

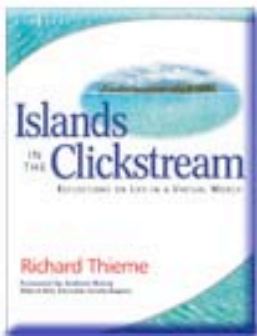


macCompanion

Your Guide To All Things Macintosh

September 2004 Issue 9 Volume 2

Book Reviews



Features



Fun 'N Games Reviews



Hardware Reviews



Software Reviews



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And our special thanks to those who have allowed us to review their products!

Letter from the CEO

Who's Where? By Robert Pritchett

Based on the original Abbott & Costello *Who's On First* comedy routine (<http://www.baseball-almanac.com/humor4.shtml>), we have the following computer-based exchanges that were created for the WinTel crowd years ago. And you wonder why folks may still get confused when it comes to buying a computer at a computer store?

Bud Abbott and Lou Costello at the Computer Store

(<http://xynext.com/Abbot-Costello-Whos-on-First-Computer-Joke/>)

Abbot: Super Duper computer store. Can I help you?

Costello: Thanks. I'm setting up an office in my den and I'm thinking about buying a computer.

Abbot: Mac?

Costello: No, the name's Lou.

Abbot: Your computer?

Costello: I don't own a computer. I want to buy one.

Abbot: Mac? [See, he was asking the right question but the seller wasn't getting any commissions on the sale, so...]

Costello: I told you, my name's Lou.

Abbot: What about Windows? [The seller gets a crazy high commission...]

Costello: Why? Will it get stuffy in here?

Abbot: Do you want a computer with Windows?

Costello: I don't know. What will I see when I look in the windows?

Abbot: Wallpaper.

Costello: Never mind the windows. I need a computer and software.

Abbot: Software for Windows?

Costello: No. On the computer! I need something I can use to write proposals, track expenses and run my business. What have you got?

Abbot: Office.

Costello: Yeah, for my office. Can you recommend anything?

Abbot: I just did. [Too bad. Wrong system for Costello. He really needed a Mac.]

Costello: You just did what?

Abbot: Recommend something. [And so it goes from bad to worse.]

Costello: You recommended something?

Abbot: Yes.

Costello: For my office?

Abbot: Yes.

Costello: OK, what did you recommend for my office?

Abbot: Office.

Costello: Yes, for my office!

Abbot: I recommend Office with Windows.

Costello: I already have an office with windows! OK, lets just say I'm sitting at my computer and I want to type a proposal. What do I need?

Abbot: Word.

Costello: What word?

Abbot: Word in Office.

Costello: The only word in office is office.

Abbot: The Word in Office for Windows.

Costello: Which word in office for windows?

Abbot: The Word you get when you click the blue "W".

Costello: I'm going to click your blue "w" if you don't start with some straight answers. OK, forget that. Can I watch movies on the Internet?

Abbot: Yes, you want Real One.

Costello: Maybe a real one, maybe a cartoon. What I watch is none of your business. Just tell me what I need!

Abbot: Real One.

Costello: If it's a long movie I also want to see reel 2, 3 & 4. Can I watch them?

Abbot: Of course.

Costello: Great! With what?

Abbot: Real One.

Costello: OK, I'm at my computer and I want to watch a movie. What do I do?

Abbot: You click the blue "1".

Costello: I click the blue one what?

Abbot: The blue "1".

Costello: Is that different from the blue w?

Abbot: The blue "1" is Real One and the blue "W" is Word.

Costello: What word?

Abbot: The Word in Office for Windows.

Costello: But there are three words in "office for windows"!

Abbot: No, just one. But it's the most popular Word in the world.

Costello: It is?

Abbot: Yes, but to be fair, there aren't many other Words left. It pretty much wiped out all the other Words out there.

Costello: And that word is real one?

Abbot: Real One has nothing to do with Word. Real One isn't even part of Office.

Costello: STOP! Don't start that again. What about financial bookkeeping? You have anything I can track my money with?

Abbot: Money.

Costello: That's right. What do you have?

Abbot: Money.

Costello: I need money to track my money?

Abbot: It comes bundled with your computer.

Costello: What's bundled with my computer?

Abbot: Money.

Costello: Money comes with my computer?

Abbot: Yes. No extra charge.

Costello: I get a bundle of money with my computer? How much?

Abbot: One copy.

Costello: Isn't it illegal to copy money?

Abbot: Microsoft gave us a license to copy money.

Costello: They can give you a license to copy money?

Abbot: Why not? THEY OWN IT!

Abbot: Super Duper computer store. Can I help you?

Costello: How do I turn my computer off?

Abbot: Click on "START".

Lou Costello requests computer literacy training from Bud Abbot

(<http://aumha.org/a/budnlou.php>)

See, if he'd had a Mac, he would have been up-and-running in 5 minutes. But no, the comedy continues. I wish it were funny. No it is really a tragedy and not comedy, isn't it? Now you see the wisdom of Apple Computer Stores beginning to dot the land....

Costello: I got myself a fancy new computer with Win98. [Okay, so it's an old OS, but it suffers less from Trojans, Worms and Virii than the later OSs from Microsoft!]

Abbot: That's terrific, Lou.

Costello: But I don't know what any of it means!!

Abbot: You will in time.

Costello: That's exactly why I am here to see you.

Abbot: Oh?

Costello: I heard that you are a real computer expert.

Abbot: Well, I don't know— [True, he really doesn't know. Costello should have gone to an Apple Store instead after that remark. Too late! Oh the tragedy of it all...]

Costello: Yes-sir-ee. You know your stuff. And you're going to train me.

Abbot: Really?
Costello: Uh-huh. And I am here for my first lesson.
Abbot: OK, Lou. What do you want to know?
Costello: I am having no problem turning it on, but I heard that you should be very careful how you turn it off.
Abbot: That's true.
Costello: So, here I am working on my new computer and I want to turn it off. What do I do?
Abbot: Well, first you press the Start button, and then—
Costello: No, I told you, I want to turn it off.
Abbot: I know, you press the Start button—
Costello: Wait a second. I want to turn it off. Off. I know how to start it. So tell me what to do.
Abbot: I did.
Costello: When?
Abbot: When I told you to press the Start button.
Costello: Why should I press the Start button?
Abbot: To shut off the computer.
Costello: I press Start to stop.
Abbot: Well Start doesn't actually stop the computer.
Costello: I knew it! So what do I press.
Abbot: Start
Costello: Start what?
Abbot: Start button.
Costello: Start button to do what?
Abbot: Shut down.
Costello: You don't have to get rude!
Abbot: No, no, no! That's not what I meant.
Costello: Then say what you mean.
Abbot: To shut down the computer, press—
Costello: Don't say, "Start!"
Abbot: Then what do you want me to say?
Costello: Look, if I want to turn off the computer, I am willing to press the Stop button, the End button, even the Cease and Desist button, but no one in their right mind presses the Start to Stop.
Abbot: But that's what you do.
Costello: And you probably Go at Stop signs, and Stop at green lights.
Abbot: Don't be ridiculous.
Costello: I am being ridiculous? Well. I think it's about time we started this conversation.
Abbot: What are you talking about?
Costello: I am starting this conversation right now. Good-bye.

My personal connection with Microsoft's XP Pro™ has to do with the security upgrades that disable Email mass-mailings with Outlook™, because it assumes you are SPAMming if you send out more than 3 of the same Emails at a time now. And this is before Service Pack 2 for XP Pro was released!

Originally the 3-fingered salute (Control-Alt-Delete) was the way to escape from the dreaded and common "Blue Screen of Death". Now it is the start-up process for logging in to XP Pro. How's that for humor?

Now to give balance to this so as to not look too biased (even though I still have my supposedly now-defunct per-MS NT MCSE certification), here is the closest I could find for similar "Who's on First" for Mac® OS X™.

Shannon Spires 20-Sep-2000

<http://db.tidbits.com/getbits.acgi?tlkmsg=8262>

“Personally, I think all this Roman numeral stuff will go away as soon as an X windows system becomes available for Mac OS X. All those exes will just become too confusing:

I just put X11 on OS X.

You mean ten?

That's what I said: X.

So you put X windows on OS X?

Right.

Did you install a client or a server?

A client, of course. So I can see its applications run from other machines.

So you installed a server, then.

No this is X windows. The client is called the 'server' and the server is called the 'client'.

But that's stupid.

Makes perfect sense to me.

I see, so you installed an X11 client on OS X, which effectively gives you an X server on X.

Now you've got it.

Who thought up all these crazy naming schemes?

That's right.

What's right?

No, What was a fool. Who is the genius that thought up these names?

That's what I'm asking YOU.

And I just told you. The guy who named all this stuff is called 'Who'.

I think I get it now. Who named OS X, and X windows, and called 'clients' 'servers'.

Right!

How long has this guy Who been around?

Many years. He used to be a baseball player.”

Can you come up with any Mac OS X humor? It seems we have a dearth of jokes for the Mac OS because it is a serious piece of business software and not a joke, like competing software seems to be today. If you know of any, please let us know by posting them in our Forum at <http://www.maccompanion.com/forum/>.

Other classic computer-based humor can be found at

<http://www.real-world-solutions.org/calvin/joke/humor-5.txt>

See Adam Engst's article on his new eBook (\$5 USD) on *Take Control of Buying a Mac* at

<http://www.tidbits.com/tb-issues/TidBITS-743.html#lnk3>.

Letter from the Editor

Of Faux Pas and Facts by Robert Pritchett

First I must apologize to Bare Bones Software for rushing a few reviews to be published last month without first doing due diligence in the process and my own faux pas (social blunder). The web-based articles are more correct than the ones posted in the PDF version for the month of August. Naomi Pierce (a Public Relations person who is very, very close to Apple-happenings) took me to task for my mis-statements and we quickly corrected most of the information, based on her feedback. We also invited her to include her comments in our Forum, which she has graciously done. (I suppose we could do an errata page like we enjoy seeing at certain book publishers...) We also discussed this issue amongst our staff who like to take more time than I feel is necessary to do a review. We promise to be both more diligent and timely in getting our reviews in "print".

This month you will see a few more book, games, hardware, shareware and software reviews by our staff here at *macCompanion*. We are grateful for their efforts in getting their reviews in to us so we could get them published. I hope you feel they were worth the wait. I do!

As we go to press, there are going to be a lot of changes in the computer industry as competitors to Apple push back with their own offers as they all vie for consumer mindshare and beg for your hard-earned money during the Fall and Winter quarters of 2004.

Expect some commentary on other faux pas by industry both here and in our BLOG and Forum. Come on over to <http://maccompanion.com> and participate! With all that is both exciting and new, there were no "Dog Days" in August. We look forward to the Apple Expo in Paris France (<http://www.apple-expo.com/uk/>) and don't expect too many faux pas there as the new iMac® debuts and competitors continue to bring out iPod® imitations.

Oh, and continue to keep us honest as we strive for perfection by sending us your comments and commentary to feedback@maccompanion.com and in our Forum at <http://www.maccompanion.com/forum/>.

Guest Editorial

Every once in a while we share with you articles we have been given permission to republish. Here is one by Bill Davies, editor of *Interface*, the newsletter for the MacNexus Sacramento Macintosh User Group Interface <http://www.macnexus.org/>, June issue, page 8 of Views & Reviews.

How The Microsoft Monopoly Affects Jobs In Our Community By Bill Davies

April 2004. A realtor member of MacNexus recently called to ask me what options existed for continuing to use the Sacramento-area metrolist service. Apparently at least 200 local realtors use Macs for their livelihood, and the company that provides the service for the Sacramento Association of Realtors had made some "improvements" that were now preventing Mac users from using the service at all.

First, some background. Ten years ago the metrolist service was accessed using terminal emulation by dialing into a mainframe. Sure, it looked like DOS, but with MacEmulate for terminal emulation, anyone could use it. Then when the "internet craze" hit, eventually the metrolist service became web-based, and any participating realtor could access property listings via a web browser. And now, with the most recent "improvements" to the service, Mac users are locked out. How could this come to pass?

The answer can only be explained by giving readers a short blow-by-blow of the Microsoft antitrust litigation. If you can grasp the following premise, you'll understand this article:

The Device	The Operating System
A computer consists of untamed screws, bolts, RAM, ROM, disks, and processors	Microsoft proposes to tame the beast with Microsoft Windows
The internet consists of untamed wires, protocols, and packets	Microsoft proposes to tame the beast with Internet Explorer

You see, if you can grasp the above premise, you will understand why the Justice Department has completely missed the boat with regards to what Microsoft is up to. Because the Justice Department was concerned solely with what Microsoft was doing with Windows, and completely missed the fact that Microsoft was repeating the same conduct with Internet Explorer. So think of Windows as the monopoly operating system of the 1990's, and Internet Explorer as the monopoly operating system of the new millennium. So now let's look at a real-world example of how this monopoly power has been wielded.

Let's go back to our realtor story. How do we explain this to our realtor who can no longer access the multiple listing service? Let's review the chronology:

Microsoft has been ruled to be a monopolist - as we know from the federal court case. And the sanctions have been flaccid and misguided at best.

Despite that court ruling, Microsoft has continued to write development tools that generate "Microsoft friendly" code, to the exclusion of adhering to open coding + development standards. This is Microsoft's way of taking over the internet. They wanted to take over the desktop in the 1990's, and they did. Now they want to take over the internet. One area where this has occurred is with Microsoft Active Server pages (ASP), which the multiple listing service (Rapattoni) uses to display multiple listing data. Rapattoni bought into the Microsoft premise lock, stock, and barrel, and coded their system to use Active Server pages optimized for Microsoft's web server environment. As Microsoft adds features, Rapattoni modifies their code to use the new features.

In other words, if Microsoft thinks web forms or web data queries should work in a certain way, they write servers and coding tools that do it "their way." They then optimize Internet Explorer to work with their servers

and the code generated by people programming the web sites. Sounds like utopia, doesn't it, to have one company concerned with making sure that it all just works for both the back-end people and the end-users in their homes and businesses?

Now, if the internet were really "platform agnostic" and any user could use any browser, on any operating system, to query the data, this story would have a happy ending. But the story does not have a happy ending. Microsoft is doing everything in its power to make sure that the internet is not "platform agnostic." In fact, in Microsoft's view, as long as everyone on the receiving end uses Microsoft *Windows* products, everything works fine. Note the italicized word in the previous sentence. In the Microsoft view, everything on the Internet (that they have their fingers in) will work seamlessly *as long as you're using Internet Explorer*. But, *ahem*, the only way you can get a current version of Internet Explorer is if you own Windows.

Microsoft has huge legions of developers who use their tools and huge numbers of corporations who are afraid to do anything that isn't Microsoft. They have education, training, and certification programs. They have community colleges teaching twenty-somethings that the correct way to query a database is to use Active Server Pages and a Microsoft Web server. (And I don't doubt that it's easy to code the pages using GUI tools Microsoft provides for writing the pages and determining how they will behave.) So from cradle to grave, Microsoft has showered the earth with people who think that this is the only way to query a database on the Internet. This is the training that students have been given. Corporations have deployed this technology in droves because that's what the kids coming out of the colleges know how to write. Colleges have deployed this technology because they want their graduates to get jobs, and Microsoft gives them lots of resources to train kids in these technologies.

In Microsoft's view, they are "just running a business, and they're a fierce competitor." They have saturated all aspects of the industry with technology designed to advance "their way" of solving this problem. Here's where we see the monopoly market manipulation tactics kick in.

So as a Mac user, you say "OK, I have Internet Explorer, so why do I care? If they're doing what you say they're doing, I'll be able to access web content as long as I use Internet Explorer, which came with my Mac OS X software."

Here is where *that* argument falls apart:

In mid-2003, Microsoft announced that there will be no future development of Internet Explorer as a standalone product. Read that sentence again, please. In part this is a reaction to the Justice Department litigation and the whole deal about whether Internet Explorer was an add-on to Windows or an integral part of Windows. You probably remember the pained demos in the court case where they asked some expert what was involved with removing the Internet Explorer icon from the desktop and putting an AOL or Netscape icon there. Microsoft argued that it was impossible to do, and that Internet Explorer was so integral to Windows that the product would stop working if Internet Explorer were not present. The Justice Department presented some geek who showed the judge that Internet Explorer could be removed with 15 or 20 clicks, and that Windows would still keep working.

This made Microsoft red in the face. So to drive a stake into the heart of that issue, Microsoft stopped development of "Internet Explorer" as a standalone download. To obtain future versions of Internet Explorer, you'll need a *current version* of Microsoft Windows. To be able to use all the features of web sites coded with Microsoft Active Server pages, you'll need the current version of Microsoft Windows which will contain the current version of Internet Explorer.

Thusly, if you think that you're protected from this monopoly because you have Internet Explorer, you are wrong. You will NOT, in fact, be able to get future versions of Internet Explorer for Unix, Linux, or Macintosh. You will NOT be able to get future versions of Internet Explorer for Windows 95 or Windows 98. (And given

all the security flaws in both Windows and Internet Explorer, you can be sure Microsoft is not going to patch those holes *and* develop new versions of Internet Explorer for retired versions of Windows.) So Microsoft will keep adding features to their development environment and their Active Server technology, and web sites that keep pace with Microsoft by adding new bells and whistles will be able to serve fewer and fewer customers. However, to get those new features, you'll need a current version of Internet Explorer. Fancy that! In fact, the only customers those ASP web sites will be able to serve will be those with a current version of Internet Explorer, which, you guessed it, can only be obtained by having a current version of Microsoft Windows.

Therefore, as I see it, Active Server technology and the Microsoft monopoly is bad for business, and bad for the economy. Real people with real jobs (like our realtor member) are now feeling the pinch, and unable to access data that they should be able to access to do their jobs.

So you can see how badly Microsoft has sucked in its victims. They did all this marketing on their server technology and active server coding language, but customers lost freedom of choice in the end. By coding to Microsoft's standards, businesses that adopted the technology will now force customers to buy a current version of Windows (or a Windows computer) to make the pages load right. And the Justice Department appears completely oblivious to the fact that the internet is the next thing Microsoft is seeking to dominate, using its market manipulation and monopoly tactics. (In a way this reminds me of those court cases where the drug kingpin claims that he didn't sell heroin to little Johnny, because some intermediary is the one who delivered the heroin and took the money.)

Alternatives? Use PHP and MySQL, both of which are free. True geeks know how to use them and they work with any operating system. But that is a separate article.

Rants, Raves & Revelations

A Eudora Tidbit and an Unsolved MS Word X Glitch By Harry (doc) Babad Edited by Julie M. Willingham

Well, folks, it's been a strange month here in Richland, WA, with little for me to either rant or rave about. So, I'll keep this column short.

Two of my favorite pieces of software have decided to glitch on me, Eudora™ and MS Word™. Not "tear them out, purge them, do a clean install bad", just glitches. First, I'll share my Eudora glitch.

Eudora™ v. 6.1.1 (QUALCOMM Incorporated, <http://www.eudora.com/>) software decided that it would no longer allow me to add an address to my 'recipients list.' This is a way you can address messages in fewer keystrokes, and as your active contact list changes, you can easily change the recipient's list. I use this Eudora function to focus on active consulting business clients and the folks I most often Email.

After saving the entry for new address book items, all attempts to check the recipients list function resulted in the program crashing. Now, as many Eudora users among you know, clicking 'recipient list' (a check mark appears) allows you to select or deselect those most often used Email addresses in your address book. This allows you to make the checked items directly available as an easy to insert address list (Message > New Message to) rather than manually searching the Find function in the Eudora address book. After a long struggle dumping .plists and other obscure files, I was no closer to a solution and my active eLISTs were out of date. I guess my guardian agent was looking over me, since all of this trial and error deletion didn't completely crash and destroy any needed files. Through all of this, unchecking 'recipients list' in an address book window worked fine; the reverse, as I remarked above, bombed. If I'd not saved new entries, I'd have lost that newly entered data.

After a pained message to Eudora, Jim Ybarra, Supervisor of QIS Technical Services at Eudora Technical Support, became my white knight.

The solution to my problem—Jim suggested that I hold down the option key while opening Eudora's address book. This action, Jim explained, will re-index the address book and recipient list. Then, he said, try to add another nickname to the recipient list. It worked.

In my note to Eudora, I also commented on the fact that I like Eudora's features and have in the past recommended it as the Email client of choice to our readers and to my local Macintosh Users Group. I do so despite the fact that there are free clients, some of them receiving very high grades in reviews in MacAddict™ and MacWorld™. After testing the alternatives, I remain a devoted Eudora user and, at times, evangelist. In fact, I have, over the last three years, submitted detailed and justifiable suggestions for changes to Eudora that could make the interface friendlier for heavy users without requiring major programming changes. (Even Apple Computer has recently better picked up on customer feedback.) But no significant interface enhancements have yet appeared in Eudora. Jim suggested that I pass them on through him, and I've added them to this column. It is refreshing when larger providers make it easier for users to provide input that doesn't just become a statistic.

And to make Eudora easier for me to use...

- Easier Access to the Text Menu—Create a new top level Text menu item with keyboard shortcuts that remove that set of operations from the Edit menu and make it more easily accessible when editing or annotating received mail. It would also be great to be able to select more than one action when marking up an incoming message or reformatting a message before sending it.
- Saved Message Formats—"Save message as" an RTF rather than as a .txt file would make it easier to work with the file in MS Word when capturing a message for future use.

- Changing Message Font Sizes—Increase or decrease the font size by using a combination of > or < and option-shifting or control-shifting or by using (alt-shift key for PC users). Alternatively, use contextual menus (right-clicking on a three button mouse) to resize the font.
- Easier Whole Address Book Access—Add a way to view the contents of the entire address book, not just those on my recipient list. Alternatively, allow a way to either create a separate non-recipient list of addresses or a second tier recipient list. This could be accessed by control clicking on the "New Message To" under the Message menu or the "Insert Recipient" under the Edit menu. Many of us use the recipient list only for those with whom we frequently exchange mail, and by providing an alternative allowing us to view our entire list, we could 'fast track' to an unlisted person's Email address.
- An Alternate Whole Address Book Access—An alternative approach could be to allow access to the entire set of captured, not just recipient listed, names by individual book; e.g., Eudora Nickname, Nuclear Consulting Contacts, Books and Music, macCompanion, MUGs, and Mo MUGs.
- Temporarily Allowing Duplicate Addresses for Template Use—I find myself creating a range of specific mailing lists for the volunteer organizations I support. Inputting addresses one at a time is a drag. If I could quickly create a mailing list by temporarily duplicating existing lists and weeding out the unnecessary names, then I could get on with sending messages. In the present version of Eudora, I'm more likely as not forced to save my individually entered address book entries one at a time, a longer than needed process.
- Address Book Error Do-Loops—I use the "Last Name, First Name-Affiliation" format along with a < > bracketed Name@Domain.Domain type format in all my address books. If not, when I make a typo while creating either multiple entries (a group) in an address record or even a new single address entry, I get into a 4-6 cycle error message do-loop. My typo-based errors include omitting the opening or closing quotation marks on a person's name or omitting a beginning or closing bracket (< or >) in the address itself. The software is programmed to reject such errors—good! But then the software cycles me through a seemingly endless do-loop of cycling error messages—bad! The error messages alternate "Couldn't apply your changes to the previous address book entry" **and then** "An address is too long or otherwise malformed. Mail can not be sent with such addresses." After up to six repeats, if my Eudora address book panel doesn't freeze first, I can get back to finding and correcting the typo.

Based on my own limited programming experience, some of these changes would require extensive programming, but changing even a few would save heavy Eudora users much time and make using Eudora a more rewarding experience. Why not start with [1] Easier Access To the Text Menu, [2] Changing Message Font Sizes, and [3] providing RTF Saved Message Formats? *Hint, Hint!*

MS Word™ X "Bad Header-Bad Footer" — Now, once upon a time, in days of old, all I'd need to do to create a header or a footer was to either type in my information or select one of Words presets, say *page of page*, or *author, page, and date* from the pulldown menu. But after a crash or two (of Word, not my Finder), all I get when selecting *page of page* is gibberish. Indeed, none of the, I presume, macros found in the header-footer pane work—gibberish, all gibberish.

I've trashed.plist files and other obscure MS Word associated files in my Library Folder, but to no avail. Now there's a work around—but it sucks. To bypass this glitch, I found an old MS Word file that had the footnote formatted correctly, stripped out the body text, and now use it as a template, cutting and pasting it into my Word documents. So if any of you can provide a fix {<mailto:hbabad@maccompanion.com>}, you'd be most welcome.

PS

If any of you know how to get MS Word X, once again, when saving a new document, to automatically make the document name the first 29 to 33 characters of the first line of type, please let me know. Double typing the document name bugs me.

Views from the Ivory Tower

September 2004 By Ted Bado

If you follow Mac related happenings and news you might have caught what on the surface appears to be a not so good story concerning Mac® OS X™. What I am referring to is that it appears that Linux is becoming the second most popular computer operating system, moving Mac OS X out of the number 2 position. Even though I would prefer Mac OS X to be the number one computer operating system, the fact that Linux is moving up might be a good thing.

Think about it. There are millions of people out there that have used Windows-based PCs for a long while. Many of the true hardcore users, ones that often build their own boxes, and are capable and willing to get into their machine at the hardware level, have invested a lot of time and money in their machines. But they are also tired of Windows and Microsoft. I wouldn't expect that many of these people would dump their years of experience with the hardware of that platform and buy a Mac®. But they would consider dumping Windows®.

What we get from this is reduction in the number of machines that run Windows. I feel, that in the long term, this would be good for Apple. As the true geeks move away from Windows, they are less likely to blindly promote it to their less geeky contacts. Which increases the possibility that a person would look at Mac OS X. I believe that the more people who consider Mac OS X, the more that will actually purchase.

I could be wrong, but ultimately, I believe that this will lead to a larger percentage for Apple. We will have to wait and see if this happens.

For certified customers only - I recently read something on a weblog kept by a writer (Ed Foster) for *Infoworld*. A reader said that he was trying to get help on using Microsoft® Office™, by visiting the Microsoft web site. There are several machines in this person's office, and not all of them have copies of Office on them. He tries to access online help using a machine that doesn't have Office on it and the Microsoft web site tells him he can't access help for Office, because he doesn't have a copy of Office on his machine!

EGads! So if you happen to visit a library and decide to try to figure out a problem you are having with Office, you won't be able to. I can see them limiting call-up help for those people with serial numbers or who are willing to pay, but Internet self-help? Of course, if the demand for help is so high that Microsoft's servers are just too busy....

This is definitely not user friendly. There have been a number of times I researched a problem a friend was having with some application that I didn't personally own. I know I would have been pretty miffed if I had been told that I cannot get help on the program unless I bought it. As a consultant, my recommendation would have been to buy another application to do the work!

And it gets worse, Ed Foster reported that on the weblog that posted this information indicates that the person has heard of a situation where a computer that does have Office on it had a hard time accessing help! For whatever reason, the web site wouldn't let the customer in. When will people wake up and dump a company with policies like that?

To look at the entire log your self, visit <http://weblog.infoworld.com/foster/2004/07/27.html#a133>.

Steve Jobs gets Surgery - If you hadn't heard, Steve Jobs recently underwent surgery to remove a tumor which might have contained a rare form of pancreatic cancer. Apparently this cancer is not the same as the more common and very much more deadly type of pancreatic cancer. According to a message from Steve to Apple

employees, the operation was successful and he won't have to undergo any chemo or radiation therapy. Please join me in wishing him a speedy and lasting recovery.

I was pretty pleased to see how many Mac-related sites made the effort to Wish the Best for Steve. One site even set up a weblog where people could post their messages to Steve. The person organizing this site was going to send the messages to Steve on Saturday Aug 28th.

OOPS, we did it again - On the not so good for Apple category, you might have heard there are some problems with PowerBook G4 batteries. In mid-August Apple recalled some 28,000 batteries. The reason for the recall was that they could overheat and cause a fire! I remember a while ago owning one of the earlier hibachi Powerbooks! Luckily, mine never went critical, but I did get a new battery. The bad batteries, were made by LG Chem Ltd. (051910.KS) of South Korea.

To see if you have one of the "bad" batteries, visit the following URL: <https://depot.info.apple.com/batteryexchange/index.html>. According to this page, "Apple is voluntarily recalling certain lithium ion rechargeable batteries that were sold worldwide from January 2004 through August 2004 for use with 15-inch PowerBook G4 (Aluminum) notebook computers."

There's always another chip - eWeek reported that IBM is developing a new G5 chip. Apparently this new chip, called the 970MP will have a dual processor core and internal chip level integration to allow the two cores to work together. Essentially, this single chip can be used in place of a dual processor. Sound interesting. As I think about this, I wonder if some third-party company might figure out a way to use one of these new MP chips to replace the single processor in the earlier G5 machines.

While this isn't a major speed upgrade to the chip, it is an improvement, a small improvement, but an improvement never the less. To read the full article in its geeky detail visit: <http://www.eweek.com/article2/0,1759,1627893,00.asp>.

Apple gains back some in the education market - Business week online recently had an article that pointed out Apple has gained sales in the education market. The numbers are pretty impressive. While Apple holds less than 3% of the PC market share (as in sales of new machines), they had 11.9% share of the education market in the first quarter of 2004!

The major reasons for this increase is that more and more college students are taking laptops along to school, which means there has been an increase in laptop sales to the education market. During this time, Apple laptop sales have soared by over 58%!

The other major reason is, the obvious. Music. The iPod® is cool, the iTunes Music Store is very popular. Which means that owning a Macintosh is possibly becoming more and more fashionable! People want them not because they are better, but because they are just cool to own!

Buying Macs for a fashion reason is okay. When the iMac first hit the streets I was amazed that people were buying them because they were "cute". I took that as a good sign. Now perhaps the same thing is happening with the Laptop industry. I know I enjoy bringing my PowerBook to a coffee shop.

Finally another reason for owning a Mac at school is a geeky reason. It comes with Unix! You get a graphical interface for running many programs and all the UNIX underpinnings; Cool beans. You can be a UNIX geek, or even throw a copy of LINUX onto it.

Now let us hope that all these leaders of tomorrow stay in "love" with their college Macs and slowly but surely foster an interest and acceptance of them into the world they create! If you would like to read the entire article please visit the Business Week Online url:

http://www.businessweek.com/technology/content/aug2004/tc2004085_0709_tc153.htm.

Apple stock goes up- In the end of August, while the NASDAQ was not really performing very well, Apple's stock rose to the highest it reached in almost four years! This is good news, for shareholders! In an article posted on the Yahoo Finance web page, (the day before the release of the HP branded iPod), they reported: "So far this year, Apple stock has climbed 62 percent, compared with a 7.5 percent decline in the NASDAQ amid weakness technology shares." (See the full article by visiting: http://biz.yahoo.com/rc/040826/tech_apple_stocks_2.html.)

This is truly amazing, when one considers that Apple is having several problems right now. The new version of the iMac is delayed, the G5 chips have not reached the speeds they were supposed to and the chips aren't being manufactured fast enough to keep up with the demand. The release of the iPod mini was delayed, and again, more are in demand than can be made. Not to mention that Steve Jobs underwent cancer surgery! With all this going on, the stock value is going up, go figure. (Not that I am complaining, mind you, it is that it doesn't make much sense to me).

It is all about brand loyalty and the value that one puts in the brand. People are very excited about iPods and are, perhaps for the first time, beginning to see Apple as a viable manufacturer of electronics. If the iPods are this good, then perhaps Apple computers must be good! As a matter of fact, one person actually wrote about this on a web site.

On the <http://www.hardwaregeeks.com> site, their leader Michael, posted a review of the iPod. He is a self confessed Apple-hater. However, in the article, he takes an interesting viewpoint. He tells how he tried to find problems with the iPod and was truly surprised to discover that it performed as it was supposed to. He ends the very nicely done review of the iPod with a great line:

"If the iPod is any indication on the quality of products Apple has to offer then maybe they are worth the high price so many people criticize Apple about."

And so now, the interest of iPods might be bringing more people to consider buying Macintosh computers. I am sure this is one thing Steve considered might happen. If people really looked at the MacOS and not hid behind statements like "Few people use Macs" or "there isn't a lot of software" or whatever else, they would see that using a Mac is fun and intuitive. I really hope this guy buys a Mac and has an equally wonderful experience! Definitely read this article if you get a chance, it is worth the reading!
<http://www.hardwaregeeks.com/articles.php?action=show&showarticle=286>.

They hit Quick- I saw an interesting article in a trade newspaper called Government Computer News recently. They reported that a PC connected to the Internet without network protection will be infected by a worm within 20 minutes, on the average. Wow. This number varies depending upon the features provided by the Internet company they use. There are a lot of bad hackers out there.

Note that they said "PC". The article didn't mention Mac OS X, although I believe that a Mac is a lot less susceptible to such an attack. Most importantly because there are so few worms and viruses that work on Mac OS X. But also because of the inherent security built into the system. From what I can tell, Apple has put a lot of effort into closing holes and keeping ports shutdown by default. Apparently this isn't the case with Microsoft.

Well, another school year has started. Lots of new students at Duke will be enjoying the iPods that were provided to the incoming class. Many other students will be carrying around G4 PowerBooks® and iBooks®, and Apple will still only have less than 3% of the market. Oh well. I am content to enjoy my Macintosh. There are games enough and programs enough to keep me busy, even when you consider that I review software, so I am always looking at new products. I hope you have a pleasant September, see you next month. ;-)

Feature

ToonBoom Studio™ 2.5 Animation Solutions Reviewed by Robert Pritchett



ToonBoom Animation, Inc.

7, rue Laurier East

Montreal, Quebec,

Canada H2T 1E4

(514) 278-8666

Fax: (514) 278-2666

info@toonboom.com

<http://www.toonboom.com/main/>

Released: April 19, 2004

\$374 USD

<http://www.toonboom.com/buy/onlinestore/customer/home.php>

Forum: <http://www.toonboom.com/support/forums/toonBoomStudio/>

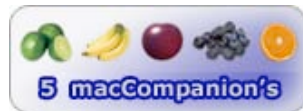
Requirements: Mac boxen; Power Mac G3 through G5; Mac OS X 10.3; 512 MB RAM 100 MB hard disk space; 24-bit color display, 64 MB video RAM, 1024x768 resolution; Wacom Tablet recommended.

Wintel boxen; Pentium III 800Mhz or higher processor; Microsoft Windows XP, 2000, 98 or ME; 256 MB RAM; 100 MB hard disk space; 24-bit color display, 8MB Video RAM (32MB Video RAM recommended), 1024x768 resolution; Wacom Tablet recommended.



For those professionals who like to make electronically generated animated cartoons.

Strengths: Great animation of cartoon graphics for web animation.



Weaknesses: None found. Okay, do I really need ActionScript capability on the Mac to play nice with ToonBoom Studio? TBSi does not import files created in Version 2.5, only in earlier versions.

Toon Boom Studio™ is a 2-dimensional cartoon animation application that provides drawing, lip-synch, 3D camera and scene planning tools for use with drawing tablet like the Wacom (elsewhere in this issue of macCompanion). This application has been the Mercedes® of tablet-based drawing software so far. It has been optimized for Macromedia® Flash™ and QuickTime® and also can be sent to the Web, used for video, runs with wireless networks. MacKiev (<http://www.mackiev.com/>) brought this package over from the Windows environment. A fair comparison would be with Macromedia® Flash™.

Interested in animation without putting too many resources into bandwidth? Now we who use Mac® OS X™ can!

Look at the other software in this issue that runs on a Wacom® tablet. Now take all those up a notch and you will have 3D animation creation at your fingertips.

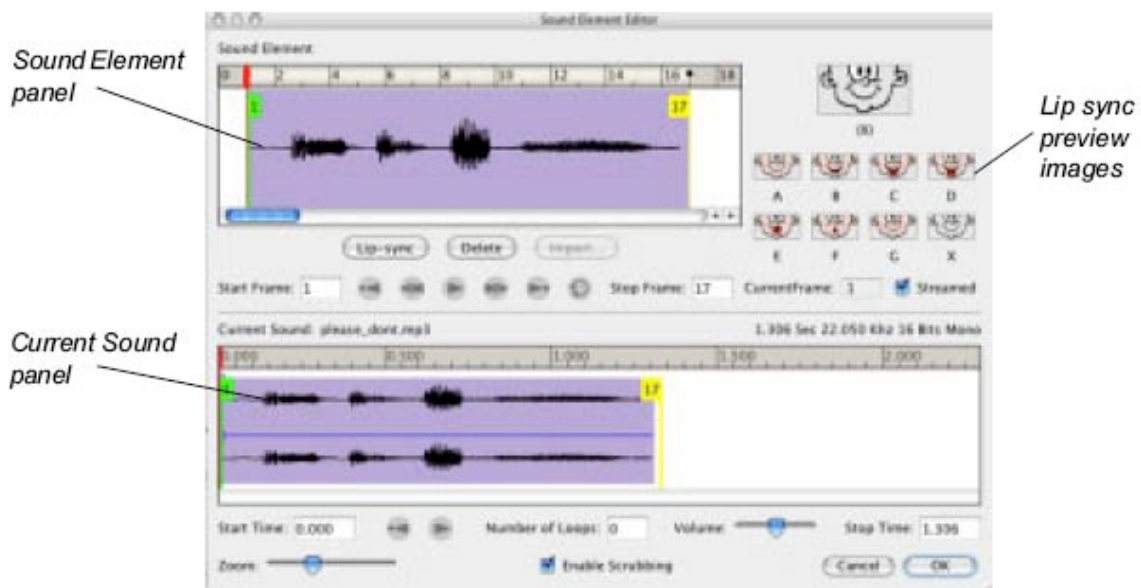
What sets ToonBoom Studio apart from the other tablet-based applications? It is designed to work with animation, include voice input that coordinates with lip-synching and other multimedia elements. It can import image files from Adobe® and Macromedia® applications and output to Macromedia Flash® and Apple's QuickTime®, AVI, Digital Video streaming or image sequencing.

Once drawings have had content optimized, they can be incorporated into ScenePlanning and pseudo-tweening for animation. With the camera view drawings can be viewed from embedded 3D technology. The workflow naturally goes from drawing and gathering media > adding soundtracks and lip-synching > inking and painting illustrations > changing and timing sequences > choreographing elements > then exporting so others can view the final effort.

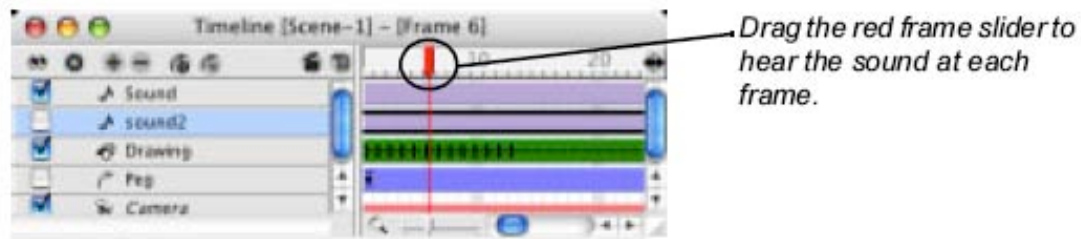
The well-written and well-illustrated 456-page User Guide is fantastic! Chapter 3 is the tutorial section and it steps us through 7 areas of ToonBoom Studio; Drawing, Painting, Lip-synching, Building a multi-plane scene, Creating cross-dissolves with color transform elements, Creating Clipping mask effects and retouching drawings in sceneplanning.

If you need help getting around, there is a 4-page Keyboard Shortcut Quick Reference Card available, or add your own. It includes both Drawing Mode and Sceneplanning Mode shortcuts.

The killer app has to be the lip-synch function that segues with the animation. ToonBoom Studio has intelligence to analyze the voice files, provide visual suggestions and give mouth positions.



After this, then the Timeline can be manipulated.



This application doesn't play nice with Macromedia's ActionScript™. If you use dual monitors, don't use ToonBoom Studio with them. There are issues that still need to be resolved.

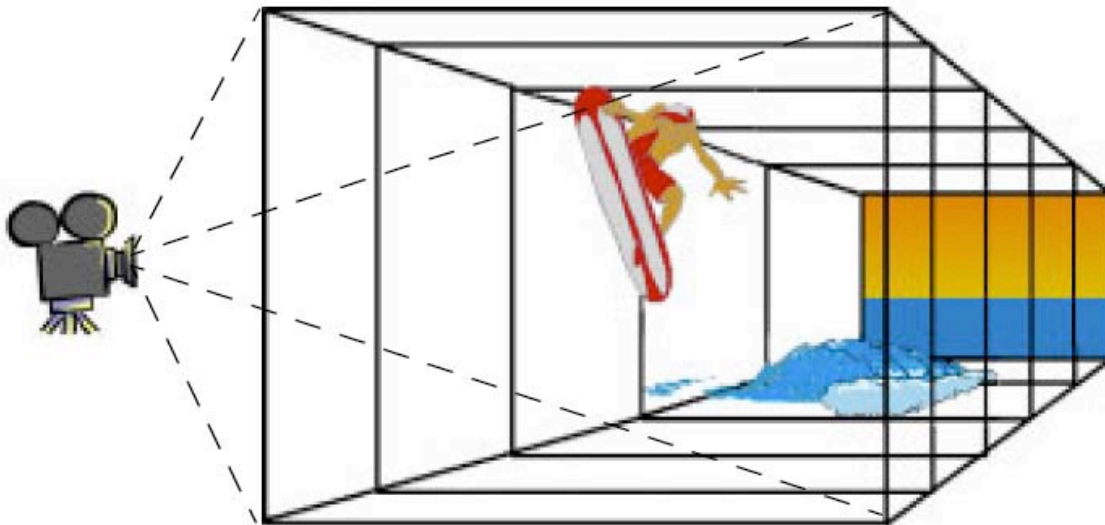
Whereas Alias® SketchBook™ Pro is paletteless, ToonBoom Studio uses dynamic palettes and requires a bit of a learning curve.

With the camera settings, the first camera is static (it can't be moved), while the 2nd one is dynamic. Once ready to export, send the DV stream file to be used with Apple's iMovie® to do further audio, effects, titles and transitions and mix in live action, then generate a QuickTime movie and everyone can then enjoy your work cross-platform. When exporting to QuickTime for PAL output, run frames at 25 per second with no compression, 768x576 resolution and color in the millions. For NTSC run at 30 frames per second, no compression, 720x540 resolution and millions of colors.

If you already have Macromedia® Flash™ MX installed, the TBSFlashPlugin and TBSPluginInterface.bundle (parts of TBSimporter or TBSi) can be added to Applications/Macromedia Flash MX/First Run/Importers. Do some more magic and TBSimporter is ready for use after restarting Flash MX.

TBSi is used to select and preserve elements, objects, sounds and scenes for import.

For 3D animation, element layers can be laid out in Sceneplanning mode in various front-to-back positions and the application auto-sizes multiplane effects accordingly. Then they can be seen from 3 perspectives; Top, Camera and Side.



Does ToonBoom Studio "require" a drawing tablet? No, drawings can be created freehand and scanned in then they can be bitmapped and vectorized.

If the application tends to crash, the latest video drivers may need to be installed.

There is a great online FAQ section for both Mac and Wintel boxen.

I'm giving ToonBoom Studio a rating of 5 because it is such a sweet piece of work. Using it in tandem with the Wacom® Intuos2® tablet is really a lot of fun. Especially for those who have developed the creative side of their minds.

Want to see some of this in action? Go to <http://www.macboy.com/cartoons/index.html>.

Books

BSD Hacks: 100 Industrial-Strength Tips & Tools Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Author: Dru Lavigne

<http://www.oreillynet.com/pub/au/73>

<http://www.onlamp.com/pub/ct/15>

O'Reilly Books

Sebastopol (Corporate Headquarters)

1005 Gravenstein Highway North

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1-707-827-7000 or 1-800-998-9938

Fax: 1-707-829-0104

<http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/bsdhks/>

<http://www.oreilly.com>

Released: May 2004

\$25 USD, \$37 CAN, £17.50 Net UK

Pages: 300

ISBN: 0596006799

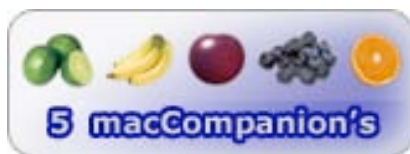
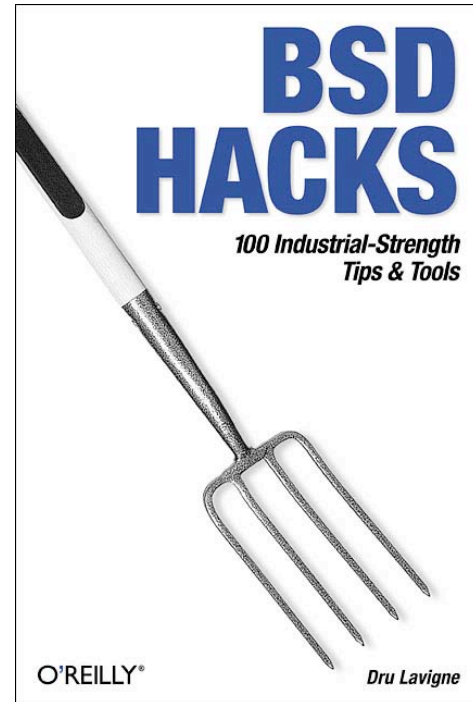
For administrators and power users wannabees of BSD systems.

<http://www.bsd.org/>

<http://www.serverwatch.com/tutorials/article.php/3393051>

<http://darwinports.opendarwin.org/>

<http://fink.sourceforge.net/>



Strengths: An exceptional member of the Hacks Series by O'Reilly.

Weaknesses: None found.

Are you interested in working with Berkley Software Design's (BSD) Operating System? Learn from Dru Lavigne's BSD Hacks: 100 Industrial-Strength Tips & Tools she has garnered over the years (over 20) from many sources.

Before you can even begin to enjoy these best-of-class BSD Hacks using this book with Mac® OS X™, you must have Apple's Developer Tools installed, then go to either DarwinPorts or the Fink Project (links are provided above). You just did that, right? I also included links to the BSD.org, a tutorial on what BSD is (and it includes a little barb on why Mac OS X isn't really included as a BSD variant).

Dru Lavigne does use a Mac® to do her work and Hack #88 shows how to "Easily Install Unix Applications on Mac OS X" where she shows us how to install DarwinPorts so we can enjoy many of the other 99 BSD jewels and gems hacks that have been so thoughtfully included in Dru Lavigne's light-hearted and easily understood manner.

Learn how you can do more with less as you explore ways you can improve performance even on a Mac. It helps if you are familiar with Unix® and know your way around Terminal.app and the Command Line.

There are 9 categories on customizing the workstation environment, handling files and file systems, boot and login environments, backing up, hacking networks, securing systems, digging deeper into how BSD can be used for automation and grokking (a thorough understanding).

Think of this as the Montessori-method (exploring, experimenting and having "ahah" moments) of learning BSD beyond the basics.

For example, did you know there were over 750 ports in the DarwinPorts tree? More added daily.

Dru Lavigne teaches with a touch of humor and it is clear she enjoys offering this discovery method of learning as much as she enjoys showing us what we can do to make any computer platform dance. If you use either Unix or Linux, the knowledge here is cross-platform.

Most topics are short, sweet and too the point and the book is full of links for us to dig deeper if we so desire.

There are some areas that could use some tweaking, but O'Reilly provides their Errata link on the book site for such discoveries. Heck, if you find one or two, then we know you read the book cover-to-cover. Get a copy so you can.

High Performance MySQL, First Edition Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Authors: Jeremy D. Zawodny, Derek J. Balling

<http://www.jeremy.zawodny.com/blog/>

<http://www.megacity.org/blog/> (caution – strong language)

<http://www.highperformancemysql.com>

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<http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/hpmysql/>

<http://www.oreilly.com>

Released: April 2004

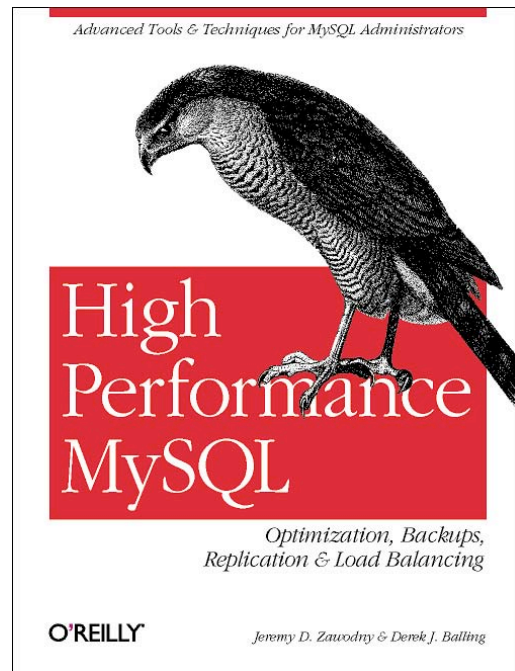
\$40 USD, \$58 CAN, £28.50 Net UK

Pages: 294

ISBN: 0596003064

For Medium to Advanced SQL administrators who know Unix, Linux, BSD variants and PERL.

<http://www.mysql.org/>



Strengths: How-to codebook on MySQL (Windows™ environments need to apply if High Performance is sought).

Weaknesses: None found.

High Performance My SQL by both Jeremy D. Zawodny and Derek J. Balling assumes you know MySQL, and works nicely under Mac® OS X™. The MySQL.org link provides a link for downloading for use under Mac OS X. High Performance My SQL is a How-To book based on personal system administrator experiences and collaborative efforts at Yahoo® and the MySQL community at large.

There are 10 chapters on quickly discussing the basics, then moving on to storage engines (multi-storage engines) and table types (benefits, tradeoffs, transaction isolation levels), benchmarking and indexing (B-TREEs, Hash tables, and clustered indexes), query (query optimizer and EXPLAIN) and server performance tuning, replication and load-balancing, high-availability, backup and recovery and security followed by 3 Appendices on the SHOW STATUS and SHOW INNODB STATUS commands, mytop and phpMyAdmin.

If you are interested in learning how to create or modify existing databases (table construction (MyISAM, InnoDB), joining, locking and indexing) and what processes makes accessing information more efficiently (SHOW VARIABLES, SHOW PROCESSLIST, benchmarking and overhead), you will find it here.

Watch how queries are handled and optimized. Learn how server performance, load-balancing and hardware are factors and what causes slowdowns and workarounds to physical limitations (might I suggest an Xserve platform?).

See how mysqldump and mysqlhotcopy are used for creating backups and how setting privileges are accomplished for security purposes along with data encryption and using CHROOT.

If you plan on rolling out a large MySQL environment, get this book so you can “fill in the blanks”.

There isn't much obfuscation here. MySQL continues to evolve and morph and I've discussed use at work but have not gone there yet due to limitations also briefly discussed by the authors.

I included the links to the author's own website as well as the MySQL.org site above so that we can attempt to stay current as this “free” database environment continues to catch fire. High Performance My SQL is a good companion book to Web database Applications with PHP and MySQL reviewed earlier.

Islands in the Clickstream: Reflections in a Virtual World Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Author: Richard Thieme

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

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

Syngress Publishing, Inc.

Released: June 2004

800 Hingham St.

Rockland, MA 02370

781-681-5151

\$30 USD, \$35 CAN, £21 Net UK, €21,90

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

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<http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/1931836221/index.html>

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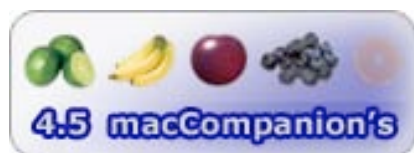
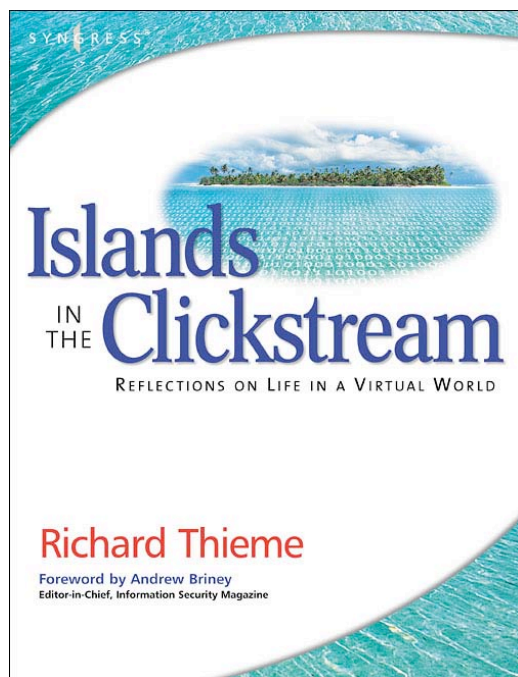
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Fax: 1-707-829-0104

<http://www.oreilly.com>

For those who want to "get cerebral" about high tech.



Strengths: Full of deep musings on technology and its affect on humanity. Puts memefication and panoptics into proper perspective.

Weaknesses: Tends toward being repetitious in a few places. Lots of typos.

Islands in the Clickstream by Richard Thieme is a grab-bag of the "best" of the Islands in the Clickstream 10-year online series shown above as a link below his name. You have to get all the way to Chapter 6 to find out what a clickstream is: "...a record of every transaction we make on the World Wide Web, that visible and notorious dimension of the Internet we access through a friendly graphical interface called a web browser."

Richard Thieme provides a sum of his parts as he muses on life and technology in his living in Chicago, Hawaii, Utah and back in the Midwest again as he seeks for eternal truths and attempts to make sense of humanity's relationship with technology. He is a Jew who speaks Christianity fluently with children that went to find spiritual moorings in other religions. He is a Zen Buddhist wannabee monk, inside an intellectually wizened former "organized religion" Episcopalian Priest. Expect some ramblings, but not too many vain repetitions that read like unforgettable technological Reader's Digest quips on such themes as fractalism

(<http://www.fractalism.com/fractal-art.htm>), paradoxicals (<http://www.paradoxicalcommandments.com/>) and

parallaxes (<http://www.wordiq.com/definition/Parallax>) in Alice-in-Wonderlandish, Blade-Runnesque, Jungian psychobabble techno-speak. Richard Thieme is best noted for his inspiring "think-different" Human Dimension of Technology "observation" talks. He brings "The Matrix" to life through his special brand of Internetualism.

Yes, he is a practitioner of “wu wei” (<http://www.hku.hk/philodep/ch/wuwei.htm>) and Taoism. He has his fingers on the cutting-edge hacker-elite. He “gets” the sea-surge communalization that the Internet brings to mankind. He helps us see the foibles and fantasies of humanity with new eyes as he explores faith (fear turned inside out) and belief (it defines parameters of possibilities) as life has become a computer game (where people are the system).

He defines (over and over again) hackers, and then adroitly defines crackers and hactivismo as he shows how egos airbrush self-portraits and lets us know how those that work at the nexus of context and content rule the world.

Richard Thieme discusses in techno-prose how ridicule is the first line of defense of “consensus reality”, and how disinformation in the virtual world is an art. He shows us how the Internet is sentient and aware, because it is fused bone-on-steel with its cyborg-riders and their sensory and cognitive extensions and how it is our Borgarian “hive-mind”.

He tends toward how humanity has to protect itself from Evil. Yes, he does believe in God, but shows that one without the other cannot exist – meaning that we cannot believe that evil exists if there is no God. It’s a yin-yang thing. It makes me wonder if he has ever read “The Book of Mormon” (<http://www.lds.org>), because of his own set of life-experiential beliefs he folds into his book. To me, he seems to constantly be seeking “the truth” and yet never really finding it. Apparently he has had some difficult, challenging experiences as a moral spiritual counselor and gave that up for a broader humanizing experience where money could be made by evangelizing technological communalism.

He sees (based on his constant visits to DefCon and other hacker conferences and events), that cyberspace is full of Potemkin villages (<http://dictionary.reference.com/wordoftheday/archive/2004/06/17.html>), and Panopticons (prison cells with glass doors arranged in a ring with a watchtower in the center). He knows that the intelligence services watch every computer transaction, cross-reference it and then is used for undisclosed purposes.

If you want to dip into the pool of cyber avant-gardianism, spend some time wrapping your mind around the virtual essays found in the 10 Chapters in this book.

Or you can get into his mind with regards to war, terrorism, torture and security issues. As he discusses each in turn, you feel empathy and begin to “feel” what he feels and “see” what he sees in his intellectual yearnings.

Turn your mind sideways and enjoy the tripsy insightful metaphors and see the memes (contagious ideas that replicated like viruses from mind to mind) as we too are transformed in our spiritual quests for meaning as we use the digital world for bad - or good.

Mac OS X Panther in a Nutshell: A Desktop Quick Reference 2nd Edition Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Authors: Chuck Toporek, Chris Stone, Jason McIntosh

O'Reilly Books

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1005 Gravenstein Highway North

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<http://www.oreilly.com>

Released: June, 2004

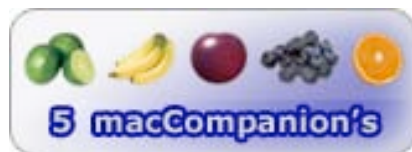
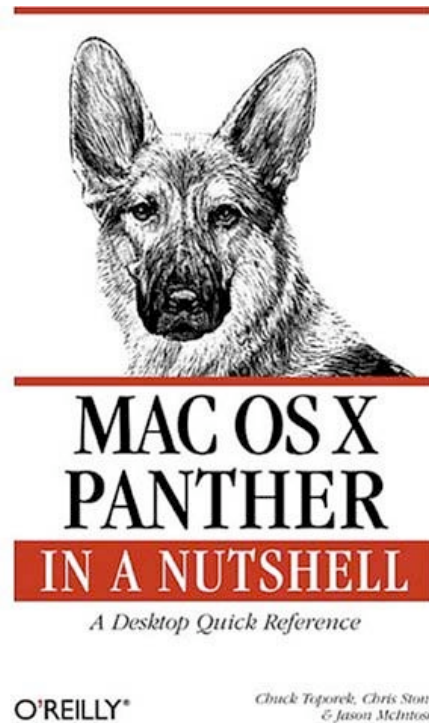
<http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/macpantherian/>

\$40 USD, \$58 CAN, £28.50 Net UK

Pages: 1054

ISBN: 0596006063

For Macintosh Power-users



Strengths: It's a 2nd edition with lots of meat added to the mix.

Weaknesses: None found.

The 2nd Edition of Mac OS X Panther in a Nutshell: A Desktop Quick reference by Chuck Toporek, Chris Stone and Jason McIntosh is much larger than the 1st Edition (see Previous review: <http://www.maccompanion.com/archives/july2003/books.html#14>)

This book has a lot of beefy meat in a much larger nutshell for Mac/Unix system administrators.

The largest section is the last chapter and could be a book all its own as a Unix Command Reference guide.

The two Appendices cover keyboard and References. (Maybe one day O'Reilly will also include *macCompanion* as a resource. Everybody else we have as *macCompanions* are located there!)

Before Tiger is officially released, this book will get us through all the advanced issues related to what Panther is and does. It is more complete than even Apple's man pages.

What's been added or updated to this thick tome? A Filesystem overview, Running Java® applications, System and Network Administration, Directory Services and NetInfo, Scripting on Mac OS X Panther, Using CVS (Concurrent Version System), Unix Command Reference, An overview of the Apple® X11 distribution

There is even a whole section on getting “Under the Hood” of BSD and a section on Xcode tools as well as a much smaller one on Mac OS X Security, which I really liked.

Go beyond “The Missing Manual ” series and get into the “Nutshell Series” of books for O’Reilly with this one on the definitive guide to all things Mac OS X Panther. I dare you to look behind the curtain. There is a lot of interesting information found within the now 1054 pages of this excellent book.

The Pragmatic Programmer: From Journeyman to Master Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Authors: David Thomas, Andrew Hunt

On-Line Interviews:

<http://www.pragmaticprogrammer.com/reviews.html>

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Distributed by Addison-Wesley

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

<http://www.awprofessional.com/title/020161622X>

Released: October 20, 1999

\$40 USD, \$61 CAN, £29 Net UK €45,49

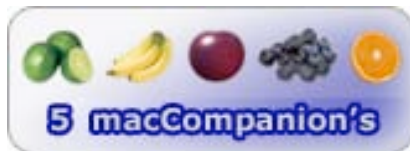
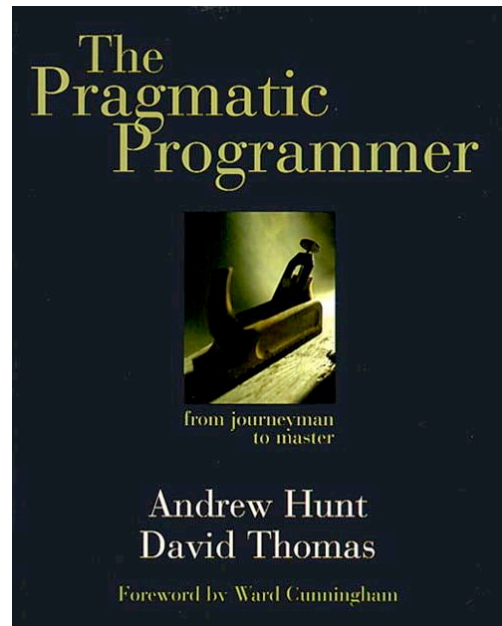
Pages: 352

ISBN: 020161622X

Errata:

<http://www.awprofessional.com/title/020161622X#>

For professional programmers who want to be pragmatic.



Strengths: Brings out the best in practical code culture. Discusses processes on how to develop code dynamically.

Weaknesses: None found.

The Pragmatic Programmer: From Journeyman to Master by David Thomas, Andrew Hunt is a conversational approach to coding concepts. The tone speaks just like one of the programmers I work with. And I can bet my CTO has read this book, because I hear his voice too. I understand he showed our programming team the Quick Reference Guide.

Think of this book as one of wisdom, liberally sprinkled with light humor that keeps us reading. One of its strengths is the tear-out 4-page Quick Reference Guide that summarizes the whole book.

This book has been out for quite some time, but I had to read it to find out why the authors needed to create 3 other books (published much later) also reviewed in this issue of *macCompanion* as “prequels” to this book.

First and foremost, coding is a craft that follows the same path as apprenticeship programs and guilds. The prequels lead up to this book and you can see by its title that it will be appreciated by seasoned programmers who will say, “ I know that!”

One of the other nice things about this book is that it does have a few exercises and appears as a textbook format with summaries, references and both questions and answers. However, this book goes beyond using specific IDE tools and gets into using good programming practices not taught nor discussed in university settings or programming trade schools (they exist, don't they?).

Think of this book as a PERL of great price, based on years of empirical programming wisdom.

There are 8 chapters that discuss Philosophy (Stone soup and boiled frogs), Approach (orthogonality), Basic Tools, Paranoia (dead programs tell no lies), Bending or Breaking (the Law of Demeter and blackboards), Coding (programming by coincidence and programming deliberately), Before the Project (solving impossible puzzles), and Pragmatic Projects (teaming and ruthless testing). There are 2 Appendices on resources (for drilling much deeper) and answers to exercises.

The sections keep referring back and forth to other parts of the book and to references, so the book is "coded" to be multithreaded, which may be disconcerting to some but a boon to others. Each section also begins with some kind of pithy quote that puts the following text in proper perspective.

My eyes were opened to orthogonality (Helicopter controls are not orthogonal – each adjustment with both hands and feet affects all others. I understood this immediately as I worked for years on IBM Selectric typewriters where all 6,000 adjustments affected all other adjustments. Orthogonal code can be decoupled and not affect other modules directly.) and multithreaded programming (designing for Concurrency) or thinking in more than 2 dimensions. I also found the value of estimating algorithms and the $O()$ Notation with approximations, refactoring (rethinking earlier code) and thinking of coding as gardening and not construction and the culture of testing. I also rediscovered the importance of identifying real constraints (finding the box vs thinking outside the box) and focusing on functionality and not function or assumptions.

And because I have become a technical writer, I really appreciate the section where the authors discuss "It's All Writing", where documentation is treated as just another programming language and how we should be managing expectations (delight vs scare).

There are plenty of anecdotes and analogies discussing pitfalls (herding cats and broken windows) and best practices (pragmatic teaming) for all who want to learn observations and recommendations by two men who know their craft and have worked their way from Journeymen to Master Craftsmen.

The last lines in the book are, "We want to see pride in ownership, 'I wrote this, and I stand behind my work.' Your signature should come to be recognized as an indicator of quality. People should see your name on a piece of code and expect it to be solid, well written, tested and documented. A really professional job. Written by a real professional."

Isn't that what separates a code-slinger from a Master Craftsman?

Pragmatic Project Automation: How to Build, Deploy, and Monitor Java Applications - The Pragmatic Start Kit – Volume III **Reviewed by Robert Pritchett**

Author: Mike Clark

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

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<http://www.pragmaticautomation.com>

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<http://www.oreilly.com>

Released: July 2004

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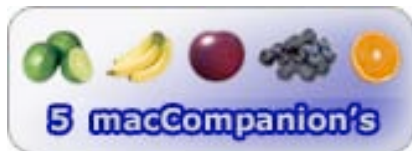
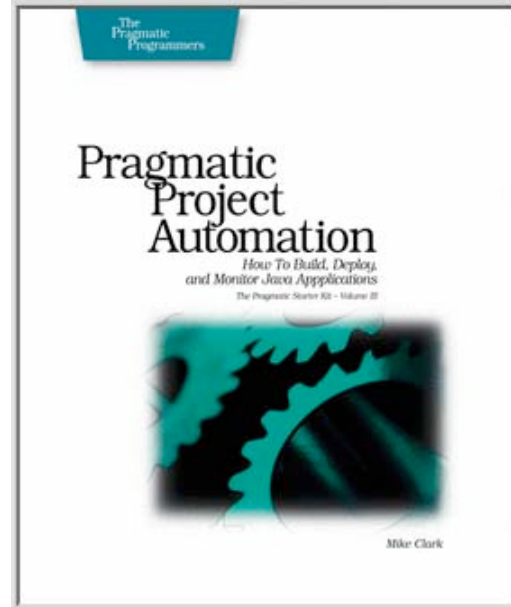
Pages: 176

ISBN: 0974514039

Examples:

<http://www.pragmaticprogrammer.com/sk/auto>

For Java programmers who want to automate the development process.



Strengths: Easy to read and understand. Great weblinks.

Weaknesses: None found.

Pragmatic Project Automation: How to Build, Deploy, and Monitor Java Applications - The Pragmatic Start Kit – Volume III by Mike Clark is the 3rd book in a series that lines the Pragmatic Bookshelf built by two programmers who apparently enjoy selling shovels to the goldminers (tools for programmers looking for income coming in).

Look closely at the title. This is a book intended for those who do programming in the Java environment. Happily, those who run either Jaguar™ or Panther™ for Mac® OS X™ are “there”.

What makes this book special? It shows the how and why of automating the CVS (Concurrent Versions System) process located at <https://www.cvshome.org/>.

Mike Clark does it in a fun way showing not only the why, but how and then step-by-step also shows each part of the process using various systems that make this all possible. The fun comes when he also ties in such things as notification systems such as lava lamps (<http://inventors.about.com/library/weekly/aa092297.htm>) that can show a visual of whether or not the daily computer program application updates are successful or not (still for okay, red lamp for something needing to be looked at, green lamp for all systems go) and cell-phone notification if things need attention.

Think of this process as one of gestalt theory coming to fruition. Computers are supposed to do what (make life easier)? How (through automation of drudge-work)? When (as soon as programmers realize it can be done)?

Learn how to overcome the tedious boring process of updating. Also learn how to get that stuff posted using RSS feeds and website downloads to clients and have that automated too, so their systems can see whether or not an auto-update is needed.

There are 6 relatively short chapters that discuss software builds as one-step activities or bush-button releases, installation and deployment processes (where I currently have a desire and need to function) and monitoring RSS trip-wires and crash reports. The Appendices fit on one page. Each chapter ends with a short "What We Just Did" synopsis.

Go to the websites listed above and if you do any kind of software development, I bet you will buy the book. The information is both cross-train and cross-platform, especially if you have invested in Java.

Tools used? Ant, CruiseControl, CVS, Groovy, Jetty, JUnit, Log4J, Ruby, shell scripts, and other tools like Anthill, Make, Maven, build frequency, and team dislocation.

This book doesn't go too deep, but it does go far.

What is the author's platform of choice? The Macintosh®, of course. The software development process just got a whole lot easier.

Pragmatic Unit Testing – In Java with JUnit – Volume 2 Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Authors: Andrew Hunt, David Thomas

Interviews: <http://www.pragmaticprogrammer.com/reviews.html>

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http://www.pragmaticprogrammer.com/starter_kit/ut/index.html

Distributed by O'Reilly Books

<http://www.oreilly.com>

Released: September 2003, 3rd printing, May 2004

\$30 USD, \$45 CAN, £21Net UK €25,77

Pages: 176

ISBN: 0974514012

Examples:

http://www.pragmaticprogrammer.com/starter_kit/utj/code.html

Resources:

http://www.pragmaticprogrammer.com/starter_kit/utj/resources.html

Errata:

http://www.pragmaticprogrammer.com/starter_kit/utj/errata.html

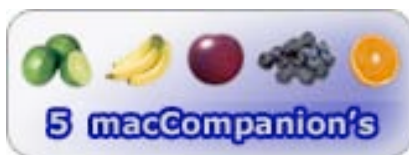
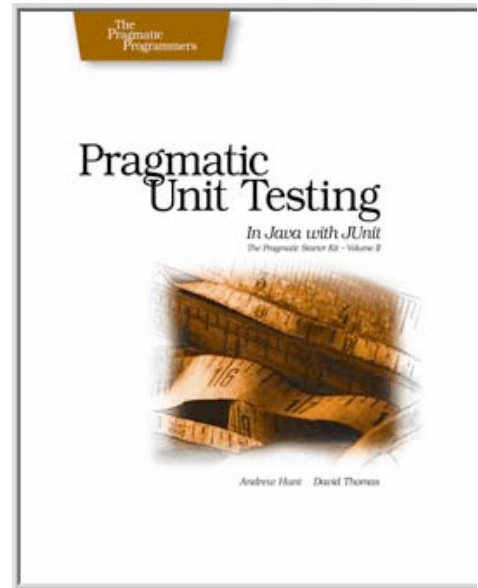
C# Version:

http://www.pragmaticprogrammer.com/starter_kit/utc/index.html

Summary Sheet:

http://www.pragmaticprogrammer.com/starter_kit/ut/StandaloneSummary.pdf

For programmers who should be testing their work – in this case, using Java.



Strengths: Easy to read and understand.

Weaknesses: None found.

Pragmatic Unit Testing – In Java with JUnit – Volume 2 by Andrew Hunt, David Thomas is the 2nd book in the 3-part series on the pragmatic approach to good software development and design using Concurrent Version Systems. This book focuses on testing procedures, gives code examples in Java, and is a great place to start with regard to testing internally and providing test modules that customers can use so they can feel confident that the software won't blow up in their hands when they use it.

The other place where I work is a software developer. One of the questions asked recently was, "What kinds of test modules do we use to inspire confidence in our product before it goes out the door?" This book will go a long ways in helping that process improve itself. Apparently we are not the only ones that face this daunting task of making software work correctly under all circumstances and situations.

Sometimes we test and the issue is the platform being used and not the software. Mock Objects (<http://www.mockobjects.com/FrontPage.html>) in Chapter 6 shows how to test the software and not the platform it is being run on.

Probably besides the summary sheet (listed above), (using mnemonics such as Right- BICEP, A-TRIP, and CORRECT), the most valuable discussion for me related to real unit testing in Chapter 7 versus addressing reported bugs. I'm intimately familiar with bug reports. They are embarrassing, because it means we didn't do enough due diligence if we get lots of them back in a short amount of time. Unit testing indicates producing test code for every line of program code. Well, how do we test the test code? This sounds a lot like watchdogging the watchdogs, doesn't it? It really is bug-trapping, then improving tests when bugs are found, then introducing bugs to prove the tests. (More Yin-Yang.)

By putting the mnemonics on the summary sheet into practice and implementing similar code to that which Andrew Hunt and David Thomas have devised and shared, we all can improve our software products before they go public.

The strength apparently of using JUnit is that the authors have had experience with regression testing and good results with JUnit in doing so "inoculate against known issues". Testing goes through a write-review-revise cycle or rather, it should.

What is really neat about the book is that it is full of cross-platform and cross-training concepts, so it isn't just about JUnit, but about using intelligent testing procedures in general – and that is what makes this book worth its weight in gold-pressed latinum.

There are 9 Chapters in the book. There are also 6 Appendices that cover 8 testing "Gotchas", how to install and test JUnit, a list of resources on the Web, books, along with the Pragmatic Unit Testing: Summary and answers to the exercises throughout the book.

The errata listed above shows a number of gotchas corrected in the 3rd printing. (Software isn't the only place things get misdirected!)

The authors have also created another book with C# instead of JUnit with the same focus. I didn't review that book.

I highly recommend this book with or without the other books in the Pragmatic Programmers series due to its content and focus for software development testing.

Dig Deeper

<http://junit.org>

<http://www.easymock.org/>

<http://cruisecontrol.sourceforge.net>

<http://junit.sourceforge.net/doc/testinfected/testing.htm>

Pragmatic Version Control: Using CVS - The Pragmatic Start Kit – Volume I Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Authors: David Thomas, Andrew Hunt

On-Line Interviews:

<http://www.pragmaticprogrammer.com/reviews.html>

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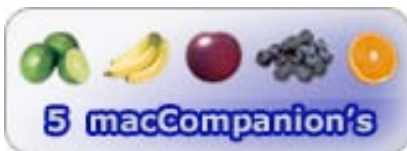
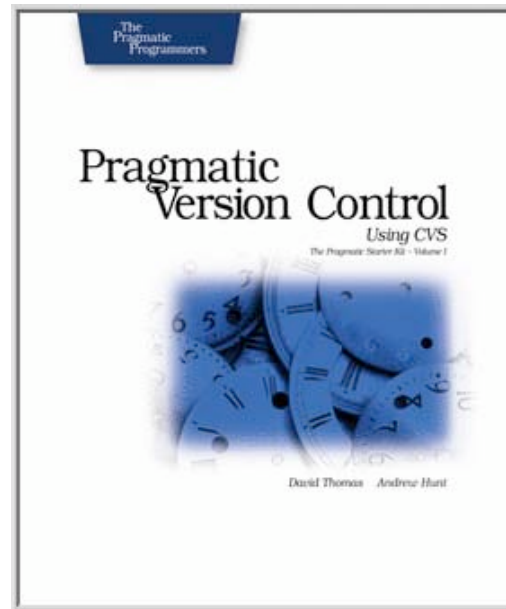
Pages: 176

ISBN: 0974514004

Errata:

http://www.pragmaticprogrammer.com/starter_kit/vc/errata.html

For programmers who want to automate the development process.



Strengths: Easy to read and understand. Great weblinks.

Weaknesses: None found.

Pragmatic Version Control: Using CVS The Programatic Starter Kit – Volume 1 by David Thomas and Andrew Hunt obviously is the first of a 3-part series on using Concurrent Version Systems. You will need to set aside time in a quiet place in order to digest this book. If you try an dread it while distractions are occurring you won't get much out of it. It requires some undivided attention. Then again, it is a quick read and is touted as the first of a prequel to *The Pragmatic Programmer: From Journeyman to Master* written back in 1999.

The book really is the beginning of a software development management starter kit – thus the 3-part series. This part covers what CVS is and what it can do for us – act as a pretty nifty end-to-end UNDO without a lot of overhead baggage and bureaucracy.

Development can be on-going and not frozen permanently so multiple software releases can concurrently occur. The authors describe it as a time machine to see how a project matures over time.

The book as 10 chapters on getting introduced and using CVS. The last one discusses 3rd party code and there are 2 Appendices that cover the CVS command format and provide other resources for further study.

Is CVS difficult? Not according to David Thomas and Andrew Hunt. They are making a living at making CVS widespread and understandable. Learn from empirical working models and best practices.

Version Control with Subversion, First Edition Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Authors: Ben Collins-Sussman, Brian W Fitzpatrick, C.

Michael Pilato

<http://svnbook.red-bean.com>

<http://subversion.tigris.org>

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Released: June 2004

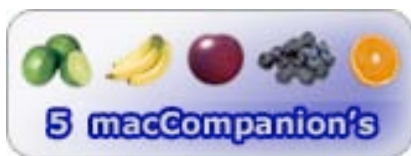
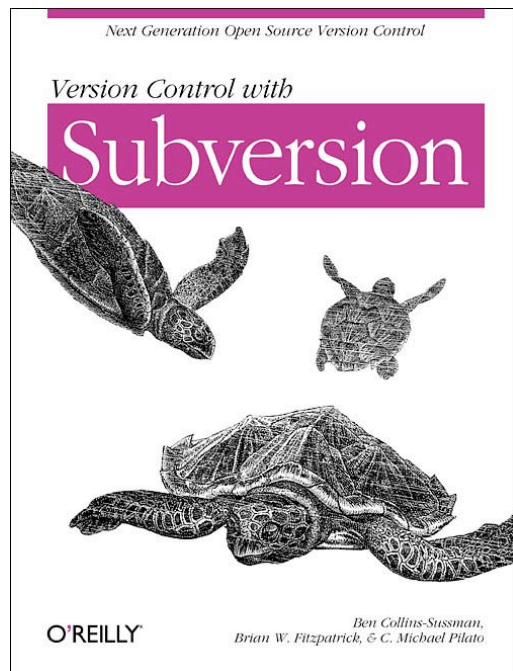
<http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/0596004486/index.html>

\$35 USD, \$51 CAN, £25 Net UK

Pages: 304

ISBN: 0596004486

For tag-team software development source-code Trackers who use Unix for version control (CVS), Beginners to advanced.



Strengths: A “free” book worth buying. Educates on CVS – and beyond.

Weaknesses: Some code listings need tweaking.

Did you see the mention of Subversion in the Keynote by Steve Jobs at the World Wide Developer’s Conference? (<http://stream.apple.akadns.net/>) It works with Xcode (<http://www.apple.com/macosx/features/xcode/>). Version Control with Subversion by Ben Collins-Sussman, Brian W Fitzpatrick, C. Michael Pilato is a “free” book online at <http://synbook.red-bean.com>, but the PDF version there is missing about 20 or so pages. Get the hardcopy version.

When working with a software development team with more than one person, collaboration takes place. This means software updates, enhancements, modules, libraries and source files all can get out of synch pretty quickly when they are “checked out” to be worked on or updated. One solution is to use the Concurrent Versions System or CVS to handle “the art of managing changes to information” (http://www.cs.utah.edu/dept/old/texinfo/cvs/cvs_toc.html). The current version of CVS (<https://www.cvshome.org/>) however have some shortfalls and Subversion was released to overcome some of those shortcomings.

Frankly, Subversion is a better CVS and is being touted as its successor as it addresses issues not currently being handled by CVS (directory versioning is a big one). See the feature set at <http://subversion.tigris.org>. Version Control with Subversion was written by the Subversion open source development team and they discuss installation, configuration, managing projects, documentation, branching, repository administration, properties, externals, and access control. Towards the back of the book, there is a complete reference guide along with four Appendices covering transitions from CVS, troubleshooting WebDAV (Web-based Distributed Authoring and Versioning) and Autoversioning, 3rd-party tools (GUI clients) and the Creative Commons Attribution License.

Is the book “dry”? No, there is humor disbursed liberally throughout the book. It is obvious the writers enjoy what they are doing.

Check out how Subversion treats repositories served through Apache and how it authenticates users with client-side certificates and encrypts communications over SSL. Also see how it resolves atomic commits, tags/branches, client/server, WebDAV access and sensible branching.

The errata links at O’Reilly should be posting issues associated with coding errors found in the first edition book. The svnbook.red-bean.com site should also have some code-listing updates.

I like how Subversion frees up programmers from the lock-modify-unlock process of CVS to the copy-modify-merge process of Subversion.

There is an active developer discussion list and commit mail list and if you can add code to make Subversion better, the authors are willing to enlist your assistance.

If you do software development, why not show your support by buying the definitive guide on versioning?

Dig Deeper

<http://www.rogueamoeba.com/utm/posts/Article/svn-intro.html>

Zero-Day Exploit: Countdown to Darkness Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Authors: Rob Shein, Marcus H Sachs

<http://www.oreillynet.com/cs/catalog/view/au/1751>

<http://www.oreillynet.com/cs/catalog/view/au/1728>

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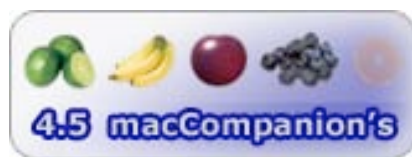
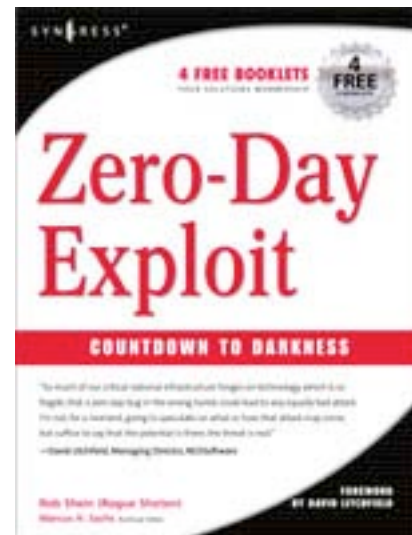
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Fax: 1-707-829-0104

<http://www.oreilly.com>



Strengths: Follows a very realistic cyber-terrorism scenario.

Weaknesses: Totally unnecessary R-rated language takes the "fun" out of the book.

Zero-Day Exploit: Countdown to Darkness by Rob Shein and Marcus H Sachs is a riveting can't-put-it-down kind of cyber-terrorism fiction book that provides an entirely believable scenario by providing in-depth background information to lives affected by computer technology. The main character Reuben is a reluctant Washington DC-based network-consultant hero who started his computing life on an Apple II and progressed from there to eventually becoming a white-knight kind of white hat who somehow never got entangled with either the Cult of the Dead Cow crowd nor the law-and-order crowd. In his quest for knowledge, he finds a kindred spirit in Madfast from Seattle. They fit the profiles of computer consultants everywhere, but find solace in such happenings as the annual treks to DefCon.

The opponents to US Computer Network Security are brought in and out through the story and are shown to not be mad, fanatical jihadists, but are highly intelligent folks eager to improve their lives - unfortunately down the dark path in an attempt to destroy the economic strength of the US.

Like typical terrorist strategy, there is an initial attack meant to cause confusion and move focus within the legal structure of the US government, followed quickly by an attack elsewhere and in this case on the petrochemical backbone and distribution system for the US.

Along the way we learn about how vulnerable certain Virtual Private Networks and SCADA systems can be and also learn some lessons on the importance of programmers thinking about securing their code instead of just trying to get code to work right.

We get to see a view of how politics gums up the works and how awesome a responsibility it is for law enforcement types to try to keep the peace and protect us all from the bad guys. Reuben and MadFast get pulled in and add yeast to the leavened bread as they teach us in plain language some of the joys of discovery and profound blunders and the consequences that result from bad decisions even as they become the “voices crying in the wilderness” as they show vulnerabilities that are ignored until too late.

You have to read the book to see how they and their network of hackers save the day and their nation from destruction.

As I discussed this book with others, I was told that the really bad language used in places in the book is “just their hacker culture”. Sorry, I can’t believe that. There is no excuse for filthy language in an otherwise great storyline. I find that extremely unacceptable and thus, give this book a lower rating than I would have otherwise.

The threat of zero-day vulnerabilities is very real. This “fictional” book shows a few that will keep you on the edge of your seat as Reuben and MadFast encounter obstacles and miraculously overcome them based on their combined past experiences and together become an uber-geek force to be reckoned with in this cyber-thriller.

The bad guys get away, so I’m expecting a sequel. Hopefully, real life won’t imitate fiction. Oh, but it so easily could...

Games

Nostromo™ n52 SpeedPad Review by Ted Bade



Belkin Components
PO BOX 5649
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<http://www.belkin.com/>

Product:

http://catalog.belkin.com/IWCatProductPage.process?Merchant_Id=&Section_Id=2071&pcount=&Product_Id=157024

\$50 USD

Driver Download URL:

<http://web.belkin.com/support/download/download.asp?download=F8GFC100&lang=1&mode=>

Requirements: Mac OS 9 or Mac OS X (or any version of Windows that recognizes USB ports), USB port.

Experience needed: Basic experience to install the controller and drivers. Intermediate with the game you are using it with. More advanced experience to really utilize all its features.



Strengths: Easy access to many keystrokes, easy to program keys, easily set specifically for any program, includes ability to make macros that attach a series of keystrokes to a single key.

Weaknesses: Key action on some units I tried was stiff. Ergonomic comfort on the wrist is questionable. Profile sharing doesn't work on the Macintosh (only on PCs).

The Nostromo™ SpeedPad n52 is a USB based game controller designed to give a player easy access to a multitude of keyboard controls in any interactive game. The keys are fully programmable. The user can set up a universal control to be used in any application or to create profiles for a specific game. The Nostromo n52 includes an ergonomic design to help reduce the stress on one's hands while playing. (especially useful for people who spend hours playing games like this.)

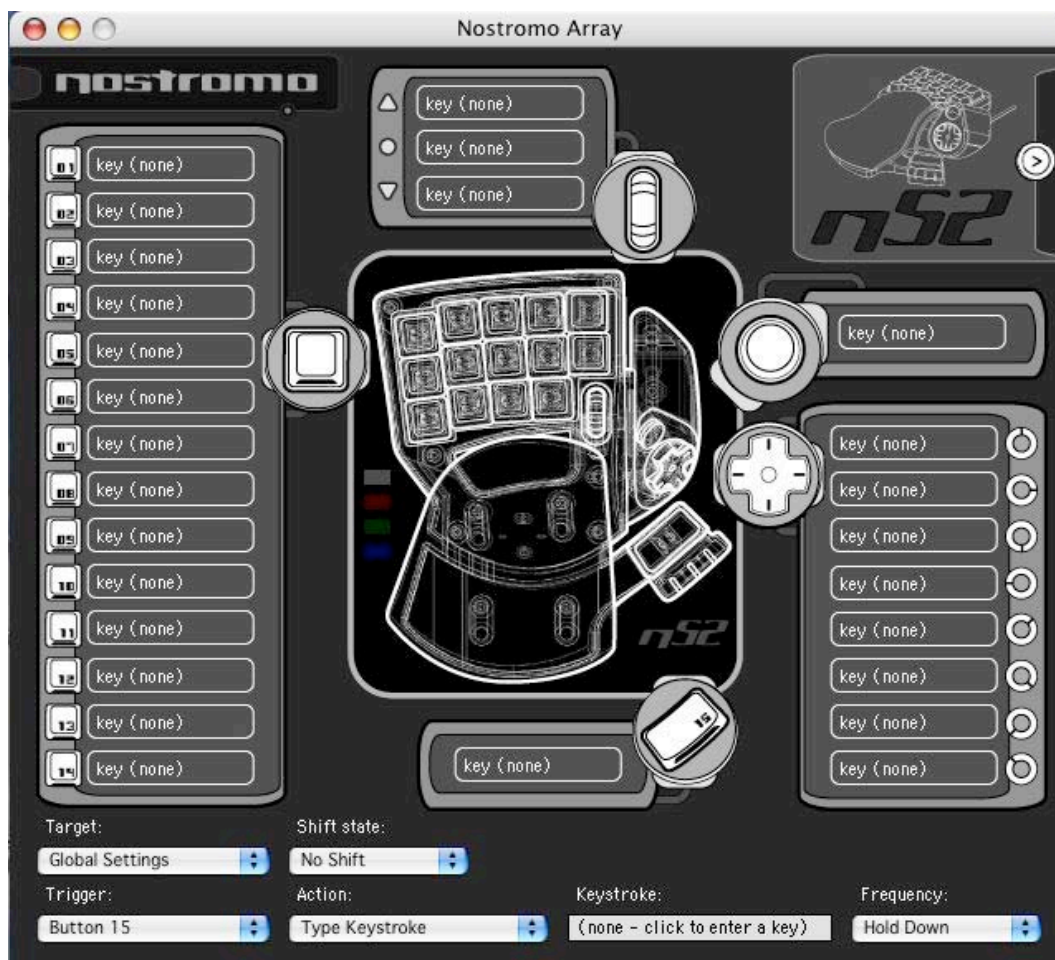
What is the Nostromo n52? It is a device that looks roughly like a keypad with a hand-rest, separated from a keyboard. There are 14 key buttons, a wheel with a wheel-button on the top surface, and a button, a 4-direction Dpad, along with a single button on the side. Add this all up it gives you 23 actions you can access easily with one hand. But wait, there's more. The n52 provides three additional shift states. Which means you can shift from state 0 to 1 to 2 to 3, quadrupling the number of keys. (assuming you are coordinated enough to smoothly change from state to state ;-)) There are 3 bright colored LEDs on the side of the n52 which light in different shift states. A quick glance at the n52 will tell you the controller is in the default state (no light) or red, blue, or green for the other three states.

Keyboards are great for typing, but not the best for playing games. Ask any person who owns a game console. They quickly learn that the keypad controller that came with it is a lot more efficient than playing on a keyboard. Using the n52 you will find less reaching, moving, and adjusting of your hand will be required. No matter your skill level, you will become more efficient at controlling the game.

Setting the Nostromo n52 for a particular game is easy. After you install the included drivers and software, you can set up a global profile, as well as specific profiles for any number of programs. The global profile is used if you run a program and haven't set up a specific profile for it. Since every game is slightly different, it makes sense to set up a profile specifically for your favorite games.

Yes, there is a learning curve. Especially if you are already familiar with controlling a game. To test this controller, I first set up my n52 to play Bungie's Halo. I had been playing the game since it arrived for the Macintosh platform several months ago, so I had already trained myself to use the keyboard as best I could. Although I'm not great at it, I can usually hold my own online and do well playing the game itself.

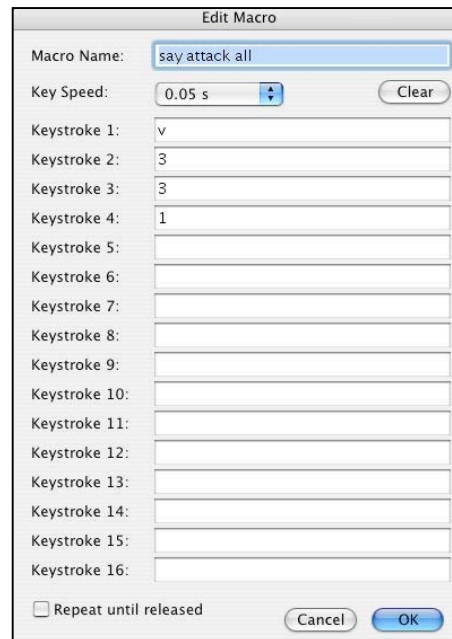
To set up a new profile you select "new profile" from the pull down menu. The n52 application will then open a file select window. Using standard Mac OS X Finder features, you navigate to the folder your game is in and select the game application. This binds the profile to that application. Then you need to define the n52 keys to provide the input for that game. To save time, the n52 software allows you to duplicate a previous profile and start from there. This is a time saver, because I generally use the same keyboard buttons for general movement controls in every game and I expect other people do as well.



The n52 application is simple to use. It shows a graphic view of the n52 and the keys you have attached to each button. When running the application if you press any of the Nostromo keys, that key is selected on the input line and flashes in the graphic window. If a keystroke has been attached to a particular n52 key, it will be shown on this graphic as well.

To program an n52 key you need to choose a key and attach an action to it. There are a number of actions you can attach to a n52 key. The obvious is a single key stroke (i.e., keyboard A or numbpad 5). You can also run a macro, open a file, cause a single, double or even triple click, and more. Depending upon the action the keystroke window changes. For instance, to enter the keyboard "a" into a position, you select that position, click on the keystroke box, then hit the "a" key on your keyboard. Other actions let you select a function that fits. Finally, you select how long or how many times the key is used, by using the pull down frequency menu. If you are inventive, you can figure out a slew of useful combinations.

Since the layout of the Nostromo is different from the keypad or keyboard, you need to make some wise choices when first defining the keys. Obviously the best way to do this is to first create and set up a layout, play the game for a while using the n52, then go back and make changes as you learn to use it. Halo was an excellent choice for trying the Nostromo because it is compatible with Mac OS X's built in program switching (using the command-tab combo to jump to another program.) As I played Halo, I figured out how to improve the layout then jumped to the n52 set up program that was also running, made the changes and returned to the game.



It didn't take long to develop a profile I really liked. However, I did learn that I shouldn't try using a new controller in the middle of a game! It is best to start a new game at the beginning and work your way through with it. Which was how you first learned to control the game anyway. This also makes dealing with the learning curve more fun. Surely, it might be a step back, but I believe the results will be worth the time. (I had a blast playing Halo through again!)

With games that don't support program switching, you have to quit, make changes, then return to the game. Some games, like UT2004 for instance, allow you to play the game in a window rather than full screen. This should allow you to use program switching as you are playing. (At least this worked with UT2004). I found games were indeed easier with the Nostromo. I was able to control movement and combat a lot better than before.

Advanced game players will be interested to learn that you can build a macro into the n52. A macro is a series of commands all tied to one key. In most action games, there are key combinations that perform a special function or action. The combinations can be complex and even awkward to perform on a regular keyboard. Most require a certain amount of timing to get it right. With the n52, you can bind a single key to a macro to complete this task.

Creating the macro is fairly basic. You choose the keys to include and the speed of the key. There are 16 slots provided in each macro to put keys into as well as a slot to name it. Now when you strike this key, the key combination will occur.

After I learned about the n52, I went to the local CompUSA to see if they had any on the shelf. I was a bit disappointed that the action of the keys of the ones they had was stiff. I wasn't certain I happy with the stiff action of these keys. Reading reviews and comments on the Internet, I saw a mixture. Some said the keys were stiff and others didn't mention this. I took a chance and bought one online, hoping that it wouldn't be that bad. The unit I got did not have stiff keys at all. As a matter of fact, the action of these keys was very smooth.

The n52's hand rest has two positions. Although the idea of a hand rest is a good one, I didn't like either of the two positions a lot. Again this is a very personal thing, so another person might find one of these positions just perfect.

The n52 is an excellent choice as a game controller. It is easy to program, and makes controlling a game easier. It easily connects to the USB port on your Mac's keyboard, and its "sticky plastic" bottom stays in place very well. It is ergonomically better then using the keyboard, since you won't be twisting your wrist as much and you might find the wrist rest position to your liking. Its definitely worth considering if you are either an intermediate or dedicated game player.

The Journey to Wild Divine Reviewed by Ted Bade



The Wild Divine Project / Healing Rhythms
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1-866-594-WILD (9453) or 303-499-3680

Fax: 303-499-3688

takeoff@wilddivine.com

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

Product:

http://www.wilddivine.com/content.php?cont_id=1

View game trailers:

<http://www.wilddivine.com/trailers.php>

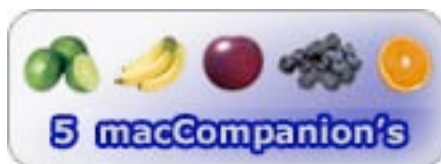
Released: October 15, 2003

\$160 USD (check trailer URL for special deal on shipping)

Requirements: G3 or G4 - on Mac OSX v10.1 or later - 1.5 GB of Disk Space - 256 MB RAM - 800 X 600, 24-bit color display - CD-ROM drive - QuickTime 6.3 or higher. Includes biofeedback device.

Experience needed: To install the game, basic skills. To learn to relax? Who knows, it could be very easy or very hard!

EXPERIENCE THE JOURNEY TO WILD DIVINE



Strengths: Great graphics with stunning scenery. Nicely done audio track. Unique user interface. Interesting, excellent game!

Weaknesses: There are some pauses between scenes, even on a faster machine.

The Journey to the Wild Divine is a fabulous game of exploration and imagination. It offers a unique biofeedback user interface and challenging puzzles, surrounded by a world that is both graphically and audibly pleasing. Unlike most other games that add to one's excitement and often frustration, Wild Divine is designed to relax and calm the player. In my eyes, it is one of the best games I have ever played. Not just because it is a non-violent game, or that it is graphically pleasing, or the fact that it's biofeedback interface is innovative, but also because, when a person plays this game they can learn to relax and calm their minds, something I believe, is dreadfully needed in our hectic world.





We need to begin our discussion about the Wild Divine by looking at its unusual user interface. It is a biofeedback device that plugs into one of your Mac's USB ports. It is attached to the player through small three clips that fit comfortably, one on each of the three middle fingers. These connectors (or "Magic rings" as they are called in the game), have sensors that read two aspects used in Biofeedback devices called Skin Conductance Level and Heart Rate Variability. I won't go into detail about biofeedback devices, as I am no expert on this subject. If you want to learn more about the subject before trying this wonderful game, the publisher offers some information on the subject at: http://www.wilddivine.com/content.php?cont_id=15 , and http://www.wilddivine.com/content.php?cont_id=16 . Or you could do your own search on the Internet.

Connecting to the Lifestone (as the game calls the biofeedback device), was usually not much of a problem for me. However, your experience might be different. Skin that is very dry or very cold can be a problem. Anticipating this, there are some useful suggestions on how to improve the connection provided inside the game, as well as in the informative manual that comes with it.

Once you start Wild Divine, you can access a screen that provides information about your connection to the biofeedback device. The "System" page gives numerical and graphical representations of your connection to the Lifestone. Using this page you can adjust what is needed to improve your connection. With the exception of one occasion after a shower, I never had a problem getting the Lifestone to work when I first put it on.



When playing Wild Divine for the first time, you go through a tutorial, in which you are guided by a game personality (Sophia). She teaches you how to interact with the environment and how to use the Lifestone, leading you to several interesting areas provided for this purpose. In one you are asked to levitate a ball and are told that, as you relax, the ball will rise. As you relax the biofeedback device senses your relaxation, and the ball rises, as if by magic! As you breath deeply and relax more and more, the ball rises higher and higher. It is pretty cool to see this happen, really! Another area asks you to raise your energy level (i.e. get excited, think about an exciting moment, etc.), to make three ball juggle in the air before you. The greater your level of excitement, the more robust the juggling motion.

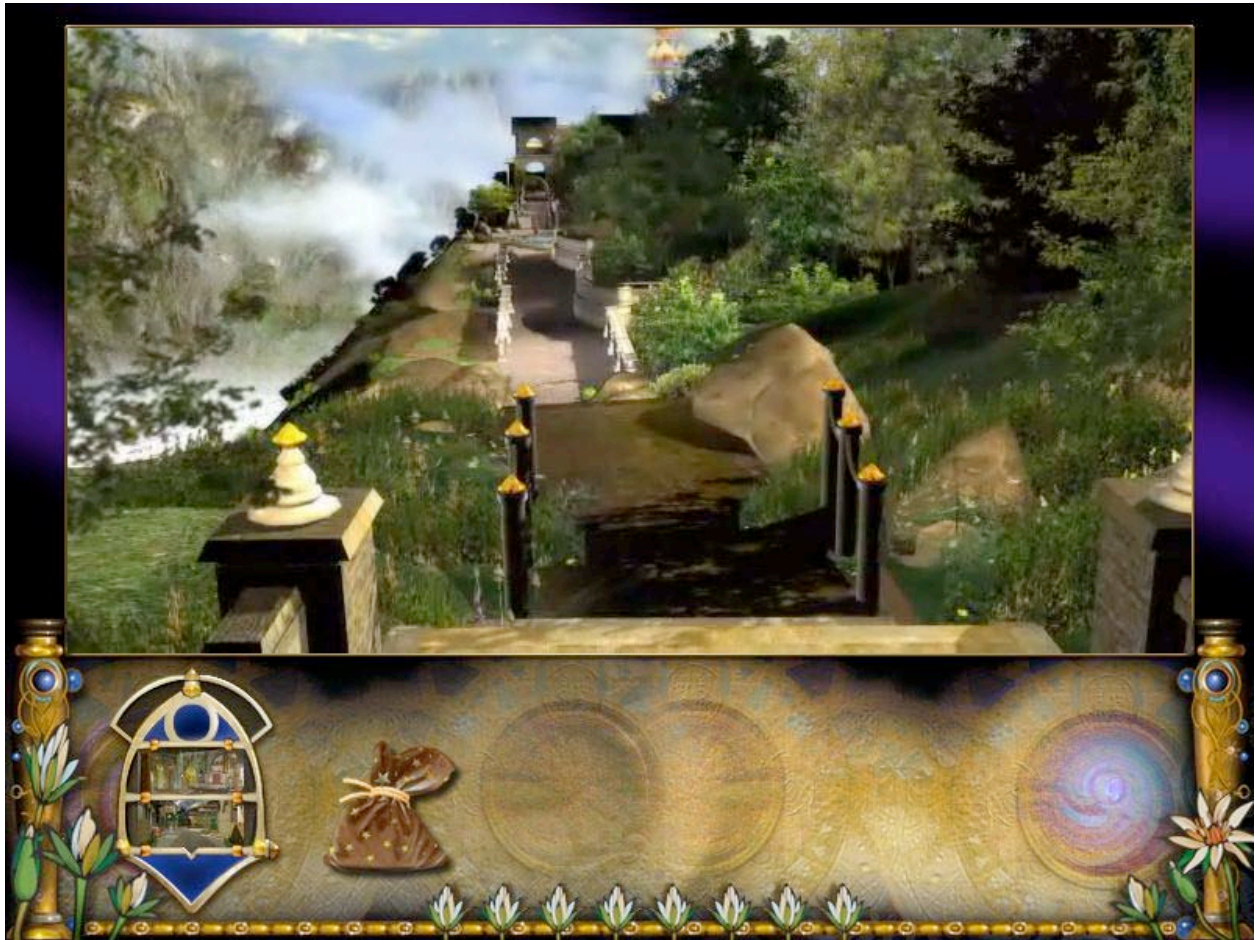
Of course, I had to test this to see if the interface was really doing anything. I was skeptical that the game just made it seem like it did. So I tried the levitating ball a second time, but instead of calming and breathing in a smooth rhythmic fashion, I purposefully breathed erratically and tried not to feel relaxed. The ball refused to rise, although it did totter around on the ground a bit. When my wife tried to relax to levitate the ball, she got moderate results, and after a while, a game personality stepped in to "help". I guess this means she needs to learn to relax....



Although it might sound easy to change your energy levels on command like this, it ain't necessarily so! Unless you are experienced with relaxation techniques, you might initially find being able to raise and/or lower your state of mind on command a bit difficult. But learning this skill is one of the things this game is all about! And don't think anyone is incapable of learning these techniques. As with any game, to play well one needs to learn how to control the user interface. The more you play, the easier it gets. However, in the case of Wild Divine, the skills you learn can be applied to improve your daily life.

The story line is pretty well done. The graphics are excellent. They paint a bright vibrant and mystical world of stone walls and buildings with flowers and plants everywhere. Butterflies flit about the landscape and the songs of birds fill the air. One might notice that, on occasion, some of the scenes are a bit misty or foggy, as if the edges or details are slightly out of focus. I believe this effect is done on purpose to give the game a dream-like quality. The introduction makes good use of this effect by starting with foggy out of focus graphics and slowly sharpening the image as you enter into the world. A very nice effect.

When you click on a portion of the screen that lets your point of view move to another position, the static images change to a moving picture, playing a movie as you "move" along the path. As I moved through this delightful scenery, I was disappointed that I could not stop mid-stream and enjoy the view. A minor problem with Wild Divine is that the point of view used when moving is sometimes too low to the ground, at the level of one's foot or perhaps knee. I likened the perspective to that of a head with feet (no body in between). But that is a minor problem and the motion videos generally very nice.



In essence, this game is very similar to many other games of this genre. You move from location to location looking for clues and items you might need and interact with various objects and game characters. There are a number of characters you need to interact with. When you are in the correct place to interact with one, you are presented with a movie of a real person (obviously "blue-screened", then placed over the background of the environment). The interaction can be lengthy, and serves to provide the player with information necessary to continue the game. Sometimes you are taught a breathing technique, or provided with a tool that will help in some other way.

Some of the earlier interactions in the game provide tools to help with game play. For instance there is a place one visits that contains a mirror. The purpose of this mirror is to point out what you need to do next. In another visit you gain a mentor who appears when you need a verbal explanation (such as relax yourself so the ball will float). You can also gain a symbolic gauge that appears when you need to change your energy state. By knowing where you are and where you need to be, you can perform the necessary actions to change your energy state to the proper one. By no means is the player left in a position where they have no way of learning with to do to continue. What one needs to do might not necessarily be easy, but it is always possible.

The audio in this game is really superb. I am pumping my audio on a fiber cable from my G5 to a surround sound stereo receiver, so the room is filled with sound. However, there is no way to adjust the audio abilities of this program, except for perhaps changing the volume. A 5.1 surround track would have been really nice!!

When you interact with a game personality, they generally speak to you, telling you a story or what is needed or expected. The game includes a lot of nice ambient music as well as background music. Like a good movie, the music changes as one moves from scene to scene, adding another level of enjoyment as one moves through this game. Over all the music is very nice, and a couple scenes I have managed to get to have actually been breathtaking!

Included in the game package are an audio CD, and a small book. The audio CD contains full music pieces, parts of which are used in the game's phenomenal music tracks. The CD is called *Soul Flight* and was performed by the Wild Divine Band. While the music used in the game is really relaxing and ambient, the full music pieces on the CD lean toward a folk-rock rather than a more New Age ambience one would expect from playing the game. But it is pretty good music.

The book that comes with the game, called the "companion Guide", is a tale told of another's journey into this land. The book was written by Corwin Bell, the creator of the Wild Divine. I read through the book before I actually played the game and realized as I did that it would have been better read along with the game. The material in the book discusses interactions and exploration of different areas in the game and gives the reader clues to what they need to do. It also serves to fill add detail to the game. That is to say, like with any book concerning a movie, there is always a lot more detail in the book. If you are inclined to read the book as I was, I would recommend reading the chapter/section on the area you are visiting next. This way you will get a better idea of what you need to do there and gain some detail on what is going on.



I found it very interesting that the book was included with the game. I have to admit that I bought and read some of the *Myst* novels, and found they added detail and information to the world of *Myst*. This companion book does the same, although it is more a journal of the person's experience than a novel in its own rights.

Considering this is a game, you might be concerned about the price. However, you need to remember that this game comes with a piece of hardware, not to mention an audio CD and a book. A lot of work went into making this game package complete. I think it is worth the cost. I noticed some information on the Wild Divine site about releasing a program that lets one use the biofeedback device directly. I also expect that some innovative third party programmer might also come up with other programs as well. Perhaps the next version of this game will be offered at a better price for previous owners.

I highly recommend The Journey to Wild Divine. It is a lot of fun and definitely relaxing. You won't feel worked up after playing and might find yourself actually being more relaxed. This is truly the most innovative game I have ever tried. A great audio track coupled with wonderful graphics make for a good game, learning relaxation techniques is a true bonus. Why not give it a try?



Hardware

RadTech BT500 Bluetooth Mouse Reviewed by Eddie Hargreaves



RadTech

1917 Fernwood Trail Drive, Suite 01

St. Louis, MO 63031-7432

314-972-7623

Fax: 530-654-5792

info@radtech.us

<http://www.radtech.us>

\$55 USD

Product: <http://www.radtech.us/Products/BT500.aspx>

Dimensions: 85.2mm long x 50mm wide x 32.6 mm high.

Weight: 64 grams

Requirements: Mac OS X 10.2.8 or higher, built-in Bluetooth antenna or USB dongle



Strengths: Small & light; ambidextrous; three buttons & scroll-wheel; white design matches white Apple models.

Weaknesses: Battery can't be monitored via software; 3rd button can only be configured through shareware driver.

Although wireless mice have been available in the marketplace for a number of years, they have previously used the RF standard. But when Apple previewed its support for the Bluetooth wireless standard in March 2002, it seemed inevitable that Bluetooth mice would start arriving.

Unfortunately, it wasn't until last September that Apple announced and shipped its Bluetooth-based keyboard and mouse. And \$69 is awfully expensive for a single-button mouse.

When January 2004's Macworld rolled around, I scoured the exhibit hall for what I thought was a reasonable product: a two-button, optical, Bluetooth mouse with a scroll-wheel that cost less than \$70. I found none.

RadTech has now come to the rescue with its BT-500. Well, it's actually not RadTech's, it's Bluetake's. I had come across info about Bluetake's BT-500 back in February, but had not been able to actually find the product. The folks at RadTech are now making the mouse available to Mac users for the reasonable price of \$55.

Weighing only 64 grams and measuring only 85.2mm long, the mouse is tiny and light. Yet there are two main buttons and a scroll wheel. In Mac® OS X™, the right button is automatically configured as control-click (bringing up the contextual menu) and the scroll wheel will work without configuration. The scroll wheel can also be used as a third button, but you must configure it using software that is not included (an exception is Panther's Exposé feature).

The mouse uses two AAA batteries, which are easy to install and remove. Although the battery level will not display in the Bluetooth pane of the Keyboard & Mouse pane of System Preferences (as it does for the Apple Wireless Mouse), the scroll wheel will flash blue when the batteries are nearing depletion. I found that they lasted a number of weeks when the mouse was used 4-6 hours per day.

The mouse will enter a power-saving sleep mode after 2-5 minutes of inactivity. Moving the mouse or pressing a button will awaken it after two seconds. There is also a power switch on the underside, to turn the mouse off for extended periods of non-use.

The mouse has two color schemes: blue and white. The latter matches Apple's white hardware products (iBook®, eMac®, flat-panel iMac®).

Most importantly, the BT-500 works well. I was initially unimpressed with Apple's Wireless Mouse because heavy AirPort usage conflicted with the Bluetooth wireless signal, causing the mouse to track very poorly. I haven't had any trouble with the BT-500 in that regard.

RadTech's BT-500 Bluetooth mouse works better than Apple's, has greater functionality and costs less. Its small size and light-weight make it an excellent choice for mobile Mac users.

Intuos® 2 Platinum 6 x 8 Reviewed by Robert Pritchett



Wacom Technology Corporation

1311 SE Cardinal Court
Vancouver, WA 98683
USA

800.922.9348

360.896.9724

Released: September 15, 2003

<http://www.wacom.com/companyinfo/email.cfm>

<http://www.wacom.com/index2.cfm>

Product: <http://www.intuos2.com>

\$300 USD, Airbrush, \$100 USD, Designer Pen, \$100 USD, 2D Mouse, \$50 USD, 4D Mouse, \$70 USD

Testimonials: <http://www.wacom.com/pressinfo/spotlight.cfm>

Requirements: Mac boxen: iMac or Power Mac with Mac OS 8.5, 9 or Mac OS X; powered USB port, CD-ROM drive, and color monitor. WinTel boxen: PC running Windows 98, 2000, Me, or XP. Powered and working USB port, CD-ROM drive, and color monitor.

Comes with Grip Pen, 2D Mouse, Adobe® Photoshop® Elements 2.0 (Intuos2 4x5 and 6x8 models only), Painter™ Classic by Corel®, penPalette™ by nik multimedia®, and Wacom Brushes 1.0. Also included is Corel™ Painter™ 8.

Reviewed with Mac® OS X™ 10.3.5.



Strengths: Great sketching input tool.

Weaknesses: Radio frequency interference may occur with other wireless devices in close proximity.

The Wacom® Intuos®2 pen tablet is a “must-have” for designers or anyone who sketches to add input electronically.

My wife illustrates her own books. She has great talent in her fingers. The Intuos2 fits perfectly with what she does, since it has a mylar sheet that can be lifted up so drawings or other paper-based products can be slipped under in order to be traced with either the 2D mouse (with scroll-wheel) or the Grip Pen.

The Grip Pen has an extremely light electronic stylus that is not battery-operated (patented by Wacom). It has a toggle called a DuoSwitch™ for clicking and a neat “eraser” that electronically removes unwanted marks at 1,024 levels of pressure. It also has a tilt feature and a solid weighted pen stand and extra grip sleeve.

The Intuos®2 Tablet has a row of numbered customizable shortcuts, 1-13 as well as 2 mode options (pen or mouse) and 3 pressure options (soft, medium or firm). There is a 160-page PDF-based User’s Manual.





After installing the Pen tablet Driver, and plugging in the Intuos2 Platinum 6x8 tablet into a powered USB port with the 8-foot cable, we could get to work.

The Intuos 2 works with just about any program and another review in this issue covers how the Alias® Sketchbook™ Pro works with this unique piece of hardware.

An accessory I didn't get is the Airbrush. It costs an extra \$100 and comes with a fingerwheel.

The only issue I have had so far is that the wireless features of both the pen and mouse tend to interfere with other input devices, so some latency may cause screen input to slow down.

Really, this is a sweet system and any of us who has any kind of talent drawing, should get one of any of the Wacom pen tablets so we can focus our attention on creativity and not on technology.





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<http://www.adstech.com>

Product:

http://www.adstech.com/products/API_550/intro/api550intro.asp?pid=API-550

\$200 USD

Requirements: Mac boxen; FireWire-enabled iMac, iBook or G4; Mac OS 9.x; Mac OS X Jaguar or later. WinTel boxen; PYRO/1394-enabled PC or notebook with CD-ROM drive; Windows 98 SE, ME, 2000, or XP; PIII 400 MHz or greater.

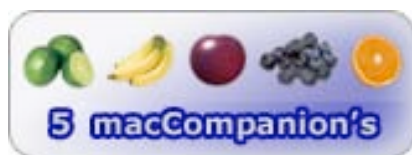
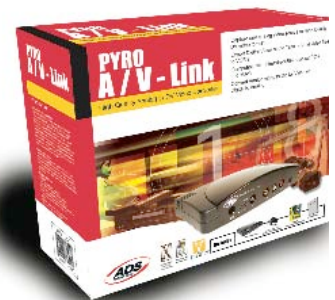
Comparisons:

http://www.adstech.com/products/API_550/intro/comparisons/AV-DVconverters.htm

Forums:

<http://www.adstech.com/support/Resources/Resources.asp?productId=API-550&productName=PYRO%20A/V%20Link>

Comes with: PYRO A/V Link unit; AC adapter; 6 ft. RCA A/V cable; 6 ft. S-VHS cable; 6 ft. 6-pin to 6-pin 1394 (FireWire) cable; 6 ft. 4-pin to 4-pin 1394 cable; Ulead Video Studio 7 SE DVD software (for WinTel boxen). API-550 Rev C with firmware Version 3.0 was reviewed on a Mac® OS X™ 10.3.5 system.



Strengths: Great breakout-box for audio-digital conversions.

Weaknesses: Oh, maybe some smoothing issues with Ulead software on the WinTel platform. Didn't notice on the Mac.

The Pyro A/V Link is a breakout-box designed for converting media between analog and digital signals.

The front of the box, left to right are the Mode Switch (Analog/Digital), power light, digital and analog indicators, SVHS In port, RCA Video In Port, Left Audio In Port, Right Audio In Port and the 4-pin Digital Video (Firewire) In port.

On the backside, there are lots more ports to look at. Left to right are the dip-switch assembly (taped over in the default settings), a Firewire port, Right Audio Out port, Left Audio Out port, Video out, S-Video out, red/blue/green Input/Output ports the On/Off switch and the 5 Volt DC power port.

Okay, it's a cute gadget, but what do we do with it? Well, what kinds of old video media do you have that you would like to save onto a DVD or view once again onscreen? Do you have a vintage videotape machine begging to get media transferred before it deteriorates further? Do you have one of those early miniDV camcorder tape units that pop into that old VHS tape recorder or BetaMax tapes that are on their last legs? How about all those VHS tapes that you invested in that are aging? Now you can take those hardware devices before they breathe their last and bring that media over through this device to the Digital Video arena.



Maybe you have Digital Video that you want to edit in Analog format. Well, now you can with this tool. You probably can even use one of those old 1950's reel-to-reel audiotape units if you really want to.

For the WinTel crowd, the system comes with the Ulead Video Studio™ 7 SE package, but the 64-page User's Guide is pretty sparing when it comes to Macs. No software included. ADS Tech assumes we all use iMovie® or Final Cut® Pro. Much of the manual seems to be dedicated to WinTel gotchas and using the VideoStudio software. The Mac setup is typical no-problem plug&play.

So what are the Geeky Specifications like for the Pyro A/V Link? Capture Resolution is 720 x 480 @ 30 frames per second for NTSC (<http://www.ntsc-tv.com/>) and 720 x 576 @ 25 frame per second with PAL (<http://www.high-techproductions.com/pal.htm>). Audio capture in DV video format is 48, 44.1 and 32 KHz (12 and 16 bit). It converts analog (RCA, S-VHS or Component Video) to DV video format without the use of a computer and can capture from a Digital Video camcorder with full device control. It can export DV Video to analog video tape recorders (RCA, S-VHS) and even creates VCD, SVCD and DVs.

Now about that dip-switch assembly. The switches need to be set before connecting to a computer.

Here are the settings:

4 Position Dip Switch Settings

Position	1 Video Format	2 DV Source	3 Operating System Selection	4 Locked Audio
Up	PAL	Mac/Win98SE/ME/XP	Windows 2000	Unlock Audio
Down	NTSC	Windows 2000/DV Camcorder	DV Camcorder/Mac/Win98SE/ME/XP	Locked Audio

Switch 4 is intended to lock Audio mode so audio and video sync both remain locked during video capture.

With Mac OS X on early versions there was an issue: DV Export from iMovie or Final Cut Pro - Proper DV decoding through the PYRO A/V Link looked for a specific header pattern in the DV data stream from the Mac as input source. Occasionally Firewire in Mac OS X corrupted this header pattern, and caused the A/V Link to fail decoding. Apple engineering group provided a fix for Mac OS X FireWire SDK 16 at ftp://ftp.apple.com/developer/Development_Kits/XFireWireSDK16.dmg.bin

In the links provided above, there are 3 Forums and also a comparison chart between the Pyro A/V Link and its competitors.

Not everything can be converted by Graphic Converter (<http://www.lemkesoft.com/>), and Apple hasn't provided all the backward-compatible tools needed for bringing the past into the present. ADS Tech has addressed that niche market nicely with the Pyro A/V Link. If you go to their site, you will see the Professional version also includes a few Adobe® packages as well for about 3-4 times the price of this stand-alone unit.

Shareware

Mail Factory 1.1 – an application to design and print address labels and envelopes on computers operated by Mac OS X. Reviewed by Harry (doc) Babad and Ted Bade (Whose comments are in blue.)



BeLight Software, Ltd.

PO Box 47

65005, Odessa

Ukraine

+380 48 738-08-49

sales@belightsoft.com

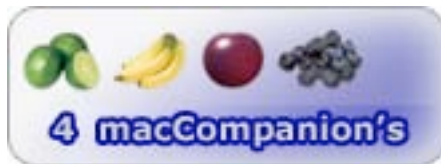
<http://www.belightsoft.com/mailfactory/>

\$29.95 USD <http://www.belightsoft.com/buy/>

Size 10.8 MB

Requirements: Mac OS X 10.2 or later. Tested on a 1 GHz dual processor PowerPC G4 Macintosh with 2 MB DDR SDRAM running under Macintosh OS X 10.3.5. [doc_Babad];

Tested on a G5/1.8GHz PowerPC with 1024 Megs of Ram, using MacOS X 10.3.5. [Ted].



For collected addresses in supported sources.



For those that don't.

Strengths: Mail Factory lets you print addresses on labels and envelopes. You can also design fancy labels and envelopes using dozens of ready-made designs, or insert custom images with your company logo or other graphics into your label. You can print on sheet labels from most sheet paper sizes. I, doc_Babad, explored the software on my DYMO label printer, using manually entered addresses only; a limitation based on the way I collect addresses.

Mail Factory has the ability to pull clip art from the Internet, program is packed with a wide variety of clip art and supports many label and envelope forms. [Ted]

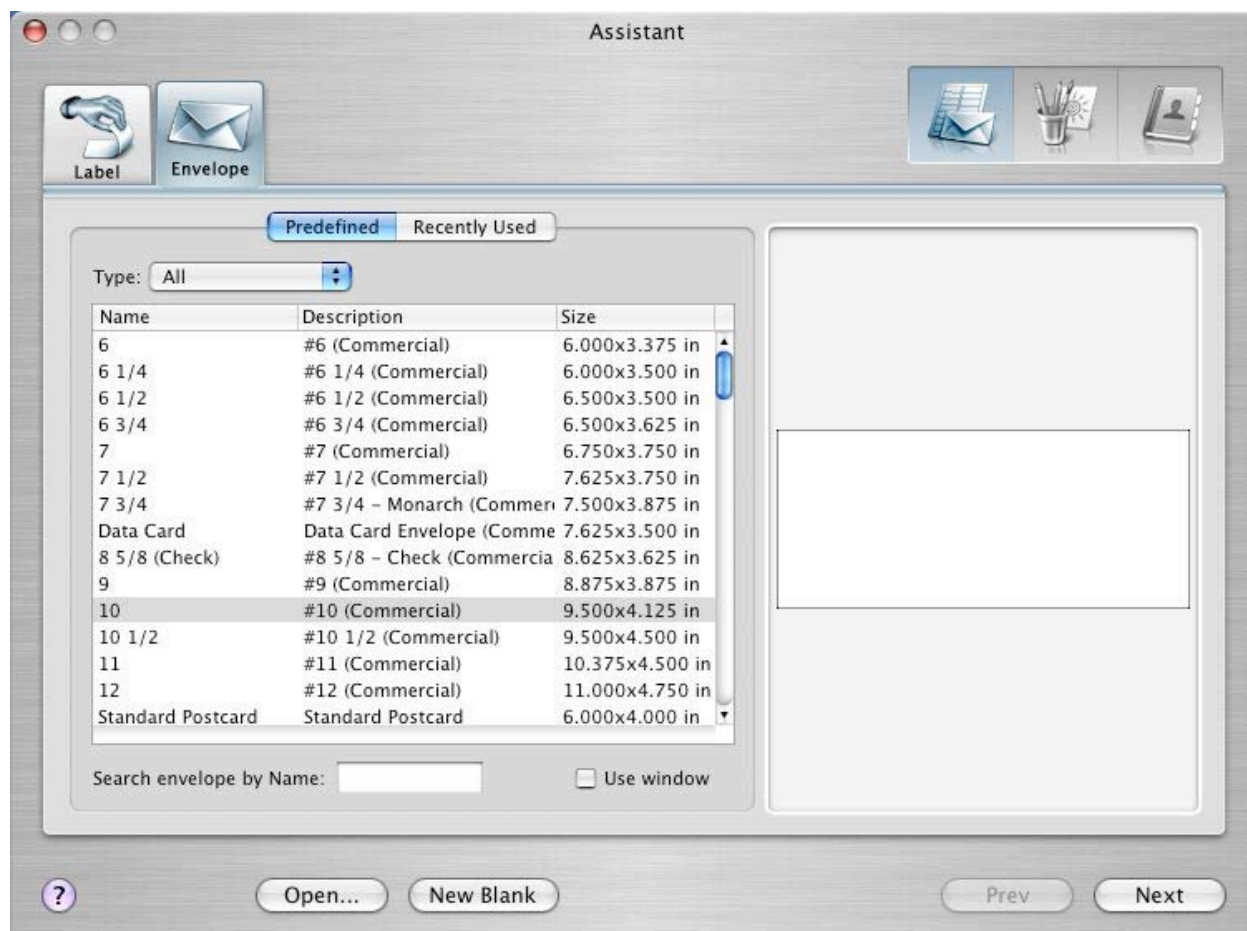
Weaknesses: The address appearance issues... the gaps between Address components have been reduced, compared to version 1.0 (except the "City State Zip" string, which conforms to USPS requirements).

The software defaults to Apple's Address book, even if you don't use that program. You must load Entourage address database every time you run Mail Factory and need to access it.

Introduction

I own a Dymo LabelWriter 330 but am often disappointed with both software that shipped with the unit and its updated versions. I found, after a little experimentation, that Mail Factory 1.1 is a good improvement over Dymo software, giving me more control of the appearance and formation of the labels I create. Although, I accumulate scores of scores of addresses a year, I seldom enter complete contact information in my Eudora address book my Email client of choice. Instead I use Filemaker Pro 6.0 (FMP) to store such information, and when I have time to get relational, FMP 7.0.

Mail Factory integrates with data from Apple Address Book, Microsoft Entourage, Now Contact, and Eudora. It supports most popular label paper, can print to DYMO label printers, can generate US Postal Service POSTNET barcodes to expedite delivery, offers automatic address formatting for more than 50 countries, and includes dozens of built-in templates as well as more than 500 supplied clipart images. It also features an internet-based image search.



I am not as organized as Harry. I have addresses all over the place. Mainly I use Entourage, but a number of contacts came to me as vCards, which went right into my Apple Address book. Mail factory does a great job of digging out the addresses for you from these packages. If you use Apple's Address Book, the integration is superb, from the first time your run Mail Factory.

When you run Mail Factory, it opens a "Contacts" menu that contains the contacts in your Apple Address book. To insert the address of a particular contact, simply click on the address and it is inserted. The "sender" field comes from your Apple Address book entry for yourself.

One of Harry's complaints was about the address format. When you select a format for your particular country, this format includes several fields. If your entry for a particular contact doesn't have information in that field, Mail Factory leaves a blank space where the information should go. Which makes the formatting look rather odd.

I found that most of this information is stuff one might use for a more business-like situation (such as company name, and a prefix). Mail Factory allows you to create a custom address layout. I created one called "home use", which included only the information I normally keep in my database. Once a contact is on the Mail

Factory window, all I need to do is tell Mail Factory to apply this custom format to the address, now the address looks the way I want it.

One complaint about Mail Factory is that the default contact application is Apple's Address book. So if I want to access my Entourage addresses, I always have to go through the process of changing to this set every time I use Mail Factory. Also, every time I switch Mail Factory to Entourage, it has to run Entourage, then load in the addresses from that database, a process that adds time to getting a label out.

According to a Belight representative, a future release of Mail Factory should allow one to select a different default address database. Also it should pull the Entourage database into itself, so it doesn't need to be pulled in every time you use it.

I found Using Mail Factory was a simple process. The program includes an assistant feature that will guide the user through the creation process. Once you create a label set, for instance an envelope or a layout for a certain type of sheet labels, you can save this format to use again later.

It's probably me, but I can never manage to get Word or even NisusWriter Express to consistently print envelopes correctly. I am sure it is that I am doing something wrong, but...

Mail Factory made the process of creating an envelope so easy that I will probably never use a word processor for this ever again! The very first time I printed an envelope using Mail Factory, it came out right. Considering I have spent hours trying to convince Word to print an envelope correctly, I have to say I love Mail Factory!! It's like a Mac, it just works.

I had a lot of fun with Mail Factory's ability to add graphics to the envelope. Not only does it come with a large database of clip art, but it also can make use of Google's clip art search engine to pull clip art off the Internet, adding a plethora of images. One scenario that came to mind as I was playing with this feature was that of a small business owner. Perhaps they want to do a mailing to customers to promote new products or promotions. More than likely, this shop sells something made by a larger company, which probably has images available.

To try this idea out, I did search for images pertaining to Boyd's Bears Inc., a manufacturer of stuffed Teddy Bears and such things. They are a smaller manufacturer, but have a pretty strong following of collectors (I live with one!!). I was pleased to see that the search provided me with a number of useful images that could be added to an envelope to spice it up. I am sure this feature could be used for many other companies that make images and clip art available on the Internet.



The Key Features of Mail Factory Include –

- Integration with Apple Address Book, Microsoft Entourage, Now Contact, Eudora. (This worked great for me, Ted, using both Apples Address book and Entourage).
- It has powerful databases search option and address selection abilities for those address book and PIM programs it supports.
- Support for DYMO label printers.
- Support for most popular labels templates from Avery, DYMO, MACO APLI, A-One, Siegel.

- Support for vCards
- US Postal Service POSTNET barcodes can be printed on labels and envelopes to expedite delivery.
- Automatic address formatting for more than 50 countries.
- The ability to set up custom-sized envelopes and label layouts.
- Dozens of built-in designs for addressing and shipping labels, envelopes.

More than 500 supplied clipart images and built-in Internet image search.

Glitches and Issues

Mail Factory is fast, comes with ready-made designs, and is an excellent for both single or batch printing but has for me one flaw that make it impossible, in this release, to use. Since I do not store addresses in any of the supported source compilations [e.g., Apple Address Book, Microsoft Entourage, Now Contact, Eudora's address books]. To use Mail Factory, I would need to manually enter each address I wanted to print - My FMP databases which now contain at least 8000 entries and even transferring 5% of them to either Eudora or Apple's address book, would negate any added convenience I would get from using this otherwise appealing software. Indeed I couldn't find any means of adding ALL of my, albeit skimpy, Eudora address book to the software's database. Selecting "Eudora" in the contact windows pulled up 21 irrelevantly named items [half entitled no name.]

I found that my use of addresses in either of my two databases was not always standard. Also, the default label format in Mail Factory is more Business oriented, with all types of information a personal letter doesn't need. It would have been nice to have a label format for personal mail. Instead, I had to go into the label format and remove those items I didn't want to see.

Unlike most products these days the folks at Belight Software Ltd did not make a complete product manual available, to capture the entire help file, each section require a separate conversion [Print to PDF] followed by using acrobat the import the pieces into a whole manual, but sadly lacking in screen shots we Macintosh users, rely on when leaning a piece of software. (Ted says "Tsk, Tsk, not even an included PDF manual)."

FLASH-I, doc_Babad, received a prompt reply from Belight's Helen Nersesova in response to my emailed concerns about the limitations my computing style imposes on my use of the software, and therefore my lower score for FMP users. She implied that although they are not presently working on extracting addresses from the proprietary Dymo address book software, they "As we are flexible vendors :), we are working to release next update soon. This version will enable the users to import text file (tab or comma delimited) with contacts. It's easy to get such type of file using the File Maker export. We plan to release the update in a few weeks." That would, when I get and use the new version, make it a powerful tool for creating address labels and envelopes and in my eyes raise its usability to me considerably-I can hardly wait.

Conclusions

According to both the publisher and our experience, Mail Factory helps you more effectively create envelopes and address labels more when:

- The professional look of your correspondence is important
- You send out letters or packages regularly



- You care about faster and accurate delivery
- You wish to create personalized envelopes or labels
- You have a DYMO printer
- You want to send mail at USPS automation rates and save on postage

"So if you are still writing addresses for your mailings by hand and have relatively complete contact information in your PIMs or email client address book(s) Mail Factory could be the solution for creating mail labels and printing envelopes, plain or fancy. The program allows you to manage all your mailings and requires only a minimal learning curve. You can print on most popular address label and envelope formats as well as create fully personalized labels."

We rate this product at 4.0 macCs for those who've collected addresses in the supported sources and a 2.5 for those who don't.

I, Ted, found Mail Factory fun and very easy to use. It takes creating both Envelopes and address labels to a new level of creativeness. One can add images and symbols. Who said creating an envelope couldn't be a creative process?

Because Mail Factory is so easy to use and creates great labels in a very intuitive way, I believe this small purpose specific application will easily become an important tool in my everyday use. However, for the best use of it, I need to get my addresses a bit more organized!

I concur with Harry's rating of 4.0 MacCs.

Software

disclabel 2.1 Reviewed by Robert Pritchett



Smile
on my mac

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402-323-6692

●FAX: +1-408-884-2320

info@smileonmymac.com

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

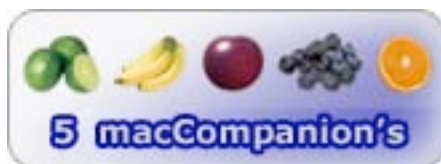
Released: June 24, 2004

\$30 USD <http://www.smileonmymac.com/disclabel/purchase.html>

Comparisons: <http://www.smileonmymac.com/disclabel/compare.html>

Download: <http://www.smileonmymac.com/disclabel/download.html>

Requirements: 6.1 MB hard drive space; Mac OS X 2.5 or later.



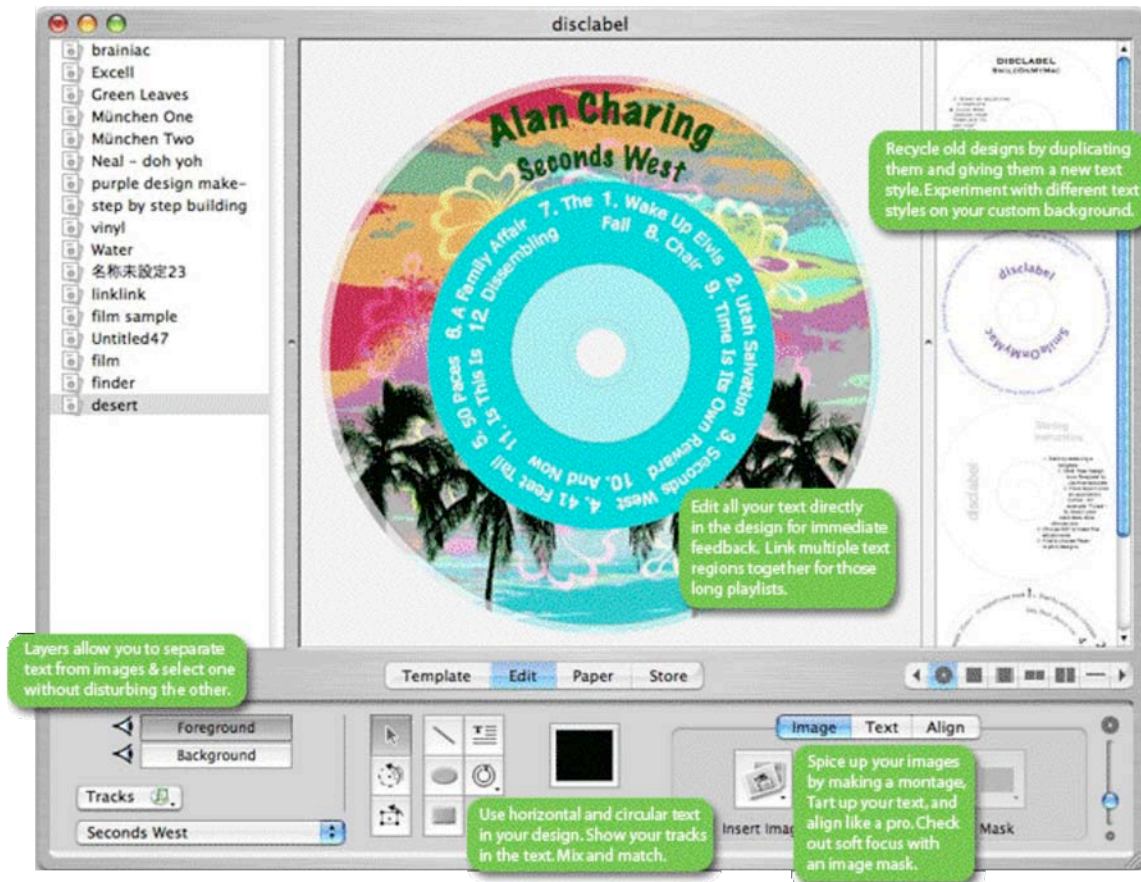
Strengths: It just works. Multilingual.

Weaknesses: None found.

disclabel by SmileonMyMac is one of those programs you have been asking for if you do any kind of CD or DVD duplication. There are a few shareware packages designed for the WinTel environment, but where are the ones that work under Mac OSX? I found them here in the Comparisons link shown above. In this case, disclabel covers all the bases, including being tied into Neato.com, the folks we are also using at the software firm where my other job is located.

I spent the last two weeks checking out the Wintel scene for software that does both the CD cover for jewel cases and the CD or DVDs themselves. I wanted the spline cover too. I found a few .dot templates for Microsoft® Word™, and 3 or more programs that are shareware packages that more or less did the job. Then I asked about Neato.com and guess what? They did have a large downloadable package for registered neato.com users for a variety of .exe application software such as Corel® 8, Photoshop®, and Microsoft® Word™ as well as a number of others – but for Wintel only. For the Mac however, all they had were image templates and no software.

We reviewed a package that coincidentally works with the Bravo II duplicator reviewed last month by Shane French. The review of that other labeling software was done by Ted Bade a few months ago and then I recently discovered dislabel.



What makes dislabel special besides having a name that begins lower-cased? Well, it does have a few features worth mentioning:

It is available in English, Japanese, German, Italian, and French. It can import track lists from iTunes, iPhoto, iDVD, Finder, and Toast. It handles all Fellowes or Neato label types as well as printing directly to CD duplicators. Label creation can be automated with AppleScript. Text can be edited even in circles. Tracks can be added (along with beats-per-minute tags) directly from audio CDs or from shared playlists via Rendezvous. Design objects can go all the way to the edge or can be constrained with inner or outer boundaries and print bleed can be specified.

For \$30 USD, what's not to like?

Envision: The New Way To Experience The Web Reviewed by Derek Meier



Open Door
Networks

Open Door Networks Inc.

110 S. Laurel St.

Ashland, OR 97520

(541)488-4127

Fax:(541)488-1708

info@opendoor.com

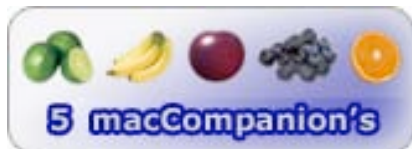
<http://www.opendoor.com>

Download:

<http://www.opendoor.com/envision/EnvisionDownload.html>

\$49 USD

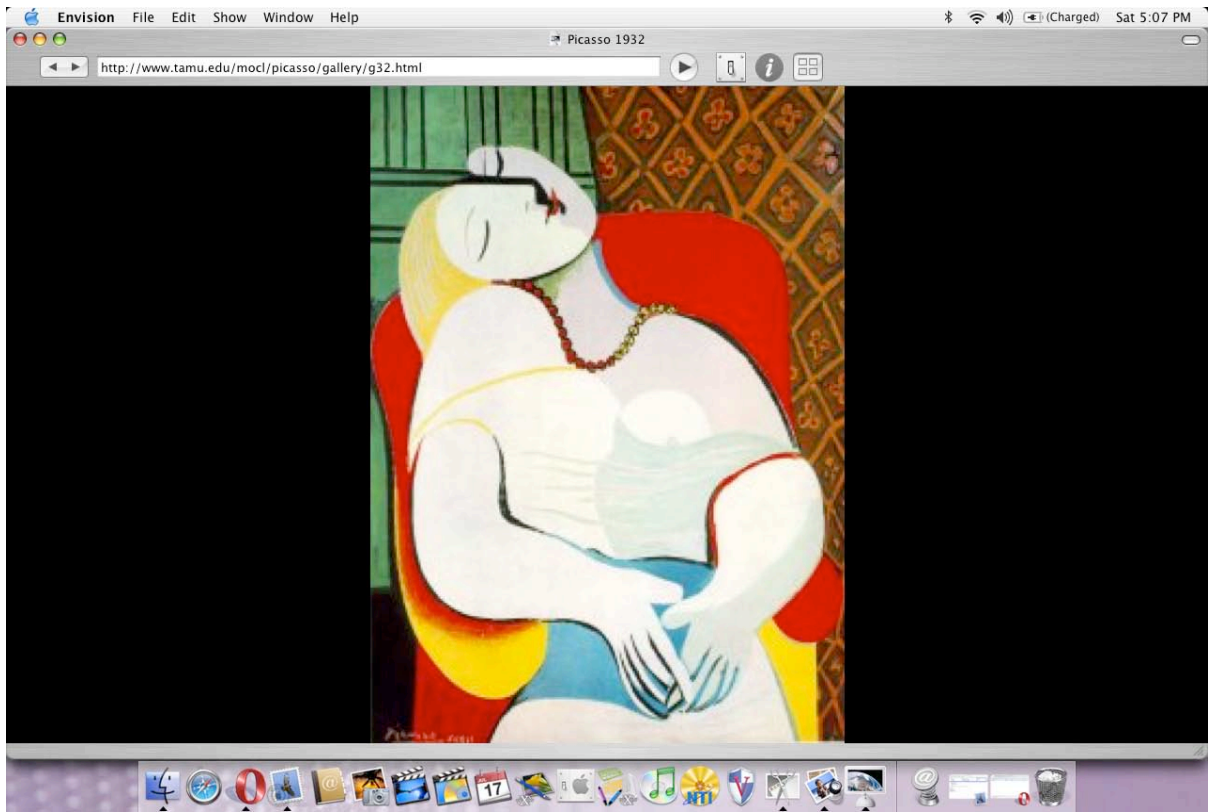
Requirements: MAC OS 10.2.8 or later and a broadband connection. 1 GB free disk space highly recommended, Web browser to explore details behind images of interest.



Strengths: Simple and fun to use.

Weakness: None found!

Envision is software by Open Door Networks that allows you to view images on a web site creating a kind of web show. It can be downloaded from their web site as a 30-day trial. Installation is as simple as copying from the disk image to the applications folder.



Use

Envision includes numerous web shows so you can quickly get up and running to see what it really does. Clicking on the Picasso web show it went through a slide show of Picasso's paintings. You can view them as a regular size or increase to full screen or you can go through and look through them as thumbnails. If you see an image you are curious about clicking on that image will take you to the page the image is located on.

Creating web shows is as simple as pointing envision to a family album site or a museum site and you can create slideshows from all the images available on the site. For example clicking on new and typing in a web site you could view all images on that site through Envision. Then you can save that slideshow for later viewing. You can also go back to that web show to delete and undelete images from a show. If you haven't been to the web site for awhile you can have Envision rescan the site for new updated images.



Envision also allows you to create a screensaver for your Mac just select a folder to hold the images and when you see images you like you can add them to the folder. Also if you see an image you are view from a web site and want to keep just that image you can drag it to the desktop or folder as well as set it as your desktop image.

Conclusion

Envision is truly a new way to experience the web. It provides a great wonderful way to view images on the web. What would be really nice is to be able to send your webshows to a non-Envision user. If you have not already tried Envision I highly recommend you do. Also if you do, don't forget to sign up for their "show of the week" on their website.

iData 2 Version 2.0.4 Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Robin Casady, Mike Wright

<http://www.robincasady.com>

support@idata2.com

<http://www.idata2.com>

Released: August 15, 2004

\$70 USD <http://www.idata2.com/purchase.html>

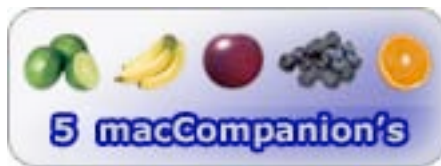
Download: http://www.idata2.com/download_idata.html

<http://www.idata2.com/help/>

Requirements: Mac OS X, 3.2 MB Hard Drive space.

Example:

<http://www.coastalfog.net/idata2/examples/id2sheetmusic.html>



Strengths: Quick and easy location for items that should be organized.

Weaknesses: None found, except maybe questioning the price.

iData2™ by Robin Casady and Mike Wright is being described as a memory upgrade for the brain. At first I didn't "get it", because my brain tends to only get things after spending some quality time with a product. This one is a quick freeform database storage and retrieval application.

iData2 provides full Unicode, Email import and browser support. It also provides Image support in the Freeform text area and links to files and automatically launches them when "touched". Apparently just about anything can be dropped into the freeform text area since it works natively with Cocoa. iData2 is a descendant of QuickDex, InfoGenie and iData Pro, so if you are familiar with any of those products, this one should not be too strange to you at all.

The phone icon dials out, if the data has been properly provided. Same with either Email or websites that have been entered into the database. And iData2 also has a spellchecker.

Label and envelope printing will come later, but currently there is a workaround by taking idx2xf format and importing it back into the older iData 1.0.17 version if you can't wait for that feature.

The screenshot is one of the fully implemented examples captured from VersionTracker.com and is the first thing you see when going to the idxdata2 website.

URL: idata


Navigation icons: Back, Forward, Home, Stop, Reload, Print, Mail, Phone, Print, A, Menu, Right Arrow

Search: iData 2

#15 2467 of 2467 selected

Category	Software you can't live without
Name	iData 2
URL	http://www.idata2.com

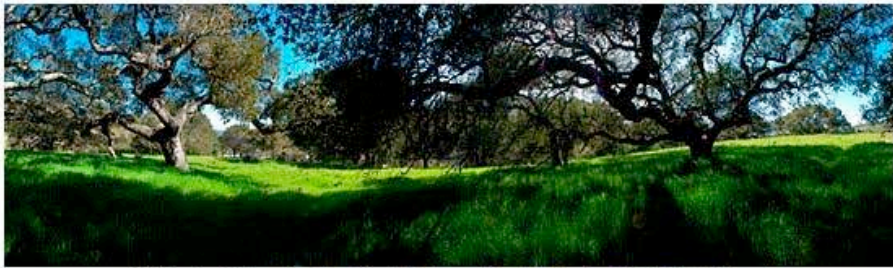
Available Now!



iData 2 is a freeform database application with optional fields—superb for keeping all sorts of miscellaneous info.

- *Store Images and Text*
- *Link to Files on Your Hard Drive*
- *Grab Web Addresses, Images, and Text*
- *Archive Email*
- *Dial Phone Numbers*
- *Use the Fast Search or Select to find anything quickly.*

Whether it is scribbles from the back of a napkin, notes on scientific research, or client-contact info, iData will make it easily accessible. You can even include images for personnel records, club memberships, ebay auctions, collections, inventory, photo archives with file links, etc.



California Oaks: <file://localhost/Volumes/Ryoko/Photos/Oaks/Oaks2.psd>

iData is very useful with the Internet as well. Has your Bookmarks or Favorites menu become bloated and unmanageable? Can't remember what half the links are for, and can't find the one you need? Is your email program clogged with old messages? Import them into iData. For web pages, use iData to grab web addresses directly from your browser whenever you find an interesting page. Copy text and images from the web page and iData can automatically paste them into the Freeform Text Area when you grab the page address. Any web page address anywhere in iData will be blue underlined. Click on it and it will launch the page in your browser. For email, iData 2 can import messages from Apple Mail, Entourage, Eudora, MailSmith, Mozilla, Netscape, and PowerMail. Email addresses are clickable anywhere in iData.

Links:

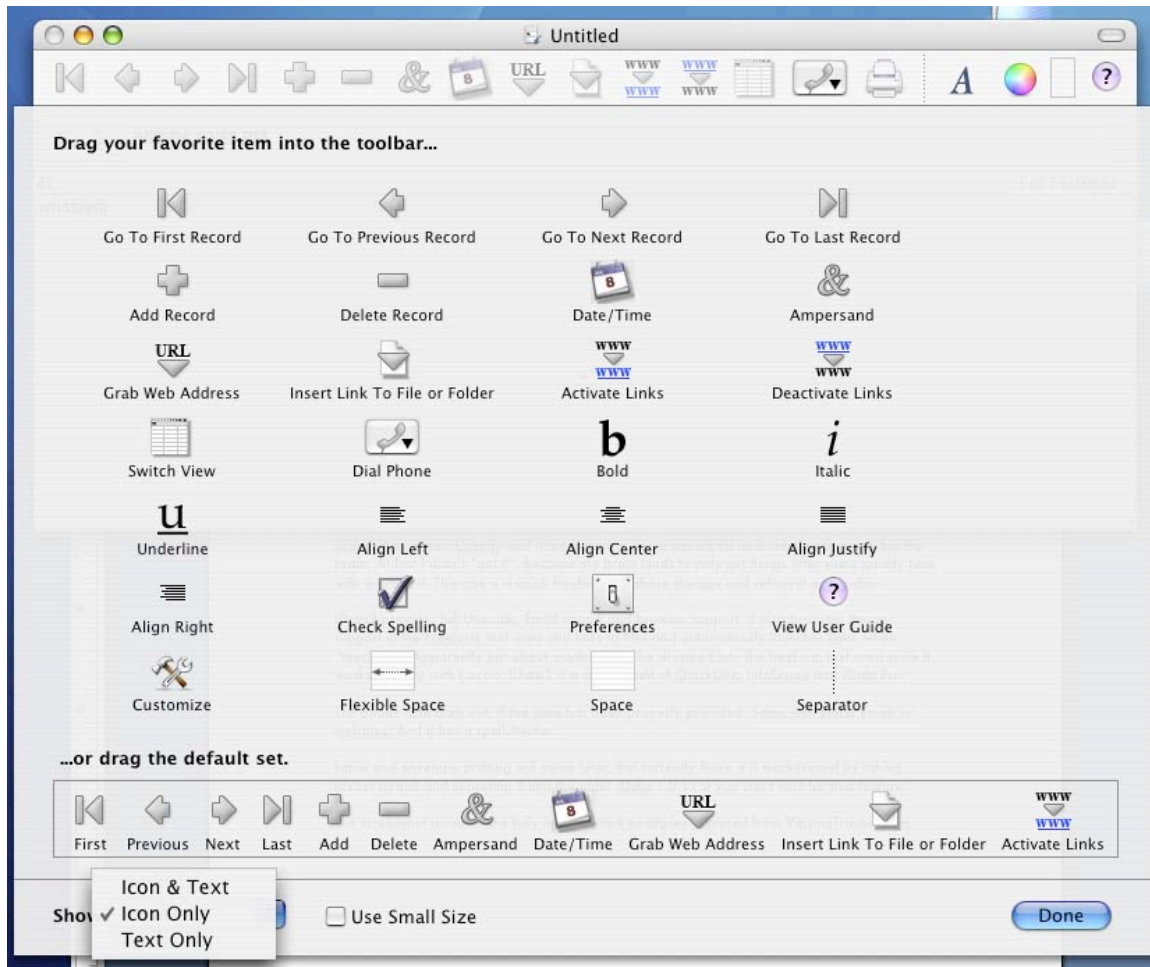
Purchase a Serial Number: <http://www.idata2.com/purchase.html>

Download the Application: http://www.idata2.com/download_idata.html

More Info: <http://www.idata2.com/help/>

www.versiontracker.com

Here are the options with the most recent release:



Preferences all play nice too with Mac OS X 10.3.5. What I see here is a souped-up next-gen Post-it app that probably could have an impact on database-handling within Tiger. Why not give it a whirl?

LogoCreator-Expansion Pack 1 Reviewed by Derek Meier



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Omaha, NE 68114-4789
(402) 554-1400
Fax: (402) 391-2413
sales@macxware.com
<http://www.macxware.com>

Download: <http://www.macxware.com/downloads.asp>
\$30 USD

Requirements: Mac OS X 10.2.6 or higher (including 10.3,
An installed version of LogoCreator Software, 25 MB of disc
space
128MB RAM, CD-ROM Drive.



Strengths: Adds over 200 brand new objects to the already great objects in LogoCreator.

Weakness: None



If you read my review of The Logo Creator in the August issue of MacCompanion you now that I think the LogoCreator is a great piece of software. Well it gets even better with the LogoCreator Expansion Pack 1.

Going through a simple installation it puts the new objects into the element setter in its own TLC Expansion Pack 1 category. The package adds 35 really cool new orbs, 32 swooshes and 10 backdrop elements. For me the most notable are the orbs they are really nicely done. The package also includes 30 commercial use TrueType fonts some of which are pretty nice as well.





REMEMBER the PAST - CHALLENGE the FUTURE

The LogoCreator Expansion Pack 1 is a nice addition to the LogoCreator allowing you to have more design options for your logos. The expansion pack is well worth the price and should be a must have if you own the LogoCreator but be forewarned you may spend hours playing with the great new objects creating new logos.



OnlyMac Software

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Fax: +49 6821 865987

UStIdNr.: DE210372044

Steuernummer: 030/275/00241

info@onlymac.de

<http://www.onlymac.de/indexe.html>

Released: August 14, 2004

Product:

<http://www.onlymac.de/html/stammbaum4en.html>

Purchase: \$45 USD, \$20 USD Upgrade,

<http://order.kagi.com/cgi-bin/store.cgi?storeID=2ZL&lang=en>

Download:

http://www.onlymac.de/html/download_all.html

Requirements: Apple PowerMac with G3; Mac OS X 10.2.8 or later; Resolution: 1024 x 768.



MacFamilyTree

The easy to use genealogy software.



Strengths: Cocoa-based. Quick, easy, simple to use.

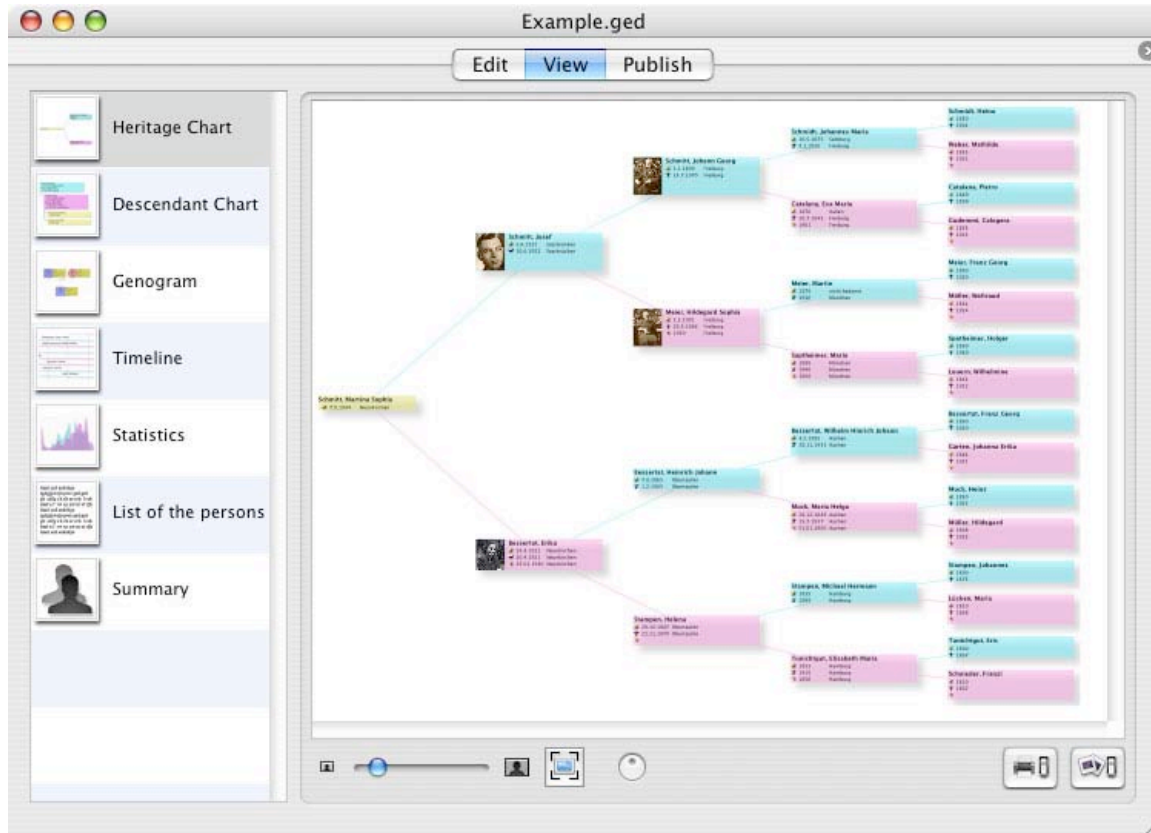
Weaknesses: None found.

If you do Genealogy and want to use the Mac with OS X, you don't have a lot of real choices. MacFamilyTree 4.0 by Stefan Sicurella is the most recent program that has been made available to us, and it has some very nice touches.

Download the demo and see what I mean. In the Example.ged there are 3 choices of *Edit*, *View* and *Publish*. In the *View* section there are seven options; Heritage Chart, Descendant Chart, Genogram, Timeline, Statistics, List of Persons and Summary. Genogram was one I had not seen before. *Publish* gives three options; *Burn* to CD or DVD, *Export to html*, to send to a hard drive or to .mac with 1 to 6 generations to be displayed per page and .mac *iDisk* where either a file or pictures can be posted.

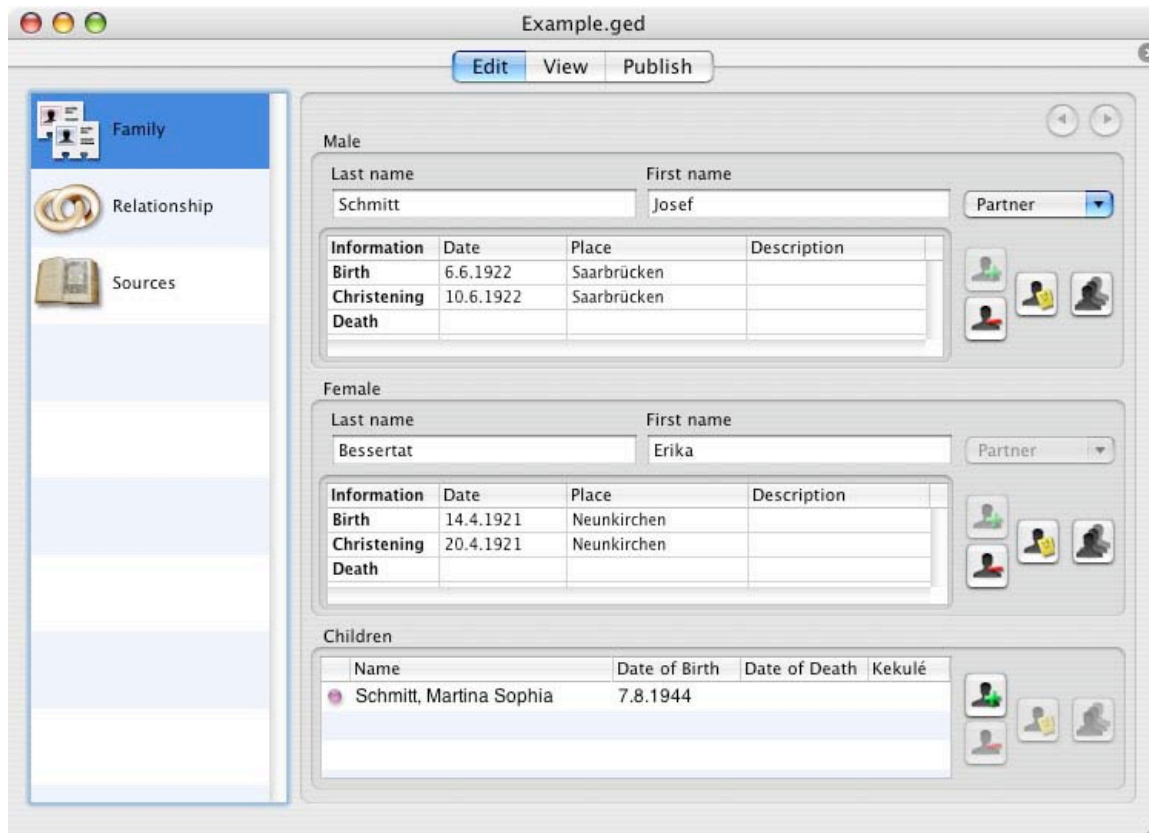
What is a Genogram? "A genogram is a representation of a Family tree, containing various information about the members of a family and their relations, spanning over at least three generations. Genograms show, in graphic form, information about a family, enabling a quick overview of complex family structures and offer a rich source for hypothesis on correlations of both clinical problems within the family structure, as well as the historical development of this structure and problems related with this." (Monica MacGoldrick)

Here is what the Heritage Chart looks like. It is what we have called a Pedigree Chart in the past. At the bottom of the screen is a slide bar for zooming in or out. Next to it is a centering tool and next to that is a dial for navigating around a screen. When the lower right items are clicked, they reveal more options. The images show a lightswitch – but are really just a pop-up for printing or pictures. Each one is a unique but needed and welcome tool and give this Genealogy application a touch of class.



Back to Edit mode, there are three options; Family, Relationships and Sources.

Over to the right there is a Partner dropdown menu and below that are 4 options that can be added or subtracted. The yellow document in front of the middle silhouette indicates it is for adding events. When clicked, another events screen pops up with three options; General, Events or Media. In Events, around 48 different types of events can be chosen from Adoption to Testament. It is culture and religious sensitive, meaning whether Bar Mitzvas, First Communion or LDS Temple ordinance work can be recorded. Under Media, Pictures or web Links can be added. The Relationship option covers those binding activities such as marriages or even broken processes such as annulments. Sources is where items can be listed from where information has been gathered.



It seems that just about everything can be customized in Preferences.

Off to the left side a running list of names that have been added into the database are shown. When that list is pulled further to the left, the Kekulé numbers can also be revealed if numbers have been assigned. For those not familiar with Genealogy-Speak, what is Kekulé? It might be the name of a Polynesian warrior, but if you guessed that, you would be incorrect in this case:

“In the 18th century, a wise man named Stephan Kekulé from Stradonitz in Germany, invented an ancestor numbering system, which to the present day is being used by nearly all genealogists all over the world. In plain language this numbering system is called Ancestor Numbering according to Kekulé.

The system is very simple:

The starting point of the ancestor list is the Proband, the person with whom the Heritage Chart starts. This person is given number 1.

The parents become numbers 2 and 3. Note that the male ancestor always gets an equal ancestor number, whereas the female receives an unequal ancestor number. Thus, my father is number 2 and my mother is number 3.

The next generation is the grandparents and they receive the numbers 4 to 7. The paternal grandparents will be given the numbers 4 and 5, whereas the maternal grandparents will receive the numbers 6 and 7. This is repeated generation after generation, so that a multiplication of the number of the male by 2, always equals the new number for the father - and his number plus 1, gives the wife's number in the next generation.”

MacFamilyTree 4.0 is based on the LDS-generated GEDCOM 5.5 standard for international and cross-platform exchange of genealogical data. It also now includes Unicode character compatibility so it can be used with Eastern European and Asian languages. It also has been designed for one-click upload to web sites such as

.Mac (with iDisk capability) and allows for attaching pictures using iPhoto®. It also is designed for storing data on either CD or DVD media and can merge various family trees.

I highly recommend looking at the websites provided above. I won't duplicate efforts done so well there by Stefan Sicurella.

If you want to get started as a beginning genealogist, MacFamilyTree 4.0 makes a lot of sense. If you want to go much deeper, try using Reunion 8 and look at the review done earlier for that package at <http://www.maccompanion.com/archives/january2004/features.html>.

Either way, this is just one more step in the direction of bringing "the hearts of the children to their fathers" and vice versa. MacFamilyTree 4.0 makes this process practically painless. You just provide the content and fill in the blanks. As you gather more information, you will begin to realize what a miracle it is that you are alive and you will begin to get a glimpse of how far we have come since Adam and Eve begat mankind around 7,000 years ago.

Dig Deeper

<http://genealogy.about.com/cs/beginnerscorner/>

<http://web.ukonline.co.uk/nigel.battysmith/gedinfo.html>

<http://www.cyndislist.com/gedcom.htm>

http://www.vjet.demon.co.uk/ftree/gedcom_5.5/html/introduction.html

<http://www.coraweb.com.au/software.htm>

http://homepage.mac.com/nowhereman77/hacks/GenX_readme.rtf

http://sourceforge.net/project/showfiles.php?group_id=59977

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

PhotoEdit 1.31 Reviewed by Derek Meier



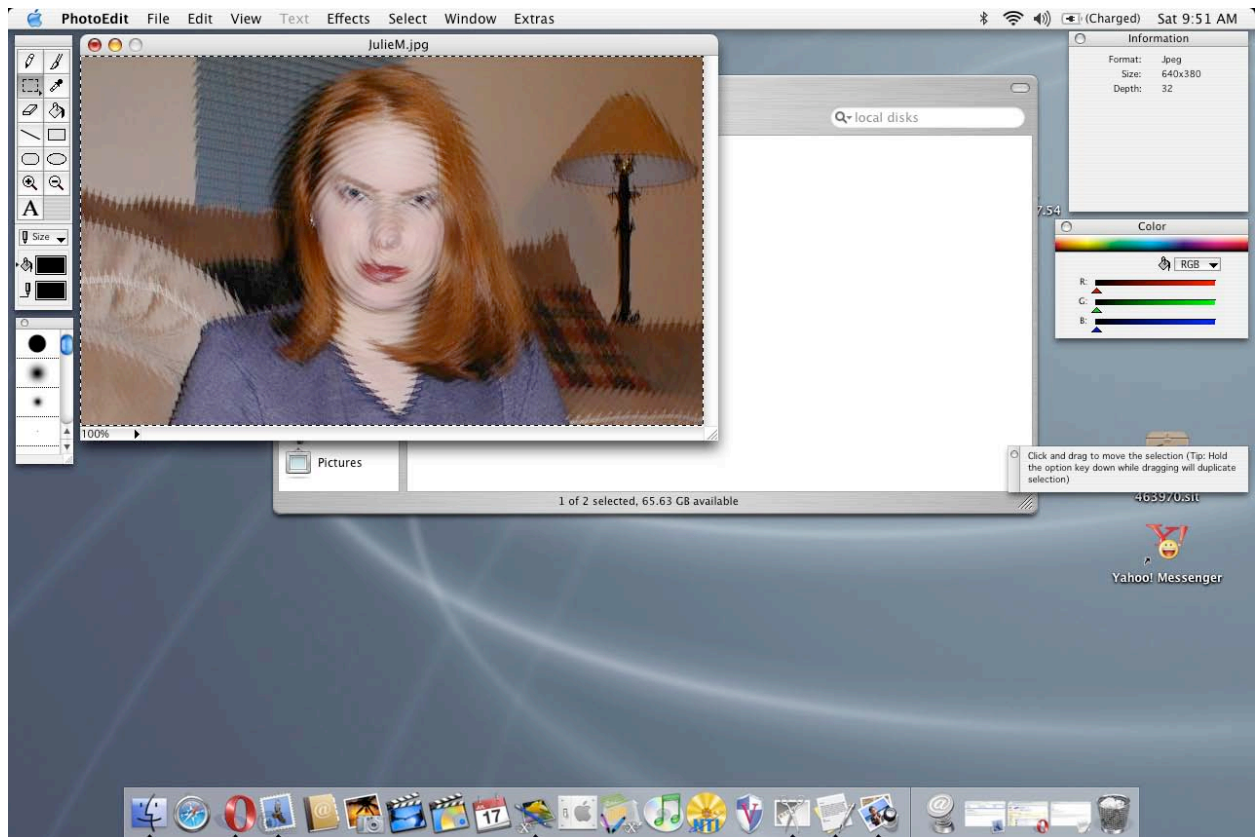
MacXware
920 South 107th Ave.
Suite 275
Omaha, NE 68114-4789
(402)554-1400
Fax:(402)391-2413
sales@macxware.com
<http://www.macxware.com>
Download: <http://www.macxware.com/downloads.asp>
\$30 USD
Requirements: G3 or better, OS X.10.1 or later, 64 MB Ram, 20 MB of Hard Disk Space.



Strengths: Some really neat effects, Nicely priced, Great manual, Media Browser.

Weaknesses: Can't save as Gif, not enough undo's

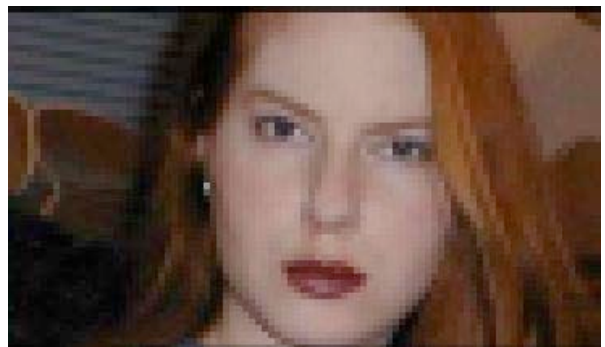
Photoedit is a software package by MacXware. PhotoEdit is a nice easy-to-use image editing program. It comes with a nice manual that goes step by step on how to use the features included. The manual comes in really handy especially if you are new to photo editing software. Being used to mainly using iPhoto® it's nice to use a program that allows you to do more with photos. I wasn't expecting it to be feature-rich like Photoshop®. I have to say I was pretty impressed.

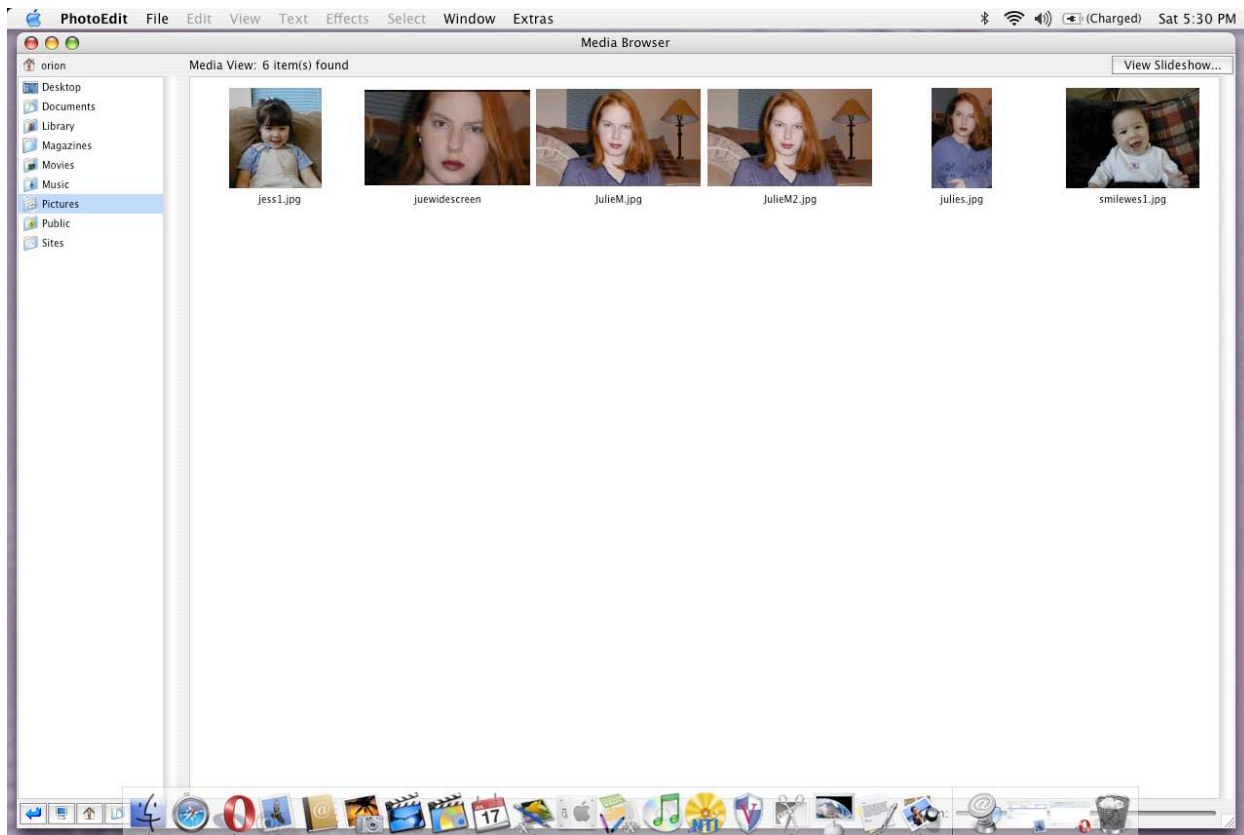


Use

The program has a toolbar and a color palette like most other image editors. I like having an uncluttered overwhelming interface and that's just what Photoedit offers. Everything is laid out well and easy to find. And it also features a nice tip windows. As a nice added bonus, Photoedit includes a Media Browser that basically works as a photo and video file manager. All images in the directory a viewed as thumbnails that you can zoom in and out.

PhotoEdit comes with a lot of slick effects that let you do almost anything from a nice ripple effect to a cool pixelate effect. Also included is the ability to create 3D images this can be done by taking to identical images that are taken at slightly different angles then combining them using 3D Anaglyphs. Although I did not have the opportunity to test this since I did not have some 3D glasses handy, if it indeed does work it should be a fun feature to play with. You can use the brush editor to create custom brushes as well as a Script Editor that allows you to create plugins in the basic programming language. This customizability allows you to make PhotoEdit better fulfill your individual needs.





During my use of Photoedit, going through the manual I did find red-eye removal more step-intensive than using iPhoto. Photoedit users may still want to bring up iPhoto to do red-eye fix. Another thing I found is that you can export everything from JPEG to Photoshop formats except one notable exclusion is exporting to GIF. Now I know that JPEG is probably the most popular format but it would be nice to have the ability to have the GIF format available. One significant drawback that affected me greatly was that single undo. I usually make mistakes and most time those mistakes are in succession having a multiple undos is a must-have. One fine feature for those unhappy with the results of their masterpiece is the discard changes button, which brings it back to the original state.

Conclusion

Photoedit is easy to use and has many features that makes it a worthwhile purchase especially at its low price. It's great for the person looking to do more with photo's than iPhoto is limited to. If you don't need to save your pictures in GIF format and if you do care to much about not having multiple undos, I would suggest looking towards Photoedit.



Versora
226 East Canon Perdido Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
805-963-9800
Fax: 805-882-2312
info@versora.com
<http://www.versora.com>

Released: June 30, 2004

\$279 USD

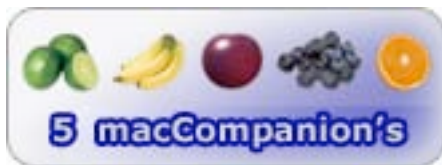
http://www.versora.com/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=34

Knowledgebase:

<http://www.versora.com/faq/kb.php?lang=en&mode=listall&prog=PWO01>

Requirements: Desire to transfer websites from Microsoft IIS to Linux servers, or Mac OS X Servers.

For Internet Managers that want to migrate away from IIS to Linux or Mac OS X



Strengths: Mac-like simplicity to migration of Websites from Microsoft servers to either Linux or Mac servers running Apache.

Weaknesses: None found.

Progression Web™ by Versora is a website migration tool designed to move sites away from Microsoft® IIS™ to Apache.

The 4-page Quick Start Guide shows how to bring over sites from IIS to Suse® Linux, RedHat® Linux and Mac® OS X with pretty much the same instructions. Pop in the CD on the WinTel platform and launch the application from the Start Menu. Tell it which Web Server needs to be migrated and choose where to store the Platform Neutral Package (PNP) and then move that file to the platform of choice after moving the CD to the new machine. Pull in the PNP, click *Continue* until the new server is configured where Apache is located. If ASP pages were used on the WinTel server, an ASP parsing engine will need to be used in Apache and those can be located at <http://www.versora.com/products/faqs>.

Versora also has other applications available for migrating other services such as Microsoft SQL or a Primary Domain Controller.

There is a nicely illustrated 40-page User Guide PDF file on the CD.

Is automatic migration worth nearly \$280 to you? Think of it this way, how much are you willing to continue paying for Microsoft licenses? Would you like to work off a system that doesn't require paying those annual fees?

Consider how long it took to get things up-and-running on the WinTel server, then decide if the painless process by Versora is worth the money. I bet you will jump at the chance if you do any kind of System Administration activities and handle web sites as an Internet Manager. Otherwise this kind of migration could take as much as 60 hours. It is an undaunting task if done manually. Humm, manual website reimplementation or automatic?

Everything gets moved, whether files, security, database tables, and configuration settings for an IIS Server to an Apache 1.3x or 2.0 Server. Links can be found in the User Guide.

Which Microsoft OSs are supported? Microsoft Windows NT 4.0, Windows XP Professional, Windows 2000 Server, and Windows Server 2003.

And Linux variants? SUSE LINUX Standard Server 8.0, SUSE LINUX Enterprise Server 8.0, SUSE LINUX Professional 9.0, Red Hat Linux 9.0 and Red Hat Enterprise Linux AS 3.

Mac OS X and Mac OS X 10.3 or later. This is a perfect solution for migrating to Xserve.

I don't think you have to think twice about this no-brainer migratory. It's cool!

Alias® SketchBook™ Pro 1.1 Reviewed by Robert Pritchett



Alias Systems Corporation
210 King Street East,
Toronto, Ontario, CANADA
M5A 1J7
800-447-2542
416-362-9181
Fax: 416-369-6140

awinfo_americas@alias.com

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

Released for Mac OS X: June 3, 2004

Product Link: http://www.alias.com/eng/products-services/sketchbook_pro/index.shtml

15-day try-before-you-buy, \$180 USD download, \$200 USD for CD version.

Download: <http://www.alias.com/sketchbookpro>

Resources: http://www.alias.com/eng/products-services/sketchbook_pro/reviews.shtml

Hardware Interface: http://www.alias.com/eng/products-services/sketchbook_pro/related_hardware.shtml

User Community:

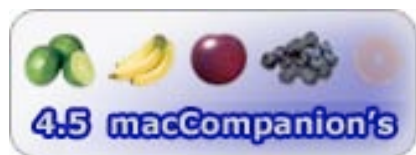
http://www.alias.com/eng/community/image_gallery/sketchbook_pro/index.jhtml

Requirements: A Tablet PC device (like the Wacom® tablets).

Macintosh® boxen: Mac OS X 10.3 or later; Power Mac G4 or later; 256MB RAM; 1024 x 768 resolution with millions of colors; 16-bit display or better; video card with 32MB video memory or better.

Windows® boxen: Intel® 800 MHz Pentium® II processor; Microsoft Windows™ XP or Microsoft Windows 2000; 128MB RAM; 24-bit color display recommended.

For Pros who use sketchbooks.



Strengths: For those who use the creative side of their brain. Superb drawing tool. Cross-platform. Email integration. No need to use the keyboard.

Weaknesses: 1.1 release. Some missing features, but not many. Easy to use and learn. Be careful with default selections for the eraser. Not intended to integrate with Photoshop or Painter. Refuses to work on anything less than a Power Mac G4.

Alias® SketchBook™ Pro 1.1 requires a Wacom® tablet (see that review in this issue of *macCompanion*) or something similar so if you don't have one, go read something else. A fair comparison would be with Painter™ 8 that comes with the Wacom tablet or maybe Fractal Design's Painter without the palettes.

What sets Sketchbook Pro apart as a freehand painting and drawing tool is the gesture-based Marking Menu™ down in the lower left corner. The Marking Menu goes deeper by either running 26 pre-configured keyboard shortcuts or pressing icons with a digital stylus. You can be ambidextrous if you so choose. The menu can be located to the right if need be.

Work off Alias' provided background if the uncluttered blank white page is too much of a challenge.

Once the work is completed it can be sent off by either Email or captured as a screenshot.



Icons in the menu appear in a circle instead of as a drop-down menu for easy choosing by tapping – no typing in 8 directions. This is a drawing tool after all, so why take your eyes and hands off what you are creating?

Do you have a mind to put images to virtual paper? Now you can be empowered to do so with little technical effort.

The main tools are: pen-driven User Interface; Marking Menu(tm) to colors, brushes, zoom and pan; 28 responsive pencils, pens,

markers, brushes and airbrushes that vary size, transparency, roundness, slant and stamp spacing; Layers in TIFF; Screen Capture; Email integration; Sketch management and presentation. It also offers 30 undo/redo steps; the snapshot tool; an auto-naming feature for document creation without doing text input; image sizing up to 8000x8000 pixels; an imports/export tool for BMP, GIF, JPEG, PNG and TIFF file formats.

Tired of standard menus, toolbars, and palettes? Learn how to use the Marking Menu. That really is the hardest part to the learning curve.

The main menu items are not customizable, but then again, this is a sketching tool and not a painter, per se. If you are used to Photoshop™, then you may notice that some features are “missing”, but then again, you are not paying Photoshop prices for this analog-like application either. And for what it lacks, you have Painter 8 that comes with the Wacom tablet anyway. Oh, and forget using this on anything earlier than a Power Mac G4. It will install, but not play. Just one more reason to leave the G3s behind.

Sketchbook Pro and the Wacom Intuos2 tablet make a great marriage of both technology and near effortless creativity. Hey, why not get both?

macCompanion Media Kit

We are the Macintosh® Professional Network (MPN), Limited Liability Corporation (LLC). MPN, LLC continues to evolve, ever since its creation in 1996 as a way to reach out to those who use computers for a living, in an effort to make their lives easier and their work both enjoyable and profitable.

Besides consulting efforts, we also provide monthly book, hardware and software reviews at [macCompanion](#). We offer ways and means for folks to get comfortable using the Macintosh™ created by the Apple® Corporation in the multibillion-dollar computer industry. We know that bad software doesn't live long in the Mac™ environment. On the other hand, good computer equipment and software becomes great as the word spreads, and we are very good at helping to spread it. Our suggestions over the years have also helped improve many successful products in use today. Through kind and gentle efforts, we have been able to help many people move to better tools-of-the-trade so they can be more productive in their work.

Besides our website, we also create *macCompanion* as a freely available PDF-based monthly. It averages about 100 pages per month. July 2004 is the first-year anniversary of this labor of love. The *macCompanion* staff is an all-volunteer team of writers and reviewers from many parts of the globe, and they also have a great wealth of knowledge and experience in their backgrounds. That base of talent also continues to keep growing as the Macintosh Professional Network expands.

Statistical Analysis

We are very excited about our site statistics! The multilingual-capable [macCompanion](#) website surpassed 1 million hits a month, starting June 2004 and readership continues to increase rapidly through our "whisper campaign". Last October we switched over to our current host. They have provided us with excellent support and tools to help us do our job. They have the right tools to do theirs too. It is a great, robust relationship and we are very proud of them.

We continue to get greater visibility every day. Many of the various 35 computer operating systems (with many moving towards the Mac® OS X™ environment), 115 online search engines, 269 countries and domains and 319 online robots have discovered us – and continue to do so. So far, over 201 other websites have also linked to us. Many of our readers have made our site one of their favorites. While nearly 70% of our readership stops by for a quick visit via RSS feeds, over 23% spend between 1/2 to 1 hour at a time going through over 250 different pages on our site (mostly archives). Many of those who quickly drop by, come to get the monthly PDFed issue of *macCompanion*. Over 8GB of bandwidth was used in June 2004 alone for download purposes. Previous months have averaged around 6GB. Trend analysis indicates that will continue to increase.

Advertising with *macCompanion*

We have four advertising options you may choose from, and multiple months will receive a 20% discount for both website and PDF-based ads. All advertising must be paid in advance. We accept credit card payments via PayPal, checks, money orders by regular mail and cash in US currency by hand.

Site Ad Rate

We offer site ads for a fixed-budget price of only \$100 per month on our site. Following the KISS principle, we accept banner ads in only one size at this time - 468x60 pixels (per the [Interactive Advertising Bureau](#) standards for a Full Banner Ad Interactive Marketing Unit.) The ad will be rotated through with other ads, and there is no limit to how many you want to include.

The billing cycle begins based on the first day the ad placed on the site and is renewable on a monthly basis. This can begin immediately or at any time.

(If you want us to create those online-ads for you, the cost is \$100 per hour, with a minimum 2-hour base fee.)

PDF Ad Rates

The published monthly version of *macCompanion* has a closing date of the 25th of each month for ads. Our target date for distribution begins the 5th of each month. Placement of the ads will be at our discretion, but we do listen to your suggestions.

Each ad will require a site link so our readers can click on the PDF ad and go to your site. Ads need to be submitted as PDFs with at least 300 DPI resolution.

(If you want us to create those ads for you, the cost is \$100 per hour, with a minimum 2-hour base fee. You will then need to send us proofs, etc. in JPEG or GIF formats.)

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Page Size: 8 1/2" x 11" No bleed				
Style	Rate	Size Fractional	Size Decimal	Size Centimeter
1/16th Page	\$40 USD	1 5/8 x 2 1/4 in	1.625 x 2.25 in	4.1 x 5.7 cm
1/8th Page Horizontal	\$50 USD	3 1/2 x 2 1/4 in	3.5 x 2.25 in	8.9 x 5.7 cm
1/8th Page Vertical	\$50 USD	2 1/4 x 3 1/2 in	2.25 x 3.5 in	5.7 x 8.9 cm
1/4th Page Vertical	\$60 USD	3 1/2 x 4 3/4 in	3.5 x 4.75 in	8.9 x 12.1 cm
1/2 Page Horizontal	\$100 USD	7 1/4 x 4 3/4 in	7.25 x 4.75 in	18.4 x 12.1 cm
1/3rd Page Horizontal	\$70 USD	7 1/4 x 3 1/4 in	7.25 x 3.25 in	18.4 x 8.3 cm
1/3rd Page Vertical	\$70 USD	2 1/4 x 9 7/8 in	2.25 x 9.875 in	5.7 x 25.1 cm
2/3rd Page Horizontal	\$150 USD	7 1/4 x 6 1/4 in	7.25 x 6.25 in	18.4 x 15.9 cm
2/3rd Page Vertical	\$150 USD	4 3/4 x 9 7/8 in	4.75 x 9.875 in	12.1 x 25.1 cm
Full Page	\$250 USD	7 1/4 x 9 7/8 in	7.25 x 9.875 in	18.4 x 25.1 cm



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And we also accept donations by those who feel our services are value-added.

If you are as excited about our *macCompanion* readership as we are, please download the contractual terms and conditions documentation that are online in PDF format, or we can send them to you as an attachment. We'd enjoy having an ongoing working relationship with you too.

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Well that's it for this issue. Please come back again next month!