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Welcome

by Robert Paul Leitao, rleitao@atpm.com

Welcome to the December issue of *About This Particular Macintosh!* We're in the middle of the 2002 holiday season. Economic reports indicate that shoppers are choosing to cut back on spending this year compared to holiday seasons in the past, and consumers are looking for bargains before Christmas rather waiting for sales after Christmas day.

But here's a little bit of holiday cheer: Hoping to spur consumer interest in its products during the holiday season. Apple Computer recently announced a $100 rebate on the purchase of the Combo Drive version of its eMac. Apple is also offering a "double the RAM" promotion on all Macintosh models. For an additional $40 consumers can double the RAM on all new Macs purchased through December 31, 2002 at the online Apple Store and at Apple retail store locations.

Shoppers with a Mac user or two on their holiday shopping list can avoid the crowds and parking problems at America's shopping malls. The Apple Store offers a convenient and easy-to-navigate Holiday Gift Guide for online shoppers.

New Titanium PowerBooks

In early November Apple released its first PowerBook with a slot-loading SuperDrive. The Titanium PowerBook with SuperDrive can burn both DVD and CD media. At the same time, Apple dropped the price of its entry-level iBook to $999. PowerBook sales were off 40 percent in the third calendar quarter as Apple worked off inventory ahead of the new model's release.

The weekend before Thanksgiving, Apple opened its 50th retail store. The company now claims that its retail stores are within a fifteen-mile drive of one-third of the US population. Apple's retail stores sold more than $100 million in products during the third calendar quarter and the retail store strategy has become key to Apple's efforts to increase its US market share. Apple claims that 40 percent of Apple retail store sales are to people new to the Macintosh platform.

Serve's Up!

Recently, Xserve, Apple's first product in enterprise market for business server solutions, has garnered a great deal of press attention. The Unix underpinnings of Mac OS X and Mac OS X Server help to make the Xserve an attractive product for business customers seeking Unix-based solutions. Watch for more news about Xserve soon after the first of the year.

Products That Gladden the Fiscal Season

Will the 2002 holiday shopping season bring glad tidings to the folks at Apple? The updated Titanium PowerBook and the Windows version of Apple's Pod, which is now sold at a variety of major retail stores, should help Apple's revenues and earning for its first fiscal quarter.

The ATPM staff wishes you a happy holiday season. We'll be back in January with the next edition of your favorite monthly Macintosh electronic magazine.

The ATPM Staff

Our December issue includes:

The Candy Apple: Finding the Bright Spots in a Murky Day

The Candy Apple finds fulfillment in a sweetened coffee drink. Or something like that.

Roll Your Own: Try to Handle This

Charles Ross continues his in-depth course on how to use AppleScript to write your own programs. This month he looks at how to check for errors when you're developing your own "killer app."

Networks in Action: Serving Files Using FTP in Mac OS X

Mac OS X includes built-in FTP support, easily controlled through the Sharing view of the System Preferences application. FTP provides no-frills network file transfer for Macs, PCs, or any computer that can connect to the Internet. This article covers the how's, why's, and wheretofore's.

What's Under the Hood: 'Tis the Season

What would a December issue of a magazine be without gift suggestions? Robert C. Lewis tells us about *lots* games for your favorite Mac person.

Segments: Mac OS X: Powerful But Awkward

David Zatz looks at Jaguar, warts and all. Find out what he thinks of the new cat on the block.

Segments: Me and My Macs

Forty is a stage in one's life when one looks back. Sylvester Roque examines his Mac experience from the perspective of someone who has used Apple products for over half his life.

Cartoon: Cortland

This month, *Cortland* has several takes on shareware, paranoia, and other funny goings on at the office.

Desktop Pictures: Chile

ATPM reader Yaniv Eidelstein brings back some great desktop pictures from his recent vacation to Chile.

Review: AlphaSmart Dana

The AlphaSmart Dana, a portable Palm-based computer, gets taken through the paces by Paul Fatula. He finds the Dana a successful combination of power and ease of use, making it an ideal tool for professional and amateur writers.

Review: BBEdit 7.0.1

Michael Tsai looks at what's new in BBEdit 7, the latest revision of the popular text-editing program. This version offers new features to make several old tasks easier to accomplish and introduces menu commands for accessing CVS (Concurrent Versions System).

Review: .Mac

Over the past few months, you have probably heard plenty of hype and plenty of complaints about .Mac. Now, Eric Blair cuts through the static to make sense of it all.

Review: icKeys (PowerBook G4 Keyboard Illuminator)

If you've ever caught yourself squinting at your PowerBook's keyboard in the dark, icKeys may be just what you need. Chris Lawson reviews a simple hardware upgrade that will provide illuminated F and J keys.

Review: Kids GoGoGo 6.2

Gregory Tetrault offers up a review of Kids GoGoGo, an application to watch over children's use of the Internet when parents aren't around to supervise. While its protections can be worked around by a computer-savvy child, it can protect a child from inadvertent exposure to some of the Net's seedier offerings.

Review: Mac OS X Killer Tips (book)

Mac OS X Killer Tips is a book offering just what its title promises. While its tips can be of use to all OS X users, reviewer Kirk McElhearn finds that the book would be of best use to beginners and intermediate users.

Review: Ponere 1.0.1

This month's round of reviews has offered a number of useful products, so here's something fun. Ponere 1.0.1, reviewed by Gregory Tetrault, is a two-dimensional puzzle game offering sixty levels of play to challenge gamers of any skill level.

E-Mail

Sharing an Internet Connection with a PC

I'm trying to share my AirPort Internet connection by connecting my employer-provided PC to my Mac using a crossover cable. I can see that the PC knows it's connected to a network but no sharing takes place. I am running OS X 10.2.1 and am using FireWalk firewall software. Any suggestion for me? I am particularly handicapped on figuring out the PC side of things and assume (but not confidently!) that that is where my problem lies.

—Bob Kozlowski

As long as OS X has Internet Sharing turned on, the PC should be able to use DHCP to share the Mac's Net connection. For more information, see this tutorial. *—Chris Lawson*

Fonts in Mac OS X

Being a very recent convert from OS 9.1 to 10.2 the one item that really has me frustrated is the font display. I mean everything from the menu bars to dialog boxes to body type and menus in applications. The type looks smudged and dirty. I have played around with the settings in the System Preferences, General Settings concerning Font Smoothing. Setting it too high makes small fonts really look like crap. Setting it low makes all fonts look smudged.

I really find it hard to believe that I can't get my display to look comparable to OS 9.x and earlier where the font displays were crystal clear.

I did download TinkerTool that supposedly should let you change the system font setting but it doesn't seem to matter.

Also, I should mention that I have two monitors: my PowerBook G3 display and an external 15" VGA CRT. Both look equally bad.

I have changed the setting for IE 5 enabling and disabling the "enable Quartz text smoothing" option.

If you could give me a brief rundown on the OS X display function and any suggestions on how to make the display comparable to OS 9 (as far as display legibility) I would greatly appreciate it.

—*Mike Brock*

Unfortunately, we know of no way make OS X's font display even approach the clarity of OS 9's.   —*Michael Tsai*

Outlining

MORE 3.1 is an outstanding piece of free software for legacy Macs. It was, hands-down, the best outliner ever on any platform and still rules that category today without an update since God knows when. The outlining function built into MS Word can't touch it. The authors of OmniOutliner use it as their touchstone but haven't begun to approach its functionality.

Outlining? It's beautiful, with every numbering option one could might ever need, and full support for drag-and-drop reorganization. Complete structured documents? Attach a "comment" of unrestricted length to each and every heading if you want. Formatting? Complete ad hoc flexibility, combined with "rules" that provide speed and consistency. Org charts? No sweat—turn an outline into a chart with a single click. Presentations? Got 'em. It's not PowerPoint, but if you live to outline, MORE is for you.

Download a copy from outliners.com, the domain presided over by Dave Winer. Dave authored MORE, which was later published by Symantec (who later still allowed Dave to re-release MORE). Dave is a creative genius who went on to found UserLand Software, and his kindness lives on at outliners.com.

MORE 3.1 not only runs on legacy hardware and OSes, but it runs smoothly and *fast* under Classic in OS X. Try it out! If you missed MORE the first time, you owe it yourself to try it now.

—*Jim Kane*

I agree. I have been forced to use PowerPoint for presentations because the campus I teach at has only PCs with Windows and Microsoft Office software. However, I still use MORE 3.1 for making handouts and overhead slides. Symantec did such a great job that MORE works perfectly under OS 9.2 (or Classic) even though it hasn't been updated since 1991!   —*Gregory Tetrault*

iTunes Radio

I'm not sure, but I think I erased a listing of the radio stations for the Talk/News iTunes category. Does anyone have that on their primary list of radio topics?

I would like to add some news to my list of radio stations, but most stations don't use Mac related products to broadcast their program. Any suggestions?

—*Ross Gunn III*

You can update the list of radio stations by selecting the "Talk/Spoken Word" item in iTunes and clicking the Refresh button. However, I only found 7 stations.

You can play non-listed radio stations by entering their URLs into the Open Stream… window (under the Advanced menu). However, I had little luck with this since most radio stations were in RealAudio or Windows Media Player formats. For now, if you want a greater variety of talk radio stations, you will need to use RealAudio. RealAudio can maintain lists of favorite stations.

The declining number of stations has two causes: fewer stations broadcasting in iTunes-compatible formats and fewer Internet radio stations altogether due to the ridiculous royalty fee schedule set by the Library of Congress.   —*Gregory Tetrault*

Finding the Bright Spots in a Murky Day

Today I took a trip. I thought it would not be at all fun, but it turned out to be a great day.

I'd heard a radio ad a few days back about a Dell Direct store opening here in town. The ad described the displays and the helpful salespeople. I thought it would be interesting to see how closely it resembles the Apple retail stores. Perhaps this would be a sign that Apple is doing something right, and that's why Dell was copying it. Turns out Dell is not really copying Apple, but it's in the same ballpark.

I headed to the Dell Web page to find out where the store was, and it turns out it's not really a store but a kiosk in a mall. Several had opened recently in my state, including two at malls here in town. I chose the newer mall. It's a little farther away from me, but I hadn't been there since it opened a few years ago, and I wanted to see what all the buzz was about.

On the way, I thought about the idea of a kiosk instead of a full-sized store. Since customers normally want new machines shipped directly from the factory, rather than floor models, it makes sense not to pay for gobs of floor space to display half a dozen basic machines. It gets the display out into traffic, so passersby might be more inclined to slow down to look at the products. I guess if I already knew what I wanted, and just wanted to place the order, and maybe ask a few questions of a live person, this might provide a really good purchasing experience.

During the drive, I noticed the overcast skies and delays at traffic lights. I realized I'd timed this thing really badly, and would be coming home in the thick of the afternoon traffic. Then I remembered that I don't go to malls much, because all those people make me crazy. So many of them are impatient or rude that I get depressed about the downside of human nature. I was driving 15 miles on a rainy afternoon to look at something I wasn't even going to buy. Ick.

An hour later, everything was different.

I arrived at the mall and looked for the Dell Direct kiosk on the map at the entrance. No luck. But near the entrance was a Customer Service desk; they told me where to find the kiosk. Most of the islands in the walkway were those cart things that roll out, but the Dell kiosk is more stationary and solid-looking. There were four customers, one on each side. The salesperson was explaining something to one of them, and a passerby stopped to listen to her. We were free to handle the products on display, so I picked up a couple of laptops just to see what they felt like. Heavy, heavy, heavy.

To be fair, the only laptop I've handled very much was an early-generation iBook, but it came in at around 7 lbs., I think. These had to be half again that much, if not more. The wireless mice were cool, but big and unwieldy. There were several different-sized screens available, including a monster big screen that would be great for classroom or office work. I didn't want to interfere with her making a real sale to someone else, so I didn't get a chance to ask the saleswoman why I should consider her product over Apple. But it was a good shopping experience anyway. This kiosk model might be worth considering, especially for places that are already hotbeds of Mac buyers.

As I left the kiosk I saw another one selling sunglasses, and remembered I needed to replace the pair I'd lost hiking a month before. I found a shop selling real sunglasses instead of knockoffs, and quickly found what I wanted, and 10 bucks cheaper than the first pair I'd bought! On the way out, I stopped in the coffee shop for something they call a gingerbread latte. It was the perfect combination of coffee and pumpkin pie flavors.

On the drive home, I was able to take the freeway instead of the in-town route. Two miles before my exit, I saw the traffic pileup ahead, in time to make an exit before getting stuck behind the jackknifed tractor trailer. The CD player held a jewel I hadn't listened to in a long time: Smash Mouth's Astro Lounge—great driving music. Perfect kitsch. The sun popped out for a few minutes on the way home. So a trip that started out potentially icky ended up being just great.

Why did it turn out so well? Here's all I can figure out: we see what we want to see. A few weeks ago I met someone for coffee that I hadn't seen in a few months. She asked how I was doing, and I said, "Great!" She asked if there was anything going on in my life that made it so, and I said, "No, I pretty much just always *choose* to be content." I don't know that that's possible for everyone, but after making that choice several times a day for a while, the habit kicks in. Makes it hard to stay negative, when you spend lots of energy seeking out positive stuff.

Looks like a good place to say…Onward.

Try to Handle This

I'm back! I apologize to all of my readers for the lengthy hiatus that I have had to take from writing this column. It's been an unbelievably busy couple of months: I started a new job for The Support Group as a developer for their new Los Angeles office, and at the moment my home is piled high with boxes as we prepare to move. I'm glad to be back though, as it means we can continue our journey through the wonderful world of programming.

While I have it in my mind to do so, I want to thank all of you out there who have e-mailed to let me know that you're enjoying this series. A number of you have asked that I show examples of integrating AppleScript with other programs such as FileMaker Pro. While I may get into using AppleScript with scriptable programs eventually, for the time being I'm concentrating on how to think about programming in general and how to create programs that do what you want them to do using only AppleScript and the standard additions included with the Mac OS. As this is a Mac e-zine, I can be pretty sure that everyone has AppleScript, but not everyone has FileMaker Pro (even though they should, as it's a great database management program).

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This month we're going to take a look at error checking in general and AppleScript's `try` block in particular. As we've seen before, sometimes things don't work out as we plan in our programs. We've been building a simple program that will prompt the user to enter a number and will sum up all the integers up to that number. For reference, here's the program we left in the last column.

```
-- Get the number to sum up to from the user.
display dialog "Please enter a positive number:" default answer ¬
    "" buttons {"OK"} default button 1
-- Get the data entered by the user into the dialog's field
set theNumber to the text returned of result
-- Assume that invalid data was entered
set isValidEntry to false
-- Repeat the following block of statements until we've made
-- sure that the user has entered valid data.
repeat until isValidEntry
   -- Attempt to coerse the data entered by the user into a number.
   try
      -- If a non-numeric entry was made by the user the
      -- following statement will produce an error.
      set theNumber to theNumber as number
      -- If the data entered by the user is a number but
      -- isn't an integer, manually produce an error.
      if class of theNumber is not integer then error
      -- If no error was produced, set the isValidEntry
      -- variable to true so that we can exit the loop.
      set isValidEntry to true
   on error
      -- If an error was produced, alert the user and ask for
      -- valid data.
      display dialog "That is not a valid entry. " & ¬
         "Please enter a positive integer:" default answer ¬
         "" buttons {"OK"} default button 1
      -- Get the data entered by the user.
      set theNumber to text returned of result
   end try -- set theNumber to theNumber as number
end repeat -- until isValidEntry
-- Initialize sum to 0.
set sum to 0
-- Sum up the numbers.
repeat with i from 1 to theNumber
   set sum to sum + i
end repeat -- with i from 1 to theNumber
-- Report the results of the process to the user.
display dialog "The sum of the first " & theNumber & " ¬
    numbers is " & sum & ¬
    "." buttons {"OK"} default button 1
```

As you can see, this code already has a `try` block in it, which attempts to capture an error that could happen. Specifically, if the user enters text or if the user enters a number that isn't an integer, then we try to handle it elegantly instead of letting the program behave improperly.

This is a specific example of the general idea behind error checking. When writing software, one of the things the programmer has to thing about is what could go wrong, and account for that possibility. In our summing program, one possible problem is that the user can enter anything into the dialog box, but only positive integers make sense to the program.

If we simply try to execute the program without the `try` block, the program will choke if the user enters text information such as "ten" or if the user enters a number with a fractional part.

As an example, here's a version of the program that doesn't do any error checking:

```
-- Get the number to sum up to from the user.
display dialog "Please enter a positive number:" default answer ¬
   "" buttons {"OK"} default button 1
-- Get the data entered by the user into the dialog's field
set theNumber to the text returned of result
-- Assume that invalid data was entered
set isValidEntry to false
-- Initialize sum to 0.
set sum to 0
-- Sum up the numbers.
repeat with i from 1 to theNumber
   set sum to sum + i
end repeat -- with i from 1 to theNumber
-- Report the results of the process to the user.
display dialog "The sum of the first " & theNumber & ¬
   " numbers is " & sum & ¬
   "." buttons {"OK"} default button 1
```

If you run this program and enter "ten" into the dialog box, you'll get an error message that says "Execution Error, Can't make 'ten' into a integer.," and the program will terminate. If the user enters a number with a fractional part, a similar error message will appear. Basically, the program can't handle the input, and computers are stupid, so it gives up.

Notice how much shorter the version without error checking is. As you can see, it's much easier to write a program without error checking than with, but that makes the experience harder on your users. Making things easier for the user usually is more difficult for the programmer, but it's worth it; it's your job, as the programmer, to anticipate these problems, and fortunately AppleScript gives us that `try` handler to help us out.

Enclosing AppleScript code within a `try` block will tell AppleScript to not choke if there's a problem, but to instead jump to the `on error` handler, which can take care of the problem gracefully. The `on error` handler of our program simply reports to the user that what he entered wasn't valid, and gives him instructions as to what a valid entry is.

The summing program can enter the `on error` handler in two ways. The first is by attempting to coerced what the user entered into a number with the code `set theNumber to theNumber as number`. If the user enters "ten," which can't be coerced into being a number, then the error is produced and execution continues at the beginning of the `on error` handler.

The second way to enter the `on error` handler is by actually calling an error manually, which we do if the class of `theNumber` isn't an integer. `error` is actually a command that you can use to manually produce an error.

Whenever an error is produced in AppleScript it is accompanied by an error message and an error number. In our current version of the program, we ignore these pieces of information, but they can be useful since more than one error might happen within a try block and we might wish to do different things depending on the error produced.

Here's a rewrite of our program that tracks the error number and gives the user more useful feedback as to the nature of the problem.

```
-- Get the number to sum up to from the user.
display dialog "Please enter a positive number:" default answer ¬
   "" buttons {"OK"} default button 1
-- Get the data entered by the user into the dialog's field
set theNumber to the text returned of result
-- Assume that invalid data was entered
set isValidEntry to false
-- Repeat the following block of statements until we've made
-- sure that the user has entered valid data.
repeat until isValidEntry
   -- Attempt to coerse the data entered by the user into a number.
   try
      -- If a non-numeric entry was made by the user the
      -- following statement will produce an error.
      set theNumber to theNumber as number
      -- If the data entered by the user is a number but
      -- isn't an integer, manually produce an error.
      if class of theNumber is not integer then error number 500
      -- If no error was produced, set the isValidEntry
      -- variable to true so that we can exit the loop.
      set isValidEntry to true
   on error number errNum
      -- Use the errNum to determine what went wrong.
      if errNum is equal to -1700 then
        set dialogMessage to "You entered text instead of a number."
      else if errNum is equal to 500 then
        set dialogMessage to "You have entered a number with a fractional part."
      end if
      -- If an error was produced, alert the user and ask for
      -- valid data.
      display dialog dialogMessage & ¬
         " Please enter a positive integer:" default answer ¬
         "" buttons {"OK"} default button 1
      -- Get the data entered by the user.
      set theNumber to text returned of result
   end try -- set theNumber to theNumber as number
end repeat -- until isValidEntry
-- Initialize sum to 0.
set sum to 0
-- Sum up the numbers.
repeat with i from 1 to theNumber
   set sum to sum + i
end repeat -- with i from 1 to theNumber
-- Report the results of the process to the user.
display dialog "The sum of the first " & theNumber & ¬
      " numbers is " & sum & "." buttons {"OK"} default button 1
```

In the first error possible, where the user enters text instead of a number, AppleScript produces an error -1700, which means that it can't condense the text into a number. In the second error, we produce an error number 500. We used the number 500 because it doesn't interfere with any error number produced by AppleScript. In general, when calling the error handler manually, you can use numbers ranging from 500 to 10000.

Once we've entered the error handler, we've captured the error number in the variable `errNum`. We could have also captured the error message by changing the `on error` line to read `on error errMsg number errNum`. This would have set the variable `errMsg` to the message that the error produced. We could have then called it manually with `error "Can't sum fractional numbers" number 500` and when the error handler was entered by that line, the `errMsg` variable would have contained the text `Can't sum fractional numbers`. Feel free to try out these changes and add a `display dialog` line within the `on error` handler.

Since we now know why the error handler was entered, we can customize our message to the user to give more complete feedback and let her know what went wrong. We store this custom message in a new variable called `dialogMessage` and use that as part of the text displayed in the `display dialog` line.

• • •

Now you understand how to check for problems that the user might create with your program and how to handle the problems gracefully. Here's your exercise for the month: What other errors might happen based on what the user enters? Re-write the program to account for these errors. I can think of at least one other error the program should account for, and I'll include that possibility in the program next month. Perhaps you'll see it too, or perhaps you'll see a potential problem that I don't.

The `on error` handler is a special kind of handler that is part of the AppleScript language, but the AppleScript language allows us to create our own handlers. We'll cover what that means and how to do it next month. Until then, happy programming!

# Serving Files Using FTP in Mac OS X

Introduction

File Transfer Protocol, or FTP for short, is an IP-based method of moving files from one computer to another. "IP-based" means that it uses the same underlying communication methods as the Internet, so if your computer can connect to the Net, it can use FTP to transfer files.

In the past, FTP relied on separate client and server programs. You'd set up an FTP server on the computer that had files to share, then use an FTP client program on the computer that wanted to access said files. Mac OS X integrates the FTP server into the operating system, making it easy to share your files without needing a separate server. I previously wrote an article about sharing files between Macs and PCs via FTP that used a server on the PC and a client on the Mac (Basic FTP File Sharing Between Macs and PCs from ATPM 7.11). This article switches places, as Mac OS X serves files to Windows via the built-in FTP server.

Step One: Hardware Hookup

My own network consists of a Mac Cube and a Windows 2000 laptop. The two computers share a DHCP router, which provides Internet access and enables the two computers to "talk" to each other over the network.

If I didn't have a router or existing network, I'd connect the laptop to the Mac using a crossover cable. Crossover cables create a network for two (and only two) computers. Connect each end of the crossover cable to the computers' Ethernet ports and you're done with the hardware setup. Find a crossover cable in the network section of your favorite (in a pinch, your second favorite) computer store.

Two-Computer Crossover
Connection
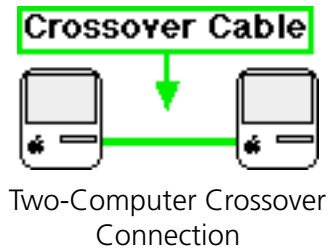
Step Two: Check Your IP Address

Open the System Preferences application and select Network from the View menu or toolbar. This displays your active network connection (you could have more than one). Select Built-in Ethernet from the Show pop-up menu and note your IP address (192.168.123.160, in my case). We'll use it later to make the FTP client connection.
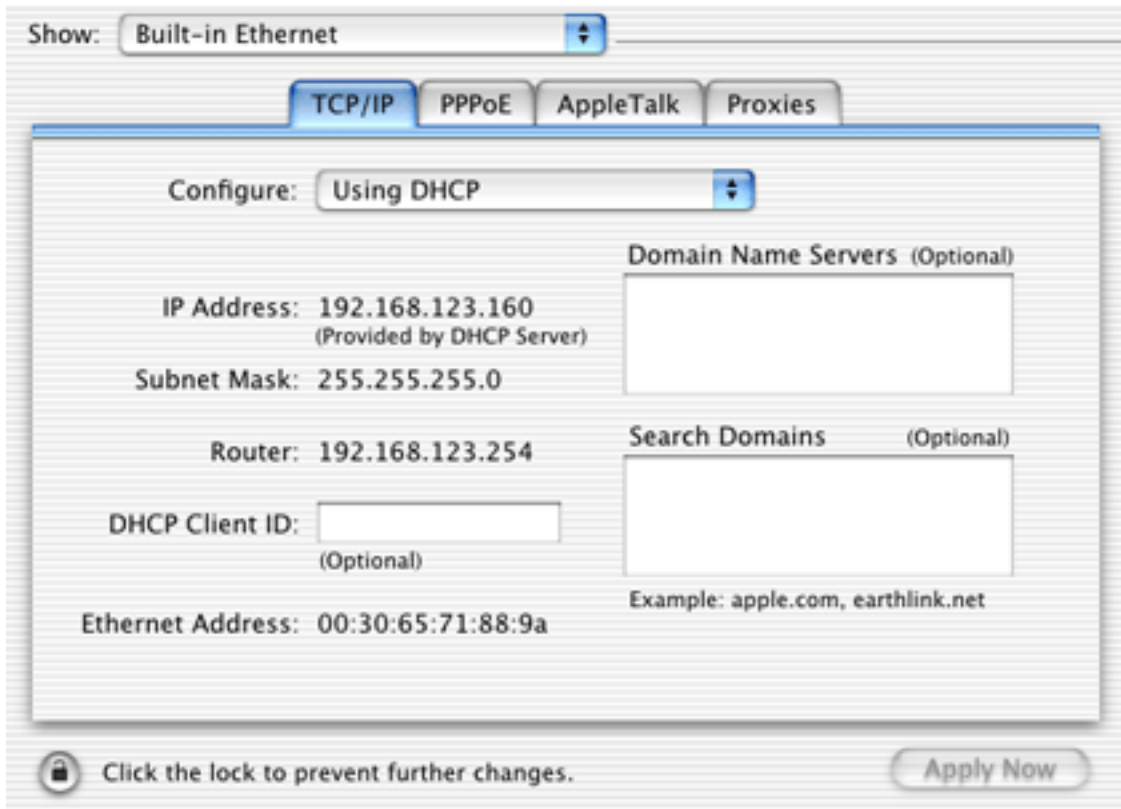

Checking your IP address in the network view.

If you don't have an IP address in the Network window, change the Configure pop-up menu to Manually and enter an address like 192.168.1.1. You can use any group of four numbers from 0 to 255 separated by periods, but the 192.168 prefix is reserved for private networks. Then enter a subnet mask of 255.255.255.0.

Step Three: Start the Mac OS X FTP Server

In the System Preferences application, select Sharing from the View menu. Check the "Allow FTP access" checkbox and confirm that your IP address appears in the "IP address" field.
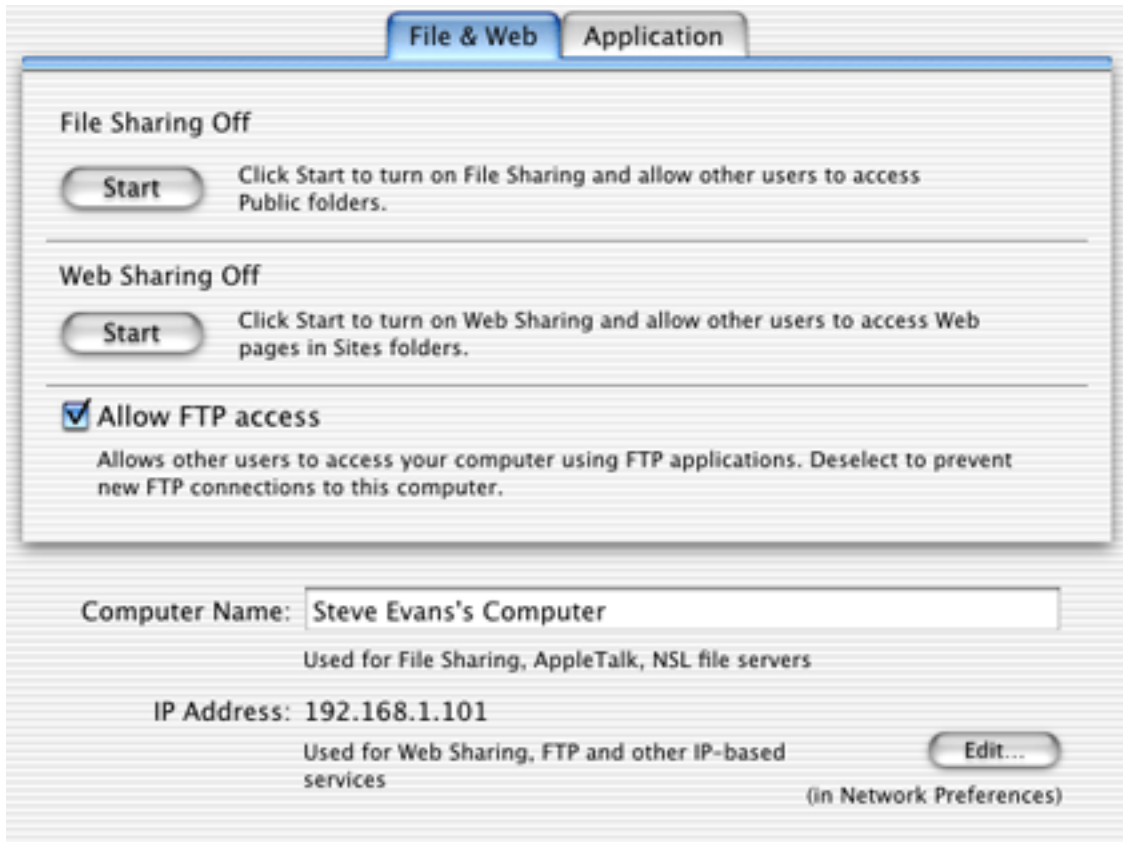
Start the Mac OS X FTP server.

Your Mac now shares the files in your home folder. To examine this directory, select Finder from the Dock, open your startup disk, and open the Users folder. The folder named after your user name is your home folder. When you log into the FTP server using your user name and password, you'll see the files in that folder.
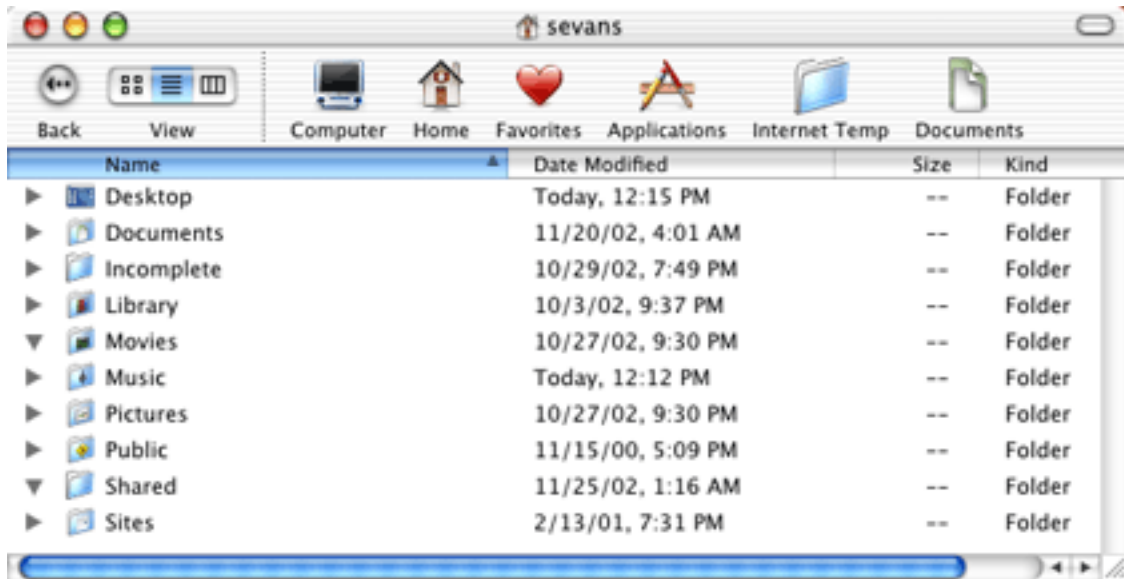
Contents of my home directory

Step Four: Check the Laptop's IP Address

Configuring the Windows laptop (mine runs Windows 2000) is similar to the Mac. To check its IP address, click the Start Button > Settings > Networks option, then open "Local Area Connection." Select Properties, then select the TCP/IP protocol and select Properties again. This displays your IP address.
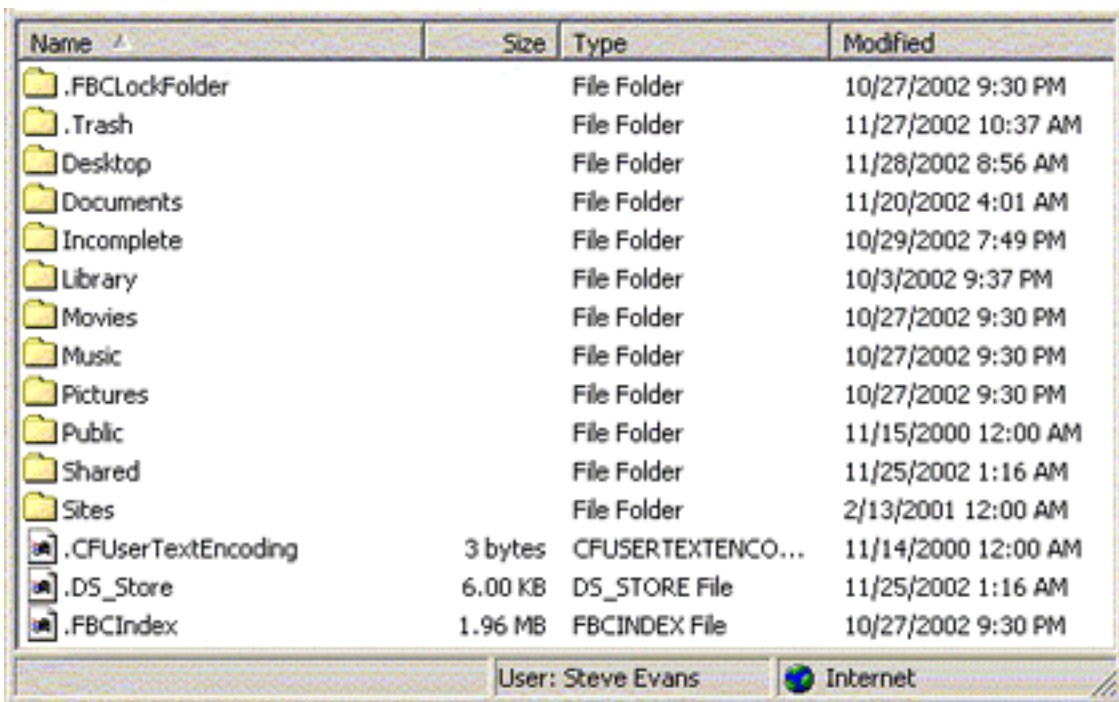
If you obtain your IP address automatically (my router uses DHCP, which handles the address automatically), you don't need to do anything. You can assign an address manually as described for the Mac, just make sure the IP address is different (192.168.1.2, for example). The subnet mask is the same, 255.255.255.0. Choose OK to close the Properties windows.

Step Five: Access Your Shared Files

Since the Mac is our FTP server, we'll access the files from the Windows laptop. Open Internet Explorer (which includes an FTP client) and enter this in the Address field:

ftp://[user name]:[password]@[Mac IP address]

The user name is your full Mac login name, including any spaces. Follow it with a colon and your login password, then the @ sign and your Mac's IP address. This logs in to the Mac's FTP server and you'll see the following window.

Name	Size	Type	Modified
.FBCLockFolder		File Folder	10/27/2002 9:30 PM
.Trash		File Folder	11/27/2002 10:37 AM
Desktop		File Folder	11/28/2002 8:56 AM
Documents		File Folder	11/20/2002 4:01 AM
Incomplete		File Folder	10/29/2002 7:49 PM
Library		File Folder	10/3/2002 9:37 PM
Movies		File Folder	10/27/2002 9:30 PM
Music		File Folder	10/27/2002 9:30 PM
Pictures		File Folder	10/27/2002 9:30 PM
Public		File Folder	11/15/2000 12:00 AM
Shared		File Folder	11/25/2002 1:16 AM
Sites		File Folder	2/13/2001 12:00 AM
.CFUserTextEncoding	3 bytes	CFUSERTEXTENCO...	11/14/2000 12:00 AM
.DS_Store	6.00 KB	DS_STORE File	11/25/2002 1:16 AM
.FBCIndex	1.96 MB	FBCINDEX File	10/27/2002 9:30 PM

User: Steve Evans | Internet

FTP via Internet Explorer

The list of folders and files matches your home directory, except that you also see files like ".Trash" and ".DS_Store," which are invisible on the Mac. Ignore these files, or at least don't delete them.

Transfer files to or from the Mac by dragging and dropping them in the Internet Explorer window. Once you have the FTP connection, moving files between computers is just like moving them around the same computer. When you're finished, close the window to log out of the FTP server.

Conclusion

An integrated FTP server is another bonus from Mac OS X's bag of tricks. FTP makes file transfer easy for users of mixed platforms, like Macs, Windows PCs, or any other Internet-friendly operating system. FTP doesn't overcome the file format differences, but people who work with platform-neutral formats like text and images or have the appropriate file translators should find FTP a very convenient way to move files around.

'Tis the Season

It's That Time Of Year

Well, it seems that the holiday season is upon us once again. People are looking for that perfect Mac gift for their loved ones. To help you find that gift, I submit for your approval some of what I consider the best games available for the Macintosh.

This year has been kind to the Mac. After having to go through a drought for the last few years, 2002 has to go down as one of the best years for entertainment on the Mac. Most of the games I will discuss should run on most G3 and G4 Macs with a processor speed of at least 266 MHz.

Some of the games I will discuss may be hard to find in most retail stores. Most just do not stock as many Mac games compared to PC games. Two stores that do stock a fair share of Mac games are Fry's and Micro Center. If you cannot find what you want there, then visit Apple's Macintosh Products Guide to find almost every type of game that available for the Mac.

In order to avoid confusion over who makes which product, I will break down my list of entertainment software titles according to the companies who distribute them. So, grab some eggnog, settle back, and let's look at some great games.

MacPlay

Any Mac user with more than ten years of experience should know the MacPlay name. MacPlay started as a spin-off of InterPlay software. Back then, Mac gamers were treated to titles such as the Alone in the Dark Trilogy, Flashback, PowerPete (Pangea Software's first creation), and Star Trek 25th Anniversary—just to name a few. Then all of a sudden InterPlay pulled the plug on their Mac franchise, creating a major void in the Mac gaming world.

About eighteen months ago, games bearing the MacPlay logo began to surface once more. Since then, MacPlay has released about twenty different titles ranging from arcade to real-time strategy games. To help take a bite out of the holiday crunch, MacPlay has reduced prices of fifteen titles to a cost-saving $19.99 each.

Aliens Versus Predator

Mac OS 8.6, G3/233, $29.99

This First-Person Shooter (FPS) is a game of survival. Choose to be an Alien, Predator, or Colonial Marine as you make your way through alien spaceships, space stations, alien terrains and more. The graphics augment the horrifying and tense action you will feel as you play the game. Add excellent sound effects and music and you will find yourself playing this for a long time. If you want more of the same, the sequel should be out before the end of the year.

The Feeble Files

Mac OS 8.6, G3/233, $19.99

When I first loaded this game and saw the opening graphics, I thought I had taken a trip back in time to when Sierra On-Line was making games like Kings Quest and Space Quest for the Mac. Even with that retro feel, this sci-fi adventure game is a must for those who enjoyed games of that genre. It is full of puzzles to solve and needs a twisted mind to solve some of them. Join poor Feeble as he links up with a rebellion to overthrow The Company and restore freedom to his people.

Besides the feel of the game, I also like the controls. The control bar cycles through the different actions such as look, walk, pick up, and touch; while clicking the mouse carries out the action. The game does require some patience in solving the different puzzles. If you miss the type of games that Sierra made for the Mac, then step into the wayback machine and give this game a try.

Earth 2140

Mac OS 8.6, G3/233, $19.99

The year is 2140 and the war to end all wars has left two major world powers at each other's throats. Earth has been totally polluted, driving the two powers underground. The only problem is that Earth's natural resources have been almost depleted. Now war is breaking out to see which power is going to lay claim to the remaining resources Earth has to offer. The question is if you are up to winning this war.

Earth 2140 is a real-time strategy game that uses an engine very similar to Command and Conquest. It is you against them as you battle to take control of the planet's resources. The controls are almost completely mouse-driven. For those who hate to learn keyboard commands, this is a definite plus. The graphics are a bit above average, but it is the game play that will really pull you in.

My son Alex has been helping me kid test many of the games and he was hooked on it in the first five minutes of play. The only thing he thought that did not go with the game was the soundtrack, and I had to agree. The music is too somber and does not go with the action of the game. Except for that one weak link, Earth 2140 makes for a fun Command & Conquer–style game.

Birdie Shoot

Mac OS 8.6, G3/233, $19.99

This game is a side-scrolling target shooter that is highly addictive and just plain fun to play. The object is simple; shoot down as many birds as you can per level of play. The graphics are done with a cartoon flair that just adds to the humor of the game, as do the sound effects. The controls of the game are nice and simple, too: the mouse does the shooting while the space bar reloads your shotgun. Another well-done feature is the extremely well-rendered background and foreground graphics.

As you play the game, you will discover that there are more things to shoot at than just the birds. A rare feature is that once you install it, you do not need the CD to play it. So grab your shotgun; birdie season is now open!

Jinni Zeala Pinball
Mac OS 8.6, G3/233, $19.99

When you hear the name Little Wing, what do you think of? If your answer is outstanding pinball action, then you are right. Little Wing was the first to bring real action pinball to the Mac over ten years ago. With titles such as Eight Ball Deluxe, Crystal Caliburn, Loony Labyrinth, and Angel Egg, you are guaranteed a pinball game that is fast-paced and challenging to play. This game has all that a pinball enthusiast could want, and the best part is that no tokens are needed. Play on. (Also see the ATPM review of Jinni Zeala Pinball.)

Incoming
Mac OS X, G4/400, $19.99

It is the year 2008 and more and more people are seeing Unidentified Flying Objects. At first, these sightings are brushed off until the international moon base is wiped out. Now, as Earth's governments shed their rose-colored glasses, the whole planet sends its military units to defend the planet against the incoming aliens.

Incoming is a first-class ship-to-ship shoot-em-up. It can be played either in arcade or flight simulation mode. In either case, you will find that the action comes fast and furious as you complete more levels. Your combat will take you from sea, to land, to air, and finally space. To aid you in your quest to save the planet is a wide variety of crafts to fight off the alien horde.

The graphics, sound, and effects have been fully optimized to take advantage of OS X. To keep the learning curve low, the number of keys used in game control are kept to a minimum. I find myself twisting and turning as I play the game and, for me, this is rare. So, strap yourself in, take charge, and bring them on.

Knights & Merchants

Mac OS 8.6, G3/233, $19.99

The King has been taken ill. While the King is under the weather, the Prince has taken it upon himself to bring down the King's domain. Confusion breaks out as the prince pillages the land and brings suffering to the people. You are the Captain of the Palace Guard, and it's up to you to gather the remaining troops and free the lands the evil prince has taken over.

MacPlay describes Knights & Merchants as a "medieval real-time strategy game." I just call it fun. Those of you who like Warcraft may want to give this game a go. Although it does not have the in-depth graphics and game play of Warcraft, it does satisfy any gamer of this genre. My son is a big fan of Blizzard games and found Knights & Merchants easy to learn and fun to play. If your Mac is not up to speed to handle Warcraft III, or even if you're looking for something a touch easier, then Knights & Merchants might be the answer to your quest.

Soldier of Fortune Double Helix II

Mac OS X, G3/400, $49.99

A bio-terrorist organization has obtained the two-pronged Gemini Virus and is holding the world at ransom. You are John Mullins, an anti-terrorist mercenary and military consultant who lives for days like this. Your mission is simple: use your brains, muscle, and firepower to take out the organization and render the virus useless.

Soldier of Fortune is one of MacPlay's newest releases, and it's right up there with Return to Castle Wolfenstein and Medal of Honor. This FPS is sure to keep you going for hours on end. Those with fast video cards are in for some real eye candy and great frame rates. I played it under both ATI 8500 and 9000 Radeon cards and was amazed at the render quality and at the animation.

At your command is an arsenal of realistic weapons (no fantasy weapons here) to help you through all 61 levels of play. The Artificial Intelligence (AI) in this game is cunning and intelligent, so you're going to need a lot more than a big gun to get you through this game. Just remember that failure is not an option.

Real Myst

Mac OS 8.6, G3/233, $29.99

When Myst came out about ten years ago it was an instant hit. It had everything: a great story line, beautifully rendered scenes, a mesmerizing soundtrack, and enough puzzles to keep you going for months. The game was way ahead of its time when it was introduced, and led to two sequels in later years. Yet with all the beauty of the game, Myst lacked one thing; a three-dimensional feel. The game was more like a slide show as you moved from one area to another. A fluid, virtual 3D environment was just not possible at the time.

Real Myst completes the equation. All aspects of the original Myst have been revamped to take advantage of today's Mac technology. Now you can go back and re-visit Myst with real-time 3D graphics in full 32-bit color, and experience 360 degrees of interactive exploration. No longer do you to wait for the next scene to load. Real Myst works in real time; day changes to night, the weather changes from clear skies to thunderstorms. So as not to disappoint early adopters, new puzzles have been added to the game.

Although MacPlay claims that Real Myst will run on G3/233 Macs, on my G3/270 it was sluggish. I recommend a G3/300 or better. Whether you are new or old to Myst, this classic puzzle adventure game is sure to please.

Icewind Dale

Mac OS 8.6, G3/233, $49.99

Back in 1998 a game was released by the name of Baldur's Gate. It brought the world of Dungeons and Dragons to the PC and Mac like no other D&D game had before. The game followed all the rules set by Wizards of the Coast and gave role-playing adventure games a whole new meaning. In Baldur's Gate we were introduced to the land of the Forgotten Realms, a land of might and magic.

Icewind Dale lies in a frozen and untamed region of the Forgotten Realms. An evil has befallen the land and now threatens all who live there. It is up to you to form a band of humans, elves, dwarves, gnomes and/or halflings in your quest to send this horde of evil back to where it came from.

Deciding on the racial make-up of your party is probably the most important part of the game, since a bad mix of characters can only lead to failure. Your quest will not be easy, as you will encounter over 150 different types of monsters. As you explore the land, you will come across ancient temples, frozen plains, volcanic caves and more.

The graphics and special effects are extremely well done. Besides single player mode, Icewind Dale allows you to set up LAN or Internet quests (singular to go with LAN) consisting of up to six people. As the game uses Bioware's Infinity Engine, those who have played Baldur's Gate will feel right at home.

Those new to this type of game will find the learning curve very slight. After playing the game for a while I did find a multi-button mouse more advantageous than a single button one. (When will Apple learn?) Once you complete your expedition, you can then move on to Baldur's Gate II: Shadows of Ann ($49.99).

The Future

MacPlay also offers the following games: Fallout, Fallout II, Sacrifice, Giants: Citizen Kabuto, Sin Gold, Heretic II, Hexen II, Zork Grand Inquisitor, Majesty, and Bejeweled & Alchemy. Except for Zork and Fallout II, which retail for $29.99, all others are $19.99. In addition, as of this writing, No One Lives Forever ($49.99) has gone golden master and should be in stores by the time you read this. Alien versus Predator II and Freedom Force should be in the stores either by year's end or early next year. Party on, MacPlay!

Aspyr

Back in 1997, a small company in Dallas released a third-person shooter game that would spawn three sequels, a movie, and a hit comic book series. It featured a female Indiana Jones who did not know the meaning of trouble. The girl's name was Lara Croft, and the game was Tomb Raider. It was already a hit on the PC side and became one of the hottest games for the Mac at the time. Within a couple of months, Aspyr released Tomb Raider Gold. These two games firmly established Aspyr's roots in the Mac gaming world and the rest was history, as Aspyr went on to port some of the best PC games to the Mac.

The Sims

Mac OS 8.1, G3/233, $49.95

This game has been in the PC game chart ever since it was released several years ago. You can trace its roots to Sim City by Maxis. The imagination that allowed you to be mayor of a city developed into other games such as, Sim Earth, Sim Isle, Sim Ant, Sim Cities 2000 and 3000, and eventually, The Sims.

The premise of the game is so simple that it has become an addiction for some players. First, create a family or couple, then move them into a home and control their daily actions on a real-time basis. This may sound easy, but think about all the things you do in the course of a day.

Your Sims must get a job and go to work, the little ones must go to school, bills must be paid, they must sleep, eat and of course, good hygiene must be maintained. You even have to tell your Sims when to go to the bathroom. It just is not good to have puddles form on the floor. Besides creating your Sims, you can also design homes from the ground up for your Sims to live in.

Since its initial release, Aspyr has released additional add-on modules to give more life to your Sims for $29.95 each. These add-ons include Livin' Large, House Party, Vacation, and Hot Date. Electronic Arts just released The Sims Unleashed on the PC side, so we can expect Aspyr to have it ported over probably in about six months.

Alice

Mac OS 8.6, G3/400, $19.95

Alice is in an insane asylum and Wonderland is turned upside-down. In order for Alice to find her sanity, she must return to that strange land and find out what has turned the whole place inside out. This third-person, 3D role adventure game is brought to life by the use of the Quake III engine. American McGee created an environment that is at times more like eye candy as you make your way through Wonderland.

In your quest to save the land you will have to overcome twisted and distorted puzzles and mazes. All the characters are back as well, but now you'll have to watch your back when around them. The only friendly face (and sometimes less than that) is our friend the Cheshire Cat who will help with clues as you make your way through the game.

The soundtrack, composed by the award-winning Chris Vrenna, further enhances this game. I was watching Tech TV doing an interview with McGee and he hinted at doing another game that may be based on the Wizard of Oz. Heaven help Dorothy.

Undying
Mac OS 8.6, G3/400, $19.95

It is not often that horror directors take their time to add their genius to a game. Clive Barker, director of Hellraiser, did just that in the creation of Undying. The game begins in 1899 where we see Jeremiah Covenant and his four younger siblings reading an evil ritual not knowing it would come back to bite them years later.

We then jump to 1920 in Ireland, where Patrick Galloway has been asked by his friend Jeremiah to see him concerning a matter of life and death. Upon arrival, Patrick discovers that Jeremiah's four siblings have died and have been reanimated to carry out one last task. In order to complete the ritual initiated in 1899, they now must kill Jeremiah in order to release the Undying King.

Having reviewed Mac games since 1985, I have seen many games that played with the gothic and supernatural genre. Undying takes that game play to a whole new level. The game consists of five dangerous missions. In each case, Patrick must come face to face with one of the four siblings, and finally the Undying King himself. To further complicate the story is the addition of strange and evil demons which have been attracted to the estate thanks to the curse.

The graphics just add to the eeriness and feel of the game. One time I was looking in a mirror when a demon appeared and made my heart skip a beat. You just do not know what is around the next corner. The music and sound effects just heighten the atmosphere and add to the tension of the game, so it is up to you to either overcome the curse or become a part of the undying. Happy nightmares…

Otto Matic

Mac OS 8.6, G3/266, $34.95

Pangea software has always been known for games that were designed to take advantage of the abilities of the Mac. Their games have always been for people of any age, and Otto Matic is no different.

Otto Matic is a take off of the classic sci-fi films of the 1950s. Earth is being invaded by aliens and the humans are being kidnapped in saucers which look a lot like those from Earth versus the Flying Saucers. To get past each level, it is up to Otto to rescue the humans before all of them are kidnapped.

If level one sounds easy, it is. It gives you a chance to cut your teeth as you move up the ten different levels of the game. As you move up, Otto will have to fight 25 different aliens with the use of seven different space-age guns. Throughout the game our little hero will get shot out of a cannon, pilot a flying saucer, drink a radioactive potion to grow 50 feet tall, and beat a giant brain from Planet X as Otto tries to stay alive after wave after wave of aliens.

Luckily, if you do get wasted, you just start the level over; but you cannot save your game mid-level. As usual, the graphics and effects take full advantage of the Mac's abilities. (As an aside, Pangea Software has recently broken away from Aspyr and has just released Bugdom 2 for the Mac.)

Return to Castle Wolfenstein

Mac OS 9.2, G3/500, $49.95

You are being held prisoner at Castle Wolfenstein by Heinrich Himmler's genetic and occult core of scientists. Himmler believes that through these experiments, he can raise an army of the dead that can level the Allies' assault. You are an agent of the Office of Secret Actions task force. It is up to you to escape from the castle, report your findings and return to stop the experiments before they succeed. The only problem is that Himmler's men have gone further than one could have imagined.

This is a World War II game, with elements you would find in a Doom-style game. In this game, you will battle the Germans and all sorts of demons, zombies, and eight-foot-tall genetic mutants that have been released by Himmler. Although at the surface this game may appear like just another FPS, it also offers a very complex storyline and excellent graphics through use of the Quake III engine. I do beta work for ATI, and since I started working with them my graphics card, a Radeon 7500, has been upgraded to a 8500 and again to, at present, a 9000. One can really see what a good card can do as I saw major improvements in frame rates and graphics.

Aspyr claims this game has a good AI, yet I found several situations where I could be looking straight at a German officer and he would do nothing as I shot him. Another weakness I found involves the flame thrower. While it does major damage to your enemies, if you were to fire at a tree or something else in the environment, nothing would happen. Even with these weaknesses, Return to Castle Wolfenstein is still one of the top three FPS games out for the Mac at press time.

As Far As I Know

Like MacPlay, Aspyr has many other older titles available at bargain prices. Just recently, Aspyr has released several new games for the holidays: they include Medal of Honor, Jedi Outcast, Galactic Battlegrounds, Clone Wars expansion packs for Star Wars, and Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon.

MacSoft

MacSoft is the third of what I call the big three in the Mac gaming department. This company has been around since about 1996. Two of the first games I can recall by them were Duke Nukem Atomic Edition and Shadow Warrior. Since then MacSoft has released games emulating game shows such as Jeopardy and Wheel of Fortune, to arcade games such as Break Out, Q*Bert and, what is now considered a classic FPS game, Unreal Tournament. As you will see, 2002 has been no different.

Beach Head 2002

Mac OS 8.6, G3/400, $19.99

Back in the days of black & white Macs, there was a company called Silicon Beach. They created a game called Airborne. It was a simple but very fun to play. The premise was simple: you were a gunner on a hill and it was up to you to defend that hill against an unending approaching enemy. Now, let's fast forward 14 years, take the same game, add color 3D graphics, a 360-degree view range, and a whole lot more to shoot at, and you end up with Beach Head 2002.

This is just a plain shoot-at-anything-that-comes-at-you game. MacSoft even gives you cheat codes for unlimited ammo and life. To defend your hill you are kitted out with M-69s, six-barrel Vulcan MGs, and heat-seeking missiles. If things really get tough, you can call in for an air to ground strike. Who says you can't build on an old concept?

Max Payne
Mac OS 9.1 (9.2.2 recommended), G3/450 (G4/733 recommended), $49.99

Max is a New York City cop who just can't win. Three years ago, his family was found dead in his home, and he found himself framed for murder by the mob. It is up to you in the guise of Max to go on an emotional and psychological rollercoaster in order to clear your name and stay alive at the same time.

Although the plot may seem old, there is nothing old about this game. If you like The Matrix, then you are going to get a kick out of Max. Built into this excellent FPS is a feature called "Bullet Time." When Max is in a tight situation, you can trigger it. All action around Max goes into slow motion while you still work in real time, allowing you to take down all around you. Just be careful how you use it since it does not last long and it takes time to build it back up. The game also has the ability to adjust to your ability as you play; as you get better, so does the difficulty of the game.

The use of movie-like cinematics and cut scenes gives the game an atmosphere similar to that of the 1940s gangster films. Another unique feature is the ability to put your face in the game. As I read in the press release, CyberExtruder's CyberX-3D allows you to take a picture of your face and create a 3D model that you can then import into the game. I have not had a chance to test this out. It may be still Max taking all the risk, but it will be your face on the screen. Gives a whole new meaning to the phrase, "here's looking at you, kid."

Stronghold

Mac OS 8.6, G3/350 (G3/500 for online play), $39.99

Take Sim City back to medieval times, make yourself King of the land, and you have Stronghold. In Stronghold, it is up to you to build up your kingdom and create your castle from the ground up while protecting all those under you from invasion. You hope to create a thriving community consisting of commoners, lords, ladies, jesters, chickens, goats, and more.

At first, the game feels a lot like Sim City in that you create your Kingdom, design and build your castles, and manage the economy of the land. As you go about building your dynasty, you will also have to defend what you build from enemies who will try to storm your castle, so make sure you take your time as you design your castle. In single player mode, you will embark on a campaign comprising of 21 story-based missions. Up to eight people can play Stronghold over the Internet or a Local Area Network (LAN). A map and scenario editor is included to give you more creativity over all that you see.

Although the graphics are well done, we are stuck with the same bird's eye view found in most games of this genre. With the 3D technology that exists for the Mac, it is high time that the ability to change the viewing angle should be the norm. Blizzard showed that it could be done with Warcraft III, and it's time that other developers followed suit. However, I digress; time to get the pots of boiling oil ready and light the ditches—the enemy is approaching.

Civilization III

Mac OS 8.6, G3/300 (G3/500 recommended), $49.99

When it comes to pure strategy games, Sid Meier has to be one of the trailblazers of the genre. From Railroad Tycoon to Alpha Centauri he has created games to challenge and engage the grey area of our brain like no one else. Now, with the release of Civilization III we are once again treated to a new level of exploration and conquest.

The goal is basic, global domination, but it is how you get there is what makes this game so unique. One of the biggest weaknesses in most strategy games is the number of options or alternate paths available to you as you play. In Civilization III, the strategy of the game can be broken down into what are called five impulses. They are exploration,

economics, knowledge, conquest, and culture. It is the manipulation and control of these five factors that will decide if you will be the conqueror or the conquered. You can gain dominance over the world by brute force or by the cultural finesse of diplomacy. Use your knowledge base (or level of intelligence) to help you move up in technical advancements.

If you have played Civilization I or II, you will enjoy all the enhancements that have been worked into this new edition. Newcomers will find the game easier to learn than its predecessor, thanks to an improved interface that offers better management and game control. If all goes well, by the time you read this MacSoft should have ready for download an editor for Civilization III where you will be able to create your own maps, edit the rules, and customize the different civilizations in the game. If conquering the world still leaves you hungry, then dominating the universe may be the next step when MacSoft releases Masters of Orion III in the first half of 2003.

Vampire: The Masquerade Redemption

Mac OS 8.6, G3/300, $14.99

It all started in the year 1141 when you were leading a seemingly never-ending battle against the undead in medieval Europe. Then, in a perverse twist of fate you were turned into a vampire, that which you had fought so much to exterminate. Despite this setback, you are still undaunted in your quest to find and destroy the vampire lord.

As a vampire, you will have to control your blood lust and master your inherent powers as you try to save what is left of your humanity. You will travel from Europe to America as you traverse 800 years in your mission to destroy your foe. In your travels, you will enlist other vampire clans to help you fight for the way of the land.

Unlike most role adventure games, this story is yours to command using the storyteller system. This feature lets you control the story using real time commands, tailor your character, and join other players through Gameranger. This game is much more than the standard role play adventure game. The gothic graphics enhance this surreal and macabre tale. This is one tale where you will never know who is putting the bite on whom.

Next Year

Regrettably, there are no plans for any new MacSoft releases for the rest of the year. 2003 does look very bright for MacSoft, however. If what I read online is correct, Mac gamers can look forward to NeverWinters Nights, Masters of Orion III, Unreal Tournament 2003, and a new Duke Nukem.

Blizzard

When I started to think about what I could say about this company the only games I could think of were Starcraft, Warcraft, and Diablo. The titles alone speak volumes about these games. If there is one thing Blizzard knows how to do, it is to create high-quality games designed to keep the gamer actively engaged. Whether you seek the real-time strategy of Starcraft and Warcraft III or great D & D gaming in Diablo II, you will more than get your money's worth from this company.

Ambrosia

Ambrosia has been making software for the Mac since 1994. Their first game, the Asteroids-like Maelstrom, was an instant hit when they released it in their first year. After the release of Maelstrom, Chiral, their first strategy game, came out. Then came Apeiron, a Centipede-style game and Swoop, a Galaxian-style arcade game.

As a fine wine improves with age, so did Ambrosia as they continued to create new and more diverse games for the Mac. If you visit their Web site you can look over their entire library of games and download trial versions of many of them. Sadly, the majority of their older games have not been updated to run natively under OS X.

The good news is that the guys at Ambrosia have created a whole bunch of games that do run native in OS X. I wrote to Ambrosia about obtaining some of their new, larger games to look at since I still only have dial-up Internet access. A CD was sent out but, at press time, the CD had yet to arrive. I will try to do a feature on some of Ambrosia's games in a future issue.

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For the rest of this article I shall look at some newcomers and the great software they have introduced.

Bold By Destineer

Age of Empires II Gold Edition
Mac OS 8.6, G3/233, $49.95

If you are a Civilization fan, then you will want to add this to your collection. Like Civilization, the object is to start with nothing and build it into a thriving empire. In many ways the two games compare to each other in game play. Age of Empire includes the Age of Kings and The Conquerors expansion packs.

In Age of Kings we start from the time when Rome falls. You will lead your empire though the Middle Ages. As time progresses, you will have a chance to battle alongside Joan of Arc, William Wallace, and Genghis Khan among others. Some of the features found in the Conquerors expansion set are the addition of five new civilizations, four new crusades, and 26 new technologies. The awesome graphics are just so detailed.

This game has received praise and awards from *Newsweek*, *Time*, and *USA Today*, just to name a few. Bold by Destineer did very well by picking this game to propel them into the Mac gaming world.

Links Championship Edition
Mac OS 9.2.2, G3/266, $49.95

Of all the games that have existed on the Mac, golf games have been around since the original 128K Macintosh (remember MacGolf?). Links was first made by Access software, then updated by MacSoft (still available), and now it has been updated once more to sport many new features. I did a full review of this game in *MacHome*'s November issue.

Whether you are a seasoned armchair golfer or a novice, this game is great. One of the best features of the game is the ability to port all Links LS courses over to this version. You can also play against other players online. The graphics, sounds, and multiple camera views combine to make a fun game of golf. The only thing I must warn you about the game is that the slower the Mac, the longer it will take for screens to refresh between swings. To serve as a barometer, on my G4/733 MHz screens take about 10 seconds to redraw.

Still To Come

In reviewing Links for *MacHome*, I got to know the folks there and gain some insight with regards to the direction they will be going in the future. The most important thing I did find out was that they have first refusal on porting to the Mac any games Microsoft will be making in the future. They will also release one of the most anticipated Mac games of 2003, Halo. If all goes well and they are able to stay on schedule, Halo could ship sometime in the summer.

Freeverse

Freeverse is best known initially for their solitaire and board style games. These include 3D Spades, Hearts, Bridge, Deathground, Reversi the Eclipse, Enigma, and X-Word Deluxe among so many others. If you go to their Web site, you can download trial versions of every title they offer.

Wingnuts

Mac OS 8.6, G3/333, $24.99

This is Freeverse's latest Mac offering. I love arcade shooting games, and Wingnuts has to rank top of my list. In the game, you pilot a jet fighter as you go head to head against Baron von Schtopwatch and his time-traveling air force. As you progress through the levels, you will combat bi-planes, blimps, helicopters, gunships, and more. Rescuing parachutists will reward you with all different types of power-ups.

The 360 degrees of movement, graphics, and sounds all add up to a well-designed game. I also like the fact that the number of controls for the game can be counted on your two hands and that once you install it on your HD you do not need the CD to play it.

Wipeout 2097

Mac OS 9.2.2, G3/333, about $29.99

When Pod Racer came out several years ago, we had the chance to be Anakin and compete just as he did in Phantom Menace. The game was a delight to play and the graphics were fantastic. Sadly, this game was never carbonized so it could run under OS X. Enter Wipe Out 2097. Although, this game is not quite another Pod Racer, it is sure to fill in the void left by it.

To make the race more interesting, you car is preloaded with a set of different types of weapons. Although none of the weapons is deadly, each one has a unique effect on your competition. This adds a new level of strategy to the game. There are also different types of power-ups scattered across the track to assist you. The graphics are sharp and vivid, although they do not quite live up to the graphics of Pod Racer. The sound effects and music are great. In fact, you can import the music directly into iTunes if you are into electronic-style music like me. The controls are easy to learn but mastering control of you car will take a bit of time. So, turn the key, put the pedal to the metal, and get ready for some great racing action.

Nova Development

Print Explosion Deluxe
Mac OS 7.6, any PowerPC-based Mac, about $69.99

Nova Development is well known for their clip art collections. Print Explosion Deluxe gives you a way to put all those great clip art collections to use. This program brings out the creativity in all of us. You can create banners, greeting cards, party theme sets, calendars, and so much more.

The program comes with 8,800 ready-made designs, 90,000 premium-quality graphics, 5,000 photographs, 500 fonts, 3,000 greeting cards, and 8,500 quotations to assist you in any project. You can also import many types of graphic file including EPS, PICT, TIFF, JPEG, and GIF. Learning how to use Print Explosion Deluxe is as easy as one, two, three. The interface is very user-friendly and you will be up and running with it in less than a half hour. I know this is not a game, but if you like to do crafts on your Mac, this is the package to buy.

Broderbund

Print Shop Deluxe
Mac OS 8.6, any PowerPC-based Mac, $69.99

Consumer alert: I have to warn you about this piece of software. I bought Print Shop Deluxe before buying Print Explosion. It said on the box that it was compatible with Mac OS X. When I inserted the CD and tried to open the application, my Mac switched to Classic mode. Only then did I realize that Print Shop Deluxe is *not* OS X–native and only works in Classic mode or native in OS 9.

I wrote Broderbund to find out why it did not work natively in OS X. They responded by saying that if it can run in the Classic environment then in their opinion it is OS X–compatible. I then took Print Shop Deluxe back to CompUSA and swapped it for Print Explosion Deluxe.

It will be curious to see what Broderbund does with Print Shop Deluxe when, starting January, no new Macs will be able to boot into OS 9. I would also like to point out that this application has not been updated in almost 8 years, except to make it run in OS 9.2.2 without crashing, making it very dated. The bottom line is, do not let the sticker on the box fool you; OS X compatibility does not mean carbonization.

Closure

There was a time when people used to say that there was not enough game support for the Mac. As you can see, the Mac gaming world has shown some significant improvement in the last year. I must also say that this is by no means a definitive list of games for the Mac; there should be many new titles released between now and the end of the year.

If you have any problems locating any of these games at a given store, tell the store manager that you want a copy. The only way computer stores are going to increase their stock of Mac software is if the buying public let them know that Mac software is in demand. Otherwise, you can find these titles by visiting the retailers listed on the Support ATPM page.

One other place to go for good deals on Mac games is eBay. Many old and new games can be bought at auction. A couple of words of advice are required here: make sure you know how much the game is worth and how much shipping will cost you. If you win a game that retails for $50, you pay your bid price of $42 and shipping costs $8, then you end up not getting a good deal. It takes a well-educated buyer to get a good deal on eBay.

I would like to thank all the software companies for all the help they have given me in the course of writing this article. If it were not for their support, there would have not been any way I could have written about all the great games that are available for the Mac. If 2002 is any indication, then 2003 should be an even better year for Mac games. In any case, may you find that perfect Mac gift for your loved ones and may you have a safe Happy Hanukkah, a Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year.

Looking

What I am about to write does not come easy. I am unemployed in the Houston area where the job market is totally flat. Besides being a writer, I am a Mac consultant and indirectly do PR work for many Mac companies through my writing and the presentations I do at my user group. I do IT and beta work; I have also been a teacher for more than 20 years, making me a good communicator and trainer.

If you know of any positions or of someone you may know where my services may be of use, please contact me and I will send you a copy of my resume. I guess you could say this would be my perfect Mac gift. Thank you.

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Mac OS X: Powerful But Awkward

Mac OS X, version 10.2, finally makes good on the new operating system's promise of speed, accelerating Classic—that is, OS 9 running inside of OS X to support older programs—so that it launches with surprising speed. On the other hand, OS X continues to sport a pretty user interface that is harder to work with than older Mac systems, or, for that matter, Windows 98.

The Lighter Side

The OS X 10.2 interface is a bit less awkward than in the past, and finally has helpful new features that can save time—including a quick, effective feature to find files, faster content searches, and a separate Sherlock for Internet searches.

Installing OS X can be surprisingly easy and fast. Internet preferences are usually picked up by the system, eliminating one of the most time-consuming adjustments. However, Apple menu items are not picked up and put into the Dock—there'd be no room for them—and some of the cosmetic settings are less than optimal.

Every device I own was easily found and installed by OS X with no fuss, though others have had problems with specific peripherals, particularly SCSI devices, HP printers, and CD writers.

However, upgrading from 10.1.5 to 10.2 caused my screen to go black, and the computer to freeze a few minutes later. Eventually, I did a minimum install and left the computer alone for six hours after the screen went black, and that worked. This seems to be a common problem for beige G3 owners; the Mac appears to go into power-saving mode no matter what settings you specified. Using a second video card and monitor appears to work for some, but most people don't have those spare parts. Still, once 10.2 was installed, it updated easily to 10.2.2.

10.2 brings an incredible speed boost to Classic, booting your old OS 9.2 system quickly so you can run older programs—or newer ones you haven't had the cash or inclination to upgrade yet. Unfortunately, the amount of memory available to Classic programs seems to be limited—some have said 128 megabytes of RAM are shared among them. Very few programs are not compatible with Classic; the only one we had real problems with was SPSS 10, and an OS X-compatible version of SPSS is coming very soon. OS X 10.2 does a fine job of running even pre-PowerPC programs, such as Cricket Draw 1.3, Word 5.1, etc. We found it easier and faster to use Office 98 under Classic than Office v.X.

For the moment, you can also boot into OS 9 after you've installed X, and many utilities recommend this. While booting into OS 9 from your hard drive is scheduled to end in machines introduced after 2002, you may be able to boot into OS 9 from disk utility CDs—for a while, at least.

There is an incredible number of new programs being written for OS X—and seemingly none for OS 9. Every day brings some cool new X program, not to mention Java ports. That will probably be the motivating factor for getting most people to upgrade, rather than OS X's gee-whiz features and candy-coated interface. Hackers will enjoy running Unix software on their Macs, and Web designers can test Apache configurations easily. Java works better, and Unix software is being ported over. In addition, many key professional staples will be put onto OS X, reflecting Apple's greater market share (and probably those companies' reluctance to invest in a dying platform, since OS 9's death had been foretold for several years). That's not to mention Apple's slick, functional, easy to use new programs—iPhoto, iTunes, and all the rest—which are free with OS X.

For those who network with Windows machines, there's very good news with easy SMB networking. You can now easily and quickly hook up to Windows shared files, thanks to a new implementation of Samba with a graphical interface. The system is much easier to use than in 10.1.x, and seems to work very well. We did have to go to Help to find out how it works, though, because it's not *that* intuitive—instead of a Network option or submenu, it's under the Go menu in the Finder. Still, it's about as easy as using Dave—or, for that matter, mounting a Windows server from within Windows.

In terms of safe Internet networking, it took a while to get the hang of setting up an SSH tunnel (for secure Telnet, FTP, etc.), and Apple had no information on their Web site about this important and common task. Under OS 9, you simply get the great and flexible

freeware program MacSSH (and see additional instructions). Under OS X, well, you should probably just visit the aforementioned Allpar site. It's a simple command—but it's pure Unix.

You can also have more than one simultaneous TCP/IP connection at the same time, making it easier to connect to multiple networks and eliminating the need to switch configurations all the time.

Web browsing is better under OS X than older systems, with a greater variety of browsers (including OmniWeb and Chimera) with greater speed and reliability (aside from Explorer).

Mail, Apple's free e-mail program, is easy to use, and powerful enough for most people. Emailchemy can help you to convert from Eudora to Mail, but because Mail only works on OS X, you can't access it if you boot from OS 9. Eudora has finally come out with a version that's fully compatible with X, on the lighter side; Mulberry has native and Classic versions; and there is a native version of Mozilla/Netscape for those who use that for mail. People who like to live dangerously can use Microsoft's virus propagation systems, which can also serve as e-mail clients.

The built-in Rendezvous system for automatically discovering network devices, such as printers, is not especially useful right now, but will become invaluable over time as more companies build it into their hardware.

Quartz Extreme makes OS X much faster, but only on systems with 16 MB of RAM and an AGP-based ATI graphics card or one of a number of Nvidia cards. That speed boost can be very helpful on G3 machines, which lack Altivec, and aids the G4 line as well. Our test beige G3 (with a $150 G4 upgrade from Other World Computing) was not equipped to use this, but OS X ran quickly enough regardless.

Device support continues to improve, with more printers, scanners, and the like being supported—but beware, because your favorite peripheral might not be on the list. Check Apple's Web site for compatibility if you're concerned. Our two printers, scanner, NP networking box, and various USB and FireWire gadgets were all recognized, but we must admit that we did not try an old slide scanner. FireWire support in OS X is better than in OS 9, by a good margin, and USB support seems better as well.

Printing is faster under OS X than 9. Creating PDF files is built into the system, but, though the display system is built on PDF, you need the free Acrobat viewer to read or print some PDF files.

Problems

As an operating system, OS X excels in technical terms. Where it falls is the user interface. Macs are known for their ease of use—but OS X is, *as it comes from the factory*, harder to get along with on a daily basis than Windows (even Windows NT!).

From the start, the lack of a Start or Apple menu is still a major gap, especially for those who have lots of small programs they need to run (and little patience for constantly opening new windows to find their programs). The Dock doesn't cut it, unless you only have five or six programs, and recognize their icons quickly. A menu-based program switcher would also be handy. There are shareware utilities which fill both these needs, but they will probably need to be upgraded each time the system is.

When Microsoft came out with Windows 98, and later Windows XP, they included provisions to keep the appearance fairly similar to Windows 95, so that people who had gotten used to the older systems would not be too disoriented. It does not seem entirely unreasonable to expect Apple, whose prior operating systems had been almost universally applauded for their usability, to have done the same—to have a set of preferences and appearances pre-installed, so that clicking on a button or two in the preferences would restore the Apple menu, program switcher, stable Trash can, and other key features to their OS 9 locations. Surely, this would not be too much to ask by 10.2.2, especially considering the work Apple has put into arguably less important features such as proprietary mail and chat clients. Can a real Apple menu be so hard to program? (And, if it is, why have several independent programmers been able to do it?)

Simple things quickly become problems, and not just because of the oversized icons. Selecting files using the new multiple-column format (in Open/Save dialog boxes) is painful thanks to poorly thought out, or missing, keyboard shortcuts—simple things like pressing the first letter of the filename, then arrowing down to select it, often don't work as expected. The columns move back and forth, making it impossible to orient your eyes easily, so you have to pay attention at all times. It's hard to ask new users to know that you have to left-arrow or click on the left scroll bar to go back up one level. And that's not even considering the paradigm shift from "contents of disk drives" to "special folders on

one disk drive" in what used to be the path button in the Open/Save dialogues; unless you store your information in one of Apple's preferred locations, you have to monkey with the default folders, and to do *that*, you have to figure out where the controls are. Hard drive roots are not listed by default, unfortunately. Neither are common OS 9 locations. It's sad that we've gone from a simple, elegant Open/Save in system 7 (Command-Right Arrow to go to a new hard drive, Command-Up to move up one level, Enter to select) to the less elegant Navigation Services (move all the way up and drill back down to change drives) to the even less elegant Column view (too complicated to summarize).

That brings us to the paradigm shift from the desktop to the multiple-user environment of Windows NT, complete with a buried set of User folders, and a separate applications folder for X and for 9.

Gone are the days of understanding what each extension did, or of being able to quickly find preference files in the System Folder. Key files are distributed across all sorts of folders, buried here, invisible there, scattered across all creation. Troubleshooting quickly becomes a nightmare. OS X is also a pig—adding to the root directory:

- .hidden
- Applications
- Applications (Mac OS 9)
- Desktop (Mac OS 9)
- Library
- Network
- System
- Users
- Volumes
- bin
- dev
- etc
- mach
- mach.sym
- mach_kernel
- private
- sbin
- tmp
- usr

- var

You can't get rid of most of 'em. That's a far cry from the old OS 9—a single system folder, logically divided into Control Panels, Extensions, Fonts, Preferences, etc. It's as bad or worse than the litter created by Windows, though at least the files in OS X have longer names, and there's no inane "shared extension except that each program has its own folder of unique shared extensions" system.

Another issue for OS 9 upgraders is the fact that most programs don't seem to be programmed to share preferences with their OS 9 equivalents—at least, not by default. You can set Eudora and the rest to use their OS 9 file locations, but by default, they look in the OS X folders and not in the OS 9 folders. That might not be under Apple's control, but surely it wouldn't be so hard to have a routine that first checks in the System Folder preferences.

It is still hard to customize most aspects of OS X, especially when compared with Windows, which allows for far greater user control. This is, to me, less important than straightening out the user interface, and going back to the tried and true principles that shaped OS 1 through OS 9. A little experimentation on real people might help Apple to make an operating system that doesn't cause its loyal customers to scream. (A lower upgrade price might have the same effect.)

There are also issues of metadata and file extensions; now the .doc extensions matter to Mac people as well as Windows people. That was probably only a matter of time, but many of us will miss the file type and creator codes when they finally leave us.

Incidentally, as long as Apple is imitating Windows' multiple-user, deeply-nested-personal-data-folders, extension-happy interface, perhaps they could program in some Windows strengths—Start menu wizards, for example, or the ability to do just about *anything* from the keyboard by putting alternate key commands into the menus, so you don't need to constantly use the mouse and dig through hierarchical menus for common tasks; instead, you could, say, type Escape-e-i-a.

Summary

It almost seems as though Apple was so busy getting the technical parts of OS X to work that they totally ignored Apple's #1 selling factor of the past, namely the user interface—and how easy it is to *get things done* on a Mac. It's *hard* to make adjustments on Windows. It's hard to get even simple work done on Windows. The Windows interface is not meant for use by humans, but by developers. That's why installers sort programs (under Windows) by company name, and put single icons into folders. (In Windows, to start Eudora, go to Start, select Programs, select Qualcomm, select Eudora, then select Eudora—ignoring Uninstall Eudora. Who cares that Qualcomm created Eudora? And why is Uninstall even *needed?*)

The Mac has always been about ease of use, about lower maintenance costs. OS X throws that out the window and replaces it with technical superiority—but not so much technical superiority that Windows isn't a viable alternative for those who don't mind doing business with convicted (albeit unpunished) criminals bent on dominating the world. Come to think of it, the technological advances of OS X are largely in place with Linux, and you can get WINE to run a large number of Windows programs under Linux—with boxes already set up at Wal-Mart for $200 and passable user interfaces.

Even though former Mac user interface designer Bruce Tognazzini posted an extensive set of recommendations for OS X two years ago, Apple seems to be totally ignoring everything it learned about user interfaces in the past. Perhaps 10.3 will do something, but don't hold your breath; we were given that line back with 10.0, then with 10.1. Even now, simple things like an OK button in the preferences (instead of just a tiny close button), or a real Apple (Start) menu with an easy interface for customization, or a satisfactory Open/Save dialog box (maybe with Windows' ability to delete or rename files) seem very far away.

Converting to OS X

Even though using OS X may make you run screaming to OS 9—or to Linux—you may choose to install the system for either part-time or full-time use. Some people seem to actually like the OS X interface, and there's no way to tell until you try it.

To prevent disaster, back up your hard drive completely before starting, and make sure you don't have mission critical jobs in the next few days—just in case. Then check out your system with DiskWarrior (it really should come with each Mac) as well as Disk First Aid. Follow all Apple's advice.

If you're using a beige G3, you will need to make sure that OS 9 and OS X are installed in the first partition, and that the partition is 8 GB or smaller. That might mean reformatting your hard drive. Make *two* sets of *good* backups if that's the case—Retrospect Express might be handy. Actually, Jaguar seems to be fairly buggy in the beige G3s in general, though some have suggested that if you have a G4 upgrade, you take it out and put the G3 chip back in for the purposes of installing OS X.

Once OS X is running, I suggest installing and configuring FruitMenu first, for your own sanity. If you are going to be using Classic (non-native) programs on a regular basis, and you probably are, set the Classic control panel so it automatically launches on startup; it comes up faster if you have it automatically shut off all extensions (Apple, it would be nice if you could simply run an extension set so you can keep essential extensions on!). Classic (OS 9 under X) starts up very quickly, and OS X puts it to sleep when it's not in use so it doesn't eat up your system resources.

Because Classic works so well (despite some problems copying and pasting between Classic and X), you probably should not upgrade all your software immediately to Carbon or Cocoa versions. Wait a while and see what happens. Maybe a competitor will come in and drive prices down in the meantime—or maybe open source will come to the rescue. Remember, being native to OS X does not mean being faster; this isn't the PowerPC conversion. If you've been using Photoshop 5.5, GoLive 5, and Office 98, upgrading to the new X versions will be disappointing. All are slower than their older 9.2 equivalents. At some point, versions that add more value—or open-source alternatives—will probably appear, especially now that the Mac is based on BSD Unix. Indeed, many are already here, including high-speed replacements for HP print drivers, and an open-source image editor.

In some cases, you will use different versions of the same program. In some cases, you can set them up to use the same preferences and files (e.g. Eudora, Mulberry). In other cases, they can drive you crazy by refusing to acknowledge the other's existence. Researching with Google can help avoid frustration.

OS X likes lots of RAM, not surprising considering that you will sometimes also be running OS 9. RAM is now fairly cheap, and 512 megabytes isn't such an unrealistic idea—but you can get by with 256 if you don't go overboard. Get good, high-quality (e.g. Kingston) RAM; many have had problems with cheap RAM under OS X.

Overall, moving to OS X can be rewarding with lots of new software, greater stability (in most cases), and new capabilities. It can also be punishing, with a poorly thought out user interface, many rough edges, and incompatibility with some hardware and software—which is unimportant to me, since all of mine works, but very important to you if your printer, scanner, and backup drive are all suddenly obsolete. You may well end up like me—switching to OS X now and then to enjoy Chimera, easy FireWire access, and fast, simple Windows access and file searches—then rushing back to OS 9 with a great sigh of relief to enjoy the traditional Macintosh ease of use, efficient use of graphics, and high-quality interface design.

Me and My Macs

In the short time that I have been writing for ATPM I have noticed one thing: Sometimes it takes me longer to come up with an idea than it does to write the article. Well, that's what happened this month. So, uncharacteristically I asked for help. That's when Michael suggested writing about why I became a Mac user and what I do with the Mac. After all, you can tell a lot about a person by what they choose to do with their computer. Well, here goes nothing. Perhaps you will find something either instructive or interesting in this journey. As always the best place to begin any journey is at the beginning.

In the Beginning There Was the II

I celebrated my fortieth birthday just a few days ago, and in preparing to write this article I realized that I have spent half my life using Apple computer products. In the early days I probably used every incarnation of the Apple II to come out of Cupertino. The first computer I ever owned was an Apple IIGS. This was in the late 1980s and at that time if you were a home user interested in graphics or education this was the best way to go. In fact, my first introduction to the Finder came on the GS and not on the Mac. I loved the GS and resisted the transition to the Mac for a long time because I felt money that should have been devoted to improving and marketing the GS was being diverted to improving the Mac. At that point I was not willing to give up my Apple II with color display for a Mac with a smaller black and white display. Eventually, it became increasingly difficult to find software specifically for the GS, and I could see the writing on the wall. Sooner, rather than later, it was going to be time to look for a new machine and that would mean looking for a new platform.

Despite the fact that my platform of choice was on the computer equivalent of life support, I continued to resist change. I finally gave in when my wife needed a computer to replace her Tandy. She wanted to do some desktop publishing, and Windows was definitely not the way to go at that time. We eventually ended up with an LC II that we continued to use long after we should have upgraded. Once I accepted the inevitable, the transition was an easy one since most of what I learned about troubleshooting the GS also applied to System 7 on the LC II. Almost immediately I found that I actually liked using

Macs. I guess a little change is a good thing. Eventually we outgrew the LC and had to move on to something a little more powerful. We currently have two iBooks, a G3 that has been upgraded to a G4, and a Wall Street–era PowerBook that needs repairing. Somewhere in between we also owned a 6500. The one thing that all the machines have had in common is that we hate to part with them when we have outgrown them.

As you can tell I am a devoted Mac user and the only computers that my wife has liked as much as her LC II have been the current iBook and a Commodore C64 that she owned years ago. Unfortunately she has gone from a full-time Mac user to a sometime Mac user.

How, you may ask, does one go from loving the LC II to being a sometime Mac user? Well, I bear some of the responsibility for that situation. You see I like to tinker with Macs, and the instability that sometimes results is not something she wants to experience. Over the years our Macs have been rock-solid, dependable, members of computing society—until I get hold of them. While I bear some responsibility for this situation, the remainder of the responsibility must be shared by people who do not understand just how much can be accomplished using a Mac.

You Can't Do That With a Mac, Can You?

Several years ago my wife developed an interest in developing multimedia software. While exploring the possibility of getting a degree in some area related to this, she was left with the impression that it would be impossible to complete such a program without a Windows machine. After much soul searching, she purchased such a box only to discover a few years later that all of the requirements could have been met using a Mac with only occasional forays into the Windows world. Most of the things that can be done using Windows can also be done successfully using a Mac. Here are some of the things she and I have done during the time we have been using Macs.

The first Mac that we owned came into our lives because my wife wanted to do some basic desktop publishing and graphics work for a quilting book. At that time she found the Mac a much more intuitive platform for such tasks. The quilting book never quite got written, but over the years we have tackled many other jobs using our trusty Macs.

I spend much of my Mac time on basic word processing and spreadsheet tasks. I have used Windows machines for these same tasks but when I have a choice I choose Macs. When I'm not writing a paper or calculating spreadsheets there are so many other more interesting things to do with a Mac.

A few years ago we set aside basic word processing and spreadsheet tasks in favor of something a little more creative. Our Power Mac 6500 played an important role in developing an educational CD covering some aspects of the history of North Louisiana. All of the sound editing and some of the graphic editing were completed on Macs, although the final product was done using Director for the PC (due to the fact that our task was to create a player that would run on a PC). We could have built the entire project on a Mac but would not have been able to compile the final PC version for playback without using the PC version.

Partially as a result of working on that instructional CD I have rekindled an interest in graphics and sound. Currently I have three projects going that I would like to work on if I had more time: restoring old family photographs, digitizing some audio files that I have on tape, and a family history DVD. I want the pictures for sentimental value and the audio files because the tapes are degrading and I doubt this material will ever make it to CD. Once I have acquired the skills during the first two projects, the DVD should be a lot easier. If anyone's interested I could write about either of these projects in more detail at a later date. Keep in mind though that what I know about these areas has been self-taught and primarily through trial and error.

One other task that I have been using the Mac for lately is PowerPoint presentations. Over the last couple of years I have taught a course on public speaking at the local university. One of the assignments requires students to produce PowerPoint slides for use with their speech. I have often found that plugging a presentation projector into my iBook is much simpler than trying to make the connection with many PC laptops.

Speaking of presentations, twice now I have had a Mac PowerBook come to the rescue at conferences. In both cases the PC laptops being used were experiencing problems and someone ended up using our PowerBook. Maybe my next startup sound should be Mighty Mouse singing, "Here I come to save the day"?

• • •

Well, that's my journey as a Mac head. It's not everything I have done with a Mac, and it's certainly not everything that can be done with a Mac, but maybe it will give you some ideas.

Chad's Guide to **GRAPHIC DESIGN**

Rule #1:

WHENEVER POSSIBLE, PUT PHOTOGRAPHS OF YOUR CLIENTS IN THEIR OWN PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL. NOTHING APPEALS TO CONSUMERS MORE THAN GRINNING EXECUTIVES WEARING SUITS.

Cartoon: Hambone

by Mike Flanagan, sensible@sensible.screaming.net

Extras: Desktop Pictures

Chile

This month's desktop pictures were submitted by ATPM reader [Yaniv Eidelstein](). They were taken on a vacation to Chile during August and September of 2002. The tools used were an Epson PhotoPC 700 and an iBook. The cerro san cristobal, peñalolén, cerro santa lucia, and santiago photos were taken in different areas of santiago de chile. The roque oceanico photos were taken in viña del mar. The valparaíso and lagunillas photos were taken in those two locales.

Previous Months' Desktop Pictures

Pictures from previous months are listed in the [desktop pictures archives]().

Downloading all the Pictures at Once

iCab and Interarchy (formerly Anarchie) can download an entire set of desktop pictures at once. In iCab, use the Download command to download "Get all files in same path." In Interarchy, use HTTP Mirror feature.

Contributing Your Own Desktop Pictures

If you have a picture, whether a small series or just one fabulous or funny shot, feel free to send it to [editor@atpm.com]() and we'll consider publishing it in next month's issue. Have a regular print but no scanner? Don't worry. E-mail us, and we tell you where to send it so we can scan it for you. Note that we cannot return the original print, so send us a copy.

Placing Desktop Pictures

Mac OS X 10.1.x and 10.2.x

Choose "System Preferences…" from the Apple menu and click the Desktop button. With the popup menu, select the desktop pictures folder you want to use.

You can also use the pictures with Mac OS X's built-in screen saver. Choose "System Preferences…" from the Apple menu. Click the Screen Saver (10.1.x) or Screen Effects (10.2.x) button. Then click on Custom Slide Show in the list of screen savers. If you put the ATPM pictures in your Pictures folder, you're all set. Otherwise, click Configure to tell the screen saver which pictures to use.

Mac OS X 10.0.x

Switch to the Finder. Choose "Preferences…" from the "Finder" menu. Click on the "Select Picture…" button on the right. In the Open Panel, select the desktop picture you want to use. The panel defaults to your "~/Library/Desktop Pictures" folder. Close the "Finder Preferences" window when you are done.

Mac OS 8.5–9.x

Go to the Appearance control panel. Click on the "Desktop" tab at the top of the window. Press the "Place Picture..." button in the bottom right corner, then select the desired image. By default, it will show you the images in the "Desktop Pictures" subfolder of your "Appearance" folder in the System Folder, however you can select images from anywhere on your hard disk.

After you select the desired image file and press "Choose," a preview will appear in the Appearance window. The "Position Automatically" selection is usually fine. You can play with the settings to see if you like the others better. You will see the result in the little preview screen.

Once you are satisfied with the selection, click on "Set Desktop" in the lower right corner of the window. That's it! Should you ever want to get rid of it, just go to the desktop settings again and press "Remove Picture."

Mac OS 8.0 and 8.1

Go to the "Desktop Patterns" control panel. Click on "Desktop Pictures" in the list on the left of the window, and follow steps similar to the ones above.

Random Desktop Pictures

If you drag a folder of pictures onto the miniature desktop in the Appearance or Desktop Pictures control panel, your Mac will choose one from the folder at random when it starts up.

DeskPicture

An alternative to Mac OS's Appearance control panel is Pierce Software's DeskPicture, reviewed in issue 5.10 and available for download.

Review: AlphaSmart Dana
by Paul Fatula, pfatula@atpm.com

Developer: AlphaSmart, Inc.
Price: $399.99
Requirements: USB port or USB PC Card for synchronizing with a Mac
Trial: 30-day trial available only to educational institutions

A little over two years ago, I reviewed the AlphaSmart 3000IR. AlphaSmart's latest revision, the Dana, looks similar but actually goes far beyond the capabilities of the 3000IR, serving as a sort of cross between it and a laptop computer. In the month that I've been using it, I've become completely hooked. The Dana is light and sturdy enough to take anywhere, and is also convenient and versatile to use, offering a great deal of functionality in an easily accessible way.

Hardware

The AlphaSmart Dana is a two-pound all-in-one keyboard and screen device, made of sturdy feeling dark blue plastic. I like my Dana too much to test this, but AlphaSmart designed the Dana to withstand a drop from four feet. Suffice to say, you do not need to buy a special padded laptop bag for your Dana. Toss it in your backpack loose with papers, pens, and books, and it'll be fine. (A case that doesn't scratch or smudge? You paying

attention, Apple?) The Dana looks far more professional than either the 3000IR or a similar product I've reviewed, the CalcuScribe. You can take the Dana into a meeting and not look like you're using a toy.


Tucked securely into the right side of the Dana is a stylus. (There are stylus holders to either side of the screen for use while the Dana isn't being used.) The presence of a stylus hints at the huge difference between the Dana and the 3000IR. The power of a stylus (your finger will work fine if you don't require precision) with a touch-sensitive screen makes editing documents much easier, and allows a great deal of functionality that you really can't get with a keyboard alone.

The screen is a comfortable size. Its 560x160 pixels can display up to ten lines of working text (in addition to a header bar) in a comfortably readable font. Better yet, the screen can be backlit if you're working in low light.

The Dana's battery can be recharged either by plugging the unit into the wall or by connecting it to your computer's USB port. AlphaSmart claims the Dana can be used for 25 hours on one charge, though using the backlight will naturally drain the battery faster.

It's comforting to not have to constantly worry about recharging, but what if the rechargeable battery runs out and you can't recharge? Pop in three AA-sized batteries and keep working. Simple enough.

The keyboard on the 3000IR was, for me, a big con: it felt cheap and was uncomfortable for me to use over extended periods of time. This is hardly scientific, since I don't have a 3000IR in front of me to compare directly, but I find the Dana's keyboard to be much more comfortable than I remember the 3000IR's being. Of course it doesn't approach the comfort level I experience with my PowerBook's keyboard, but it's good enough. The top row of keys on the Dana's keyboard includes eight function keys, as well as application keys, which take you directly to many of the applications included on the Dana. This offers easy one-button access to whatever you want to do.
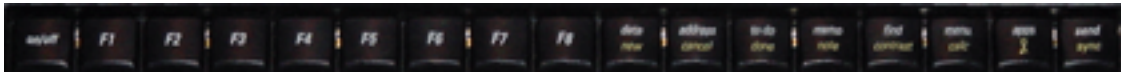
There is one more button in that top row however, and it is the only fault in the hardware design: the power button. This was a problem with the 3000IR, and I really wish AlphaSmart had rectified this problem when they made the Dana. Since the power button is just another key, it's too easy for something to press against it while you're carrying the Dana in your backpack. (Curiously enough, the Dana offers an option to allow some or all of the application keys to act as additional On buttons, which only increases the risk of an accidental power-on.) Once the Dana is on, any future accidental key presses will end up in the last document you were working on, so the next time you use the Dana you may find a bunch of gibberish on the screen or, worse, that some of your document has been deleted.

A good, firm switch on the side of the Dana could easily prevent this problem and would not at all detract from the product's ease of use or aesthetics, and the cost would surely be minimal.

There are a number of ports on the back of the Dana: an IR port (I love IR printing, which works flawlessly), power jack, two USB ports (one for connecting to a computer, one for printing), and two expansion slots that can hold MultiMediaCards or Secure Digital cards. The Dana comes with a power cord for non-battery use or battery charging, and a USB cable for connecting to a computer. It doesn't come with any MultiMediaCards or Smart Digital cards, so I was unable to test that functionality, but they can act as additional storage space or as compatible expansion devices.

Operating System

Here's another huge difference between the Dana and its predecessor: It runs PalmOS 4.1. I had never used a Palm device before I got the Dana, so if you have, this section will probably be skim-worthy at best. I am told that since the Dana uses the Dragonball VZ chipset, it cannot run PalmOS 5.0, but that PalmOS upgrades that are compatible with its chipset are possible with collaboration between Palm and AlphaSmart.

If you're used to a two-minute startup on your Mac, you're going to love PalmOS: there is no booting process. Turn the Dana on, and it's on. It starts up exactly where you left it when it shut off: in the middle of a document, or displaying your calendar, etc. In other words, when you want to use the Dana, it won't slow you down. Turn it on and get to work.

PalmOS took me a little time to get used to, but not much. The key is realizing that it's designed to be efficient. In some ways, it's really a treat to use, especially combined with the Dana's hardware. For example, it's much easier to switch programs on the Dana than

on a Mac: it's as though every program on the Dana is always running in the background. Press its button, and there it is. (If it doesn't have a button, it can be assigned to one of the eight function keys, or opened from the Apps screen.)

I still haven't quite gotten used to the fact that you *never* quit anything. When you're done with a program, you just leave it there, or switch to something else. Scrolling is intuitive, and command keys like Command-S and Command-O do exactly what you expect them to. In short, five-star ease of use.

I suppose Graffiti is pretty well known: it's the handwriting recognition element of PalmOS. Frankly, it works rather differently than I expected, and I never use it: with a keyboard, there's no need. Graffiti lets you enter one letter at a time, using a slightly altered version of the alphabet…but you can only enter it into a special handwriting recognition box, not just anywhere on the screen. I ended up mostly using the stylus for navigation, selecting text, and, yes, playing games.

The biggest advantage to using PalmOS, though, is availability of programs. Only a relatively small subset of PalmOS applications (of which there are over ten thousand, according to AlphaSmart) are "wide screen enabled," to take advantage of the Dana's much-larger-than-a-Palm screen. Those applications that aren't will still run in the middle of the Dana's screen, with the handwriting recognition window to either the left- or right-hand side depending on your preference.

Alternately, the Dana's display can be rotated 90 degrees in either direction, giving you a tall skinny screen rather than a wide short one. Of course, that leaves the keyboard sideways, so I rarely do that; but when for example reading an eBook, a tall thin column can be more comfortable to work with. Other applications, such as AtomSmash, a Breakout-type game, require the screen be turned on its side.

Synching

The other biggest advantage to using the PalmOS is that synching the Dana with your Mac is simple. Install the Palm Desktop software on your computer, and with the press of a key combination on the Dana all your data are saved to your Mac. Under OS X, insanely, my AlphaWord documents are saved to /Users/[username]/Documents/Palm/Users/[Palm username]/AlphaWord/ by default, which, well, is just not fun to navigate to. Eventually, I found a well-hidden way to set where I want documents saved.

Palm Desktop also lets you send files from your Mac to the Dana. That lets me work on this review from either my Mac or my Dana, meaning the Dana can be used for doing some serious long-term work. In addition, the Dana's small size makes it far more comfortable to use on, say, a public train, than a notebook computer could ever be.
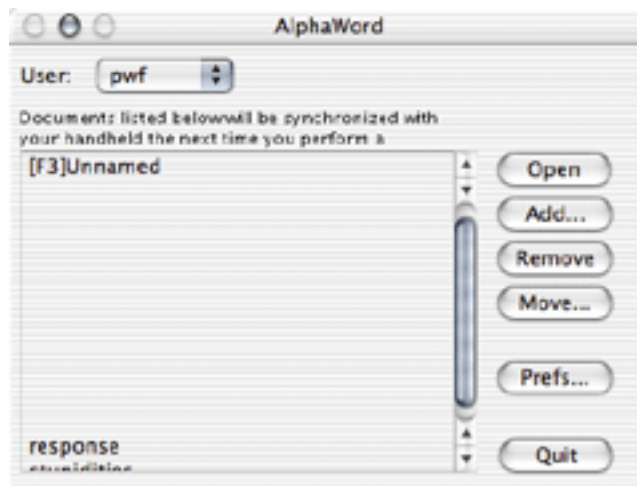
Synching AlphaWord documents is done in collaboration with a program called AlphaSync, whose purpose is to let you select documents on your Mac that you'd like transferred to the Dana. The UI in the OS X version is buggy: in the above picture, the

middle of the list disappeared after I added a new file to be synched. A file cannot be removed from the list by hitting the Delete key; you have to use the button. There are also some tremendous issues with just what files can be imported, but I'll get to that in the AlphaWord section.

PalmOS programs can be downloaded to your Mac and installed via HotSync, and presumably upgrades to programs like AlphaWord can be applied the same way, which is great.

This can't be considered synching, but it is a neat trick if you're in front of an unfamiliar computer that doesn't have Palm Desktop installed and you want to send a file from the Dana to the computer. Plug the Dana into the computer's USB port, open the AlphaWord file you want, open a blank document in a word processor on the computer, and hit "Send" on the Dana. This makes the Dana type the document to your computer, very rapidly and without any of the problems I encountered doing this with the 3000IR. Keep in mind that if you "sync" this way, formatting such as font size and italics will not show up on the receiving computer. For me at least, that's not an issue.

AlphaWord

I've mentioned AlphaWord a few times now, so what is it? AlphaWord is the Dana's word processor, written by AlphaSmart especially for use with the device. Having AlphaWord up on the Dana is a lot like using a 3000IR, in that it's mind-numbingly simple to use. That's part of the beauty of the Dana; it packs in a tremendous amount of functionality while maintaining the ease of use of a much less powerful product.
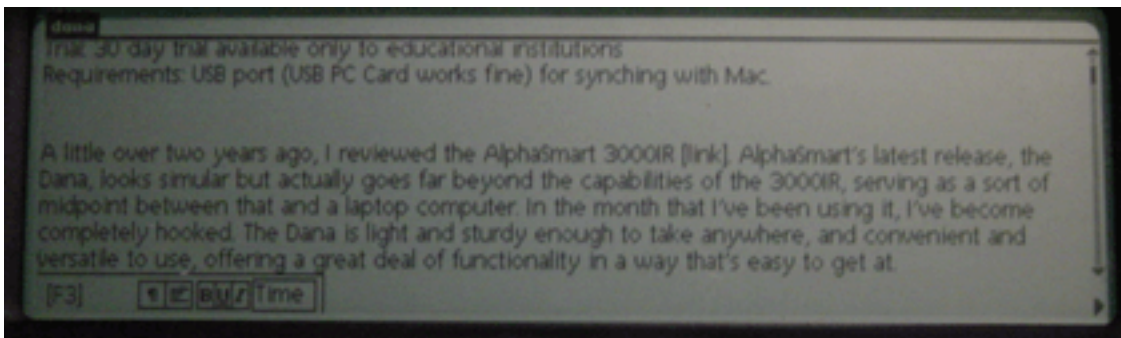
Like the 3000IR, AlphaWord can have up to eight different files open at a time, and lets you navigate quickly from one to another by pressing one of the eight function keys on the keyboard. *Unlike* the 3000IR, AlphaWord lets you save and name your files, so you can keep more than eight easily identifiable files in total on your Dana. The Open… dialog box shows you which function key applies to which opened file, but curiously fails to take advantage of the Dana's wide screen, forcing you to scroll down to see all your files.

AlphaWord lets you embolden, italicize, and underline text. Text can be justified, and different fonts and sizes can be used. Documents can be password protected if desired, but the file will not be protected on your computer after HotSyncing, so the actual security this option provides is pretty minimal. Find/Replace, Word Count, Spell Checking, and even a Thesaurus are all available within AlphaWord.

The ability to save formatting, at least for me, turns out to be a kind of a minus. Here's why: AlphaWord saves its files in Rich Text Format (RTF), not plain text. That means synched files are a lot less universal than I'd like. I have to use Microsoft Word or Nisus

Writer or some other RTF-capable program to open my documents on my Mac, even if I've applied no formatting at all. There needs to be a preference to save documents as text, or at least an option in the Save As.. dialog box.
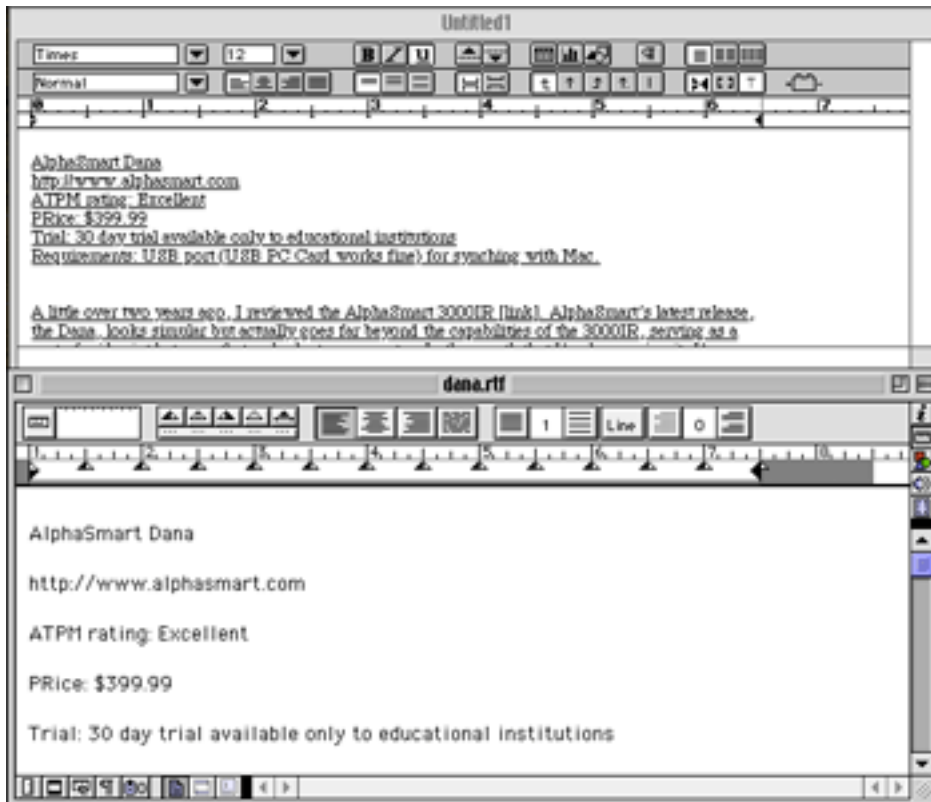
The same RTF file opened by two different programs. Top: MS Word 5.1.
Bottom: Nisus Writer 6.5.

Even with applications that claim to support RTF documents, things aren't perfect. When I open an AlphaWord file with Nisus Writer 6.5, all the return keys are doubled. In Microsoft Word 5.1, all of the text is underlined. Microsoft Word v.X displays the file just fine. I'm not sure what's going on here, really. Nisus Writer opens an RTF made with Word 5.1 as though it were text, displaying all the RTF codes; Word 5.1 opens an RTF made with Nisus Writer flawlessly. Maybe the problem lies in the word processors, or maybe AlphaWord isn't encoding its RTF files quite right. Wherever the cause lies, there are minor anomalies to be aware of.

Unfortunately, it gets worse: not only is AlphaWord incapable of saving documents as text, it's incapable of reading documents saved as text as well! So before I can put a BBEdit document on my Dana, I have to open it with Microsoft Word and do a Save As…. AlphaWord refuses to recognize an RTF file created with Nisus Writer, though Word has no problem with it. RTF files created in either Word 5.1 or Word v.X work fine.

While I'm at it, I'll mention two other, really minor, changes I'd like to see to a future version of AlphaWord: First, as a left-hander, I'd really like an option to make the scroll bar appear on the left hand side of the screen. As it is, I can't easily see the text of the document as I scroll, as my hand is in the way. Second, when you're on the last line of a document and you press the Down Arrow key, you should be taken to the end of that last line. That's how it works in all of the Mac apps I use, and I'm accustomed to just Down-Arrowing to the end of a document to start typing.

Other Applications

The Dana, thanks to PalmOS, is not just a word processor. It has a datebook, an address book, a to do list, and a memo pad, all built in and all viewable with the Palm Desktop program once you've synched with your computer. Somewhat to my surprise, I actually use these apps.

When I first heard about the Dana, I wanted to think of it as a sort of 3000IR on steroids, and figured I'd just use it for word processing. But if memory serves, one of the documents I had on the 3000IR was, essentially, a to do list. Now, I have an application for it.

I used to keep track of phone numbers and addresses on random pieces of paper, or in seperate computer files at home and at work, depending on how I knew the person. Now it's all in one place, and always at hand. Each of these applications is simple and well thought-out.

Documentation

Usually, I expect to have to complain about poor documentation; it's just not a priority for most companies these days. AlphaSmart is a welcome exception. The Dana ships with an 82-page Getting Started printed manual which is reasonably well organized and well written, with a two-page index in the back. AlphaSmart gives its contact information, including e-mail address and phone number, for use if you have problems.

The Dana also comes with a CD containing a 220-page PDF User's Guide. In all honesty, I only skimmed it, reading at random a few sections; I felt the Getting Started manual was more than enough to get me comfortable with using the Dana and answer questions I had.

Conclusion

I very much enjoy using the Dana; its simplicity and convenience encourage me to use it, and its sturdiness, light weight, and long battery life encourage me to keep it with me even if I don't anticipate having to use it.

The PalmOS and its applications are designed to let me do what I need to without getting in my way or slowing me down. At the end of the day, AlphaSmart's Dana only has two real flaws, both of which can be overcome. Not bad at all for something as complex as a portable computer system. If you're a writer, either for fun or professionally, the Dana could well become your favorite portable.

Review: BBEdit 7.0.1

by Michael Tsai, mtsai@atpm.com

Developer: Bare Bones Software, Inc.
Price: $179; $119 (cross-upgrade from free BBEdit Lite); $49 (upgrade); $59 (upgrade after 2003–01–01)
Requirements: Mac OS 9.2.2 with CarbonLib 1.5 or Mac OS X 10.1.5
Recommended: Mac OS X 10.2.2
Trial: Fully-featured (30 days, watermarked printing, periodic nagging)

Background

BBEdit is a powerful general-purpose text editor with a strong Macintosh heritage. Although it's useful for a wide variety of tasks, many of the features are designed specifically for Web developers and programmers. ATPM has previously reviewed versions 4, 5, and 6. This review will focus mainly on what's new in BBEdit 7.

Mac OS X

BBEdit has run natively on Mac OS X since version 6.1, and version 6.5 made it a better Mac OS X citizen by combining the OS 9 and OS X versions into a single file and adding such features as authenticated saves, a command-line "bbedit" tool, shell worksheets, and long filenames. BBEdit 7 continues this trend. The BBEdit application is now BBEdit.app, an application package that contains separate executables optimized for OS 9 and OS X. The application package includes Apple Help and the 330-page PDF user manual (as of version 7, an HTML version of the manual is also available), making for easy drag installs of the application and documentation. BBEdit plug-ins can be installed with a simple drag and drop onto the application icon. You can now install the "bbedit" command-line tool from the preferences window, eliminating the need for the separate installer and its disk image. The BBEdit Support folder—which contains dictionaries, glossaries, plug-ins, language modules, scripts, etc.—is stored outside the application package. Each user can now have her own BBEdit Support folder in ~/Library/Application Support.

Rectangular Selection

BBEdit now supports rectangular text selection (when not in soft wrap mode), which is particularly useful for manipulating columnar text. You can cut, paste, and otherwise transform rectangular blocks of text. With previous versions of BBEdit, I would use BBEdit's regular expression support to work with columnar text, or paste into Nisus Writer or Excel. Being able to stay in BBEdit and do all this with a few quick swipes of the mouse is great. This is not a feature that I will often use, but it's great when I need it. Mac text geeks know that Nisus Writer is still ahead of BBEdit in that it supports non-contiguous text selection. However, I found that this feature was only useful when working with styled text; BBEdit, being a plain text editor, has no need for it.

Line Processing

BBEdit's plug-ins for processing lines of text have been reorganized and expanded for version 7. The Cut Lines Containing… and Copy Lines Containing… commands have been merged into a single Process Lines Containing… command. You can choose whether the matched lines are kept or deleted, copied to the clipboard, or copied to a new window.
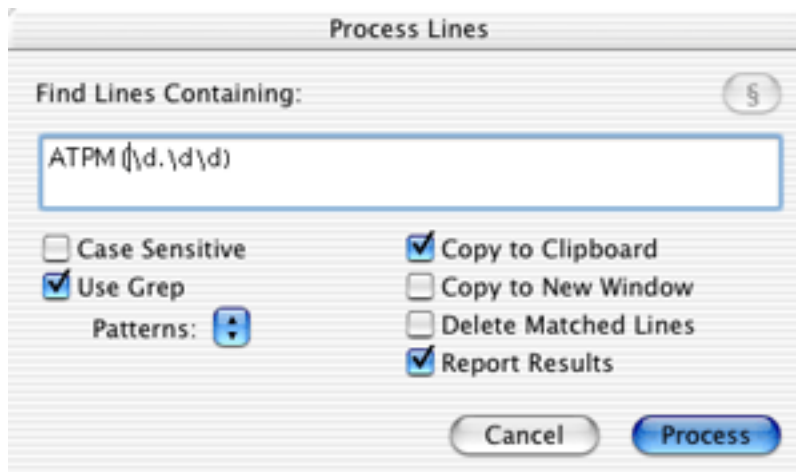

A new Process Duplicate Lines… plug-in reduces the need for Perl scripting (and adds functionality for those who don't write Perl) by providing a simple interface for telling BBEdit which criteria to use to find duplicate lines, and what to do with them once they're found. You can specify that lines be matched using a grep pattern and then use grep sub-

patterns to specify the criteria for duplication. For example, you could use the pattern to match fields of tab-delimited data and specify that lines should be considered duplicates if they contain the same values for certain of the fields.
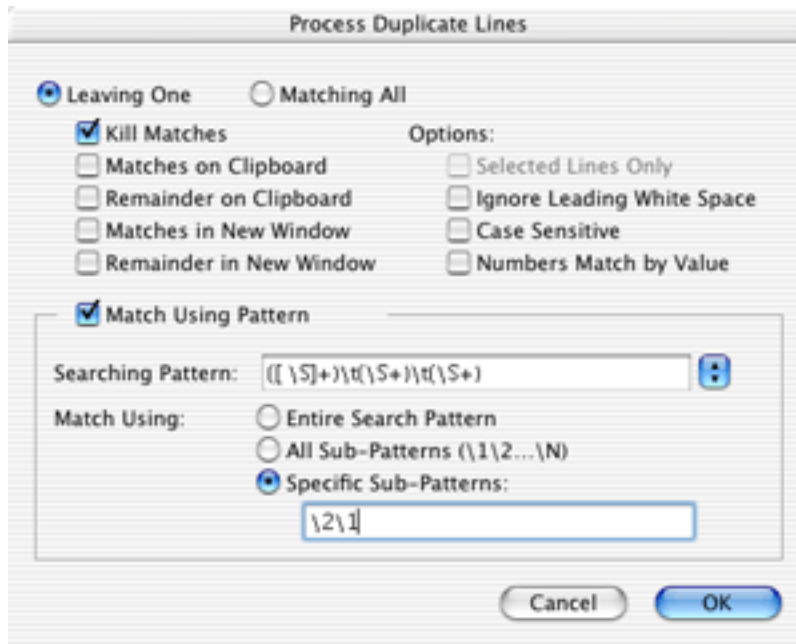
Finally, the Sort Lines… plug-in has also been expanded. It can now send its output to the clipboard or to a new window, instead of modifying the current document. Additionally, you can use grep patterns to specify how to sort the lines, in much the same way as with the Process Duplicate Lines… plug-in. For example, you could specify that tab-delimited data be sorted first by the second field and then by the first field.
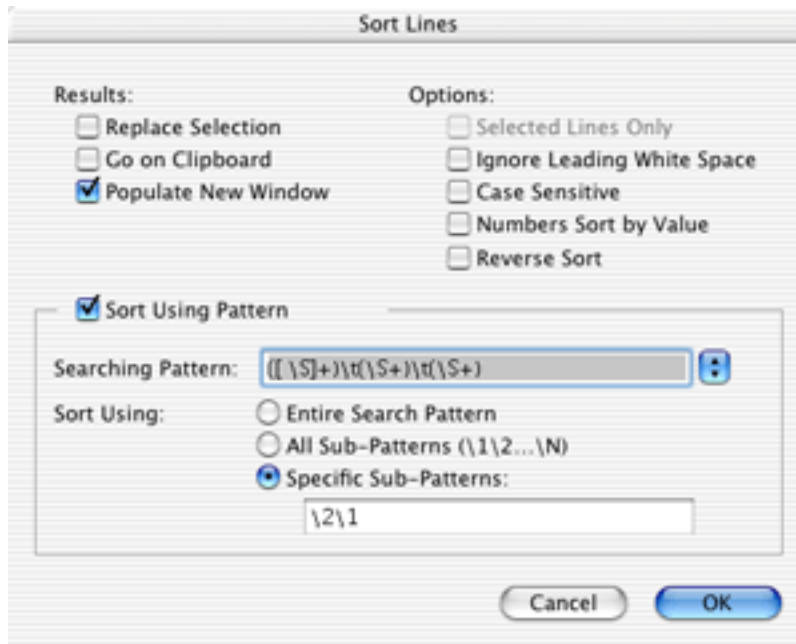

All in all, BBEdit's line processing tools are much improved. There's nothing the new tools do that couldn't previously be done by writing a script, but the new tools make common tasks much easier. My only complaint is that entering grep patterns for the tools is not as nice as doing so in BBEdit's Find & Replace dialog; the text fields don't use a good code font or provide syntax coloring.

Glossary

The Glossary holds frequently used text snippets that you can access from a floating palette or by custom keyboard shortcuts. I'm not the type to fill my screen with palettes. Assigning keyboard shortcuts works well to a point—especially since you can re-use keys

across different language glossaries. However, I've never used the glossary as much as I probably should because of the difficulty in remembering (and typing) the more obscure shortcuts.

BBEdit 7 aims to solve this problem in two ways. First, there is a new menu command called Insert Glossary Entry…. This brings up a list of your glossary entries in a modal dialog. The dialog is fully keyboard navigable, and you can type the first few letters of a glossary entry's name to jump to that entry. I find this to be a big improvement over the Glossary palette, because it disappears when I'm not using it and because I can keep my fingers on the keyboard.
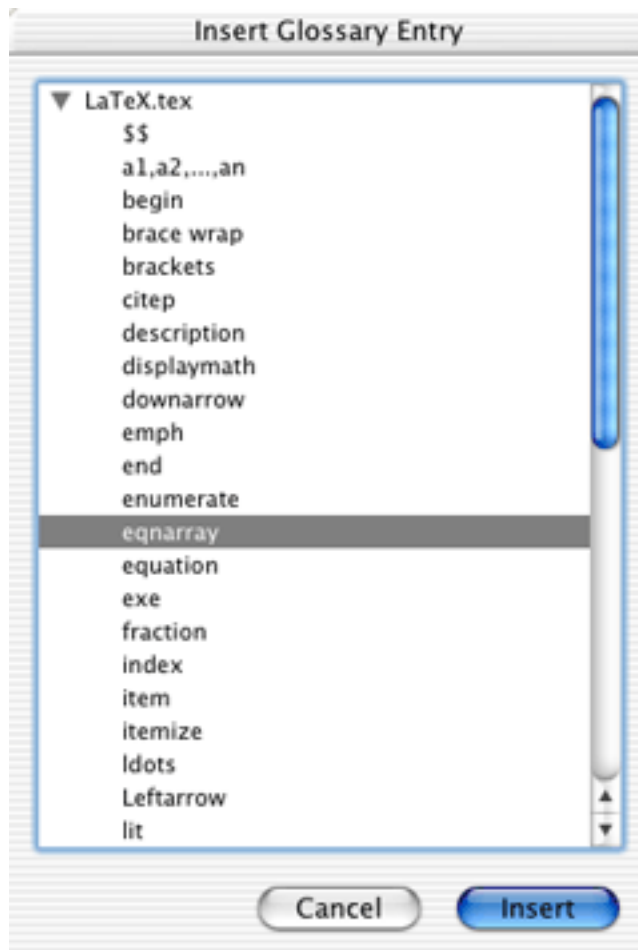
The other new command is called Auto-Complete Glossary…. To use it, you type (directly into the normal BBEdit window) the first few letters of the name of one of your glossary entries. Then when you choose Auto-Complete Glossary…, BBEdit looks at the letters preceding the insertion point and tries to find a glossary entry with a matching name. If there's more than one match, it brings up a dialog showing the entries that match what you've typed so far.

It's worth emphasizing that the Auto-Complete Glossary feature requires you to have previously created a glossary entry (a text file in BBEdit Support/Glossary) for the text you want to insert. You type part of the name of the glossary entry (the name of the file) and BBEdit can auto-complete the remaining part of the entry's name and then insert the entry (the contents of the file). This is quite useful in its own right, but it is *completely different* from auto-completion in programs like Terminal, Emacs, and Project Builder. In those programs, auto-completion is word-based and works on words in the current window without any prior setup on the user's part. This kind of auto-completion is not built into BBEdit, but it is available (on OS X) via my free BBAutoComplete utility.

Paste Previous Clipboard

BBEdit has supported multiple clipboards since version 6, and version 7 makes them easier to use. Previously, you could open the Clipboard window to see the contents of all the clipboards (one at a time). You could also use the Next/Previous Clipboard commands to cycle through the clipboards; after each step you could Paste to see what was on the clipboard and Undo if it turned out that you wanted the contents of another clipboard. With BBEdit 7, you can cycle through the different clipboards and see their contents using a single keystroke (Command-Shift-V for Paste Previous Clipboard). After you've pasted once, you can simply press this key combination to replace the just-pasted text with the contents of the previous clipboard in the list, and keep pressing it to move further back in the list of clipboards. For Emacs users, this command will be familiar as yank-pop (M-y).

CVS

BBEdit now has menu commands for accessing the commonly used features of the Concurrent Versions System. CVS is the version control system preferred by most Unix and open-source developers. It's used by Apple itself and is included on the Mac OS X Developer Tools CD.

You can add, remove, and commit files from within BBEdit. There are also commands for retrieving revisions from the repository and comparing them using BBEdit's Find Differences command. You can also get the CVS status of a file and look at its revision history and commit messages. The Find Lurkers… command brings up a BBEdit browser showing a list of all the files in a folder that differ from the current versions in the repository. Finally, there are commands for navigating among conflicts in files that CVS has merged. I used the CVS integration with both local and remote CVS repositories, and it worked without a hitch.
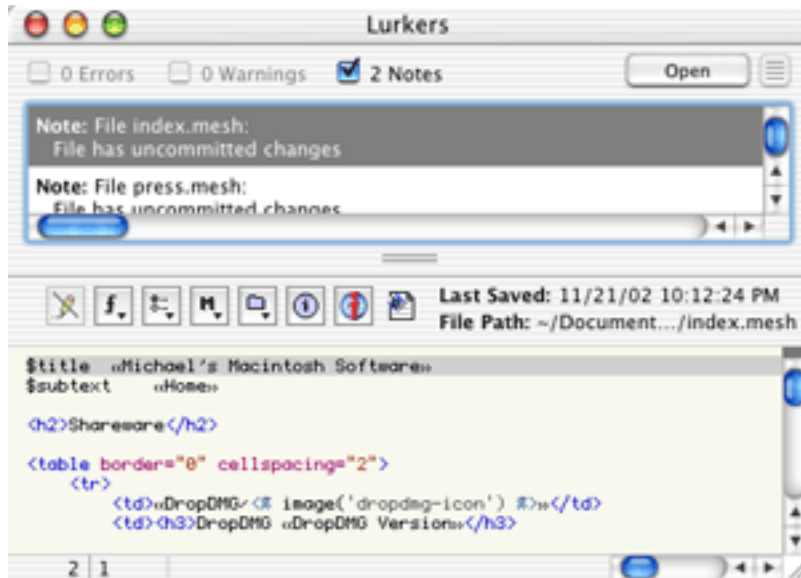
BBEdit's CVS commands provide convenient access to the basic CVS features, however they are not a complete CVS solution. To create a CVS repository or check out a new working copy, you still need to use the command line or a graphical CVS client like CVL. I don't consider this a drawback, as such features probably do not belong in a text editor.
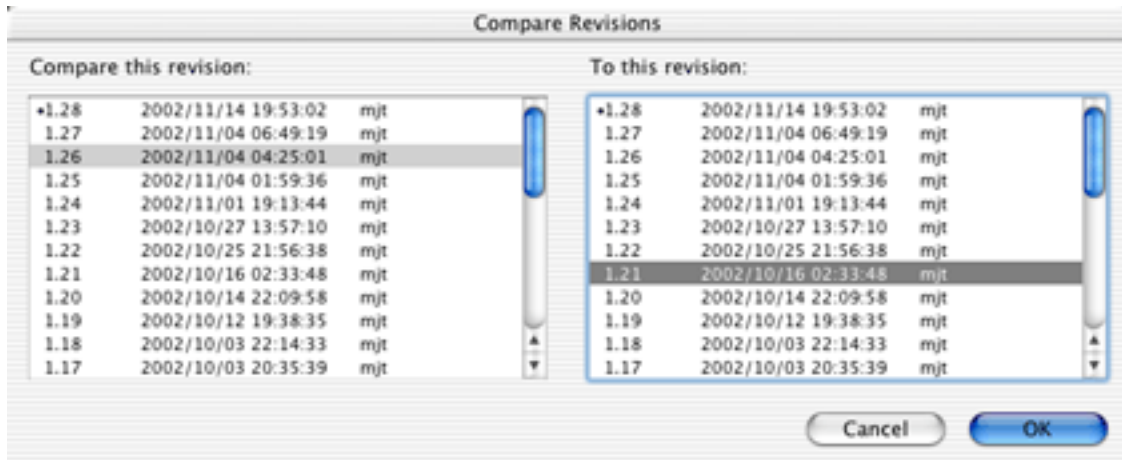
BBEdit's CVS integration is much better than Project Builder's, both in terms of features and reliability. That said, it still leaves a lot to be desired. The window for entering commit messages is modal, so you can't scroll through your file as you write your commit message. You have to use the Get CVS Status command to see whether a file differs from the version in the repository. This is easy enough to do, but it would be nice if BBEdit displayed some sort of indicator in the status bar, browser windows, or file group windows. Adding, updating, and committing files works fine, but feels more cumbersome than in Emacs, which assigns the same keyboard shortcut to all three commands and automatically chooses the correct one based on the current state of the document. Find Lurkers… is very useful, but because it doesn't show the folder hierarchy I often find myself using CVL instead. Also, you can't select multiple lurkers and commit them together. The Compare Arbitrary Revisions… command is a big improvement over the command line, but it only lets you pick revisions by version number and by date—not by symbolic tag or by commit message. Finally, the Get Revision History command just dumps the revision history in a new BBEdit text window. Again, this is an improvement over having to go into Terminal (or a shell worksheet), but most of the time I find it easier to browse the commit messages with CVL.

Shell Worksheets

Shell worksheets, new in BBEdit 6.5, let you access the command line from within a BBEdit window. The advantages to this are that you have access to BBEdit's powerful text processing features and that you can save worksheets to reuse the commands later. The disadvantages are that shell worksheets don't work well with interactive commands, and that they don't support tab completion or key commands for cycling through the command history. (Emacs's shell buffers do support tab completion and the command history, and they have much better coloring than BBEdit's shell worksheets.)

I haven't found much reason to use shell worksheets, but those who have will welcome the improvements that BBEdit 7 brings. The lower left corner of the shell worksheet window now shows the name of the running command which, among other things, lets you know when the command has completed. There's now a padlock icon in the status bar, which lets you enable and disable administrator access (think 'sudo') on a per-window basis. When you drag files into a shell worksheet, BBEdit helpfully escapes their POSIX paths to make it easier to use them for constructing a shell command. Finally, when a shell worksheet is frontmost, BBEdit's Open File by Name… command starts its search in the shell's working directory.

Markup

BBEdit now lets you define more than one Web site in its preferences window. Previously, you could only have one Web site defined at a time; people with more than one site had to AppleScript the preferences. Now that BBEdit has real support for multiple sites, the scripting is unnecessary. More importantly, the markup tools are smart about creating links to files in different sites. If you try to link to a file in the current site, BBEdit can insert a relative link; if you try to link to a file in a different site, BBEdit will look up that site's domain name in your site preferences and insert a full URL.

BBEdit's syntax coloring now supports ASP/VBScript embedded in HTML as well as PHP4. I have no use for the former, but apparently there are a lot of ASP developers that want to use Macs and BBEdit.

My favorite improvement to the markup tools is the new Close Current Tag command. It does just what the name says; BBEdit looks backward from the insertion point to find the last unclosed tag and then inserts the appropriate closing tag. Between this, the Tag Maker, and the Edit Tag… command, it's possible to quickly enter and edit tags without

having to go into the Markup menu or memorize lots of keyboard shortcuts. Like the other markup insertion commands, Close Current Tag doesn't give you control over where BBEdit inserts linebreaks; therefore, obsessive hand-coders may prefer to use glossary entries instead.

Notably absent from the list of markup improvements is support for checking the syntax of style sheets. And, of course, many people would like BBEdit's HTML syntax checker to support arbitrary DTDs. It currently supports the major W3C HTML and XHTML standards as well as Apple's XML property list format.

Programming

There aren't many documented improvements for programmers. The Open Selection command now lets you enter a colon and the line number. For instance, if a shell worksheet contains an error message that refers to line 42 of the Foo.c file as Foo.c:42, BBEdit can now open the file at the appropriate line. (Similarly you can use `bbedit +42 Foo.c` from the command line.) What would be better, however, is if BBEdit could make its nice error browser window available for Python and Ruby programmers, and if it could integrate with Apple's pbxbuild to display compiler messages from Project Builder directly in BBEdit.

I'd rather write code in BBEdit than in Project Builder, but recent versions of Project Builder have some handy features that make programming in BBEdit harder than it should be. BBEdit doesn't support soft wrapping using hanging indents, nor does it support automatic (syntax-sensitive) code indenting. It can't find the header file that defines a particular symbol. The Open File by Name command is similar to Project Builder's Open Quickly, but it's much slower and it's hard to choose from among multiple matches. It also doesn't support filename completion. BBEdit does integrate with the Mac OS X Developer Help Center, but the latter is so poorly written as to be almost unusable.

Finally, BBEdit's language modules could use some improvement. The common Mac OS X programming languages are well-supported, but the syntax coloring in the shell script module is not very good and there is no language module for Makefiles. Although the existing language modules are of high quality, BBEdit supports only a fraction of the languages supported by Unix editors like XEmacs and VIM. It's possible to create your own

BBEdit language modules, but doing so is much more difficult than with other editors. It's not possible to extend the built-in language modules, e.g. to add keywords or new languages embedded in HTML.

What Else is Missing

I feel like being harder on BBEdit than other products, because it's already so good and because so many people think it already has every conceivable feature. In that spirit, here are a few more features that one might reasonably expect a text editor to support, but which are absent from BBEdit.

- Full support for dark background colors. BBEdit does let you change the background color, but practically speaking you can't use light text on a dark background because the non-configurable selection color would make selected text nearly invisible.

- It takes a long time to open very large files (even if you only want to see part of them), and BBEdit can't edit large files that don't fit in virtual RAM. Mac OS X supports only 4 GB of RAM, and much less is available to applications. Files larger than that are quite common, and they cannot be opened with BBEdit.

- When you close a document, BBEdit forgets all the changes you made; you can't undo them after re-opening the file. Programs like Nisus Writer didn't have this restriction. Although CVS support and BBEdit's automatic backups somewhat eliminate the need for this feature, it would still be nice to have.

Conclusion

The new features in BBEdit 7 are welcome additions, as are the subtle interface tweaks like the new tooltips that show you the full names of files in the various palettes. My favorite new features are the CVS integration and Paste Previous Clipboard. Others will probably like the new Web features or the improved text manipulation tools. I'm not jumping up and down, however. Though it's a good upgrade, BBEdit 7 is simply not up to the standard set by previous paid BBEdit upgrades. Version 5 added improved markup tools and customizable key bindings. Version 6 added AppleScript recordability, multiple glossaries, and file filters. Version 6.5 added Perl-compatible regular expressions, CSS, and lots of OS X stuff. Version 7, at least for my purposes, doesn't add any such must-have features—though heavy BBEdit users will probably want to upgrade to get all the smaller

improvements. Complaints about the upgrade aside, BBEdit is an excellent program. Most Mac users will ignore the Unix text editors, even though they may have more high-powered features, because BBEdit's interface is excellent and its Macness is unrivaled. It remains the leading example of how the marriage of Mac and Unix can sometimes produce the best of both worlds.

Review: .Mac

by Eric Blair, eblair@atpm.com

Developer: Apple Computer
Price: $99.95
Requirements: Mac OS 9 or Windows 98
Recommended: Mac OS X 10.2
Trial: Feature-limited (60-day account, limited e-mail and iDisk
storage, no anti-virus software, no backing up to removable media)

Ever since Steve Jobs announced the death of iTools and the birth of .Mac, the question on the mind of many people has been "Is .Mac worth it?" If all you are looking for are the e-mail address, Web page, and storage space from your old iTools account, then the answer is probably "No"; there are a number of less expensive solutions that will give you these features. If you still use OS 9 as your primary operating system, then you should probably look elsewhere, since many of .Mac's features require OS X. However, if you're interested in some of the new features Apple has added to .Mac, along with tight integration with OS X and several of the iApps, then you should read on.

Old Friends

When .Mac was first announced, many people had problems with the fact that most of the services were essentially the same things that came free with iTools—mac.com e-mail, iDisk, HomePage, iCards, and iPhoto integration. Since the release of .Mac, the .Mac e-mail and iDisk have both changed slightly while HomePage, iCards, and iPhoto integration have remained mostly the same.

There are two main features of a .Mac e-mail account. First, you get 15 MB of disk space for storing e-mail. This allows you to keep a lot of mail on the server so it can be accessed anywhere you can find Internet access. To give you an idea of how many messages you can store with 15 MB, I currently have 384 messages sitting in my account using a total of 5.1 MB of space.

Second, Apple's interface for reading e-mail on the Web is possibly the best I've ever seen. If I remember correctly, it was in beta testing during the last days of iTools, but it wasn't declared final until the announcement of .Mac. The main interface contains a toolbar

similar to one you would find in many OS X applications. You can search the Subject, From, To, and CC fields of e-mails from the mail list instead of switching to a dedicated search page.
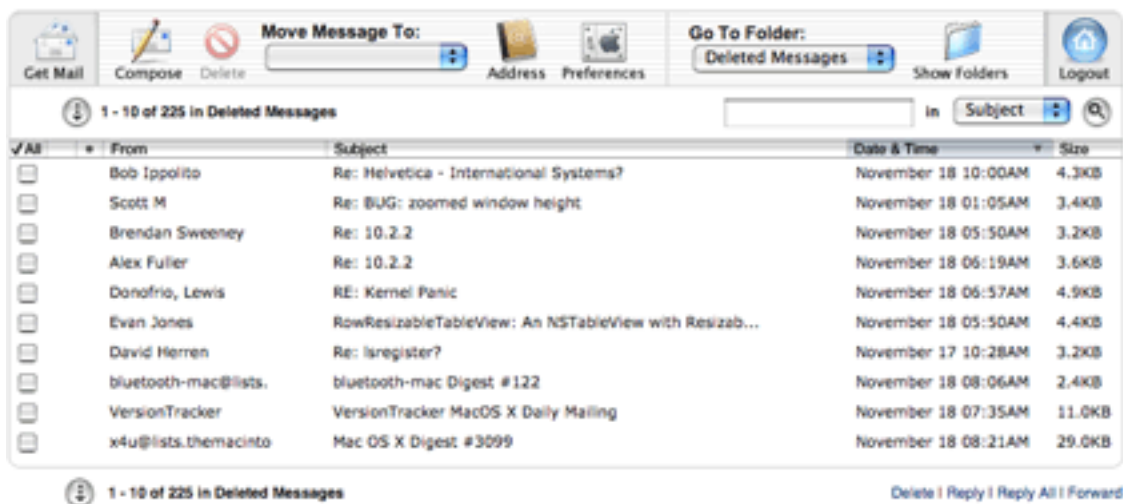
Checking your e-mail on the Web.

Under Webmail's preferences, you can specify your signature, whether or not you want to include a photo, your viewing, sending, and receiving preferences, and whether you would like to check an external POP account.

The photo option does not use the X-Face e-mail header. Instead, if you e-mail somebody who uses the Webmail interface or Mail.app, the picture is downloaded from the .Mac server. As far as I can tell, no other e-mail application can take advantage of this feature.

I do have a pair of complaints about the Webmail interface. First, you must go to the preferences and retype your password whenever you want to check an external POP account. It would be nice if .Mac would remember the account information and let you check the account from the main interface. Second, there is no way to get your address book from the new Address Book application into .Mac or vice-versa. Considering the integration between .Mac and several of Apple's other applications, this is extremely disappointing. Hopefully, this will either be addressed by an update to the Address Book or the final release of iSync.

The biggest change in iDisk is that the base storage size has increased from 20 MB to 100 MB. The standard iDisk includes folders named Documents, Movies, Music, Pictures, Public, Sites, Backup, and Software. The first folders mirror the folders of the same names in every user's home folder on OS X. That said, it would be nice if they picked up the same custom icons as their Home folder counterparts. Backup is a read-only folder that is used with Apple's Backup application. Software contains many programs placed there by Apple that you are free to download. This folder is also read-only, but it doesn't count against your allocated storage space. If you use iSync, a folder named Library will appear that contains information about your syncing preferences.

For some reason, Apple doesn't bother to publicize HomePage all that much. I don't use it that much because I prefer to design my own Web sites on my own computer, but it seems to be fairly well designed. Apple provides over 50 themes to which you can add your own information. These themes are split into categories like Photo Album, iMovie, Resume, Education, File Sharing, and Site Menu.

It's probably the least interesting of the categories, but I'm really impressed by the Site Menu templates. By default, there is an entry in the menu for every page in your site. You can delete these default entries and add entries to pages elsewhere on the Web. The only requirement is that the image you use in the menu must be in your iDisk's Picture folder. Of course, the part I find really cool is when you're editing your menu, you can drag-and-drop the entries to reorder them on the page, similar to creating menus in iDVD. This might seem like a no-brainer, but I love the fact that Apple was able to add this functionality to a Web site. It really helps that you can take knowledge from one Apple application and apply it in another.

I believe that iCards is the only portion of iTools that remained free for anybody to use following the release of .Mac. The only advantage to using iCards with a .Mac membership is you can create iCards using your own photos instead of being restricted to Apple's stock designs.

iPhoto integration is the one feature I was upset about people losing in the transition from iTools to .Mac. Unlike most of the other .Mac features, iPhoto integration is accessed by a single button (under Sharing in iPhoto) in an application Apple ships with every computer. This is similar to the iDisk integration in the Finder. Unlike iDisk integration, though, nothing changed in regards to iPhoto. For some people, this button just went from working one day to not working the next. Hopefully, Apple will address this in an update

to iPhoto—either hide the option for people not using iPhoto or come up with some alternative method of getting photos onto the Internet, similar to iCal's support for WebDAV.

Backup

Apple touted Backup as one of the new features of .Mac. For basic backups, it works acceptably, but it is lacking when it comes to the more advanced features. For instance, Apple includes a number of QuickPicks for getting all of a certain type of file in a given location—for instance, all Word files in the Home folder or all iTunes playlists. However,

there's no way to specify your own QuickPicks. So, if you wanted to back up all the Quicken files in your Home directory (or even on your hard drive), you would have to locate all the files and add them by hand.
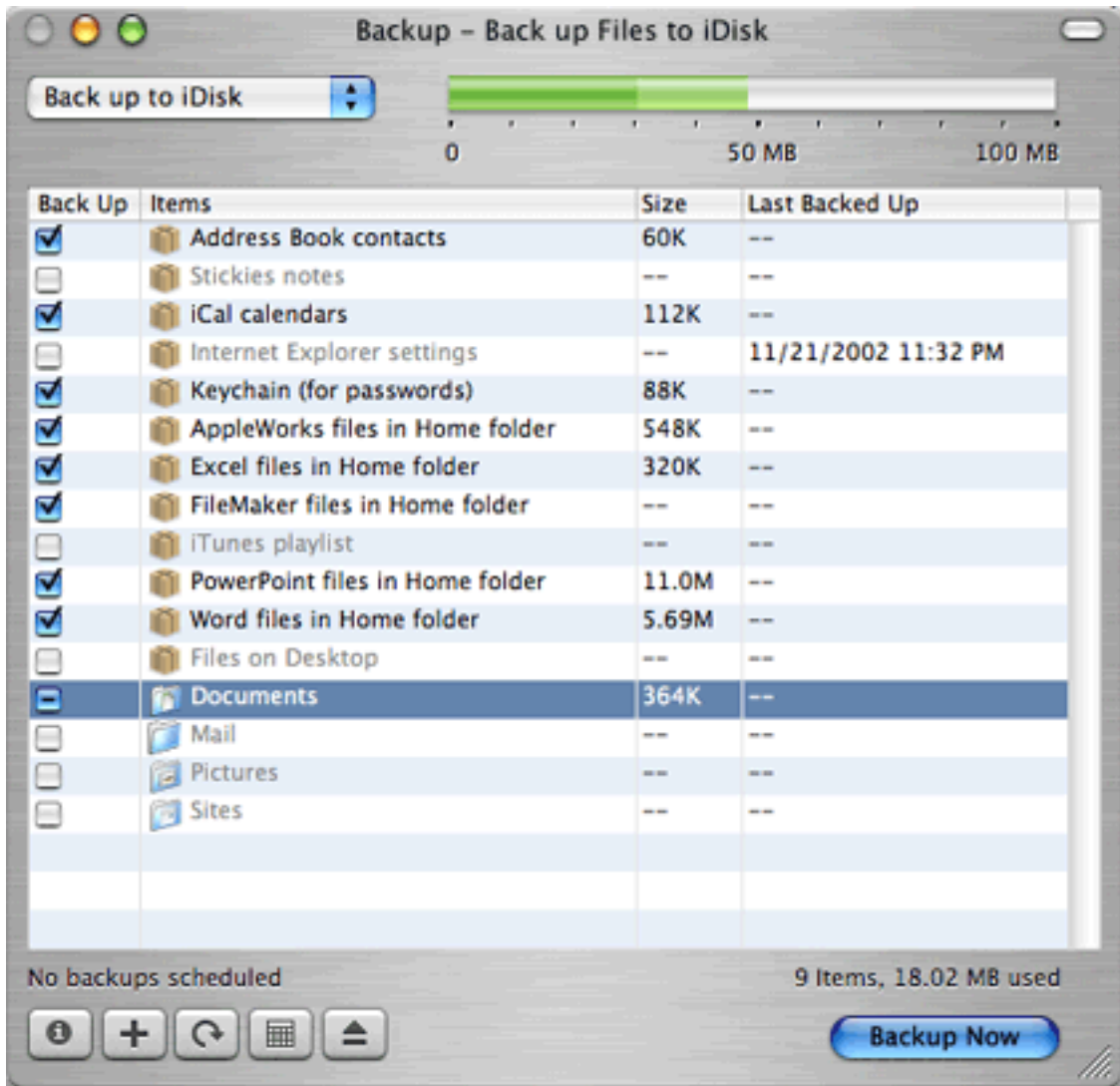
Keeping your data safe on Apple's server.

Also, backing up data to your iDisk can take up a lot of space. If you want to do something like back up several years of e-mail, you could very quickly consume all of your space. For instance, my Mailsmith mail file would fill my iDisk many times over.

Along with working with your iDisk, Backup can also archive data to a CD or DVD recorder. This is great for keeping larger files safe. However, Backup will only record to a CD or DVD if it can verify your .Mac membership. Since it needs to go online to do this, there's no way to back up your data when you are not connected to the Internet.

On the bright side, Backup does support limited backups sets. You can specify one group of files for backup to an iDisk and a second group for backup to removable media. This will let you keep a smaller collection of files on your iDisk so you can back them up on a regular basis using Backup's scheduled backup option while also keeping your large files backed up when you have access to removable media. It appears that you are limited to two sets, though.

Virex

The inclusion of Virex in .Mac has me scratching my head. I mean, it's been about four years since there were any new viruses released for the Mac and it's much harder to infect a Mac with a virus than it is a PC since there's no real Macintosh equivalent to the

backdoor-filled Microsoft Outlook. True, OS X is probably at risk from certain Unix-based viruses, but to this point, very few people are bothering to compile these viruses so they will run on PowerPC processors.
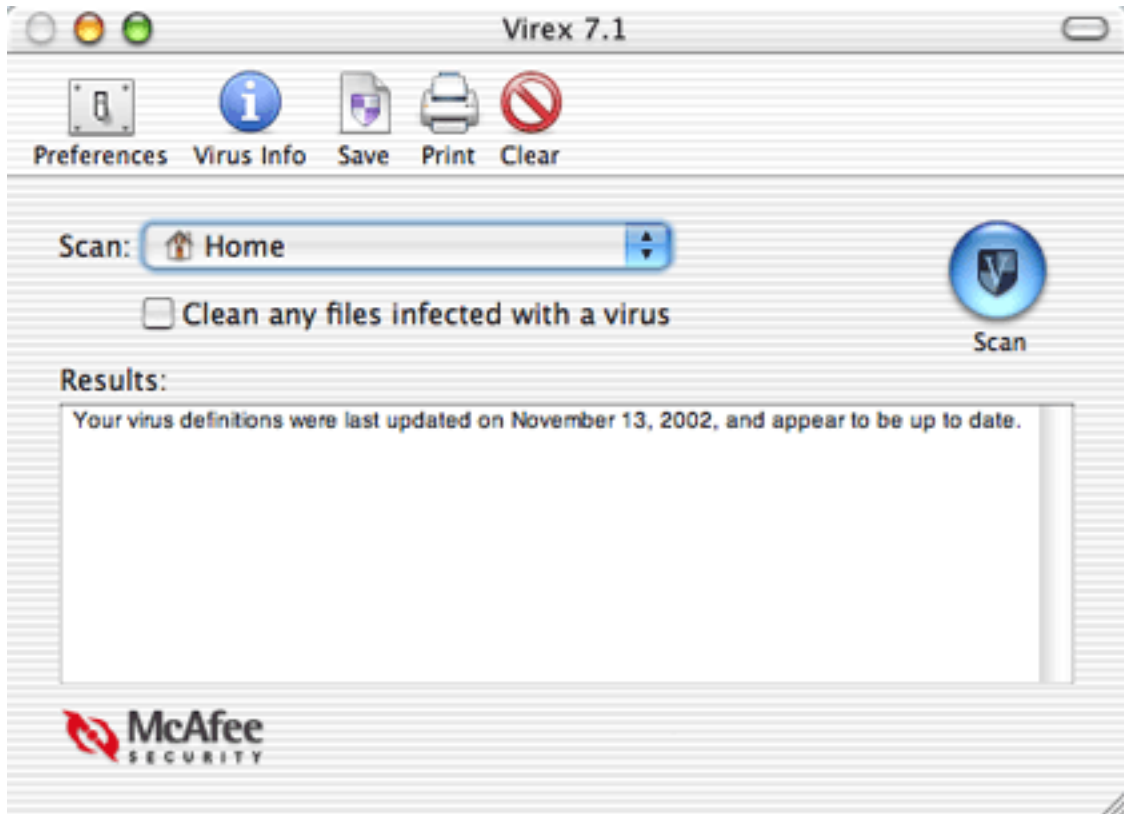
If you ever do see a Mac virus, Virex should protect you.

I can only think that Virex is included in .Mac as an attempt to ease the minds of switchers. Most Windows computers come with some sort of virus checker and people might want to know why their Mac is lacking such software. Personally, I'd rather see Apple shouting from the tree-tops that Macs are rarely affected by viruses and therefore a virus checker is a nice, optional, product, but not something you absolutely need for using your computer on a day to day basis. The money Apple is spending to provide Virex to .Mac users could be better spent on providing .Mac users with quality disk repair software like DiskWarrior (or the OEM version, DiskWarrior Recovery Edition).

I'm not all that impressed by Virex. Support for automated scanning is very limited—you can choose to have Virex run automatically when you login. For single-user systems, you can go a long time between logins. Technically, you can use the Unix tool cron to run the command line version of Virex, but this a poor option for a Macintosh program. Virus definitions must be downloaded and installed by hand—there is no excuse for Virex not to handle this all by itself, possibly just asking permission if it should check for new virus definitions.

It's a good thing viruses aren't a major problem for Mac users, because Virex only seems to take minimal steps to protect users. Yes, it scans for viruses, but it doesn't do any of the extra things a good anti-virus program should.

iCal Integration

This is where things start to get interesting. Apple announced .Mac and iCal at the same time, so people knew this feature would be coming. Until iCal was released in September, though, people really were not sure how it would work.

As it turns out, iCal integration works pretty well. If you publish your calendar to your .Mac account, anybody with iCal and an Internet connection can download your calendar that will update to reflect any changes you make. However, Apple also recognized that not everybody can use iCal, and they designed .Mac to handle this. Basically, .Mac uses WebObjects to convert the iCal file to a Web page—whereas Webcal://ical.Mac.com/ical/ Rockingham32Park.ics will load the Rockingham Mall calendar into your copy of iCal, http://ical.Mac.com/ical/Rockingham32Park will load it in your Web browser.

Personally, I haven't had any need to publish my own calendar, but I do subscribe to several calendars—holidays, sports schedules, movie release dates, and things like that. It's not information I need to survive and I can certainly find the information elsewhere, but it's certainly convenient to have the information sent to me automatically.

Granted, you don't need .Mac to subscribe to iCal calendars. You could even use a third-party service like iCal World to get free calendar hosting. However, the fact that I could post a calendar of family-related dates and have both Mac and PC-using family members see what's happening is definitely a plus.

iSync Integration

iSync is still in beta and I haven't had any chance to play with its multi-computer sync capabilities. Bill Bumgarner, though, has. Very cool. On the one hand, Apple probably could have found a way to implement this feature on local networks using Rendezvous, but the fact that you could basically sync a cell phone in California with a Palm in New York and just have it work seems really excellent. I'm looking forward to seeing where Apple takes both iSync in general and this feature in particular as they release version 1.0 and beyond.
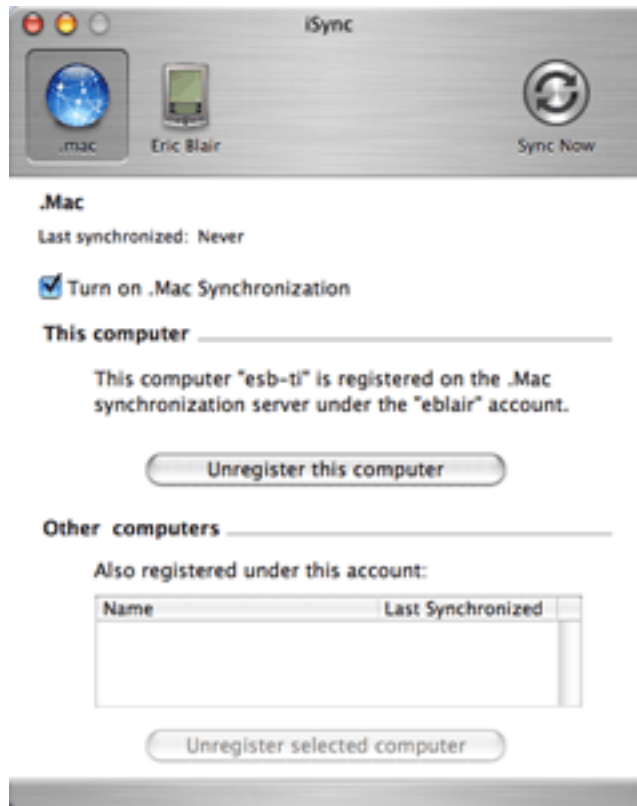
Maybe some day, I'll have enough devices to make full use of iSync's capabilities.

All that Extra Stuff

The biggest problem I have with reviewing .Mac is that it's not a shrink-wrapped product that never changes. Instead, it's a collection of parts that is more likely to gain functionality than lose it. When I moved from iTools to .Mac, I received 100 free 4" x 6" prints through

iPhoto. At $0.49 per print, I basically bought 100 prints and got .Mac for free. The iPhoto offer ends on December 31, but if offers like this continue, they should make the cost of .Mac much more reasonable to swallow.

Along with free prints, Apple has also added the .Mac Slides Publisher. This lets you subscribe to screen savers of other people's pictures. It's a nice way to swap slideshows with friends and family.

Apple is also providing .Mac users with a free copy of PopCap's Alchemy Deluxe, an addictive game that was previously only available as an online game. Now, you can watch the hours disappear without tying up your phone line while doing so. Additionally, .Mac users get $5 off another of PopCap's puzzle games, Bejeweled.

Near the end of the .Mac trial period, .Mac suffered from several periods of down time, which apparently included some pieces of e-mail getting lost. Not only did Apple rectify this issue, but they established a pair of .Mac status pages—one available through Apple's support Web site and the .Mac member home page. If Apple wants .Mac seen as a serious set of Web services, then making this information easily available is a necessity.

Conclusion

Although .Mac's core functionality is highly similar to iTools, there are several new pieces that go beyond what was previously available. I fully expect to see this list grow as .Mac matures.

In its current state, .Mac is a Good product. Its current features work well and integrate together nicely. Furthermore, Apple seems to have recovered nicely from the earlier service outages. However, there are certain things that just drive me nuts, like the lack of any integration between Address Book and the .Mac address book. Assuming Apple addresses the current shortcomings and continues to add new features, .Mac should only get better as time passes.

Review: icKeys (PowerBook G4 Keyboard Illuminator)

by Chris Lawson, clawson@atpm.com

Developer: LCT
Price: $34.99 (free shipping)
Requirements: PowerBook G4 (any model)

ATPM RATINGS
GOOD

"…and God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light."—Genesis 1:3

With the recent rise of inexpensive blue-white LEDs in the electronics market, an entire class of low-power lighting devices have emerged targeted at the mobile computer user. icKeys, a small two-LED lighting device for the keyboard of the PowerBook G4, claims to illuminate the keyboard in dim lighting conditions so as to avoid being "caught pressing the wrong keys." icKeys provides a helpful visual indication of the location of the F and J keys, but provides little illumination outside that immediate area.

Installation of the icKeys device is reasonably simple; detailed, photo-illustrated instructions are supplied and consist mainly of lifting the keyboard, pushing two wires in a power connector to the side, and gently pushing the device into place. While icKeys can be installed while your PowerBook is turned on, this approach is *not* recommended because there's no telling what effect slight power fluctuations might have on the operation of the 'Book.

A portion of the instructions is dedicated to adjusting icKeys so it will remain off part of the time (e.g. while the 'Book is asleep); I found this functionality problematic, and attempting to adjust icKeys according to the instructions resulted in very inconsistent operation. Fortunately, Mike at LCT was quite responsive to tech support e-mails. Since adjusting the device all the way "on," I have had no problems with inconsistent operation, but it's worth noting that the two LEDs are a (very) minor battery drain (perhaps one minute of battery life out of a full charge) when they're on all the time.

Because LEDs are highly focused light sources, with little of the spread of a true "light bulb," icKeys cannot illuminate more than a very small area of the keyboard, approximately two key caps' worth. This limits its utility somewhat; an electroluminescent (EL) panel or glow-in-the-dark lettering on the keys (are you listening, Apple?) would be more useful. However, the visual cue icKeys provides under the F and J keys makes sitting down at a PowerBook in a dark room a much less squinty operation—simply target your index fingers at the two points of light and if you're a touch-typist, you're off and running. It's much faster than feeling for the little finger nubs or trying to determine the F and J keys' locations in dim light. One would imagine this could be especially useful to those with minor visual impairments (e.g. corrective lenses or poor night vision).

Compared to a product like the Kensington FlyLight, icKeys has several obvious drawbacks. The FlyLight is $15 cheaper and provides broader illumination, due to its greater distance from the illuminated surface. It also has a flexible shaft, allowing it to be pointed in any direction and greatly increasing its versatility. However, icKeys does not require a USB port like the FlyLight does, and it fits entirely within the PowerBook itself, making it easy to install the device and leave it in place while the 'Book is packed up, in contrast to the somewhat cumbersome external FlyLight.

Currently, icKeys supports only the PowerBook G4 models. Earlier PowerBooks and iBooks use a different power connector and internal layout, making an icKeys-like device for them much more difficult to produce and install. Mike says a future version may include

an EL panel to provide broader, softer illumination over the entire keyboard. The current problem, apparently, is sourcing an appropriate inverter that fits in the space in front of the two RAM modules. I am eagerly anticipating the possibility of such a product, but in the meantime, the LED-based icKeys provides enough of a visual cue to make the device worthwhile. If you do a lot of typing in dimly lit areas—airplanes or late-night papers in your dorm room, for instance—then icKeys is probably worth investigating.

Developer: MAKI Enterprise, Inc.
Price: $30 (discounts available for volume, corporate, and educational purchases)
Requirements: Classic Version: Power Macintosh 7500, Mac OS 8.6, CarbonLib 1.04, a supported browser (Netscape Communicator/Navigator 4.0, Internet Explorer 4.0, iCab 2.0, Opera TP3, Mozilla 0.9.8); Mac OS X Version: Mac OS X 10.0.4, a supported browser (Internet Explorer 5.0.1, Netscape 6.1, Mozilla 0.9.4, iCab 2.5.3, Opera 5.0).
Recommended: G3-based Mac
Trial: Fully-featured (14 days)

Overview

The Kids GoGoGo application is designed to protect children from "harmful" content while they are using the Internet in an unsupervised environment. Kids GoGoGo uses a combination of features to secure Web browsing, chat room use, movie playing, etc.

Installation and Setup

After downloading and unstuffing the KidsGoGoGo folder, launch the KidsGoGoGo Install application. This installs the KidsGoGoGo application in the Apple Menu Items folder and the KidsSafe extension in the Extensions Folder. The application requires 3.2 MB of application RAM.

Main window for setting up Kids GoGoGo.

Kids GoGoGo can be launched from the Apple menu immediately after installation. First, click the Password button and create a password for Kids GoGoGo. Next, choose the filtering mode using the radio buttons. "Stop harmful sites" allows regular Internet use but tries to detect and block or hide sites deemed inappropriate for children. "Kids sites only" restricts Internet usage to Web sites that have been screened and approved for children. After making this choice, click the Update DB button to get the most recent listings of good and bad Web sites. Further adjustments are possible by clicking on the picture icons to the right of the radio buttons. These four buttons are inactive unless Kids

GoGoGo is on. The stopwatch button lets you control the usage times of Web browsers or selected applications. You can set individual times for each day of the week, or you can use the "Copy all" buttons to apply the same time restrictions to every day of the week.

Setting time restrictions.

The "Clear all" buttons remove all restrictions. By default, the restricted applications are ICQ and Hotline. You can add more by launching the Restrict Apps application.

The Globe button lets you restrict Web sites based on their geographic region. Check or uncheck regions as appropriate.

Setting Kids GoGoGo to block access to sites by country or region.

The Hammer/G button provides options for restricting Web browsing. You can choose to block online shopping, video or image searches, movie playing, etc. You also can choose to "Close windows instead of 'Swap URL,'" an option I strongly recommend (see below). Radio buttons let you choose Standard or Strict filtering. The difference between them is not explained. The buttons to Show or Hide KidsSafe toggle the visibility of the KidsSafe extension. The idea is that hiding the extension makes it harder for children to remove or disable it. Other options (viewable by clicking the small blue triangle in the lower left part

of the window) let you block movie playing, disable movie players, and disable the Web browser after a selected number (0 to 200) of "bad" sites have been blocked by Kids GoGoGo.

Options window for Kids GoGoGo.

The last icon button toggles between pictures of a pen and a document. When the pen icon is visible, you can use the Add URL and Exclude URL buttons. These let you add Web sites you deem appropriate and exclude sites you deem inappropriate, regardless of what the Kids GoGoGo database indicates. When the document icon is visible, you can use the Add File and Exclude File buttons. This lets you add entire text files containing URLs to the include or exclude databases. The text files must use lower case letters in the URLs. Each URL must be on its own line.

The Log file button shows the last options. Logging is not required. If desired, you can choose to log all Web sites visited or only blocked sites. Other menus let you select the contents of each log entry (page title, URL, or both), the language of the log entry, and the browser preference. You can choose to have Kids GoGoGo display an icon when it is recording Web sites.

You can review current settings by clicking the Info icon (yellow circle around exclamation point). The resultant window summarizes the settings and status of Kids GoGoGo.

Testing Web Surfing Under Kids GoGoGo

Kids GoGoGo runs in the background. It has two modes: "Kids sites only" or "Stop harmful sites." I did not spend much time assessing the "Kids sites only" feature, since it is easy to restrict access to a predefined list of sites. Instead, I wanted to see how well KidsGoGoGo discriminated among sites.

I clicked the Update DB button to get the most recent listing of totally blocked Web sites. I set Kids GoGoGo to standard filtering and I did not block any regions or countries. I conducted a series of tests with Internet Explorer. I entered the URL for what would certainly be a blocked site: www.hardcoresex.com. The browser window for that site appeared with child-inappropriate graphics. However, the window was quickly overlaid with a new window for a Google search (the default choice). If I tried to close the Google window, it would reappear. However, I could resize it and move it to view the www.hardcoresex.com window beneath. I also could minimize the blocking window. Oops.
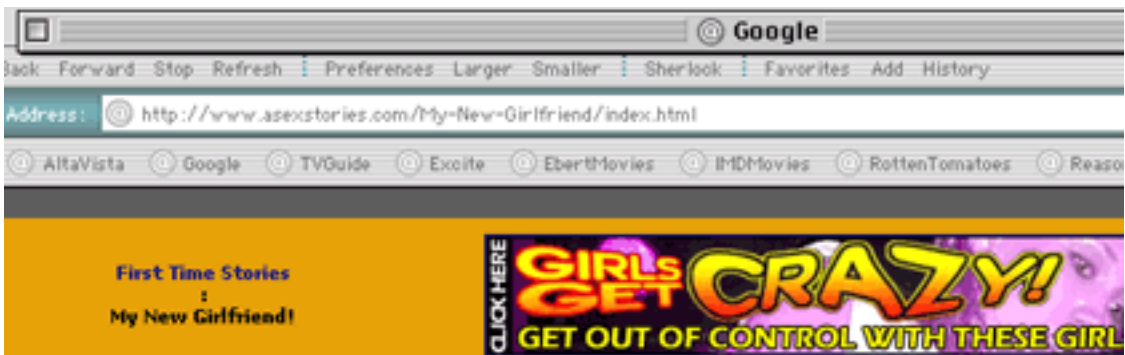
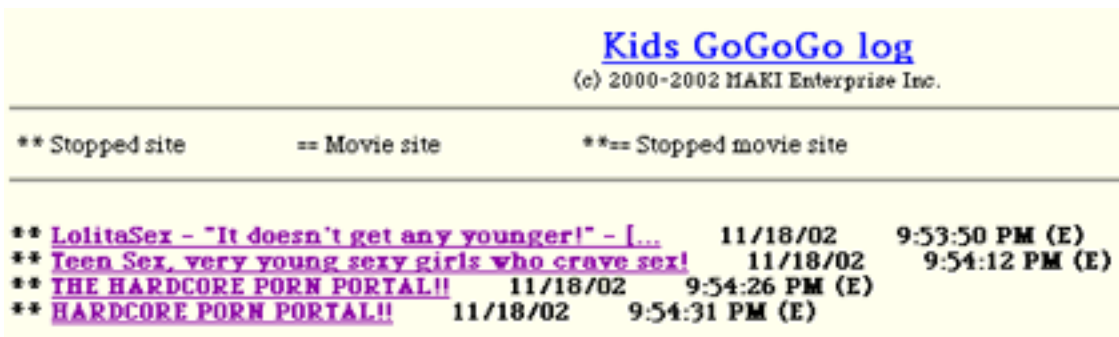Blocking window can be minimized, revealing everything underneath.

I went back to Kids GoGoGo and checked the option "Close windows instead of 'Swap URL.'" When I repeated the above tests, the www.hardcoresex.com window appeared for an instant but was immediately replaced by a blank Google search window. However, I did find a way to continue to view the offending screen: as soon as the page loaded, I selected a menu item from Internet Explorer. As long as any menu was pulled down, Kids GoGoGo could not switch the page back to Google. Also, if I was very speedy, I could click on a button or a highlighted URL on the offending page. The new Web page would load and I could use the same menu-selecting trick to view it.

I performed an experiment regarding profanity. I did a Google search for "profanity dictionary." The list of hits (over 10,000) was not blocked by Kids GoGoGo. I clicked on the link for "Roger's Profanisaurus" and was able to view the Web site and its definition pages. I reset KidsGoGoGo for strict filtering, but I was still able to reach the site. Tests on other profanity-related links showed that Kids GoGoGo blocked most sites that discussed or used profanity.

My next concern was whether Kids GoGoGo would block Web sites that provide useful information. I returned filtering to standard instead of strict. I entered the search term "breast cancer support group" into Google. Kids GoGoGo, using standard filtering (not strict) blocked the page listing the results. Review of the search results with Kids GoGoGo deactivated showed that most hits were for legitimate sites offering support and information on breast cancer. I tried an AltaVista search using the phrase "avoid* sexual* transmi* disease*" (asterisk is a wild card character). Kids GoGoGo blocked the completed search page, even though the listed sites were providing health information. It also blocked truly legitimate pages related to sexually transmitted diseases.

Attempting to Bypass Kids GoGoGo

Kids GoGoGo can keep a log of all Web sites visited or just blocked Web sites. The log is kept in the Preferences folder as a locked but visible document titled "Kids GoGoGo Log." Logging can occur even when Kids GoGoGo is not filtering Web sites.

Web browser view of Kids GoGoGo log file.

I opened the locked document with BBEdit and attempted to delete "bad" sites from the list. BBEdit noted that the document was locked and asked if I wished to unlock it. I clicked "Yes" and saved the edited log. I then locked the edited log, which worked perfectly. Thus, any computer-savvy child can sanitize the log file after browsing the Web. If you have such a kid, the most effective way to use the log function would be to hide the fact that Kids GoGoGo was installed and make certain that the log recording icon is not active. Kids GoGoGo can also save log files as an HTML page stored at any location. The saved log file isn't locked, and it can be edited.

Kids GoGoGo can not work correctly without the KidsSafe extension. Restarting with that extension disabled allows unrestricted surfing, chat, etc. Starting the computer from a drive or a CD that does not have Kids GoGoGo installed also allows unrestricted Internet access (assuming that the OS on the other drive or CD has the appropriate software for Internet access).

Kids GoGoGo's password window does not restrict the number of password attempts. Hundreds of guesses can be entered without any tracking, logging, or lock-outs. Users need to choose a password that can not be easily guessed.

Parents of a computer-savvy child can still use Kids GoGoGo to silently monitor Internet usage. To do this, I recommend moving the Kids GoGoGo application out of the Apple Menu Items folder and putting it into the Kids GoGoGo folder. That folder should be tucked away or even made invisible. Kids GoGoGo should be set up to create a complete log of all sites accessed without displaying a "recording" icon. This setup will not prevent access to inappropriate sites, but it will allow retrospective review of the Web sites that were visited.

Problems and Bugs

None found in the OS 9.x version of Kids GoGoGo.

Documentation

The Kids GoGoGo manual consists of 600K of files accessed via an HTML table of contents page. The manual is divided into chapters and subchapters. It does not contain an index. The manual makes good use of screen captures and examples. It answers most basic questions on setting up and using Kids GoGoGo.

Technical Support

The manual has a section on troubleshooting. You can access the Kids GoGoGo Browser menu and choose Trouble Shooting to go to the Kids GoGoGo technical support Web page. This page has very little information, though it does include a link to instructions for uninstalling Kids GoGoGo. There is no technical support–specific telephone number or e-mail address.

Alternatives

ContentBarrier from Intego is available for OS 8 and 9. I will review this application next month.

Summary

Kids GoGoGo is a good choice for protecting children from inadvertently encountering inappropriate Internet content. It also can work well in a semi-controlled environment (such as in a supervised computer lab. However, Kids GoGoGo's protections can be thwarted by computer-savvy children.
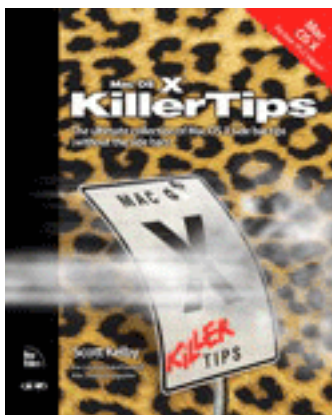
Review: Mac OS X Killer Tips (book)

by Kirk McElhearn, kmcelhearn@atpm.com

Developer: New Riders/Scott Kelby
Price: $29.99

As we all know, Mac OS X is a radical departure for Mac users who have become familiar, over the years, with Apple's older versions of its operating system. Notwithstanding the Unix underpinnings of the new OS (which are not apparent to those users who don't want to see them), the Aqua interface, the new structure of the OS, and the many changes to familiar features and applications, put all Mac users back to square one.

Many books have been written about Mac OS X, from thick compendia to slim introductions, covering the full range of user needs and skill levels, mostly providing a complete roadmap to using the OS. But this new book, *Mac OS X Killer Tips*, by Scott Kelby, is a departure from the standard fare: it is a collection of tips, hints, and shortcuts to help users already familiar with OS X go further.

When I first got a copy of this book and started flipping through it, I was immediately attracted by its colorful layout, full of Aqua screen shots, on glossy paper. This is quite different from most computer books, which are in black and white, and have much more

text than graphics. But the very nature of this series (Killer Tips) lends itself to this type of presentation. With one or two tips per page, each illustrated by one or more screen shots, this book is more visual than most others.

Most books tell you, on the back cover, which level of users they address. But this book does not come out and say what level it is for. Its "fun, cool, timesaving tips" will interest readers at all levels, though I must confess I was hard-pressed to find more than a handful that I don't already know. In fact, reading this book, it seems that many of the "tips" are merely explanations of how to do the basics. But for users who have not bought any other books on Mac OS X, there is plenty of useful information.

The book's 13 chapters, and more than 400 tips, cover such things as windows; icons; working in Classic, iTunes, and the other iApps; and there is a brief chapter on troubleshooting. A totally useless (yet fun) chapter presents some pranks to play on Mac OS X users, and a couple of chapters contain tips on stopping annoying things or working faster. The tips range from some pretty basic stuff (locking files, selecting multiple icons, changing preferences) to some more arcane things (getting the most out of the Dock, optimizing iTunes, and some basic troubleshooting tips).

So who is this book for? Well, if you already consider yourself a Mac OS X power user, this book isn't for you. But it might be right for that spouse or parent who uses a Mac, and who adamantly refuses to read a "real" book. Intermediate users will get a lot out of it, and its non-threatening layout will be a boon to beginners.

But these tips don't come cheap—at $30 (list price), this costs the same as a complete book, such as Mac OS X: The Missing Manual, by David Pogue, which tells you (almost) everything you ever need to know about Mac OS X. But we all know many people who won't read books like that; for them, *Mac OS X Killer Tips* could be exactly what they need to become familiar with Mac OS X.

Review: Ponere 1.0.1

by Gregory Tetrault, gtetrault@atpm.com

Developer: Degana
Price: $18.95
Requirements: Mac OS 8.6 with CarbonLib 1.1 or Mac OS X 10.1,
    14 MB application RAM, thousands of colors.
Trial: Feature-limited (only first few levels)

Overview

Ponere is a two-dimensional puzzle game with sliding pieces. Scrambled figures must be reconstructed by manipulating tiles with directional arrows at the boundaries of the puzzle field. Ponere consists of 60 progressively more difficult levels.

Installation

You install the downloaded version by dragging the Ponere folder to a hard drive location. Double-click the application icon, and you are ready to play. The easiest method for registering Ponere is to go to the e-mail receipt containing the code, copy the entire e-mail onto the clipboard, launch Ponere, and choose "Enter Code" from the Degana menu.

Game Play

The main screen has three buttons: New Game, Tutorial, and Quit. Ponere's tutorial uses two informational screens to show how the game is played. Scrambled tiles need to be repositioned to form either the original shapes (simple levels) or a number of closed loops (advanced levels). The arrow keys along the borders of the playing regions move all the tiles in a row or column in the direction of the arrow. Tiles will wrap around when they reach the edge of a playing region. Once you have recreated a required shape or a closed loop, clicking on it removes it from the board when playing at the Basic level. In the Advanced and Wizard levels, clicking a closed loop shape removes the loop while leaving the tiles intact and in place. Pressing the spacebar eliminates all completed loops. To

complete the more advanced levels, you need to create a series of closed loops that use all the tiles. A single puzzle can have shapes created from different colored tiles. The colored tiles cannot be mixed.
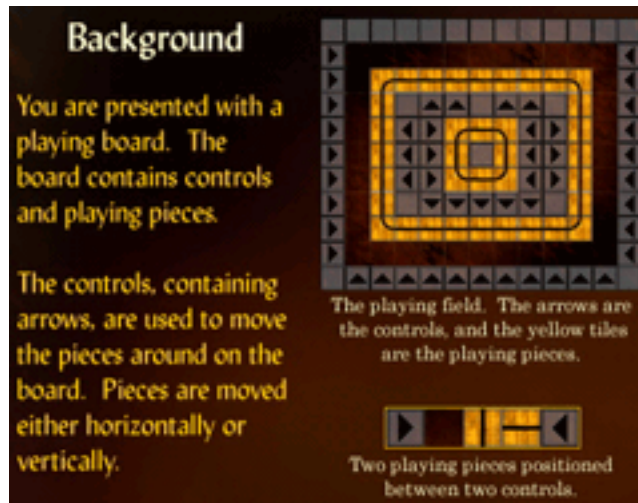
Information from Ponere's Tutorial

When you first click on New Game, Ponere asks you to input your name. Ponere can be played by many different users, and the game keeps track of each user's scores. The New Game window has buttons across the top to select the difficulty (Basic, Advanced, or Wizard). Each difficulty has twenty game levels. Clicking on a puzzle picture shows your statistics for the level: number of attempts, number of completions, and best score.

Ponere also displays the top player and top score for each level. To play the selected level, click the Play button. The Switch User button allows you to choose or create a different user. The Main Menu button returns you to the main screen.
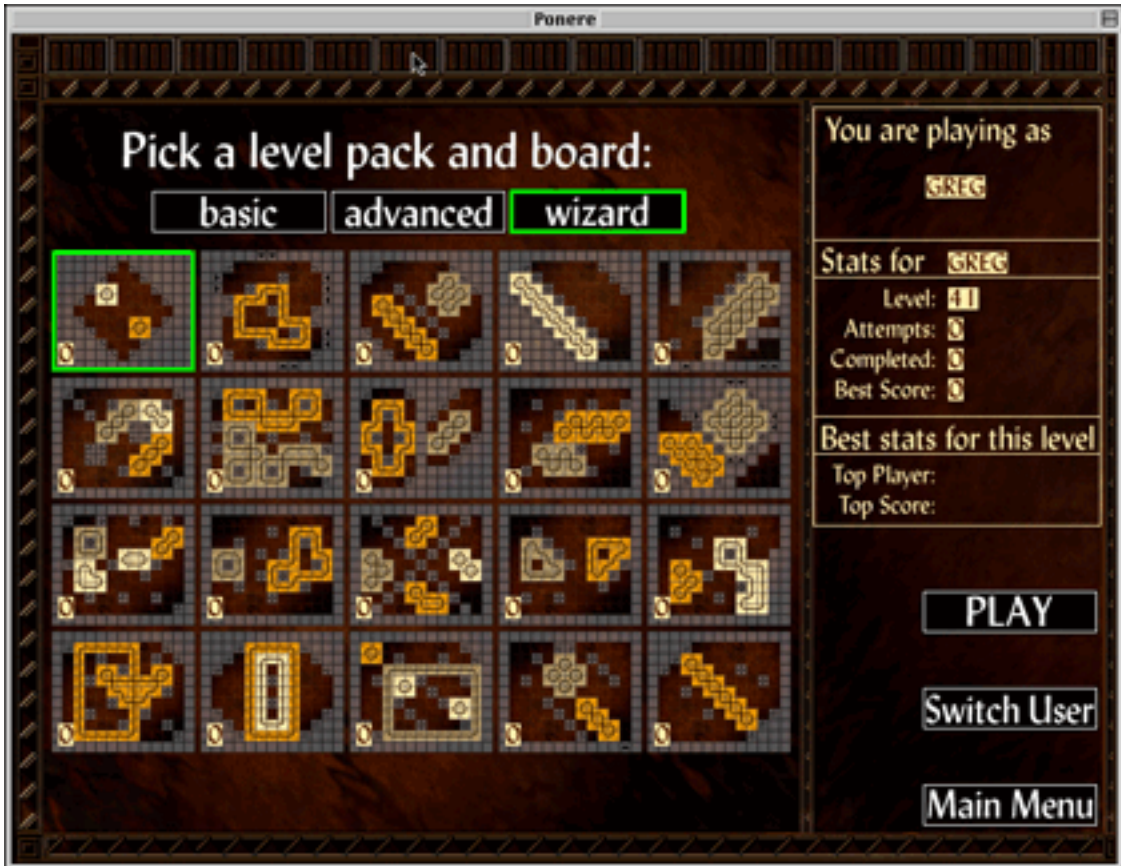
New Game Window

The playing window shows the level, score, bonus points, and other statistics to the right of the tiles. A small graphic of the original shape is shown below the statistics. The Restart button resets the current level. The Quit button quits the level, not the game. It sends you back to the New Game window. To quit Ponere, choose Quit from the File menu (or type Command-Q).

Ponere game screen with scrambled tiles.

The game has only a few settings, sensibly found under the Settings menu. Game sounds can be toggled off and on. Background music (keyboard-based light jazz pieces) also can be toggled off and on. Note that Ponere's background music stops automatically if another application is brought to the foreground. Selecting Full Screen centers Ponere over a black background. Otherwise, Ponere plays in a moveable, collapsible window. The

"Use 16 bit color" setting toggles the main monitor of the Macintosh between millions of colors and thousands of colors. Switching to thousands of colors may improve game response when playing Ponere on an older Macintosh.

Instructions and Help

Ponere comes with a short Read Me file and the tutorial. These adequately describe system requirements and game play. A section describing the scoring algorithm and playing strategies would be useful.

Bugs

None found.

Summary

Ponere is a remarkable improvement over the standard square picture grid puzzle. Ponere looks nice, plays smoothly, and presents enough levels to provide hours of challenging play to even the best logicians.

FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions

What Is ATPM?

About This Particular Macintosh (ATPM) is, among other things, a monthly Internet magazine or "e-zine." ATPM was created to celebrate the personal computing experience. For us this means the most personal of all personal computers—the Apple Macintosh. About This Particular Macintosh is intended to be about your Macintosh, our Macintoshes, and the creative, personal ideas and experiences of everyone who uses a Mac. We hope that we will continue to be faithful to our mission.

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- You can quickly navigate between articles using the bookmarks pane at the left of the main viewing window.
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- Try turning Font Smoothing on and off in Acrobat Reader's preferences to see which setting you prefer.
- All blue-underlined links are clickable.
- You can hold down option while hovering over a link to see where it will lead.
- For best results, turn off Acrobat's "Fit to Page" option before printing.

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What If I Get Errors Decoding ATPM?

ATPM and MacFixIt readers have reported problems decoding MacBinary files using early versions of StuffIt Expander 5.x. If you encounter problems decoding ATPM, we recommend upgrading to StuffIt Expander 5.1.4 or later.

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how it may help them in their work, and how enthusiastic they are about recommending it to others. If you have a new piece of hardware or software that you'd like to review, contact our reviews editor at reviews@atpm.com for more information.

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What If My Question Isn't Answered Above?

We hope by now that you've found what you're looking for (We can't imagine there's something else about ATPM that you'd like to know.). But just in case you've read this far (We appreciate your tenacity.) and still haven't found that little piece of information about ATPM that you came here to find, please feel free to e-mail us at (You guessed it.) editor@atpm.com.