special Features (Part Two) — Taking advantage of the ever-growing number of Google special features (e.g., news, images, prices {Froogle}, maps, directory (its searchable subject index), books and not least earth.) And of course the book goes into details associated with many of the other Google products.
- Use Gmail, Chapter 11 — This was a well focuses chapter that served me well. I had just accepted an invitation to open up a Gmail account but was a bit shy about stating to use it. This was in part because the interface differed significantly in detail, from what I was used to in Eudora. Needless to say, I've not started to get more comfortable in Gmail, which I will start to use for much if not all of my on-line transactions. Let google help me deal with Spam.

Learn all about focused search for images, tuning news updates to your needs, find like minded souls in groups, and avoid getting lost by using Google's maps. Learning to use these and the other specials google tools will take you well beyond simple search to Google mastery, not Nirvana — that's too much to expect from a search engine. [Do check out Nirvana Philosophy on Google, you'll get a mere 1,040,000 hits.]

I'm Not Nor Have Ever Been a Webmaster — In Part Three, which I'd only skimmed, the book describes, in detail, some of the key steps to take to get your web site noticed in Google. Since the barriers to entry in web design are low, and more and more people are finding themselves webmasters of some sort, this material will provide a valuable aid in enhancing their sites visibility. Such information will definitely help those people. The section ends with a discussion of Google's AdSense program, where website's can run ads supplied by Google, targeted to your site from the information in the Google database, a way perhaps a way to make money with Google..

The Appendices — At the end of the manual there is a useful pair of appendices that summarize a number of special sites that use the Google Engine in novel ways. Also covered are sites that discuss Google technologies and services while offering useful news, tips, and tutorials. Since Google offers a very wide set of specialized services, that continuously change, these appendices may come in handy for users from time to time. Note that the macCompanion site used a Google engine to aid in searching our now item-rich website.

Review Limitations — Since I have no present plans to either establish a website for my two very small business or to make money for those business by advertising on Google I only skimmed Part Three: Google for Webmasters. But I know the material is in the book, in great detail.

The specific details in this 110-page section, which I rapidly read, was high in quality and clarity. Why I skimmed Part Three? After all should I *now* care about *adsence*, which helps you to offset the costs of running your own website? Or be concerned about *adwords* to hone my ads, or even Google analytics that teaches you how to use this free service to track visitors and summarize their habits while visiting your site?

But if you have or will want to be using Google to support your business' out reach and customer base, buy the book and start reading and working with the materials in Part Three.

The kind of stuff covered in the book can be best related to by showing you a copy of the google Web Search Features Page. It's all in the book... so you can learn more about these and the other rich google features.

Google Web Search Features

In addition to providing easy access to billions of web pages, Google has many special features to help you to find exactly what you're looking for. Click the title of a specific feature to learn more about it.

- [Book Search](#) — Use Google to search the full text of books.
- [Cached Links](#) — View a snapshot of each page as it looked when we indexed it.
- [Calculator](#) — Use Google to evaluate mathematical expressions.
- [Catalogs](#) — A New service for searching catalogs.
- [Currency Conversion](#) — Easily perform any currency conversion.
- [Definitions](#) — Use Google to get glossary definitions gathered from various online sources.
- [File Types](#) — Search for non-HTML file formats including PDF documents and others.
- [Froogle](#) — To find a product for sale online, use Froogle - Google's product search service.
- [Groups](#) — See relevant postings from Google Groups in your regular web search results.
- [I'm Feeling Lucky](#) — Bypass our results and go to the first web page returned for your query.
- [Images](#) — See relevant images in your regular web search results.
- [Local Search](#) — Search for local businesses and services in the U.S., the U.K., and Canada.
- [Movies](#) — Use Google to find reviews and show times for nearby movies.
- [Music Search](#) — Use Google to get quick access to a wide range of music information.
- [News Headlines](#) — Enhances your search results with the latest related news stories.
- [PhoneBook](#) — Look up U.S. street address and phone number information.
- [Q&A](#) — Use Google to get quick answers to straightforward questions.
- [Refine Your Search](#) — Add instant info and topic-specific links to your search in order to focus and improve your results.
- [Results Prefetching](#) — Makes searching in Firefox faster.
- [Search By Number](#) — Use Google to access package tracking information, US patents, and a variety of online databases.
- [Similar Pages](#) — Display pages that are related to a particular result.
- [Site Search](#) — Restrict your search to a specific site.
- [Spell Checker](#) — Offers alternative spelling for queries.
- [Stock and Fund Quotes](#) — Use Google to get up-to-date stock and mutual fund quotes and information.

- [Street Maps](#) — Use Google to find U.S. street maps.
- [Travel Information](#) — Check the status of an airline flight in the U.S. or view airport delays and weather conditions.
- [Weather](#) — Check the current weather conditions and forecast for any location in the U.S.
- [Web Page Translation](#) — Provides you access to web pages in other languages.
- [Who Links To You?](#) — Find pages that point to a specific URL.

Kudos

When Not to Use Google — Many authors fail to recognize the limitations of the products they write about – Milstein, Biersdorfer and MacDonald did not. I was pleased with this section on Google’s limitations (for now). For example, when you want to view your results in a clustered format, where all the information is grouped by topic. The book recommends you use another site such as Vivisimo, or Amazon's a9.com for this purpose (see page 34 ff). Another example: For pages that have fallen of the Google’s radar, check out the WayBack Machine at www.waybackmachine.com/ And there the references on how to do an advanced search on steroids; “Fagan Finder www.faganfinder.com/google2.html [See page 57.]

Google Groups, The Old Usenet — The section (Googling with Others - Chapter 4) on Google groups (e.g., Usenet newsgroups) details how and when to use these, often archival, sources of information. It details what (kinds of) groups exist, how to navigate them, how they are organized, how the Usenet groups are organized. The chapter goes on to teach searching Google Groups, how to post messages to them and even how to create a Google group or three of your very own (pages 119-122).

My only reservation on this material, that I’d forgotten existed, was how to relate this information to the current paradigm of creating controlled feedback group blogs.

Discomforts

Lack of Specific Examples — A significant part of the audience for parts one (Searching with Google) and two (Google Tools) of the book is aimed at new or casual users. I am troubled by a lack of specific examples that would aid a users’ ability to use the otherwise excellent descriptions of Google feature and tips on their use. If not in the book, okay paper has its limits, at least on the web site associated with the book [www.missingmanuals.com/]. I’ve checked the O’Reilly missing manuals website and if the authors have posted additional information/examples I could not find it. Such examples would have been particularly useful for chapter 2, *Superior Searching*.

Image Size and Lack of Color — Okay, a perennial gripe, but as always even with a magnifying glass, I could not make effective use of many of the graphics the authors used to illustrate their points. At times I could follow the tread of the narrative and find a comparable screen with my browser, but at times this became tedious. Now a shift in paradigm, that perhaps you, David Pogue, might adopt for the Missing Manuel Series. Since most graphics are fed to the publisher in high-resolution form, why not post them on the web indexed by the figure number. If you need to protect the material, use the same methods as you provide for accessing virtual CDs that accompany other books in this series.

The Times They Are A Changing — We all know that Google changes too fast for a mere book to keep up. It would have been helpful, as David and Jennifer Pogue [<http://www.davidpogue.com/>] have done in other areas of computing, to establish an eBooks on googling. As a testament to an evolving Google, the first edition of this book in 2004, was only 300 pages long.

A Final Nit — Google Scholar appears to have been renamed books; but the information provided in this book still applies (page 117).

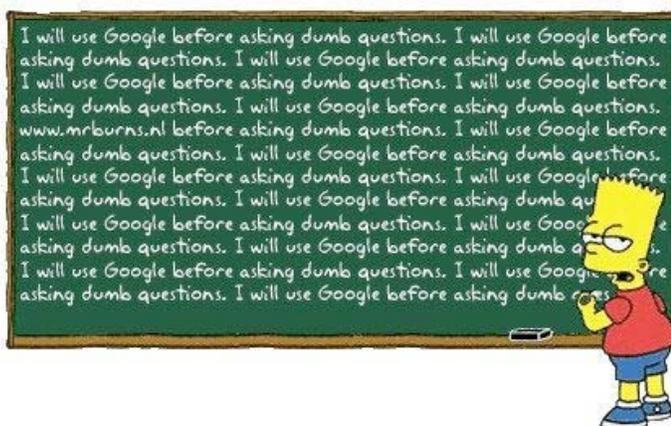
In Closing

Whether you're new to Google or already a many-times-a-day user, you're sure to find tutorials, tips, tricks, and tools that take you well beyond simple search to Google "gurudom".

The Missing Manual is a must-read for anyone who wants to make Google work harder, faster, and more effectively. This easy to read book doesn't get bogged down in arcane technical details. I does however support a readers needs with reader with (mostly) simple explanations of potentially complicated search or 'Webmaster' related processes.

This is a book that will remain close to my home computer, and one that I'll browse through on a regular basis to get those "There's got to be a better way!" moments.

Probably the most significant thing I've learned about Google, as a user and from books, is that if its available on line there's likely a way that Google can find it for you. Note Google will not crack the proprietary databases that professional research librarians or data miners can assess.



However, this book provides information on many tools available to non-specialists, for fulfilling this promise.



MacReviewCast.com

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Mac Freeware

By Tim Verpoorten - January 2007

Hello again folks. Last month we looked at the top freeware applications of 2006. This month we're back to our normal conversations about the new and updated freeware I looked at in the last few podcasts. Let's take a look at my favorites.

SlideSaverMaker <http://www.omisware.com/slidesavermaker>

A slidesaver is like a screensaver that uses your pictures. Creating slideSavers has never been easier. In just two simple steps you can have a custom slideSaver installed and ready to use. Drag and drop your pictures from iPhoto, or a folder of pictures from anywhere on your computer directly into SlideSaverMaker. You now have a personal slidesaver.

iRemindU <http://www.theapplegeek.com/iru>

iRemindU is designed to be the perfect little reminder application. Fill in the information and when it needs to alert you, iRemindU will jump to the top and make sure you get the message. With a sleek new interface and more visible alerts, you can depend on iRemindU to make sure you get the message! Place iRemindU in the login items and you'll never forget that important note. It works by a timer which is handy when you need a reminder in 15 or 20 minutes rather than at a specific time.

Inquisitor 3 <http://www.inquisitorx.com/safari>

Here's an app that a good friend, Paul Figgiani, told me about. Paul loves Newsfire, the shareware RSS reader. Well here's a freeware app from the same author called Inquisitor 3. It works in Safari, and it's like Spotlight for the web. Start typing and websites pop up immediately, along with ideas to refine your search. It'll auto-complete your words and you can add more search engines to Safari with customized keyboard shortcuts. So if you've ever been to that website where you just can't remember the name, but you know part of it or what it contains, start typing in Inquisitor and let it do the work for you.

AP Grapher <http://www.chimoosoft.com/apgrapher.html>

AP Grapher is a freeware program for Mac OS X which searches for nearby wireless (i.e., Wi-Fi, Airport) access points and graphs the signal strength as a function of time for the base station to which you are currently connected. Although the program has a "stumbler" like mode, it's not a true stumbler in the classic sense since it only finds visible networks. AP Grapher is intended to help you find the best access point to connect to and optimally position your base station and or computer to achieve the best possible signal strength. So if you're having trouble with a wireless connection, try AP Grapher, it will optimize the positioning of your wireless.

Urly <http://www.zenonez.com/urly>

Urly does one thing only but one thing well. It manages all those URL links you have saved open in your dock and rather than just seeing a whole line of URL icons in your dock, Urly puts them all in a list so when you click on the icon for Urly you see the exact URLs listed in a popup and they can be easily clicked on and visited rather than keeping them all in your dock. It's probably easier to see than to explain, so head over to the website and see for yourself. It's a great idea.

dead.licious <http://www.malarkeysoftware.com>

dead.licious is a tool for verifying that all of your bookmarks in your del.icio.us accounts are still valid and gives you the option of removing those dead links. Right now, the feature set is not as complete as the developer would like but he wanted to get this version out to gauge interest in this kind of tool. So take a look for yourself, if you're using DeLico.us for bookmarking, this tool is a great asset. Try it and let the developer know what you'd like to see added.

Imagewell <http://www.xtralean.com>

We've talked about this one before, but it's so good that it's hard not to mention again. ImageWell is a small, but powerful, image editing application that lets you quickly resize, crop, watermark, edit your images and then upload them to the web, save to your computer or email them to a friend. ImageWell also lets you annotate your images with text, shapes, arrows and lines, quickly and easily, And it doesn't stop there - add a drop shadow, a shaped border, flip or rotate your image, take screen grabs, plus so much more. Version 3 brings many new enhancements and an even more streamlined user interface. Some of the new features include layering and transparency controls for images and draw objects, SFTP support, flip image feature, graphical watermarks, and so much more. V3 is also available in 12 different language localizations. Overall you get a ton of editing, importing and exporting features. If you don't need an expensive, over bearing image editing app, then Imagewell freeware is just what the Doctor ordered.

OnyX

<http://www.titanium.free.fr>

This is another of those freeware apps we talked about before, but it does such a good job, I wanted to mention it again. OnyX is a multifunction utility (maintenance, optimization, and personalization). It allows you to run misc tasks of system maintenance, to configure certain hidden parameters of the Finder, Dock, Safari, Dashboard, Exposé, Disk Utility, to delete cache, to remove a certain number of files and folders that may become cumbersome, to see the detailed info of your configuration, to preview the different logs and CrashReporter reports, to check the Preferences files and more. OnyX is an Universal Binary application and works with all Macintosh PowerPC and Intel computers running Mac OS X version 10.4.x (Tiger). To run correctly, OnyX must be run from an admin account. If you find that using a maintenance utility such as Applejack is a little too involved for your skills, then OnyX is the perfect answer.

BackityMac

<http://www.whimsplucky.com>

Here's yet another freeware app that we talked about before, but it's updated and it's better than ever.

Have you ever wanted an easy way to backup all the important files in your home folder? Are you tired of sifting through the Library directory to find the folders you need to backup? Let's say you just want to backup your Apple Mail database file, not all you have to do is click the "Apple Mail" checkbox and click "Backup". Supported important files include:

- Apple Mail Files
- MS Entourage Files
- iCal Calendars
- Address Book database
- Safari, Firefox, Camino bookmarks
- iPhoto and iTunes Libraries
- iWeb website files
- Home Documents folder
- Full home folder backup.

This is not some proprietary system. All backups are placed in a read-only disk image which ensures you can access it on any Mac. But what is backup without restore? Choose an image created by this program, and the backed up contents will automatically be detected for you, then decide what you want to restore, and click "Restore". The contents will be placed back into their original directory automatically replacing its contents. This is the perfect solution for those who want to be able to clone their home directory and replace it on another Mac untouched. CD or DVD burning is now supported with a registration fee of \$10.00. Take a look at this app if you only want to back up the important files and folders fast and easily.

That's it for this month, we'll see you again in the next issue of the *macCompanion*, but while you wait, check out the MacReviewCast podcast each week at <http://www.macreviewcast.com>.

macCompanion 2006 Index

This annual index lists books, games, hardware, software and training reviews that were completed and published in 2006 and can be accessed either via the *macCompanion* Google Search on the website at <http://www.macompanion.com>, through the PDF archives at <http://www.macompanion.com/archives/archivesindex.html> or by mousing over the titles below.

Books	Publisher	Pub Date
40 iPod Techniques	Sybex	10/01/2006
A Practical Guide to UNIX for Mac OS X Users	Prentice Hall PTR	03/01/2006
Adobe Acrobat 7 tips and tricks	Peachpit Press	02/01/2006
Ajax Design Patterns	O'Reilly Books	10/01/2006
ApplePro Training Series. Xsan Quick-Reference 2nd	Peachpit Press	06/01/2006
Applescript Handbook Mac OS X 3rd Ed	SpiderWorks	04/01/2006
Applied Software Project Management	O'Reilly Books	01/01/2006
Build Your Own Web Site	SitePoint	08/01/2006
Building Online Communities with Drupal, phpBB and Wordpress	Apress	11/01/2006
Building Scalable Web Sites	O'Reilly Books	09/01/2006
C++ Cookbook	O'Reilly Books	01/01/2006
Chief Customer Officer	Jossey-Bass	07/01/2006
Combating Spyware in the Enterprise	Syngress Publishing	09/01/2006
Computer Security Basics	O'Reilly Books	08/01/2006
Creating Web Sites Missing Manual	O'Reilly Books	02/01/2006
Creative Computer Crafts	No Starch Press	06/01/2006
Degunking Your Mac, Tiger Edition	Paraglyph Press	01/01/2006
Deliver First Class Web Sites	SitePoint	09/01/2006
Dictionary of Information Security	Syngress Publishing	09/01/2006
Digital Photography Missing Manual	O'Reilly Books	08/01/2006
Digital SLR Photography	Wiley	07/01/2006
Digital Video Production Cookbook	O'Reilly Books	01/01/2006
Dreamweaver 8 Design and Construction	O'Reilly Books	04/01/2006
Dreamweaver 8 Missing Manual	O'Reilly Books	05/01/2006
Drupal; Creating Blogs, Forums, Portals and Community Web Sites	Packt Publishing	12/01/2006
Enemy at the Water Cooler	Syngress Publishing	11/01/2006
Everyware	New Riders Press	07/01/2006
Excel Scientific and Engineering Cookbook	O'Reilly Books	03/01/2006
Filemaker Pro 8 Missing Manual	O'Reilly Books	08/01/2006
Fixing Windows XP Annoyances	O'Reilly Books	07/01/2006
Give Me Back My Credit!	Infinity Publishing	12/01/2006
Google Hacks	O'Reilly Books	10/01/2006
Google Maps Hacks	O'Reilly Books	09/01/2006
Hacking Digital Cameras	Wiley	01/01/2006
Hardcore Windows XP	McGraw Hill Osborne	01/01/2006
Head First HTML with CSS & XHTML	O'Reilly Books	01/01/2006
How to Cheat at Managing Information Security	Syngress Publishing	11/01/2006
How to do Everything with Adobe Acrobat 7.0	McGraw Hill Osborne	06/01/2006
How to everything with Windows XP 3rd Ed	McGraw Hill Osborne	07/01/2006
Insider Threat	Syngress Publishing	02/01/2006
Intermediate Perl	O'Reilly Books	05/01/2006
iPod and iTunes Digital Field Guide	Wiley	04/01/2006
iWoz	WW Norton and Company	12/01/2006
Just say no to Microsoft	No Starch Press	01/01/2006
Keep it Simple with GarageBand	PC Publishing	09/01/2006
Leadership on the Line	Clarity Publications	12/01/2006
Learn Objective-C on the Macintosh	SpiderWorks	12/01/2006

Books	Publisher	Pub Date
Learn to Program	Pragmatic Programmers, LLC	03/01/2006
Legend of the Lamp Volumes 1 and 2	Sounds of Zion, Inc.	06/01/2006
Linux Multimedia Hacks	O'Reilly Books	03/01/2006
Looking Good in Print	Paraglyph Press	02/01/2006
Mac OS X Technology Guide to Dashboard	SpiderWorks	04/01/2006
Mac OSX Internals	Addison-Wesley	09/01/2006
MacDesign out of the box	Peachpit Press	06/01/2006
Macworld Digital Photography by Superguide	LuLu	04/01/2006
Makers All Kinds of People Making Amazing Things	O'Reilly Books	04/01/2006
Mind Performance Hacks	O'Reilly Books	08/01/2006
Music Projects with Propellerhead Reason	PC Publishing	11/01/2006
MusicTech Magazine Ten Minute Masters	PC Publishing	10/01/2006
No Nonsense XML Web Development with PHP	SitePoint	03/01/2006
On Digital Photography by Stephen Johnson	O'Reilly Books	11/01/2006
OS X for Hackers at Heart	Syngress Publishing	02/01/2006
Outdoor Photographer Landscape	Wiley	08/01/2006
Peace Quantum	New Age Publications	08/01/2006
Penetration Tester's Open Source Toolkit	Syngress Publishing	04/01/2006
Perfect Passwords	Syngress Publishing	04/01/2006
Phishing Exposed	Syngress Publishing	01/01/2006
Photoshop CS2 Workflow	Sybex	07/01/2006
Photoshop Elements 4. Top 100 Simplified Tips	Wiley	10/01/2006
Photoshop for Right Brainers	Sybex	03/01/2006
Point and Click OpenOffice.org	Prentice Hall PTR	01/01/2006
Practical Perforce	O'Reilly Books	01/01/2006
Publish & Prosper: Blogging for your Business	Peachpit Press	12/01/2006
Quartz 2D Graphics for Mac OS X Developers	Addison-Wesley	04/01/2006
Raw 101	Sybex	01/01/2006
RFID Essentials	O'Reilly Books	06/01/2006
Running Boot Camp	O'Reilly Books	06/01/2006
Secrets of Podcasting: Audio Blooging for the Masses 2nd Ed.	Peachpit Press	11/01/2006
Simplified Mac OS X Tiger	Wiley	03/01/2006
Skype Me!	Syngress Publishing	02/01/2006
Smarter, Faster, Better: Strategies for Effective Enduring and Fulfilling Leadership	Jossey-Bass	11/01/2006
Software Piracy Exposed	Syngress Publishing	03/01/2006
Software Security	Addison-Wesley	03/01/2006
Soundtrack Pro: Professional Sound Design	Peachpit Press	03/01/2006
Spam Wars	SelectBooks	04/01/2006
Steal this Computer Book	No Starch Press	08/01/2006
Step Into Xcode	Addison-Wesley	04/01/2006
Stopping Spyware	Addison-Wesley	01/01/2006
Take Control of Buying a Digital Camera V. 2.0	Take Control Ebooks	12/01/2006
Take Control of Buying a Mac V. 2.0	Take Control Ebooks	12/01/2006
Take Control of Maintaining your Mac	TidBITS	04/01/2006
Teach Yourself Visually Adobe Photoshop Elements 4	Wiley	10/01/2006
The Cult of the iPod	No Starch Press	01/01/2006
The Da Vinci Barcode	New Academia Publishing	08/01/2006
The Future of Memories	Peachpit Press	06/01/2006
The Hidden Power of Photoshop Elements 4	Sybex	08/01/2006
The Internet Missing Manual	O'Reilly Books	10/01/2006
The Liahona Legacies Series	Sounds of Zion, Inc.	06/01/2006
The Macintosh iLife 06	Peachpit Press	10/01/2006
The Macintosh iLife '06	Peachpit Press	12/01/2006
The Magic of Thinking Big	Simon & Schuster	11/01/2006

Books

	Publisher	Pub Date
The Shutterfly Guide to Great Digital Photos	McGraw Hill Osborne	06/01/2006
Ubuntu Hacks	O'Reilly Books	08/01/2006
Ubuntu Linux for Non-Geeks	No Starch Press	12/01/2006
Unix for Mac OS X 10.4 Tiger	Peachpit Press	01/01/2006
Visual Basic 2005	No Starch Press	06/01/2006
Web Site Cookbook	O'Reilly Books	07/01/2006
What Da Vinci Didn't Know: An LDS Perspective	Deseret Book	06/01/2006
Wicked Cool Java	No Starch Press	01/01/2006
World of Warcraft Dungeon Companion	Bradygames	11/01/2006
Xcode Tools Sensei	LuLu	04/01/2006
Yahoo! Hacks	O'Reilly Books	02/01/2006

Games

	Creator	Pub Date
Call of Duty 2	Aspyr	08/01/2006
The Sims 2 with NightLife, Open for Business and University	Aspyr	12/01/2006

Hardware

	Manufacturer	Pub Date
Apricorn Aeigis Mini Ultraportable 1.8" Hard Drive	Apricorn	12/01/2006
Broadband Firewall Router with 4 port switch/VPN Endpoint BEFSX41 v2	Linksys	01/01/2006
Business Card Reader II	IRIS	04/01/2006
Canon PIXMA MP530 AIO	Canon	10/01/2006
Dialog Phone	Miglia	12/01/2006
Disco iPod Case for the iPod Video	Griffin Technology	11/01/2006
EvolutionTV	Miglia	01/01/2006
EyeTV	Elgato Systems	07/01/2006
EyeTV 250 from a Gamer's Perspective	Elgato Systems	12/01/2006
EyeTV EZ	Elgato Systems	06/01/2006
EyeTV Hybrid	Elgato Systems	11/01/2006
Flip Wireless USB KVM	Belkin	09/01/2006
Free-1 Phone	IPEVO	08/01/2006
FS1 High Definition Earphones	Future Sonics Inc.	01/01/2006
Graphire4	Wacom	11/01/2006
HOBOWare Pendant Emp/Light Data Logger	Onset Computer Corp	05/01/2006
iClear iPod Case	Griffin Technology	09/01/2006
ICY DOCK MB559UEA-1S	ICY DOCK USA	11/01/2006
Intuos3 6x8 Pen Tablet	Wacom	11/01/2006
Invisible Shield	Shieldzone Corporation	09/01/2006
iPod U2 SE 2006	Apple	10/01/2006
iPod Video case by WaterField Designs	Waterfield Designs	11/01/2006
Kodak Easyshare P880 Zoom Digital Camera and EasyShare Photo Printer 500	Eastman Kodak Company	02/01/2006
Laptop Desk 2.0	Lap Works	09/01/2006
LocationFree Player Pak for Mac	IO Data Device	08/01/2006
Logitech V450 Laser Cordless Mouse for Notebooks	Logitech	12/01/2006
Miglia TVMini HD	Miglia	03/01/2006
MiScope	Zarbeco, LLC	03/01/2006
MS Wireless Laser Desktop for Mac	Microsoft	07/01/2006
Oakley SI Computer Bag	Oakley	10/01/2006
Pantone huey Monitor Calibration Tool	Pantone	06/01/2006
Parrott TalkPro Headset VXI USB 7.0	VXI Corporation	07/01/2006
Petito 512 MB Flash Drive	ATP, Inc.	07/01/2006
PhoneValet	Parliant	08/01/2006
Photosmart 3310 AIO	HP	09/01/2006
RadTech BT500 Rechargeable Bluetooth Mouse	RadTech	06/01/2006

Hardware

Shuttle Disk Firewire Enclosure
 Skype Mac Starter Pack
 Slimline 8x Dual Layer SuperDrive Upgrade
 Snowball USB Mic
 tekstyl
 The Slanket
 Tough Skin for iPod Video 30GB
 ToughDrive
 TVMax
 TVMicro
 Waterfield Designs Apple iPod HiFi Protective Case
 WiebeTech ToughTech XE
 Wireless-G Broadband Router with SRX200 WRT54GX2
 Xerox Phaser 8550DP
 Xpad

Manufacturer

ICY DOCK USA
 Skype
 FastMac
 Blue Microphones
 RadTech
 Technipak
 Speck Products
 ATP, Inc.
 Miglia
 Miglia
 Waterfield Designs
 WiebeTech
 Linksys
 Xerox
 EDOVA Innovations, LLC

Pub Date

09/01/2006
 09/01/2006
 11/01/2006
 07/01/2006
 08/01/2006
 12/01/2006
 01/01/2006
 08/01/2006
 09/01/2006
 06/01/2006
 05/01/2006
 11/01/2006
 01/01/2006
 05/01/2006
 01/01/2006

Software

Accio 1.0 and Ultralingua 6 English Language Dictionaries
 Accio Dictionaries for iPod
 AKVIS Chameleon
 AppZapper 1.6
 Art Explosion

 Berlitz French Premier

 Berlitz German Premier

 Berlitz Spanish Premier

 Bookdog 2.3.7
 Business Card Composer 3.2
 Business Cards with PrintShop 2
 CandyBar 2.5.1
 CardIRIS 30r4
 Carrara Pro 5.1
 Cassa vX 1.2
 Cepstral Swift Voices Version 4.0.1
 CocoaBooklet 2.0.1
 Collaborative Online Project Management
 Copper 2005
 CoverScout 2.2
 Daily vX 1.3
 Data Rescue II
 Daylite
 Deep Freeze Mac 2.0 with ARD
 DEVONnote 1.8
 DirectControl for Macs
 Disc Cover 1.0.8
 DiscBlaze 6.1.5
 DockStar
 DoorStop X 1.1
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 E-Mail Commander
 EyeTV 2 Digital Recording Software
 Fast DVD Copy 4.0.4

Manufacturer

Ultralingua
 Ultralingua
 AKVIS
 AppZapper
 Nova Development
 Corporation
 Nova Development
 Corporation
 Nova Development
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 Nova Development
 Corporation
 Sheep Systems
 BeLight Software
 MacKiev
 Iconfactory
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 Element Software
 Equinux
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 Marketcircle, Inc.
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 Radical Breeze
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11/01/2006
 07/01/2006
 11/01/2006
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Software	Manufacturer	Pub Date
FastTrack Schedule 9	AEC Software, Inc.	01/01/2006
Feed For All Version 2	Notepage, Inc.	10/01/2006
Fidget Menu 1.5.9	neXT Soft	05/01/2006
Finale NotePad	MakeMusic, Inc.	12/01/2006
Flip4Mac	Telestream	09/01/2006
Flip4Mac WMV	Telestream	04/01/2006
Folder Glance 2.0.1	Yellow Lemon Software	12/01/2006
Folder Icon X 3.0	Narratt	07/01/2006
FolderControl 1.60	Derman Enterprises	11/01/2006
FontNuke 1.0.5	Pietrykowski	11/01/2006
Garritan Personal Orchestra	Garritan	08/01/2006
iGlasses v 1.3.6	ecam	10/01/2006
iList Data 3.2	Lakewood Studios	06/01/2006
iListen 1.7	Mac Speech	07/01/2006
Illumination 1.5.7	Radical Breeze	03/01/2006
Image Tricks Pro 2.3	BeLight Software	10/01/2006
iMaginator 2.4	Stone Design Corporation	08/01/2006
Internet Security Barrier X4	Intego	08/01/2006
iPartition 1.5.2	Coriolis Systems Limited	09/01/2006
iPaste 1.1.2	IGG Software	12/01/2006
iSpeak It 3.0	ZappTek	11/01/2006
iValet v 1.0.2	ZiggySoft	10/01/2006
Labels vX	INtex Publishing	08/01/2006
Mac Pilot 2.0.3	Koingo Software	03/01/2006
MacRabbit's CSSEdit 1.7	MacRabbit Software	03/01/2006
Merlin 1.3.7	ProjectWizards	01/01/2006
Mouse Locator 1.0	2Point5Fish.com	03/01/2006
Mousepose 2	Boinx Software	08/01/2006
Musicast 1.0.2	Musicast	12/01/2006
myNotes 1.1.1.1	Mishimo	05/01/2006
NetShred X 3.17	Mireth Technology	08/01/2006
On the Job 2.2.1	Stunt Software	09/01/2006
Overflow 2.0	Stunt Software	12/01/2006
Parallels	Parallel's, Inc.	07/01/2006
PDF pen	SmileOnMyMac	08/01/2006
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PDFshrink 3.1	Apago, Inc.	03/01/2006
Pop Char X	Ergonis	08/01/2006
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PowerBoost	ecam	10/01/2006
Print Explosion Deluxe 3.0.1.1	Nova Development Corporation	06/01/2006
RapidWeaver 3.2	Realmac Software	02/01/2006
Readiris Pro 11.0.3	IRIS	01/01/2006
Reason 3.0.5	Propellerhead Software of Sweden	06/01/2006
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Screenshots Preference Pane 1.0	EGO systems	07/01/2006
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Sidenote 1.7	Chatel	07/01/2006
Smart Scroll X 1.3.3	Marcmoini	07/01/2006

Software

SOHO Business Cards 1.6
 Spamnix 3.0.28 for Eudora
 Sp amphibian Gateway Version 1
 Speed Download 4.0.2
 Stone Works!
 Swift Publisher
 The Logo Creator MEGA Pak
 The Print Shop
 TidyUp
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 ToDo X 1.9.1
 ToDo X 2.1
 Toon Boom V3 2-D Animation
 Typinator 1.3
 VectorWorks Designer 12 with RenderWorks
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 WheresTheFreeSpace v0.1

Manufacturer

Chronos, LC
 Spamnix Software
 Outspring, Inc.
 YazSoft
 Stone Design Corporation
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 Hyperbolic Software
 Roxio
 Omnicron Software Systems
 Omnicron Software Systems
 ToonBoom Animation, Inc.
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Apple Store for Businesses in the USA

<http://store.apple.com/AppleStore/WebObjects/BizAgent?qprm=126559>

ecamm networks

<http://www.ecamm.com/> (Right after the *Hardware* Heading.)

Lionshead Studios Limited and Feral Interactive - Black & White 2 & The Movies

<http://www.feralinteractive.com/>

DigitalMediaTraining

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Parallels

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Advertising Information

Contact Wayne Lefevre, our Ad and Marketing Director, for working through the process of advertising with us.

wlefevre@maccompanion.com

We are the Macintosh® Professional Network (MPN), Limited Liability Corporation (LLC). MPN, LLC continues to evolve, ever since its creation in 1996 as a way to reach out to those who use computers for a living in an effort to make their lives easier and their work both enjoyable and profitable.

We also provide monthly book, hardware and software reviews at [macCompanion](#). We offer ways and means for folks to get comfortable using the Macintosh™ created by the Apple® Corporation in the multibillion-dollar computer industry. We know that bad software doesn't live long in the Mac™ environment. On the other hand, good computer equipment and software becomes great as the word spreads, and we are very good at helping to spread it. Our suggestions over the years have also helped improve many successful products in use today. Through kind and gentle efforts, we have been able to help many people move to better tools-of-the-trade so they can be more productive in their work.

Besides our website and consulting efforts, we also create *macCompanion* as a freely available PDF-based monthly. It averages about 100 pages per month. July 2006 was the 4th-year anniversary of this labor of love. The *macCompanion* staff is an all-volunteer team of writers and reviewers from many parts of the globe, and they also have a great wealth of knowledge and experience in their backgrounds. That base of talent also continues to keep growing as the Macintosh Professional Network expands.

Statistical Analysis

We are very excited about our site statistics! The multilingual-capable [macCompanion](#) website is close to 2 million page views a month and readership continues to increase rapidly through our "whisper campaign".

We continue to get greater visibility every day. Many of the various 35 computer operating systems (with many moving towards the Mac® OS X™ environment), 115 online search engines, 269 countries and domains and 319 online robots have discovered us – and continue to do so. So far, over 201 other websites have also linked to us. Many of our readers have made our site one of their favorites. While nearly 70% of our readership stops by for a quick visit via RSS feeds, over 23% spend between 1/2 to 1 hours at a time going through over 250 different pages on our site (mostly archives). Many of those who quickly drop by, come to get the monthly PDF issue of *macCompanion*. Over 35GB of bandwidth was used in December 2005 alone for download purposes. Previous months have averaged around 20GB. Trend analysis indicates that will continue to increase as folks decide to "Move to the Mac".

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Well that's it for this issue. Please come back again next month!
The *macCompanion* Staff