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EN EVO NETWORKS

Data Center Express

Because your data is worth it.
The Data Center Express is the first ever secure, fully integrated,
completely flexible and remotely managed data center designed specifically
for smaller organizations.

Data Center Express Overview

Evo Network's Data Center Express
(DCE) is the only fully integrated,
completely flexible and remotely managed
data center designed specifically for small
organizations with 5 to 100 users. The
DCE features integrated security,
collaboration services, disaster recovery,
and remote access. All of which, scale to
meet future business demands. This is a
true enterprise class data center solution
for a fraction of the price. Best of all, no in-
house IT staff is required.

The Data Center Express is at
home in any office.

DCE At A Glance

- Single solution for storing and
  managing data in your organization
  with up to 1.5 terabytes of storage
  (1500 GB)
- Shipped to you preconfigured and
  ready to go
- Integrated Firewall protects entire
  network from external threats
- Handles 800+ secure remote
  connections (VPN)
- Built-in Antivirus protection, with
  optional Antivirus service to protect
  all client computers
- Disaster recovery solution protects
  servers, desktops, and notebooks
- Encrypted backup drives ensure
  secure off-site protection
- Can support over 100 wired and
  hundreds of WIFi devices
- Protective, whisper quiet desk-
  height enclosure with casters
- Uninterruptible power supply
  protects the entire DCE
- Optional 24x7 Support +
  Maintenance
- Mac and Windows Versions
  Available
- Designed and Assembled in the
  USA

The IT Challenges Your Small Business Faces

As small businesses grow, they begin to
accumulate a hodgepodge of computing
technology. While this may seem like
the nature of the beast, trying to use and
control the growth of an IT infrastructure
that was never designed to work together
becomes a nightmare to manage,
expensive to repair (what was your last IT
support bill), and in the end isn't even
very reliable or secure.

With the IT industry as fast paced and
complex as it is, SB owners and
managers find it hard to create and
maintain an IT solution that provides a
reliable, secure and scalable
infrastructure that eases the
communication of information and ideas
with the organization, its partners and its
clients.

The Data Center Express Solution

The DCE was designed specifically to
address these challenges. It combines
industry standard technology to create an
all-in-one solution designed to work
together, but more importantly designed
to work for your business.

Integrated security, collaboration
services, disaster recovery and remote
access make this a true enterprise class
data center solution for a fraction of the
price of typical data centers.

This scalable solution also means your
business can continue to grow and
evolve without having to "rip-and replace"
the DCE or its components.

EN offers truly affordable and
comprehensive 24x7 service and support
for those companies that have few or no
IT staff.

Express Financing

Commerce Bank We have financing
available through
Commerce Bank.

Secure Your Information	Simplify Collaboration	Insure Against Disaster	Eliminate IT Headaches	Evolves With Your Business

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Getting Winterized and the So-Called "Greenhouse" Effect
By Robert Pritchett

It would appear that we are in for an early winter this year, so we have a few books this month that we have reviewed that we think you might be interested in. And we have a few intellectually stimulating articles by some of our staff in the **Columns** section that we thought you might also enjoy.

Of course, we also looked at some hardware and software.

We are calling a new section **Greenware** we started last month, as the "Hippy Generation" moves from the "free-love" era to "retro-saving" the planet in the new religion of "greenism".

We are going through another 11-year sun cycle, but the eco-evangelists keep promoting their agenda and using the so-called "global warming" effect as the next "Save the Children" promo. Manufacturers and Architects are grabbing hold of this new eco-friendly movement with both hands to promote a new wave of green for their coffers.

We are attempting to find real wheat amidst the chaff in our own small efforts to perhaps stave off or even avoid the next world war as we energetically look at ways to be more self-sufficient and kinder and gentler to this big blue marble we call home.

You might even enjoy Nick Lockwood's piece on eco-illogicalism. I sure did! And Jay Marhoefer definitely makes us think with his book on *Re-Energizing America*.

When you have time, go take a look at the **News and Events** section of the 3-Rivers Synergy Centre website for videos, etc. http://maccompanion.com/RenewableEnergy/newsandevents.htm

Meanwhile, as Heck freezes over with more innovations and the cornucopia of products spewing forth from Apple, we pray we can get a few more tomatoes harvested before an early frost kills off the plants and turns the vegetation from green to brown.

Keep us in the green and help us from turning brown by going to our advertisers and affiliates and even see if the products and services we are promoting on our **3-Rivers Synergy Centre** site will meet your needs. http://maccompanion.com/RenewableEnergy/products.htm

According to Hoyle...

Looking Forward to Mac OS X 10.5 Leopard, Part III: Objective-C 2.0 Enhancements

By Jonathan Hoyle

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macCompanion
October 2007
http://www.jonhoyle.com

This month, Apple will be introducing the sixth major release of Mac OS X: version *10.5 Leopard*. With each release, Mac OS X has succeeded in improving stability, usability and power. Earlier this year, Microsoft released *Vista*, an update to it Windows operating system, with somewhat disappointing sales. To get an interesting (and very amusing) comparison of *Vista* and the current *Mac OS X 10.4 Tiger*, I strongly suggest you visit this *YouTube* video link (taken from last year's Worldwide Developer's Conference):

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n9UPhwmjJ-Y

As the video suggests, Vista is an attempt to copy Mac OS X's past. This month's release of *10.5 Leopard* is a big step toward the Mac's future.

In July, we began our look with an overview of the 2007 Worldwide Developer's Conference. In August, we examined in earnest the changes coming in *Leopard* from a user's perspective, and then last month, we reviewed Xcode 3, Apple's new development tool update for *Leopard*. You can view these articles here:

- http://www.maccompanion.com/archives/July2007/Columns/AccordingtoHoyle23.htm
- http://www.maccompanion.com/archives/August2007/Columns/AccordingtoHoyle.htm
- http://www.maccompanion.com/macc/archives/September2007/Columns/AccordingtoHoyle.htm

This month, we begin concentrating on specific issues related to *Leopard* software development.

As mentioned in previous columns, *Mac OS X 10.5 Leopard* is still prerelease software and is under a Non-Disclosure Agreement. For that reason, I can relay only on information that Apple has already revealed to the public, despite *Leopard's* release being only a couple of weeks away. Between now and *Mac OS X 10.5's* release, an excellent resource is Apple's *Leopard* page at:
http://www.apple.com/macosx/leopard/

The 64-bit Challenge

The price of 64-bit development went up by a lot this year, with Apple announcing that Carbon development is unsupported beyond 32-bit. Carbon is the C/C++-based programmer's interface which traces its history back to the original Macintosh from 1984. Until very recently, the vast majority of commercial Macintosh products were built with Carbon. The announcement to desupport 64-bit Carbon came as quite a surprise for many, as Apple's remarks at last year's WWDC was completely the reverse. In 2006, Apple provided a *64-bit Transition Guide for Carbon*, detailing a process for developers to port their Carbon projects for 64-bit compilation. Many companies spent this past year affecting those changes, just to discover in June that the rug has been pulled out from under them. Carbon projects slated for 64-bit support have to be completely rewritten to have any chance of becoming 64-bit.

To take advantage of the 64-bit operating system, most developers will be switching to the Objective-C based Cocoa API. However, there are other possibilities. *Darwin*, *Unix* and *X11* developers will see no impediment moving to 64-bit with their current code base. Likewise, *Java* developers will be able to run virtually unmodified in 64-bit mode on Intel-based Macintoshes (although PowerPC-based Macs will run Java in 32-bit only, even on the 64-bit G5 processor). Those developing in frameworks may find themselves in trouble, since most Mac-supported C++ frameworks are Carbon-based. Trolltech's *Qt* framework uses Carbon and thus *Qt-based* apps will not be 64-bit any time soon. Trolltech announced their decision to change their Mac OS X implementation from Carbon to Cocoa, but they have no idea how long this is going to take. Those using the open source *wxWidgets* framework are in a slightly better position. Although the main Mac OS X branch of *wxWidgets* is Carbon-based, there has been an ongoing initiative for the last several years for a Cocoa implementation, called *wxCocoa*. It seems to me that suddenly *wxCocoa* will begin to receive attention from a much wider audience. I have seen no official word from other C++ frameworks like *CPLAT* or *FLTK*, but it cannot be good news for them. Even non-C++ project may be impacted, such as those using the very popular *REALbasic* development environment, which is still primarily written in Carbon.

For more information on transitioning to 64-bit development, visit:
http://www.apple.com/macosx/leopard/technology/64bit.html

Objective-C & Leopard

With Apple's elimination of Carbon from 64-bit discussion, the Objective-C programming language is no longer an option for the Macintosh software developer. The reason for this is that the Cocoa API's native language is Objective-C, and to use Cocoa, you must acquire fluency in this language. Many longtime C/C++ programmers have resisted having to learn it, since all their needs were satisfied by Carbon in C and C++. Unfortunately, those days are coming to an end, and Mac developers who wish to remain relevant will want to learn Objective-C.

"Isn't Java also a supported language for developing Cocoa applications?" someone is bound to ask. Well no, not any more unfortunately. In the early days of Cocoa on Mac OS X, Apple recognized that there was a great deal of resistance in using a relatively obscure programming language like Objective-C. So to be as receptive as possible, Apple provided two language accesses for the Cocoa API: Objective-C and Java. The choice of adding Java was an obvious one, due to its immense popularity amongst developers. Apple's hope was that Cocoa would become embraced by the huge hordes of Java developers. This turned out not to be the case, as Java programmers continued to prefer cross-platform APIs, such as *AWT* and *Swing*. C/C++ programmers remained with Carbon, leaving only academics and old NeXT developers (already familiar with Objective-C) interested in Cocoa. So Apple has recently announced that the use of Java for Cocoa development is officially deprecated with *Leopard*. Objective-C is the only Apple-supported language for Cocoa development moving forward.

Despite its deprecation, there remains a small but strong contingent of Cocoa/Java developers who plan to stay with their technology for as long as it remains viable. If you wish to learn more about developing Cocoa applications with Java, visit:

http://www.mactech.com/articles/mactech/Vol.19/19.12/CocoaAppsinJava/index.html

Objective-C History

Objective-C is not a *new* language by any means. It was created in the early 1980's during a time when Object Oriented programming was just starting to become mature. Although there were already a number of pure O.O. languages in existence, these were mostly niche languages with a small number of advocates. The development community yearned for a way to extend the popular C programming language in such a way as to become object oriented. There were many object-oriented variants of C which were developed, including *THINK C with Objects* used by many Macintosh developers. These language variants for the most part died away as C++ became standardized. So powerful and so influential did C++ become, that the vast majority of newer languages today have adopted the C++ syntax style of *object-dot-method-left parenthesis-ordered argument list-right parenthesis*. Those learning Java, PHP, Ruby or others will find it very easy to go from one language to another because of this widespread syntax adoption.

Objective-C was an early variant that did not adopt this standard syntax. Instead it used the rather unusual Smalltalk bracket syntax, with an argument list prefixed by tags and colons. It lacked most of the rich features found in C++ but did have some powerful capabilities not available in C++, namely reflection and a dynamic runtime model. Despite these advantages, it remained a niche language, surviving almost exclusively on *NeXT* computers. When Apple bought NeXT in December 1996, Objective-C became available for Macintosh developers.

With *Mac OS X 10.5 Leopard*, Objective-C is seeing its first major facelift, adding a number of new features to the language to make it on par with other modern languages. This update is called *Objective-C 2.0*, and we will be looking at some of it new features this month.

Automatic Garbage Collection

The most significant of enhancement coming to Objective-C 2.0 is *Garbage Collection*: the language runtime process which automatically deletes allocated memory which is no longer in use. Essentially all modern languages (post-C++) do this, and adding this capability to Objective-C 2.0 shows Apple's commitment to its preferred language.

Garbage Collecting in Objective-C 2.0 is an *Opt-In* proposition, so you choose to turn it on if you wish:
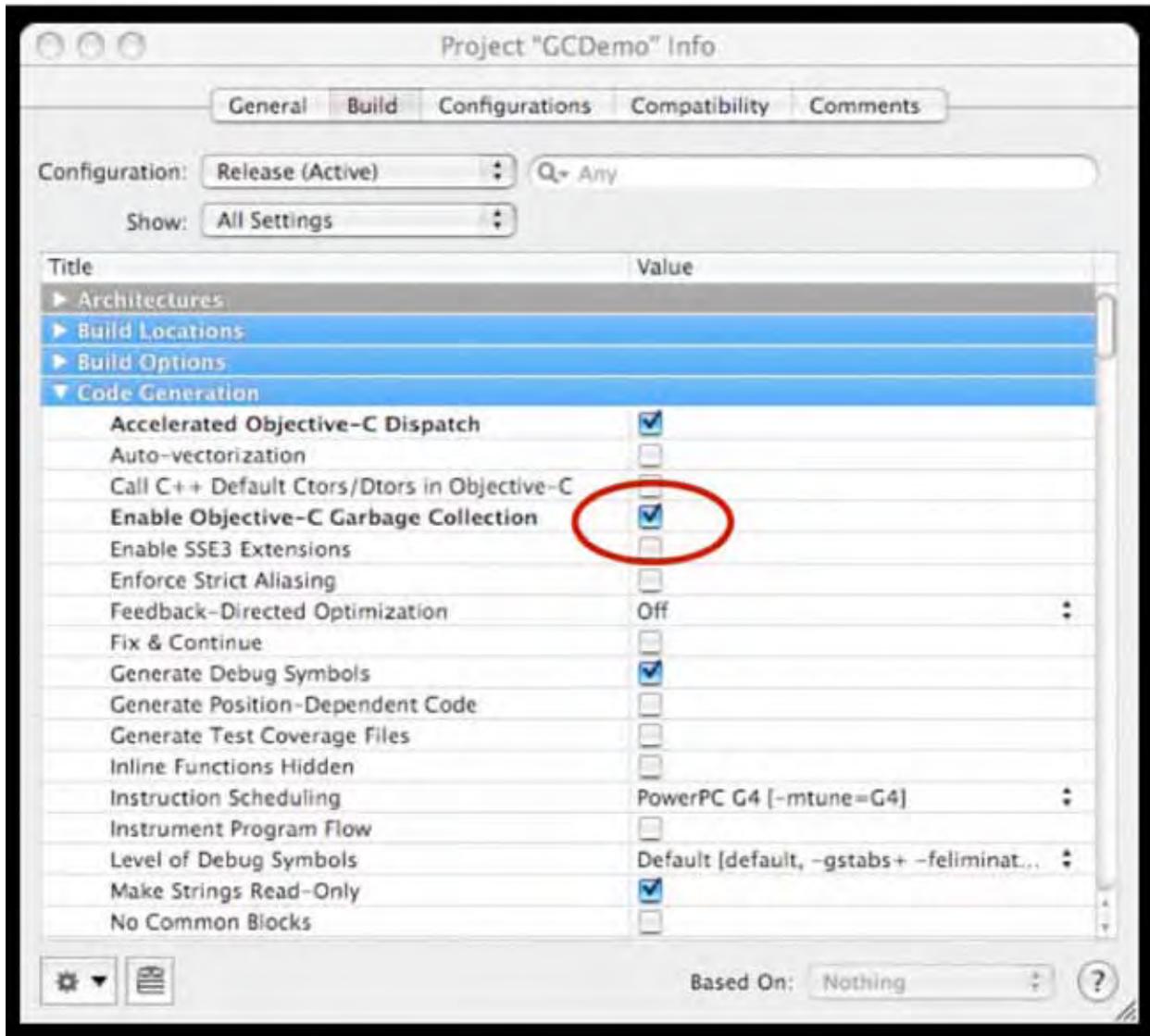
Although you may have some older Objective-C projects that you do not wish to take the time to convert, all new projects should start with this flag turned on by default. It is fully supported in Cocoa and all public frameworks, as all **NSObjects** are collectable. It does not, however, rewire or replace C's **malloc**() function or C++'s **new** operator, so you must replace these yourself.
If you are converting an old project, you need to be concerned about older memory management calls, as **-retain**, **-release**, **-retainCount**, **-autorelease** and **-dealloc** are each ignored when GC is turned on. However, the equivalent *CoreFoundation* functions **CFRetain**() and **CFRelease**() remain meaningful, as they are meant to be available to Carbon/C++ developers as well.

Fast Enumeration (foreach)

Another feature added to Objective-C 2.0 is what Apple calls *Fast Enumeration*. It is essentially what modern languages call a **foreach** capability. The best way to explain it is to see the code for yourself. In this example, we have an Objective-C method which takes an **NSArray** of **MyObjectType**, and iterates through the array looking for the first one which returns **true** from a call to **isSpecial**. In Objective-C 1.0, such code might look something like this:

```
-(MyObjectType *) getSpecialObject: (NSArray *) myArray
{
    NSEnumerator *myEnumerator = [myArray objectEnumerator];
    MyObjectType    *myObject;

    while (true)
    {
        myObject = [myEnumerator nextObject];

        if (myObject == nil)
            break;

        if ([myObject isSpecial])
            return myObject;
    }

    HandleErrorCondition();
    return nil;
}
```

First, an **NSEnumerator** has to be created for our loop. With each iteration, a call to **nextObject** has to be performed to acquire the next item, a check against **nil** is made so as to see if the array is completely traversed, and then finally a call to **isSpecial** is made to see if we have found our object. This was a slow and memory intensive procedure, primarily because we rely on the **NSEnumerator** to tell give us the object (or **nil** when it is completed). With Objective-C 2.0, this same code could be written more simply as:

```
-(MyObjectType *) getSpecialObject: (NSArray *) myArray
{
    for (MyObjectType *myObject in myArray)
        if ([myObject isSpecial])
            return myObject;

    HandleErrorCondition();
    return nil;
}
```

Here, all of the enumeration complexity of the prior code sample is completely subsumed by the **for (in)** syntax. In some other languages, this same syntax is used except the **for** keyword is replaced by **foreach**. With this, no **NSEnumerator** is needed, and the code is more concise and readable.

Finally! The Dot Operator!

One of Objective-C's biggest annoyances is its ugly syntax. In almost all other C-based languages, square brackets are used exclusively for array indexing. Finding objects, methods and colons sprinkled inside standalone brackets strikes the new programmer as dismayingly bizarre. For example, the same function written in C++ and Objective-C may be invoked this way:

```
    myReturnVal = myObject.foo(parm1, parm2, parm3);
// C++
    myReturnVal = [myObject foo:parm1, bar2:parm2, bar3:parm3];
// Objective-C
```

I wish I could tell you that with Objective-C 2.0 the brackets are gone. Unfortunately, I cannot. However, I can tell you that many of the instances in which they were required can now be avoided with the use of the standardized *Dot Operator*. One can now obtain property data from an Objective-C class this way. For example, the following two lines are now equivalent:

```
    z = [x y];   // Objective-C 1.0 syntax
    z = x.y;     // Objective-C 2.0 syntax
```

Likewise, the setting of property data can also be done this way:

```
    [x setY:z]; // Objective-C 1.0 syntax
    x.y = z;     // Objective-C 2.0 syntax
```

This works with any **-name** / **-setName:accessor** pattern. Essentially, anything that looks like an accessor method can now be dotted. The only limitation is that **x** must be a known class type. Unfortunately, the declaration of these properties still remains munged in Objective-C's peculiar syntax:

```
    @interface MyClass
    @property(attributes) type name;
    // equivalent to:
    - (type) name;
    - (void) setName:(type)name;
    @end
```

Objective-C Adopting the C++ Exception Model

Like C++, the Objective-C has an exception model built into the language. Unfortunately, its implementation is a very poor one relative to C++. In C++, exception check is designed to be essentially *zero cost*. The cost of entering a **try** block is not more than entering any new scope. The performance hit is taken only during a **throw**, that is when the exceptional circumstance actually takes place. This is important since the performance cost of a **throw** is an order of magnitude greater than the **try**.

In Objective-C 1.0, the reverse is the case: the **@try** call takes an order of magnitude longer than the actual **@throw**. Since a typical programmer will enter a **try** block far more often than **throw** from it, exception handling becomes an expensive proposition for the Objective-C developer. Apple has addressed this matter in Objective-C 2.0. Although backward compatibility prevents Apple from changing this model for 32-bit applications, 64-bit applications written with Objective-C 2.0 will use the zero cost C++ exception model. With this, entering a **try** block becomes fast and **throw**ing an exception would be slow.

Another nice feature is the interoperability of exceptions between Objective-C 2.0 and C++. The C++ **catch(...)** will catch Objective-C exceptions, whilst **throw;** rethrows them. Likewise, Objective-C's has implemented a new **@catch(...)** call, which will catch any uncaught exceptions (including C++ exceptions) and **@throw;** rethrows them.

Despite the different models used between the 32- and 64-bit runtimes, exception handling remains mostly source compatible. The main difference being that in 32-bit, the new **@catch(...)** call is implemented like **@catch(id e)**.

Coming Up: More development advice for *Mac OS X 10.5 Leopard*. See you in 30!

Macs Really Do Run Windows Better

By Steve Frank – Reprinted with permission

http://www.stevenf.com
http://stevenf.com/software/

Ever since Boot Camp appeared on the scene, there have been several comments about Macs being better Windows machines than Windows machines. The weird thing is *it's actually true*.

I won't lie to you -- I use Windows occasionally. It's important for me as a Mac developer to use Windows once in a while, because it's a fantastic lesson on how do absolutely everything wrong when designing software. (For example, one of my top ten favorite Windows XP features is the one where it asks you to confirm your wireless network password by entering it twice when you join a network.)

The other 90% of the time, I use Windows because it is a popular gaming API. I've maintained a succession of PCs over the years just to play a handful of games that never got ported to the Mac. (I'm looking at you, Half-Life series! B****ds.)

Having just set up XP in Boot Camp again over the weekend, I'm amazed again by how much better the experience is than using a Windows box built by an actual Windows box vendor.

You just install Windows from a retail disc, install the Boot Camp drivers from a second disc, let Windows Update reboot about 20 times, and you're set. The resulting system is really fast and all the hardware works.

By way of comparison, let's discuss my most recent PC, which happened to be a Sony VAIO. If you've not dealt with Windows box vendors lately, you are really missing out on some treats.

For starters, Windows vendors have discovered that they can save upwards of 1/1000th of a cent per unit by NOT INCLUDING RESTORE DISCS with the computer. What they do now is install the OS, and a hidden partition (6-10 GB or so) containing the restore data. Then there's usually some program you can run that lets you burn a restore disc your damn self if you want to.

Or better still, you can forget to do that and be completely screwed when your hard drive fails out-of-warranty. It's also important to note that this particular PC did not offer any disc burning hardware -- I had to rustle up an external USB disc burner... to get system restore discs. I could also order them from Sony for TWENTY DOLLARS.

Finally, a sheet of paper came with the PC advising me to use an i.Link burner, rather than a USB burner, otherwise "compatibility problems" could result. (i.Link being what the entire rest of the world calls "FireWire".) What in the hell is that supposed to mean? The only "compatibility problem" I can think of is the compatibility of my wallet with Sony's web site, which sells i.Link disc burners.

The VAIO came loaded with so much shovelware that it took in the ballpark of fifteen minutes just to boot the first time. After the desktop came up, the disk just kept grinding and grinding and grinding, as Norton (60 day trial!) popped up, followed by Trend Micro Anti-Spyware (60 day trial!), a dialog box warning me that my Bluetooth module was not set discoverable (uh, thanks?), a cascade of Sony windows (for which they designed their own window style), the Ask! Toolbar conveniently pre-installed itself into Internet Explorer, some bubbles asking me to set up such-and-such piece of hardware, and, I'm not kidding, an "All Programs" menu in the Start Menu that spanned three columns.

I hope Sony doesn't seriously believe that any of this is helpful to anyone, and that it simply makes them look like giant corporate whores to any company that will wave a dollar under their nose. It's such a total mystery why Apple doesn't participate in the Intel Inside sticker program!

So, I headed straight for the "Remove Programs" control panel, as always, to be confronted by a 2-3 page list of complete crap. (Ooh! Trial versions of Wheel of Fortune AND Jeopardy!?) Then I thought, you know, it would be easier just to clean re-install Windows, then the Sony drivers, and call it a day.

Ho ho ho.

The VAIO came with a Windows Certificate of Authenticity, including the license key, so I figured I'd just boot off the retail disc I had lying around, and use that license key. How naive.

Let me stress this point: The retail boxed version of Windows WOULD NOT ACCEPT the license key from the CERTIFICATE OF AUTHENTICITY that was INCLUDED IN THE BOX WITH MY PC. The recovery discs are the only way to get the OS back onto the PC without burning an unnecessary second Windows license.

And, of course, you don't find out about this restriction until you already have Windows half-installed. And, double of course, the recovery discs put Wheel of Fortune and everything else right back on as well.

In my desperate quest for a clean system, I went ahead and used the retail license I had, since I wasn't actually using it for anything else at the time, effectively paying for Windows twice. That went fairly smoothly. Now it was time to install the drivers.

Let me just take a break here to pop a few Valium before I talk about Sony's driver download site.

There we go. Ahhh. Sweet medication eases the pain.

Finding Sony's driver site, and the correct page for my computer on that site was relatively painless. It would be the last painless moment of the process.

I suddenly found myself looking at a list of 40-50 individual installers. And of course, you can't just click to download them -- clicking on one of them takes you to the DOWNLOAD page, where you click AGAIN to download them. For every... single... one.

But wait, what's this! "Download Taxi"! Clever old Sony has come up with a download client to spare me this pain. I just install the Download Taxi client, then I can select all the updates with one click, and choose "Download with Download Taxi"! Brilliant! This will save me so much t--

Wait, what is this tiny footnote at the bottom of the page?

* Download Taxi Limitation: Maximum of 35 files per download

Picking my head up off the desk, I decide not to bother with Download Taxi, and begin the process of clicking 100 links to download all the driver installers.

A note about the installers themselves: They are most all the various hardware vendors' original driver installers, wrapped within ANOTHER installer by Sony for no apparent reason other than exclusively to piss me off. In addition, every single one of them is named in this format: SOAVUD-01451706-US.EXE

Yeah, so that number has nothing to do with anything. It's not a version number, it's not a date, it's literally just 8 apparently random numbers. You give Windows users a 255-character filename limit and this is what they do?

I'm clicking away through the installers, trying to remember whether I just installed 01256339 or 12847214, so I don't accidentally delete one I haven't installed yet. And then the problems kick in. A couple of the installers just quit at the end, without any indication of either success or failure.

That's nerve-wracking enough, but then one of them straight up tells me "Installation failed", then, after I click OK to that, "Installation successful!"

After weighing the pros and cons of suicide, I decide to actually try to use some of the hardware I just installed drivers for. About 80% of it works. Some of it, just a dead loss; doesn't work at all. I don't know what I could have possibly done differently with all those installers.

Finally, I give up. I just throw in the towel. I reinstall from my homemade recovery discs, Wheel of Fortune and all. There's one final insult, which is that Sony has scattered the installers across two DVDs so that the restore process requires manual intervention in the form of 5 or 6 disc swaps, not at all unlike trying to copy a floppy disk 20 years ago.

Then I go back to Remove Programs, and start tossing out junk. There are at least three programs in the list (Microsoft Business Contact Manager for Microsoft Outlook for Business for Microsoft for Contacts for Microsoft, and not one but TWO entries for Flash Player 8) whose uninstallers can't be located when I try to uninstall them. Don't care any more. I'll just uninstall as much as it will let me and live with it.

Literally hours of pain later, and I have a VAIO with working drivers that is mostly s***-free.

It's a good thing Half-Life 2 was really, really awesome.

XP on my Mac though? Smooth sailing. *smacks lips* Is that the delicious taste of irony? I think it is!

For comments, go here - http://stevenf.com/2007/09/macs_really_do_run_windows_better.php

Doc_Babad's Macintosh Tips - A Macintosh Tip or Three…

October 2007 Edition

By Harry {doc} Babad   © 2007

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The software related tips were tested on a 1 GHz dual processor PowerPC G4 Macintosh with 2 GB DDR SDRAM; running under Macintosh OS X OS X 10.4.10.

This month I continue sharing my occasional tip related finds with you. Some, of the tips I share are things I've thought of, used and want to pass on. Where I use any one else's tips for this column, I acknowledge both their source and their contributors.

Oh, I almost forgot! Unless otherwise noted, all the tips and tidbits I share, where appropriate, work on my computer. If I don't own the software but if the tip sounds interesting, I'll so note at the end of that specific write-up.

Tips I've provided this month, as always in a random order, include:
- Transferring Images between PDFs (Acrobat Tip)
- Downloading/Adding Widgets — Don't get confused
- Zinio Reader Rejects You Bug
- Reducing the File Size of a PDF — Save it again Sam
- Dealing With Nested Files and Folders — Unnest me, give me a break
- Don't change that Acrobat Document Name in Midstream

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Transferring Images between PDFs (Acrobat Tip)

There's a real timesaving process that's terrific for visual people. Rather than extracting, combining, and deleting content between documents through dialogs, you can do it visually using the Pages panel.

Here's how:
1. Start with two documents, one to which you want to add pages (the recipient) and the other from which you're taking pages (the donor).

2. In Acrobat Choose [Window> Tile> Horizontally] to display both documents.

3. Click the Pages icon on each document to show the thumbnails.

4. Select the page thumbnails from the donor document's Pages panel and drag them to the recipient document's Pages panel. *You may need to arrange the files you want to reorganize and drag thumbnails to add and remove content.*

5. Release the mouse when you are in the right spot and the job is done.

6. Organize and arrange the pages. You can readily display the Pages panel from two, three, or even more documents on the screen and drag pages between the documents.

> Adobe Acrobat 8 How-Tos: 125 Essential Techniques
> By Donna Baker (Adobe Press)

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Downloading/Adding Widgets — Don't get confused — There is a difference between downloading a widget and installing it. It's all in the browser you use.

To install widgets you either:
1. Download the widget (like any other application) in a non-Safari browser, or with Safari configured to not open "safe" files after downloading. Go to where you downloaded the file in Finder and double-click the widget file.

2. Download the widget with Safari in its default configuration, and the widget will begin to install itself automatically. Doc sez, since you get a dialog box when Safari starts to install the widget, you can stop this process.

I do because I don't like dashboard so I convert each widget I want use to a WidgiApp using **Mesa Dynamics'** *Amnesty Singles* http://www.macupdate.com/info.php/id/22226. I store my limited collection of WidgiApps in a folder accessible through the Unsanity.com *Fruit Menu* Haxie http://www.macupdate.com/info.php/id/777/fruitmenu. But that's enough cross-threaded tip for this item.

Anyway back to Widgets: You can see, says Leland, where the confusion may come in. a user who is used to downloading in Safari, where the widget installs itself, fires up Firefox one day and does the same thing. But now, the widget just "lies on the desktop or their download folder.

That's because it was never launched, as it is when Safari handles the job. There's nothing-mysterious going on there, but it is a distinction users would benefit from knowing.

If your experience was something other than that of my hypothetical Firefox user (a proxy for everything that falls in item 1 above), please take a minute to check the exact sequence of steps. If it's repeatable, then you've found a bug that should be passed on to Apple.

> Leland, Musings from Mars
> <http://www.musingsfrommars.org>

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Zinio Reader Rejects You Bug — Great minds find common solutions

For several reasons, I've just about given up on any subscriptions through Zinio. First and foremost, it's difficult, but not impossible to capture part of a downloaded magazine for future reference. When one does capture part of an article it is water marked in an obnoxious manner. Finally at least every other time I attempt a download (since I updated Macintosh OS X, perhaps past version 10.4.7) it refuses to do so.

Solution —I deleted Zinio Reader using CleanApp [http://www.macupdate.com/info.php/id/21453] and reinstalled the reader. This method defacto removes all associated Zinio reader application files, but not the documents downloaded with the reader. In that fashion it mimics Christopher Breen's solution.

 Christopher Breen had a more detailed solution that I quote below.
"If you use the Zinio reader to subscribe to digital versions of magazines, you may find that it refuses to open or download your issues after you transfer your data to a new Mac or restore a hard drive. To fix this, delete the Zinio application and a trio of files located in *your user folder*/Library/Preferences: ContentGuard, com.zinio.reader.plist, and Zinio.plist. Be sure to empty the Trash after putting the files there. Finally, reinstall Zinio Reader, and the application should once again see you as a valid subscriber."

PS:
Oh, the best reason to give up on Zinio is that all but one of my paper magazine subscriptions offers easy free or almost free access to the magazine's contents. This satisfies my information junkie needs without needing to save paper or scan it; or to put up with Zinio. Only Scientific American still requires a fee for each article you download… shame on them.

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Mac 911 – Macworld Sept. 2007
By Christopher Breen

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Reducing the File Size of a PDF — Save it again Sam

One of the usual methods for reducing the file size of a PDF document is to limit the versions of Adobe Acrobat or Reader than can open it. I've always found this method is unfair to readers who don't stay current with new updates

However Donna Baker, an Acrobat guru, describes a better way. One of the simplest ways to reduce file size is to save a file as itself. If you have been working with a document-for example, adding and removing pages-the file is saved on top of itself each time you save it, and these iterations can really add up to a huge file size. Choose File> Save As. in the Save As dialog, leave the name as is and click Save. A prompt asks if you want to overwrite the file; click Yes. The file is resaved, and content is consolidated. You may be surprised how much smaller the file becomes!

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Adobe Acrobat 8 How-Tos: 125 Essential Techniques
By Donna Baker (Adobe Press)

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Q: I recently found a program called Disk Cleaner (for PCs) and was wondering if there was something similar for Macs. -Gordon Werb

A: Disk Cleaner is a free, open source utility that deletes temporary, cache, and cookie files, as well as stray items in the Recycle Bin, from a Windows PC. There are loads of similar utilities for the Mac, but my favorite is Titanium Software's OnyX (payment requested). It allows you to easily muck with parts of the operating system that are usually accessible only through Terminal. But unlike many tools of this sort, OnyX helps you stay out of trouble while you do so—it clearly explains what its features do and warns of potential problems. For example, in the Cleaning tab, where it seems that you'll be spending the bulk of your time, you'll discover that you can delete a wide variety of cache files, as well as form values and cookies (see "Empty the Cache"). OnyX warns you that deleting these things may mean that you have to reenter user names and passwords when you revisit favorite sites (this could cause trouble if you've neglected to make a note of any passwords).

Mac 911 by Christopher Breen as Reprinted
In the Mid-Colu7mbia Macintosh Users Group *Finder* September 2007.

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Dealing With Nested Files and Folders — Un-nest me, give me a break

Q: I have a folder, which contains many files, and also, many sub-folders. Some of these sub-folders contain sub-subfolders, as well as other files. And so on. Is there any simple application -- or Automator or Terminal sequence -- you might know that will "break open" all these subfolders and sub-subfolders, etc., so that the original folder will contain all, and only, the files within it, with no folder structure within it? Thanks. Al Feldzamen

A: Boy, do I. This can be easily done with Automator.

1. Control-click on the Desktop and choose [Automator > New Workflow].
2. In the Untitled window that appears choose Finder from the Library pane. Select the *Get Specified Finder Items* action and drag it into the *Workflows* pane.
3. Drag the folder you want to work with into the *Get Specified Finder Items* action in the *Workflow* pane to add it.
4. Select the *Get Folder Contents* action and drag it into the *Workflow* pane. Enable the Repeat For Each Subfolder Found option.
5. Select the *Move Finder Items* action and drag it into the *Workflow* pane. In the Finder create a folder where you'd like to move your files to. From the *To pop-up menu* choose *Other* and navigate to the folder you just created.
6. Click the Run button and all the files—even those within subfolders—will be moved into the new folder without their enclosing folders.

Note that these files will be *moved* rather than copied. When you return to the original folder your files will be gone—only the now-empty enclosing folders remain. The files now reside in the new folder you created.

If you want to maintain the original files in their folders as well as have them all in a single folder, use the Copy Finder Items action instead of Move Finder Items.

Presuming that you'd simply like to view all the contents of this folder—including all the contents of all the subfolders—you can accomplish this task without moving a single file. Try this:

Create a new Automator workflow that includes these three steps:
1. **Get Specified Finder Items** This will be the folder full of subfolders.
2. **Get Folder Contents (Repeat For Each Subfolder Found)** Again, you're selecting every file within the folder and its subfolders.
3. **Add Spotlight Comments to Finder Items** You're applying a tag to each file. Enter *Swordfish* for all I care.

Now, return to the Finder and choose File > New Smart Folder. In the New Smart Folder window choose Other from the first pop-up menu (the one that currently reads Kind). From the sheet that appears, choose Spotlight Comment and click OK. Make the first condition read *Spotlight Comment Contains Swordfish* (or whatever you've tagged your files with).

Your smart folder now contains entries for all the files within the main enclosing folder, organized by document type. Save and name the smart folder.

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Reprinted from a response to a macCompanion Help Question
Answer By <u>Christopher Breen</u>*, Mac 911*
http://www.macworld.com/weblogs/mac911/2007/07/autosubfolder/index.php

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Don't change that Acrobat Document Name in Midstream

I've noticed that in some applications changing the document name while the document is open can causes a bit of a problem. Applications in question include Acrobat files and at times MS Word, and GraphicConverter [GC] 5.x. Files The effect is random for GC 6.x files, which I just installed.

For me, using the Fugitsu high speed document scanner (May 2007 macC) this is a real problem To smooth sequential scanning the scanner and associated software (read Iris 11 for Fugitsu) gives each new document a customized name I designated, in this case one based on date and time. [E.g., 2007_04_16_12_37_16.pdf] Then I renamed the document *NAS Tank Waste Study Summary* to meet my filing needs.

Save changes before closing

Do you want to save the changes you made to the document "2007_04_16_12_37_16.pdf"?

Don't Save   Cancel   Save

The document could not be saved. A file I/O error has occurred.

OK

The document could not be saved. A file I/O error has occurred.

OK

And the screen shots were grand, gnash — gnash

I changed the name back to the misspelled original and all was fine. Why couldn't I, I tried, I *save as* the document: I don't know, it sometimes works but mostly does not.

Harry {doc} Babad
macCompanion.com

That's all folks… Harry {doc} Babad

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The Northern Spy

The Domain Domain

By Rick Sutcliffe

Technology News and Views Since 1983

October 2007

Price increases are in store
for the most common Internet domain names, as registries VeriSign, Afilias, Neulevel and Public Interest Registry have received approval to increase the wholesale price to registrars by $0.50. Registrars in turn are expected to pass these increases on to their resellers and customers on or after October 14, 2007.

[Lesson can be skipped if the student has already taken Domains 101.] These registries run the databases with the whois information for the domain names under their jurisdiction, providing the infrastructure for tracking and maintaining domain ownership. On the next level of the feeding chain, registrars are approved wholesalers, usually for several registries, and they in turn maintain DNS servers based on registry information, providing the Internet plumbing connecting domain names to machine addresses. Approved registrars handle the mechanics of domain registration, transfer, and renewal. However, most woman-on-the-street domain transactions are with retailers who resell for one or more registrars, as do the Spy's companies.

The latest price increase affects .com, .net, .org, .info, .biz, .us, and .name, the most commonly used international domains, but not to the two-letter or country domains such as .ca, .us, .tv, .ws, and so on, each of which is separately managed (and usually costs more to begin with).
Customers who buy from resellers with a high pricing structure ($16 or more) may see the reseller eat the increase, as their margin is already high. Those who buy from high volume, low-margin resellers such as the Spy's own nameman.net and WebNameSource.net will see the entire fifty cent increase reflected in their prices.

A trivial change? Not when you multiply it by the many millions of domain names out there. Had the contracts for operating these registries been put out to public tender as they ought, it's more likely the price would have gone down rather than up, the collapse of the once mighty YankeeBuck notwithstanding.

Of course, for high flying currencies like the $CDN, which has gone from $.62US a few years ago to parity or above today, the cost of exporting has increased while that of imports ought to have dropped. In the domain domain, most .ca names are owned by Canadian residents anyway, so the currency fluctuations mean nothing when paying in $CDN.

Of course, expats who are paid in local zlotneys and have to buy in CanuckBucks will feel the sting. Now if the makers of books, magazines, clothing, cameras, igloo doors, and computers would only drop the RO (RipOff) factor from their pricing and allow currency changes to take effect, import prices here in the frozen north would become what they now ought to be--the same numbers as $US. But no, many items are still tagged as if the rates were unchanged over the years, so to get the value out of $CDN, one often has to shop across the bump at the forty-ninth parallel or buy online. Brickbats to greedy importers.

Most Governments Contract out Registry operation
for a cut of the action to a commercial enterprise that can handle the technical details. These in turn take various approaches to marketing the brand. For instance, .ws (Western Samoa) is marketed as though it meant "WebSite" and the .tv (Tuvalu) folk pretend theirs has something to do with television. Others like .to (Tonga) and .in (India) have an intrinsic appeal for some people. Many countries allow anyone to buy names in their national domains, and in some cases, the revenues, like those from the gaudy postage stamps we used to call "wallpaper", form an appreciable fraction of government income.

Other countries maintain the country designation for people with a substantial connection to the nation in question, and try to give it both quality and a national distinctive. Some, such as .ie (Ireland) require a rigorous and well-documented process before allowing a customer to purchase a name. Others, such as .ca (Canada) have rules, and do ask customers to agree to them, but don't check. If a complaint surfaces, however, the customer would lose the domain, just as she would if she violated other rules, such as registering someone else's trade name.

It's worth noting that if one doesn't mind the perceived obscurity and marginalization of some of these TLDs, a very short or otherwise unavailable (via .com) domain name may be purchasable. The Spy, for instance, owns g8.to, which is a rather nice property.

But Speaking of .ca
CIRA (the Canadian Internet Registration Authority that runs .ca as registrar) is a member policy-driven organization (at least in theory). Domain owners vote for most of the board of directors and have a degree of control over the brand. However, in recent times, CIRA has gone to a "verified member" system to ensure each person gets but one vote, rather than allow the possibility of one for each domain. After all, some own hundreds. A good idea in theory, but by the time a person responded to the spring 2007 eMail, went to the CIRA site, agreed to register as a new-style member, waited for mail verification, went back to the site to complete registration, and waited for the registration card to arrive in snail mail, the board election was upon them. If they threw out the paper to which the membership card was attached, they also discarded their voting token, and couldn't participate in the election.

If they did everything right, and got their token in time, and read up on the candidates at the .ca site, and possibly participated in the forum, and voted, and got the confirmation of that, they had their say. Well, it was pretty clumsy for a first time effort at the new system, but it's a better input opportunity than most other domains registries offer. May the CIRA tribe increase, but may it also get better, continuing to fulfil its promise as a premium top level domain whose policies get copied worldwide. Meanwhile, the procedure can serve as an example of a good idea getting lost in the implementation details.

Oh, by the way. Of the four board members elected this time, two were continuing, one was a previous member who'd taken a year off, and the fourth was...ahem... yours truly, the Northern Spy, (alias Rick Sutcliffe)--in this instance wearing his Arjay Web Services hat. Can one person make a difference? We'll see. Congratulations/condolences or suggestions are welcome, of course.

Meanwhile, in the slimy underdomain

the scam artists are alive and well in the guise this time of something calling itself by the ponderous monicker of "International Domain Name Registry" or "IDN Inc." The sell is the usual solicitation in the guise of a slightly disclaimered fake invoice to renew and transfer one's domain at supposedly discounted but actually a far higher than average price--asking $24 for what normally goes for under $10. These things were around for a long time in snail and eMail form from a thing that called itself "Domain Registry of xyz" (usually xyz = "Canada" or "America"), though the Spy seems to recall the courts putting an oar in that one (or is this the same outfit operating from yet another fleabag hotel room?) The latest scam is in the form of an unsolicited FAX--something the Spy thought the law had dealt with long ago.

Even if such solicitations were fairly priced and sent legally, they make use of the registry database to capture the name, owner, and contact information, contrary to registry terms of use, which explicitly forbid the practice of mining for solicitations. Enough already. Let's get these foul barnacles of the information sea scraped off our hulls--deliver them to the ignominy suffered by SCO when it went into well-deserved bankruptcy proceedings and got a September 27 delisting notice from NASDAQ (sound of one hand clapping).

Some registrars, like the giant Enom (for whom the Spy resells) already provide privacy cloaking for their customers, but registries themselves may have to cloak the personal and contact information to protect people from those with more ingenuity for wickedness than social conscience. CIRA/.ca may well become one of the first to go this route. Whatever happened to the polite and trusting days of the old net?

New Versions Department

In other news, Nisus (word processor) has cranked its pro version to 1.01 and the express version to 3.0 on a few minor changes and bug fixes. Still no word on invisible styles or mail merge so the Spy can't yet stop using Classic and NisusWriter 6.5. Meanwhile, system utility Cocktail is at 3.8.2 with a few new Automator actions. (Want your product mentioned here? Convince me of its merits.)

What's up Bugs?

The Spy has been developing a new and dynamic-acting (even if pedestrian-looking) Web Site for his hosting company, and has now gone live with this thing at http://www.webNameHost.com. He could have employed purchased or open source scripts for the menus, rounded corners, equal-cell-without-tables effects, and Ajax loading, but wanted to learn ECMAScript (JavaScript) and not be beholden to others' work (proof of concept, classroom examples to fix, etc.). Welcome, old boy, to the world of browser incompatibilities.

Once the code was done a month or so ago, and tested on every browser running on the Mac (all but iCab and ie 5.2 worked fine) he cranked up a W*nd*ws box and tried out ie7, then ie6. Over the span of his half dozen scripts, he had to find workarounds for twice that many ie bugs and missing standard features (some in one, some in the other, some in both). It would be a lot simpler for developers if everyone just scrapped these dysfunctional browsers in favour of FireFox, Camino, another Mozilla product, Safari, Opera, or OmniWeb. He's gotten to pronouncing it ayyyyeee (clenched teeth needed for full effect). C'mon, Redmond. Make standards work. Everyone else makes the effort.

In news from watchers of iSteve's growing behemoth

sales appear to be outstripping all previous estimates for the quarter. Watch for bigger than ever profits and market share coming to Cupertino. The snowball is starting to roll downhill.

Keep an eye out also for a subnotebook product to add momentum to the market swing. The announcement must come soon to be in time for the Christmas buying season. Of more importance, such a product would begin the process of convergence with the small consumer products (iPod, iPhone), pave the way for computers/readers/players in the six to nine inch screen range, and result in a seamless product line from towers to nanos.

Books received

Steve Souders' *High Performance Web Sites* arrived today from O'Reilly. It looks interesting, and may keep me off the streets the next while. More detail next month, when the Spy may weigh in with a few ideas of his own on the subject.
--The Northern Spy

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

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

URLs

The Northern Spy Home Page: http://www.TheNorthernSpy.com
The Spy's Laws collected: http://www.thenorthernspy.com/spyslaws.htm
The Spy's Shareware download site: http://downloads.thenorthernspy.com/
WebNameHost: http://www.WebNameHost.net
WebNameSource: http://www.WebNameSource.net
nameman: http://nameman.net
opundo: http://opundo.com
Sheaves Christian Resources: http://sheaves.org
Arjay Books: http://www.ArjayBooks.com
Booksurge: http://www.booksurge.com
Fictionwise: http://www.fictionwise.com
CIRA Election results: http://www.cira.ca/news-releases/210.html
Cocktail: http://www.maintain.se/cocktail/index.php
Nisus: http://www.nisus.com/
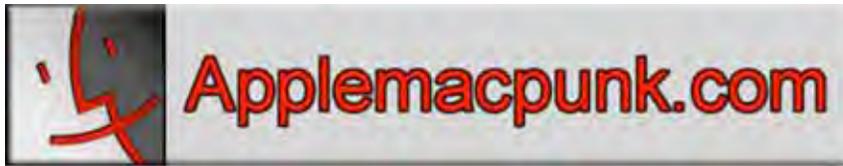
Mac Security 101

FileVault: What does it do and why do I need it?

One of the questions I constantly hear is, "what does FileVault do and why do I need it?" FileVault is an encryption service built into Mac OS X that encrypts the contents of your home folder. However, just turning it on won't necessarily increase your security. There are a few things you should know first.

I constantly hear… "…but nobody can get into my home folder anyway because OS X protects it." This is true to a degree, but not entirely. Mac OS X uses the Unix permissions model to ensure only an authorized user has access to their own home folder. So if you have two users on the same Mac, they cannot see the things inside the other's home folder (with the exception of the Public directory). Permissions are one thing, but encryption is another thing entirely. Think of permissions as security guards, and encryption as a lock box. Security guards are useful, but you can sneak past them, or trick them and get to the restricted area. A lock box is different. Once the box is locked, nobody can view the contents except the person who has the key. Even if they steal the lock box from you… they still can't open it. This is exactly how FileVault works. It assigns a cryptographic key to each user. When that user logs in, the box is opened. When they log out, the box is locked.

So why is this useful? Let's say you're traveling with your MacBook, and let's say you're a security conscious Mac user, so you have your system set not to allow automatic login (many Mac users have automatic login enabled which is a bad security practice). Now… let's say your laptop is stolen. The perpetrator runs home and starts your laptop to try to steal your data. He gets dumped at a login screen and can't go any further because he doesn't know your password. However, if he is a savvy Mac user, he can still get to your data. He can pull the hard drive out of your Mac and put it into a USB enclosure. Then he can access the data on the disk without the permissions and passwords inhibiting him. If he's an advanced Mac user, he probably understands target booting. Connect 2 Macs with a FireWire cable, then boot the first Mac with the T key held down. Then boot the second Mac normally. The second Mac will be able to access all of the data on the first Mac's hard drive. While this is a convenient feature, and it is often useful, it is also a major security flaw.

In both of the above scenarios… FileVault would have made all the data in you home folder unreadable. For those of you who understand encryption, FileVault uses the AES-128 algorithm to encrypt. This algorithm yields 3.4 X 10^38 possible 128-bit keys. To put that in perspective, if you could crack a 56-bit DES key in 1 second, it would take you approximately 149,000,000,000,000 years to crack AES-128.

In order for FileVault to work though… a few other factors have to be taken into consideration. First, you must disable automatic login, or it completely defeats the purpose of FileVault. If your computer logs in automatically, it essentially "unlocks the box" without any input, which completely circumvents the encryption. Also, you must have a password set, and it must be hard to guess. I know a lot of Mac users that have a blank password, or set it to something simple like "password". Again, the account password is what "locks and unlocks the box", so a weak or blank password will compromise the encryption. By the same token, do not store your password anywhere near your Mac. I have met Mac users that write their password on a piece of tape and put it on the bottom of their laptop. Obviously, this compromises the encryption as well. Here's the bottom line, if you're going to use FileVault… you MUST protect your password. It is the key to the kingdom so to speak. Your password should be complex and secret, and do not share it with anyone (see Security 101: Secure Building Blocks, MacCompanion April 2006).

Also remember, FileVault only encrypts your home (/Users/your_user_name) folder and everything beneath it. I know several users that will create a folder on the root of their drive called "projects" (or something similar), and store everything in that folder. FileVault will NOT protect these files. It only protects things in your home folder. Make sure everything you need to keep secret is in your home folder before enabling FileVault.

Last but not least, do not leave your Mac logged in all the time. I know many Mac users that do this. Remember, when the Mac is logged in, the box is unlocked. So when you're done working, either log off, or set your Mac to require a password to unlock from sleep or screen saver. Encryption does not work by itself. It also requires some user intervention, and a little education.

Is FileVault for you? It all depends on what data you store on your computer and what value you place on that data. If you store business critical data and financial information on your system, it may be worth it to you. If you store nothing of importance on your system and still make frequent backups just in case, it may be a nothing more than a hindrance. If you like having blank (or simple) passwords, FileVault really won't protect anything. If you in a creative field and are protective of your work, FileVault might be a necessity. Every person's needs are different. The most important thing to keep in mind is this… just turning on FileVault does not make it work. You must also be using a secure computing methodology in general. If you are already doing this, turning on FileVault will cause little impact to the way you work. If changing to a more secure methodology will be big change for you… you might want to take it one step at a time.

Views from the Ivory Tower - October 2007

By Ted Bade

Another month and yet another special announcement from Apple. This time, as you probably know, Apple updated their line of iPods. I personally think they made some very nice improvements. As usual, Mr. Jobs put on a Keynote presentation to introduce the new iPods.

He started out with a couple of interesting statistics. Apple is now the #3 music retailer in the US, just above Amazon. (Wow, what a change this is. Who would have thought that a computer company would eventually move so high into the ranks of selling music?) He also pointed out that in 2006 32% of the new album releases were digital only. Interesting. To me this says that part of the recording industry is embracing digital media as a viable solution. I don't think that CD's will disappear in the foreseeable future, but I do see more and more independent artists being able to release their music using the digital domain rather then making a CD.

Apple added the ability to make and buy ring tones for the iPhone to the iTunes program. I was impressed with their solution. Most companies allow the user to buy a snippet that was produced by someone else. This piece may or may not be exactly what the user wants. Using Apple's iTunes solution, the user can create a snippet from anywhere they choose in any participating song. I do realize there is software out there that allows the user to cut a snippet from any tune to use. This may or may not be legal, Apple's solution is 100% legal and fees are paid.

Once again, Apple is leading the world by allowing the user, not the manufacturer, choose what they want. I like that. That has always been Apple's method and that is why I use their computers. They let me, (for the most part), do things the way I like. I don't have to follow corporate rules or live with what they want me to. I can do it myself. Yes, surely this means I can bungle the process. But at least I know I bungled it!

In any case, the deal with ring tones is that when you make one you like you can buy it for 99¢. Obviously one needs to already own the song to make a ring tone with it. If the user already owns the song, they don't have to buy it again to make the ring tone, but they do have to buy it if they don't. So cost of a ring tone without owning the song is $2 (1 for the song and 1 for the ring tone). I think that is a very fair price to get something exactly as you want it.

Apple updated all of its iPods, although the shuffle only got a new color scheme. Apple added a larger LCD screen to the Nano and the ability to view photos and movies. They changed the name of the standard iPod to iPod Classic, because they needed to differentiate it from the new iPod Touch. They also added capacity to the iPod classic, the high end one now offers 160 GBytes! (Who has that many songs? I don't know, but with 160 G of space, this iPod can carry my music library and have enough space for a Macintosh backup boot volume and a ton of applications!)

The iPod Touch is modeled after the iPhone. It has the full sized touch screen with the ability to change orientation as you move it around. It comes in two sizes 8 and 16 G of storage. After years of wishing that Apple would make an iPod with a full sized video screen, I am really pleased by what they finally created! All I wanted was a larger screen; Apple added a number of interesting and useful abilities to the iPod Touch as well.

The Touch offers built in Wi-Fi, so you can access the Internet and more importantly (to Apple), the iTunes Music Store as you wander about. If you buy and download a song to the Touch, it will upload to your Mac next time you synch it. This Wi-Fi can be used to access the Internet and the web using a version of Safari that is installed on the Touch. There is a button to get you directly into Utube (to watch their videos), and you can move the bookmarks from your Mac (or PC) into the Touch for easy access to your favorite web sites. Since this thing can run one application, Safari, I wonder why it couldn't run several others. Perhaps someone will figure out how to make the iPod touch into a PDA!

Apple finally pulled coffee seller Starbucks into their plans by getting Starbucks to agree to free access to the iTunes store when entering a participating Starbucks. The deal is that you can see the artist and title of the current and past ten songs playing on the store's audio system. If you like, you can buy the song and using Starbuck's Wi-Fi, download it to your Touch. Interesting, although I don't know how much value people will see in this. If I go to Starbucks with my iPod, I am usually listening to my stuff on the iPod and not the store's music!

A final bit of news that really annoyed a lot of customers was that Apple reduced the cost of the iPhone by $200! Wow. While this is a kind of slap in the face for early adopters, it is good news for people who wanted an iPhone but thought the price was out of their range. It also really ruins the plans of those people who bought an iPhone speculating they could resell it for a profit when the supply got low! In a letter to previous iPhone users (http://www.apple.com/hotnews/openiphoneletter/), Steve Jobs explains a little about the situation. While he didn't say it, one gets the impression that Apple worked a really good deal on components and could therefore reduce the price. Reducing the price at this time, just before the winter holidays, is a good sales move as well. In exchange for their early purchase, Apple is giving them a $100 Store credit at any Apple store. That's nice. I know how the market can change; I was one of those who bought the original iPod 3 days before the price dropped $100! But back then it wasn't so popular that I got a rebate!

Video glasses - I mentioned the video glasses a couple of time in the past. Then they were really vaporware, something planned, but not yet available. I recently hear that a company called Vuzix has some really cool video glasses. These glasses give you a personal and private video space. They have versions designed to connect to a video iPod or your computer. Using a product like this gives one a view as if they had a very large screen and can also come in handy for keeping what is on your screen personal.

Sounds like interesting gear to me. I would love to be able to see my iPod video on a virtual large screen!

Golly, Apple has been so busy pleasing and annoying people on their own, that there is little else to talk about! Are the exciting day of controversy and regular rumors of Apple's demise gone forever? I don't expect they are totally over ☺. For Mac users, these are interesting times!

As always, keep on using your Mac!
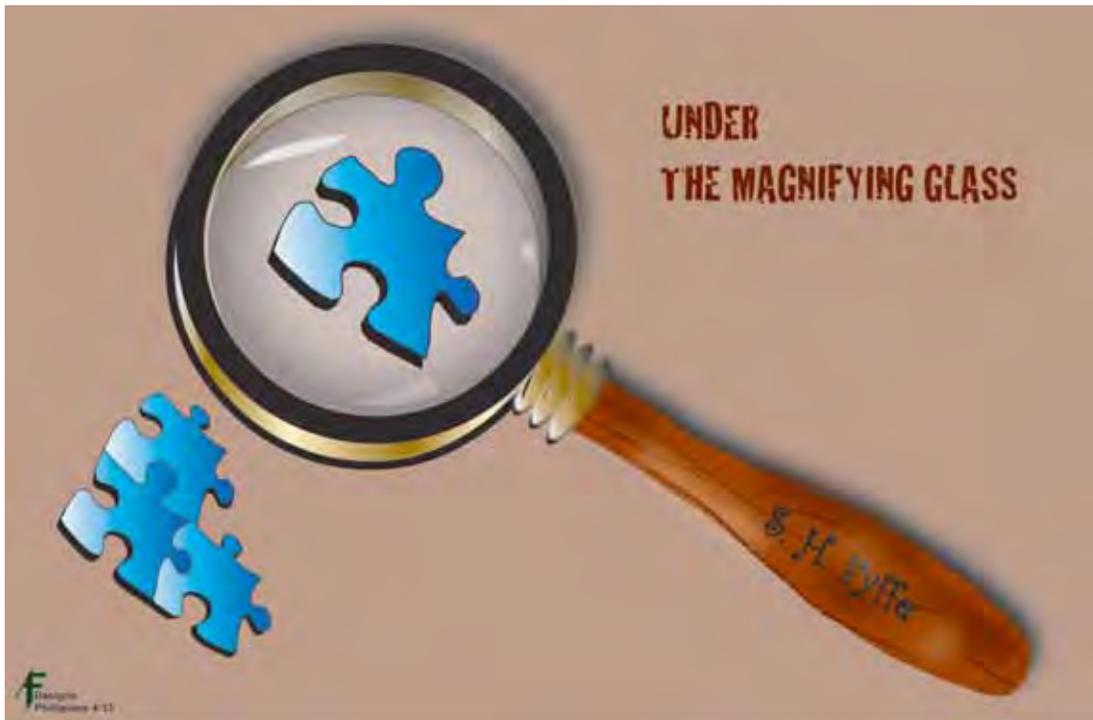
Under the Magnifying Glass
Observation of Trifles
By Steven H. Fyffe
sfyffe@maccompanion.com

"Look Papa!" Jared exclaimed, pointing to the ground. My grandson interrupted our trek to the ice cream store, stooping down to inspect bicycle tracks made in the dirt. He then wrote notes in his imaginary journal.

Sherlock Holmes scrutinizes the grass along a path, in *A Study of Scarlet* <http://www.monmouth.com/~cathygrim/documents/The%20Art%20of%20Deduction.pdf>, when a sudden expression of satisfaction crosses his lips, having determined which scoundrel had done the dirty deed.

A Biblical Greek student slowly parsed each syllable of the text I assigned him to read aloud in class. Then, his face brightened in recognition. He rather sheepishly read without hesitation John 3:16 from the Greek Bible.

What do Jared, Sherlock, and this student have in common? They all experienced the joy of discovery through inductive analysis.

"You know my method. It is founded upon the observation of trifles" … "It is, of course, a trifle, but there is nothing so important as trifles" so spoke Sherlock Holmes <http://www.bcpl.net/~lmoskowi/HolmesQuotes/q.detection.html>.

Holmes's creator, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle <http://www.sherlockholmesonline.org/> was a physician and he based the Holmes character on his medical school professor Joseph Bell <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Bell>, who emphasized the importance of close observation of details in making a medical diagnosis. Bell was one of the first to apply scientific observation to forensic investigations, just as Doyle's character often lectured Watson to practice in their many adventures <http://camdenhouse.ignisart.com/canon/index.html> .

In my experience, teaching Biblical Greek and nurturing our girls in home school, inductive learning <http://www.thoughtfuled.com/strategies/Inductive%20Learning.pdf> is the fastest and surest method for retaining knowledge. The Georgia Department of Education <http://www.glc.k12.ga.us/pandp/critthink/inductive.htm> gives a very clear description of inductive learning. To paraphrase, inductive learning is built on the process of inductive thinking and helps students connect what they discover with their prior knowledge. By carefully examining seemingly unrelated details, "trifles" as Holmes called them, students learn to classify these pieces of the puzzle into groups with common characteristics, learn to apply what they have learned to any project they tackle, and motivates them with the desire to learn more.

Let me share another example. Jared started in kindergarten last week with all the traumatic emotions that entails. But in spite of that, he was guided into a discovery of the letters *i* and *s* and how they magically form the word *is.* The teacher did not define the rules of grammar or explain the difference between a verb and a noun … deductive lecturing will come later. Although there were tears from the academic torture, Jared truly enjoyed his "guided discovery" <http://eltj.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/52/1/88.pdf > of the letters *i* and *s*, telling his mom "I want to see how many *is*'s I can write."

Building upon his audiolingualism <http://eltj.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/52/1/88.pdf > experience, i.e. mimicking what he heard from parents and others, with his new found discovery of the letter *i*, he formed the words *it* and *in*. He picked up on this, all on his own, while his mom was reading to him. WOW! In less than two weeks he can write a sentence fragment, "It is in". All on his own, Jared fit the puzzle pieces of language together. He will retain this knowledge much longer than if he had sat through a lecture … in one ear and out the other. By sharing what he has learned, Jared will seal that knowledge into his memory … he taught grandma and grandpa to spell *is* and later proudly told his mom he taught us how to spell it.

Those who love puzzles examine each piece, groups together those with common characteristics, and, for those with a keen eye for observation, the pieces of a puzzle fall into place to form a beautiful picture

Likewise, detectives like Sherlock Holmes and Adrian Monk develop an eagle's eye for what may seem to be the most obsure trifle. "Elementary, my dear Watson."

Now, you may be like Dr. Watson in *A Study of Scarlet* <http://www.monmouth.com/~cathygrim/documents/The%20Art%20of%20Deduction.pdf> and are thinking "What ineffable twaddle." Well, I have given you the first clue. Perhaps, you have formulated your first conjecture as to why I gave my column the title, "Under the Magnifying Glass". Perhaps, you found the first piece to the puzzle in understanding the purpose for the beautiful graphic my daughter, Amy, designed for us.

However, you probably are still scratching your head as to why I am penning an article about inductive analysis in *macCompanion*? Well, the mystery will become clearer in the months to come, but let me say that we are embarking on a great adventure, a safari if you will.

To give a taste of our future escapades, here is your first "guided discovery" <http://eltj.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/52/1/88.pdf > assignment: Open a Quick Time movie. Resize the window, by clicking and holding the lower right corner. Do you notice any limitations? Now, hold the Shift key down, while doing the same thing. What did you discover? Wasn't that fun? You discovered, with a little guidance, this hidden gem. Now, share your discovery with someone else. Don't just tell them (deductive lecture), but lead them to a "guided discovery" of this fun feature of Quick Time.

Please come back next month and visit "Under the Magnifying Glass", where I hope to be your companion in another adventure. As we get to know one another, we will be steering each other toward a "guided discovery" <http://eltj.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/52/1/88.pdf> of the Macintosh and all those other creative tools and toys we enjoy so much. I want to invite you to come back and sit a spell. Experience the same kind of excitement discovering the Macintosh, as Jared and and his Papa have when they discover bicycle tracks in the dirt and letters of the alphabet.

Books

40 Digital Photo Retouching Techniques with Photoshop Elements 5.0 3rd edition

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Author: Zack Lee
Distributed by O'Reilly
Released: April 2007
$17 US, $23 CND, £ 10 UK. Comes with CD
Pages: 208
ISBN-10: 8931433700
ISBN 13: 978-89-314-3370-8

Strengths: Offers pretty intro to Photoshop Elements 5.0.

Weaknesses: CD Photoshop Elements trial version is for Windows-only. So is Version 5 and 6 of Photoshop Elements.

Introduction

With digital camera usage now established, the demand for easy, affordable photo editing tools has increased. Adobe's Photoshop Elements leads the way as an affordable image-editing tool. This easy-to-follow, full-color guide shows all digital photographers how to make their photos look their best with dozens of well-organized, hands-on techniques. Readers learn how to change or replace a color, enhance faces, fix burred images, correct poor exposures, create a slide show, and more.

W.F. Borman wrote this review for Amazon;

Adobe's Photoshop Elements 5.0 (PE5) is an advanced photo editor that combines most of the special tools of the standard bearer, Photoshop, with affordable cost and a manageable learning curve. The current version 5 also includes an organizer that lets the user assemble his pictures in albums, combine them in slide shows on DVDs, and more.

For those who want to get a quick overview of many of the powerful tools available in
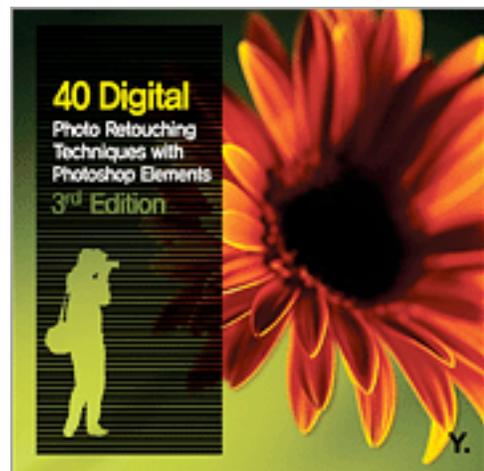
PE the book by Zack Lee is an excellent guide. (Note: the author of the first edition is listed on the O'Reilly Web site as John Kim). In short chapters it leads the reader step-by-step through various editing procedures, using photos provided on a CD included with the book. Many basic editing steps can be achieved in different ways using the large selection of available tools, and the author purposely varies common procedures from example to example to optimize the learning experience. Of course, a complete discussion of all the tools available in PE5 requires a heftier text, such as O'Reilly's Photoshop Elements 5 - The Missing Manual.

After a brief introductory overview of the Editor window the following 6 chapters cover Correcting Contrast, Manipulating Colors, Enhancing Portraits, Editing Skills and Special Effects, Very Special Effects, and Using and Sharing Images. Going beyond the standard editing tools provided in basic photo editors, the reader also gets exposed to the many powerful special tools such as layers, levels, and the many brushes and erasers that do a lot more than the names would imply. With special tools portraits are made more flattering by adjusting skin color and retouching skin imperfections, resizing eyes, and streamlining jowly cheeks. A nice snapshot can be changed into an attractive portrait by blurring the background and removing background objects altogether. The possibilities are seemingly endless.

The book is attractively bound and presents step-by-step colorful screen shots of the photos at the different stages of editing, as well as of the corresponding editor windows. Sometimes the tool marks, such as the "crawling ants" outlines of selected objects, are hard to distinguish in the illustrations, but this is usually not a great obstacle in following the examples.

After completing the examples in the book the reader has been exposed to many of the powerful editing tools in Photoshop Elements 5.0. A useful index makes it easy to go back to specific examples for a refresher on how to perform certain adjustments or how to use certain tools. Highly recommended.

The CD says the trial version of Photoshop Elements 5.0 is Windows-only, but the sample pictures do appear as .tiff files in Preview on a Mac just fine.

The book is a beautifully illustrated coffee-table book. I'm sure there will be another edition to the book, now that Photoshop Elements 6 is out for Windows for $100 USD. The last update for Macs was to version 4.0.1 in June 2007 and can be purchased for $80 USD.
http://www.adobe.com/products/photoshopelmac/

Photoshop Elements is intended for the "casual photographer", according to Adobe.

Conclusion

If you have a Mac, this book may not be what you are looking for. If you use a Windows-based machine and have Photoshop elements 5 or 6, then this book will be of great worth.

Adobe Acrobat 8 How-Tos: 125 Essential Techniques

Reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad   © 2007

Author: Donna L. Bake**r**
Publisher: Adobe Press
http://safari.adobepress.com/0321470818
Released: 12 February, 2007
Paperback Pages: 304
$25 (Street $16.49) (USD), $30 (CND), £ 19.79 (UK)
ISBN-10: 0321470818
ISBN-13: 978-0321470812
Requirements: Adobe Acrobat 8

Audience: Intermediate and Advanced Acrobat users, preferably using the PC Version

Techniques Tested on a 1 GHz dual processor PowerPC G4 Macintosh with 2 GB DDR SDRAM running under OS X 10.4.10 with Adobe Acrobat 8 Pro and MS Word 2004, version 11.3.5.

Strengths: The book contains a collection of 125 focused techniques to show you what Acrobat can do, and how it can help you use its rich functions smarter and faster. The mostly well-defined and focused techniques serve to focus your attention on only items you next need to master.

Weaknesses: The document give lip service support to Macintosh users, but enough of the guidance, especially for users of MS Office are simply incorrect. This is due to differences between formatting of documents in Windows based MS Office vs. that for OS X.
Also, the lack of a CD or web based examples make duplicating, the described techniques more difficult than necessary.

Macintosh Users

PC Users

Introduction
I have long been an Adobe Acrobat and Pro (AA8) user having found these products to be a valuable tool for both (1) giving my clients and contacts a universal access to my scribblings and (2) working to modify downloaded recipes to meet my esthetic and culinary needs.

I had preciously reviewed and studied Ms. Bakers' Acrobat 8 in the Office [MacC July 2007] and found it both well worth reading and for using as a source for enhancing my abilities with AA8. When I became aware of the "How-Tos book, I though it could help me better focus on learning specific AA8 techniques. Those methods, functions I'm not yet comfortable with. This includes (1) creating and working with forms; and (2) changing, adding, annotating commenting and manipulating text in PDF files. Indeed this "How-Tos" book, segmented into 125 succinct and focused Essential Techniques and served up in cohesive 16 chapters seemed just the thing to speed my larnin'.

For those of you who are not familiar with the richness of AA8's features, describing what the product does and is can be difficult. Since such a description gives insight into the products functionality let me share Donna's overview.

"Acrobat isn't like "ordinary" software in that you can't define its purpose in a single word as you can with a spreadsheet, word processing, or image-manipulation program. It's not that simple. Rather than trying to qualify the program in a single word, consider the ways in which Acrobat functions. Acrobat is designed to create PDF content, using material from many different sources or from a new document; combine content, using either a merged format or a combined format; collaborate on information, using the commenting and review process; collect information, using PDF forms with input collected from forms and reviews; and control information, using PDF security via passwords or by signing and certifying documents."

In this book…
This book allows us to increase your productivity with Acrobat, one technique at a time. It is not meant to be read from cover to cover, but rather to be used as a guide when we, in our daily work, need to expand our expertise with AA8.

Excerpted From the Back Book Cover — "Now that PDF has become the ubiquitous electronic document format, it's important to recognize that there's much more to Adobe Acrobat than just managing your documents and improving workflow. With this powerful tool, you can now communicate with new commenting tools, collaborate with individuals and teams, automate forms, provide additional security, use redactive tools, and accomplish tasks for greater productivity and efficiency. But with all this power, how do you bring your Acrobat skills up to speed quickly?

There is a wealth of information in this book, but alas much of it, as an individual contributor and one person business, beyond my present needs. But don't let that stop you from exploring. [The book's Table of Contents] is attached, for information, to the end of the review.

Here are just some of the things you'll learn to do, with a few of my annotations that served to focus my review:

- Conduct searches quickly by building an index and attaching it to files (*Tried this, but need more practice*)

- Merge multiple files into a single PDF document and create a custom cover (*Yep, Donna's hints made this even easier but, despite Donna's assertions it doesn't work easily from Microsoft Word (MSW) on a Macintosh*)

- Create comments in PDF documents, start a review, and work with comments (presently of only limited use to me, but its easy to learn. *There're some wonderful techniques in the book that expanded my skills in this area*)

- Use new form tools in Acrobat 8 for drawing fields, tracking responses, and creating a form automatically (*I'm getting better but still prefer to start in MSW*)

- Set up an online meeting in Acrobat Connect (*PC Users Only*)

- Creating PDF Documents in Distiller and Acrobat (a detailed and for the most part useful chapter that enhanced my skilled after I figured out how to make *Tips* these techniques happen on my Macintosh.)

- Add movies and 3D content, and create interactive presentations (*Have no present need*)

- Assign levels of security and passwords to documents using new hashing algorithm support in Acrobat 8 (*interesting, some day*)

Disappointments and Discomforts (A Sampling)
Macintosh AA8 Thoughts — Although information specific to the Macintosh is both understated and well hidden, the author does provide shortcuts (in sidebars) that work on bother platforms. (*I'm not sure whether this is a good or bad thing.*)

Illustrations — Most of the illustrations were done on the PC version of the program. Do I sense a bit of platform bias here?

Practicing the Techniques — Unlike what Ms. Baker has done for her book *Acrobat 8 in the Office*, there is no supplementary material available to help work through complex techniques. For me to succeed in using them, all too many of the complex methods would have befitted by an example either posted to Ms. Baker's website or on an attached CD. I especially found leaping into form creation difficult, this despite having practiced form making for several projects. In addition, I gave up entirely when trying to learn the advanced nuances of *Organizing searching and Cataloging* (Chapter 2) or Producing a Professional (*designer level*) Looking PDF Document (Chapter 4).

Limits of A Page or Two Narrative is Too Concentrated — For some of the more complex multiple step methods I would have been happier for a separate treatment (e.g., introductory and advanced) for some of the techniques.

Glitches and Gotcha's:-
- *Web Page PDFs* — It's amazing that one can only create PDFs from web pages using Internet Explorer (page 42, Tip 18). Although using AA8's create PDF from a web site is mentioned in the next tip, this sort of leaves Safari and Firefox users hanging out, especially if the don't read chapter 4.

- *Grey Screen Shots* — With a magnifying glass and brighter lights than I usually read by, I could decode most of the screen shots. We're an aging population, how about some image clarity from the worlds premier graphics and multimedia software maker.

- *Adding Additional Text To The Body of a PDF File* (Page 127, Tip 56, Page 142, Tip 64 and Page 224, Tip 102) — The write up is excellent except for one problem. The other neglects to tell us what happens when the amount of added text exceed the size of the PDF page. [Hint, it runs off the page since AA8 cannot scroll it to a new page. There are workarounds that involve adding a blank new page and a lot of cutting and pasting; but the results leaves lots of unsightly white space while saving all the text old and new.]

- Adobe PDFMaker Limitations on the Macintosh — The general statement introducing Chapter 3 is misleading for Macintosh MS Office users. Indeed, Donna does not distinguish either what works for Mac users and when to use Distiller vs. the auto installed PDFMaker, which can't be controlled with respect to setting preferences. I also wonder what MS Office SR1, SR2 or SR3 are (page 33 –Sidebar)? Also what is Office XP for the Macintosh (Page 29)? There are no Macintosh versions of MS Office with these version numbers. In addition, there also are no specific detailed instructions on dealing with conversion of Power Point Presentations to PDF on Macintosh Systems (Page 40, Tip 17.)

> There are many ways you can create a PDF file from within other applications, and these capabilities expand with each revision of Acrobat. After you install Acrobat, you'll find new menus and toolbars in most Microsoft Office programs, such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Outlook. (Chapter 3) The menus and toolbar make up PDFMaker 8, which you can use to configure settings and create PDF content right from your Office program.
>
> Acrobat also installs the Adobe PDF printer driver, which lets you print PDF documents from many programs, as well as Adobe Distiller, a program that converts PostScript or Encapsulated PostScript (EPS) files, such as those created in Illustrator, to PDF format. Read about creating PDF files with Distiller in Chapter 4. Conversions can be controlled by PDFMaker settings, by Acrobat Distiller, and by source programs that export PDF-formatted files directly.

More Issues Macintosh MS Office and Acrobat PDF Maker — I must be missing something, but I can find no way to set preferences for tuning Acrobat PDFMaker, on my Macintosh. This is true in either MSW or AA8 Pro, I found no way to customize the conversion of MS Office documents to PDF. This might be an Acrobat Distiller function but I've not yet learned when to use that program.

Special Crops — Why mention of a subject, and give no explanations of its use? (Page 129, Tip 58 — Sidebar)
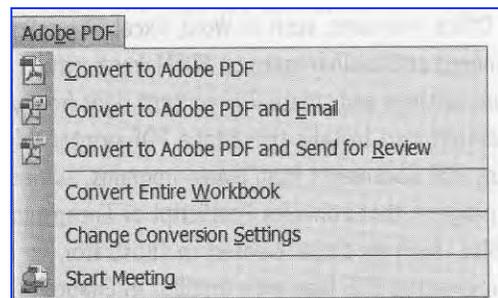
Conclusion

Although many users rely on Acrobat's page-viewing abilities, the application offers a world of functionality just waiting to be tapped. It will not replace either your word processing or image processing software. However, with its range of document-enhancing features and large array of supported input and output formats, Adobe Acrobat offers something for just about everyone. By inference, this means that figuring out how to do any one new specific task with it can at times be somewhat daunting, despite the Adobe Acrobat help system.

In Adobe Acrobat 8 How-Tos: The 125 Essential Techniques, author and Acrobat whiz Donna Baker solves that problem by presenting each Acrobat task as a short and focused stand-alone unit, complete unto itself. (This as mentioned in the review body has it good and bad points.) So if the scope of the topics meets your needs, use this book as a means to increase your productivity with Acrobat, one technique at a time.

Recommendation

For users, intermediate and advanced level, who've only scratched the basis of AA8s functionally this is a good way to get started on learning more about the specifics of the powerful features in AA8 and AA8 Pro. The techniques, for the most part, in the book are more likely to be an easy learn for PC users, but even folks using a Macintosh can tough it out though the methods described by Ms. Baker. Even if only a "*bakers'* dozen of these techniques fill your present needs, the book us well worth the street price.

PS: Don't forget that Acrobat 8 in all its versions comes with robust help files, 24.5 MB for AA8 Pro. Check out Kurt Foss' article *Acrobat 8 Help: Options & formats.* Use them while your book is being shipped
[http://www.acrobatusers.com/blogs/kfoss/category/2/page/2/%5D]

Addendum
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Dreamweaver CS3 Bible
Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Author: Joseph Lowery
http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-0470122145.html
Released: May 2007
Pages: 1,152
$50 USD $60 CND, £ 32 GBP with CD-ROM,
ISBN: 978-0-470-12214-3

Strengths: Definitely a Reference Guide for Dreamweaver CS3. Comes with CD and preconfigured code with samples and techniques described in the book.

Weaknesses: One or two printing typos.

Introduction

Learn to create dynamic, data-driven Web sites using the exciting enhancements in the Dreamweaver CS3 version. You get a thorough understanding of the basics and then progress to learning how to produce pages with pizzazz, connect to live databases, integrate with Flash and Photoshop, use advanced technologies like Spry and Ajax, incorporate Flash, Shockwave, QuickTime, and WAV files, import Photoshop files directly into Dreamweaver, and enjoy Web success.

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Part VII: Extending Dreamweaver.

Chapter 33: Customizing Dreamweaver.

Chapter 34: Handling Server Behaviors.

Part VIII: Appendix.

Appendix A: What's on the CD-ROM?

Bonus Chapters.

Bonus Chapter 1.

Bonus Chapter 2.

Index.

What I learned from this book

I learned that there is an awful lot I don't know about Dreamweaver CS3, but that this book did a fairly good job bringing it all together.

Start with the best and everything else will drop into place.

The CD does have an index starting with chapter 5. Some chapters don't have sample files. The bonus chapters cover creating and using objects and creating a behaviour. In the Additional Extensions folder, the behaviors and objects are listed under the author's names instead of as a list of objects and behaviors, so some extra work is involved in trying to find stuff.
I got the book because I was interested in working through the items in Part III and Part IV where one of the topics is on interactive forms and another is on making data dynamic. And then I noticed the chapters on adding video and audio to a website in Part V.

The CD comes into play in chapters that have a "Dreamweaver Technique" sidebar. Most entries are tips, cautions, notes and cross-ref to other chapters on topics. Mark Fletcher did the Captivate simulations on the CD-ROM and his website is http://macrofireball.blogspot.com

Conclusion

If you are into Dreamweaver CS3 at all, this is probably one of the best if not the best reference book on the topic and the CD-ROM indeed does make this a true value-add.

Recommendation

The book is worth the paper it is printed on.

Low Budget Shooting - *Do It Yourself Solutions to Professional Photo Gear*

Reviewed by Wayne LeFevre

Author: Cyrill Harnischmachet
Publisher: Rocky Nook
http://www.rockynook.com/books/1-933952-10-5.html
Released: April, 2007

Pages: 72

$19.95 USD, $20 CND, £10 UK

ISBN-10: 1-933952-10-5
ISBN-13: 978-1-933952-10-9
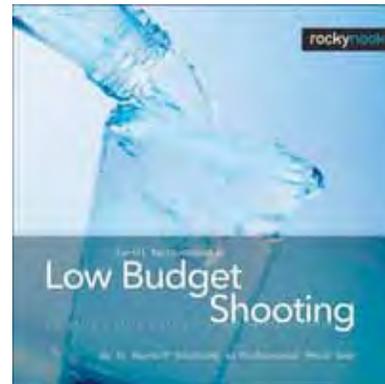
Audience: Beginner/Intermediate/Advanced

Strengths: Excellent pictures and examples for photo gear projects for the DIY crowd.

Weaknesses: A bit short.

Introduction
Photography gear for studio, tabletop, and flash photography, and for accessories here and there, are expensive and often not even available. Many pros have made their own, but the home user wouldn't have a clue if not for a little help from someone else. But where to find that help? Rocky Nook.

In this book…
Rocky Nook, one of my favorite publishers of photography, has another winner of a book out for the struggling photographer, or even a wanna–be like myself. *Low Budget Shooting* is very aptly named.

After I bought my first DSLR, a lens, and splurged on Aperture, I pretty much used up all my Christmas, Anniversary and Birthday allowance for the next year. Though this is really all that is needed, the more you really start getting into photography, the more it becomes more like computing. Yes, an iMac, keyboard and mouse is technically all you need, there are many gadgets and extras that would make life just that much simpler. Unfortunately, money has a habit of disappearing when it comes to the "gadgets envelope", and that is where this book comes in.

Though not a huge book, coming in at 72 pages, it's professional hard cover, incredible photographs and step–by–step instructions will make you wonder why some spend thousands on the same gear. Low Budget Shooting is the one-stop source where you will find instructions and a shopping list on how to build an array of useful and inexpensive photographic tools.

Filled with full-color images and easy-to-follow text, this book shows how to build essential lighting and studio equipment; how to make the perfect light-table for shooting small objects; and how to build reflectors, soft-boxes, and light-tents that really work. It also tells where to get some of the little helpers that make a photographer's life so much easier.

One of the neat ideas in the book are the photographs is that they will show the same subject, photographed with the different lighting techniques, boxes and reflectors that are included in the book to be made.

Conclusion
If you're a photographer on a budget, or just like to save a little money, this is a must to add to your collection.

MacBook for Dummies

Reviewed by Dr. Eric Flescher
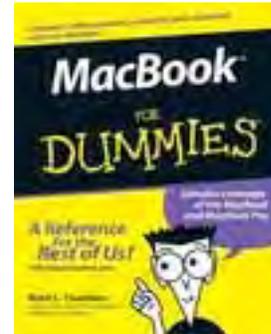
Strengths: The book includes a very introduction. Good screenshots and illustrations including the pointers to specific areas within the illustrations. Five icons help pinpoint helpful information along the way. Chapter 23 " Top Ten Things to Avoid like the Plague " is quite good as well as Chapter 22 "Top Ten Laptop Rules to Follow" (which is insightful and well written). Good price, well written and readable.

Weaknesses: Chapters like the ones with iDVD and Imovie have minimal amounts of information. Really these and some of the sections just have the basics. To know and learn more, books that detail more information regarding specific applications should be found besides these basics, the iLife applications, you might want to turn elsewhere. Users who read about "movies", "projects", "video clips", may find the information in this book not well defined, especially concerning when and how the media can be imported, exported and utilized.

Introduction
There are several books on the market dealing with MacBook. Several include not only information about MacBook but MacBook Pro. This is one includes both. I wanted to see what the author had to offer in this MacDummies series related to these laptops. I found the author of this book has previously published the Mac OSX All-In-One desk Reference for Dummies and completed thirty computer books. My wife bought a MacBook so I decided to research this book to see what it could tell me.

The book covers 366 pages and spans 23 chapters with seven part/ sections. The first part of the book includes a very nice introduction that gives the reader a nice prelude to learning about the laptops but more. As the author says, " he started with no assumption " regarding knowledge of the laptop. The book starts "from the ground up" and launches into some interesting ideas that relate to more then the "hardware".

It is nice that in this beginning section, the author pinpoints information about "switchers," those computer users who are moving into the Macintosh realm from the PC/windows usage (particularly targeting Windows XP users). He also nicely mentions that if you are new to Macintosh and the Apple world, most of the software is in the computer and does not have to be purchased. This is a great tip that probably many PC people still don't know about even though many Apple users already are mindful about.

While many of the Dummies books vary in their versatility, breadth and depth of the instructional content, this one is solid. While the illustrations are only black and white, the screen shots are readable. Several include pointers to various sections within the illustrations that zone in on the information talked about. This takes away the annoying quess work that I have found in some books that I have read in which "hunting" within the illustrations was a regular and recurring point. There are also five icons that are placed throughout the pages. These (Tip; Mark's Maxim; Technical stuff; Warning!; Remember) serve to include precise additional information that assists along the way regarding the instructions.

The Part 1 includes information pertaining to Mac laptops, turning on and starting with the system and computer. Part focus in on the OSX and operating system while Part 3 launches into the world of connecting and communicating.   Part 4 focuses on the iLife applications (introductory instruction and while the text takes you through each application starting up and using, if you want more in-depth information other books will be needed). Part 5 is sharing access and information while Part 6 deals with important troubleshooting, upgrading information and maintaining your laptop.

Part 7 is called the Parts of Tens. This includes Chapter 22 " Top Ten Laptop Rules to Follow (insightful and well written) and Chapter 23 "Top Ten Things to Avoid like the Plague" (useful for many reasons in your encounter with the internet, applications, hardware and more).

Conclusion
All in all I liked the book and what it had "to say." Novice and intermediate laptop users might like it not only for its good price but also the information it provides. Readable and you gain insights throughout the book. But especially if you already have a Macbook or Pro and have worked with it and want more information (concerning the iLife applications), you might want to turn elsewhere. Users who read about "movies," "projects." "video clips," may find the information not well defined, especially concerning when and how the media can be imported, exported and utilized.

Real World Mac Maintenance and Backups

Reviewed by Michael Potter

Author: Joe Kissell
Publisher: Peachpit Press, in association with Take Control Books
http://www.peachpit.com
http://www.takecontrolbooks.com
Released: October, 2006

Pages: 230

USA $29.99, CAN $36.99, UK £21.99

ISBN: 0-321-49218-8
ISBN-13: 978-0321492180

Audience: Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced

Strengths: Well thought out and detailed advice, up to date, easy to understand.

Weaknesses: Pricey.

Introduction

The two most neglected tasks in the computer world are running regular maintenance on your computer and backing up the many multi-gigabytes of data we generate every day. Face it, it's a daunting task to keep on top of these steps! When iPods and the iLife suite of easy to use multimedia applications became common-place, all of a sudden we could no longer back up our entire collection of text documents to a single CD (or floppy), but now had to figure out what to do with 18+ gig of music ripped from our CD collection, iMovie projects filling up our Movies folder, as well as many thousands of digital photos.

Joe Kissell's book lays down the foundation for multimedia serenity and teaches us there's really no excuse for not performing any of these routine maintenance and backup tasks on your Mac.

In this book…

The book is divided into two main halves reflecting its origins as two separate e-books originally released by Take Control Books. The first half, consisting of chapters 1 through 8 focuses on what you can do on a regular basis to maintain your Mac and keep it running at peak condition. The remaining chapters, 9-12, concentrate on best practices for backing up your Mac. This second half is the meat of the book in my opinion but we'll come back to that in a minute.
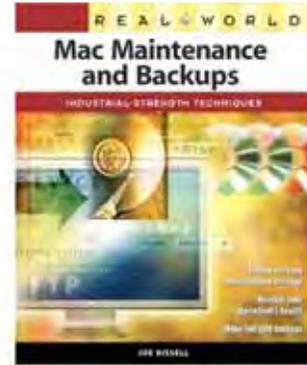
As any good support person should do, Kissell begins the book by getting everyone to common ground. Chapter 1, entitled "Start On The Right Foot," takes us through the process of upgrading OS X to the latest version, running software updates on both OS X and third-party applications, cleaning up the "cruft" as he calls it – that is, getting rid of the junk files on your computer – trolling through your start up items looking for applications that can be removed, as well as a number of other simple steps to get you started on your journey toward a more efficient Mac. Divided into Daily, Weekly, Monthly and Yearly tasks that should be performed on your Mac, Kissell very clearly lays out a foundation upon which you can build an effective strategy for a smooth running machine.

I must say that every step mentioned is pretty spot on. As much as I tried to come up with something he missed or maybe didn't cover completely, I could not. That includes more complicated tasks such as clearing caches and running Disk Utility on down to cleaning the iSight camera. Even when I tried really hard to root out fault, I found that he, instead, very eloquently played to both sides of the court. Such as when I came across the sub-heading, "Empty Your Trash" in the Monthy Tasks list. As I read the book, I found that some sub-headings like that one can be a tad misleading.

In Chapter Two, Perform Daily Tasks, for instance, the subhead reads: "Download Software Updates". Certainly we don't want to be saddling ourselves with that each day we sit down to be productive, however, when you read the section, he explains that, in truth, you should be checking for updates no more than once a week and should postpone updates that might pop up in between those times. I would consider renaming these subheads or possibly moving the content to another chapter, but that's nitpicking. Then again, maybe it's just a simple test so he can tell if you actually read the book or not.

Once you've got the routine for what you should be doing down pat, Kissell moves on to discuss a couple maintenance tasks that are often mentioned in the same breath as the others but, he suggests, aren't really all that necessary. The first is Repair Permissions and the second is Defragmenting Your Hard Drive. Once again, Kissell deftly navigates potential conflict with those who might disagree with this assessment by pointing out when, in each case, these tasks might be warranted.

Chapter 7, "When Apple Releases a New Version of Mac OS X," is a nice addition to the maintenance half of the book and one I think many new Mac users will find useful with Leopard, at the time of this writing, only a few weeks away. Though not long, it very neatly preps the reader for the second half of the book where full backup strategies are discussed, by strongly encouraging a Bootable Backup be made of your system before any OS upgrades are installed. In fact, he suggests *two* if time and resources permit. Sound advice.

An interesting perspective in this chapter is that you should NOT wait to upgrade to the latest version of OS X when available, instead, he says, go ahead and plunge right into it. His point is the benefits of the new release will far outweight any difficulties you may run into during the initial release. Most folks, including many noted Macintosh pundits, would bristle at this suggestion, but as an early adopter myself, I'd have to say I agree with him. Especially if you're the person everyone turns to when problems arise.

With this good foundation of maintenance under our belt, Kissell moves on to discuss strategies for backing up your Mac in Chapter 9. Of all topics discussed, I feel this chapter is the most valuable in the entire book. Kissell begins with a discussion of sample backup approaches covering everything from budget concerns to data safety. This is all laid out in a nice pros and cons style which makes it very easy for anyone who is not familiar with sound backup principles or terminology.   In the pages that follow, he very succintly defines ideas such as archiving, creating duplicates, synchonization, scheduling your backups and whether you should consider incremental or differential backups. It's all logically organized and he takes care to limit his descriptions to small, easily digestible bits of information. Most importantly, Kissell discusses the special needs of those who have large photo, video or music libraries.

The chapter concludes with a recommended strategy for each of the backup methods described in the book. This is a welcome addition to the chapter and shows anyone new to backing up a computer how to use these methods individually or in combination with each other to ensure complete recovery in the event of a major hardware or software failure. I think even grizzled veterns of server room backups will appreciate this chapter. We tend to get one method stuck in our noggins and it's nice once in a while to analyze someone else's routines and adopt some of their best ideas to our own.

The remaining chapters of the book explore the hardware, software and setup needed to perform your backups. A very common question I'm asked is what the best media are for long-term backup storage. The truth is, of course, that very few of us ever find out because technology changes so rapidly and what might work well for us one year, may be rendered completely obsolete five years hence. So good practice is to continually migrate your precious memories to newer technology as it matures and our old methods begin to decay.

In Chapter 10, Kissell considers the technology available now, such as hard drive, optical, tape, flash, network attached storage and internet backup services. He even discusses some of the more esoteric backup methods such as using a camcorder (a method I recall first experimented with about 9 years ago or so using home VHS video recorders) or the less commonly found Iomega REV drives.   For each, pitfalls and chances for data recovery in case of emergency are considered and eventually boiled down to his recommendation for the typical user.

For software recommendations, Kissell breaks it down three main types: combination software that incorporates archiving and duplication; duplication only software; and archiving only software. If you incorporate his backup strategies, you'll need something that does both, even if it ends up being two different applications. For instance, I use iBackup for my achiving and SuperDuper! for drive duplication and have been extremely happy with both, though I noted iBackup was not on his list of recommended programs.

In the final chapter of the book, "Set Up Your Backup System," Kissell takes you through the methodical steps of testing your hardware, software, labeling your media and, lastly, performing test runs of both your duplicate and archive backups as well as sample restores of your data. Testing your equipment and methods of backup is well-grounded practice, because the last position you want to find yourself in is when you're in emergency recovery mode and only then discover your media are all blank! Kissell closes the book out with a firm emphasis on the importance of off-site storage for your backups.

What follows in the back of the book are three appendices with lists of troubleshooting resources, a recap of backup software mentioned, including prices current at the time of publication as well as contact information, and a rather indepth discussion of using EMC's Retrospect as your primary backup solution.

Also in the back of the book you'll find a complete Glossary, Index and Periodic Checklist of Maintenance Tasks.

Conclusion

As up-to-date as this book is – it really is! – "Real World Mac Maintenance and Backups" completely skips over the upcoming inclusion of Time Machine in OS X Leopard. While some might argue that it would be irresponsible to try and give advice based on something we've yet to lay our hands on, it certainly warrants a sidebar for no other reason than it will be an incredibly important advancement for the typical Mac user and how they approach backing up their data.

As much as I like Kissell's book, I have a couple minor quibbles with it.

In the first chapter, he recommends the installation of an anti-virus application on your Mac. This is an argument with no winners and has been played out in many other forums before, but beyond the risk of viruses that may, someday, be released into the wild for the Mac platform, one of the main reasons to install an anti-virus program, according to Kissell, is to help protect Windows users to whom we may unwittingly pass along a virus-laden file via e-mail. He admits there have been so few viruses for OS X in the wild that he could count them on one hand, but for Windows, we know, there are hundreds of thousands, so am I to understand that it's for these Windows users I should run an anti-virus? Users who should already be running up to date anti-virus software and following safe computing practices?

I run a Mac with OS X so I don't have to worry about that ... as much. When it's shown to me that OS X is as inherently flawed as Windows and becomes a breeding ground for viral activity, I'll pay more attention to installing an anti-virus application. In the interim, paying attention to the types of activities I do online, practicing safe computing, securing my Mac with strong passwords, not opening foreign attachments and keeping my system up to date with the latest patches will suffice. The biggest danger on the Mac platform now are a number of potential vectors of attack that would go unguarded by an anti-virus application because they are of the social engineering variety.

As IT Manager for a predominantely Windows-based network, I'm quite familiar with the dangers to computers from malicious software. Understanding fully that nobody is ever totally immune from malware on their platform of choice, the extra overhead of running the program, the licensing costs, and the constant maintenance an anti-virus application would saddle me with, I'll take a pass for now. Ultimately, you should do what makes you feel the most comfortable and, for you, that may mean an anti-virus application.

Kissell also spends an inordinate amount of time discussing EMC's Retrospect for the Mac – including an entire appendix to its use – I'm inclined to write that off more as familiarity with the product than an attempt to hawk it to those in the reading audience. He even says as much in Chapter 11. Much like the suggestion to purchase the book "Take Control of Upgrading to..." in Chapter 7, these inclusions, to me, call attention to the book's origins as two smaller e-books and may make readers less experienced with backups, feel uncomfortable choosing something different – even if that other choice is more suited to their needs and budget.

One other minor complaint I have with the book is the price. At $29.99, I feel it's a bit overpriced. I sure the real question is, however, what price can you put on solid advice for keeping your data safe? I don't know and will leave that up to you to decide. Your experience with backups and the Mac may dictate whether you feel the same way about the price as I do or not. It's certainly cheaper than hiring a consultant to give you much the same advice and, for the most part, this is a book full of good solid advice.

Recommendation
While still technical in nature, it's not made too difficult for those new to the Mac platform to comprehend. That the topics of his book can be covered so thoughouly in a mere 230 pages is a testament to the straightforward nature of his writing. Short of the couple minor points brought up in this review, I was hard pressed to find much of anything to criticize within the book and believe it would make a wonderful addition to the shelf of Mac users of all levels.

Never Hire a Bad Salesperson Again

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Authors: Dr. Christopher Croner and Richard Abraham
The Richard Abraham Company, LLC
http://www.salesdrive.info
Released: 2006
Pages: 156
$20 USD
ISBN 10: 0-9741996-1-3-0
ISBN 13: 978=0-9741996-1
Drive Calculator: http://www.salesdrive.info/calc.php
FAQs: http://www.salesdrive.info/faq.php
Sample Qs: http://www.salesdrive.info/questions.php

Strengths: It shows what kinds of questions to ask and tests to filter in to get the "right stuff" for the job.

Weaknesses: The book seemed to take the meat that was in the intro and stretch it across 156 pages to make it book-sized. I got it in the first few pages. The rest was just supporting material.
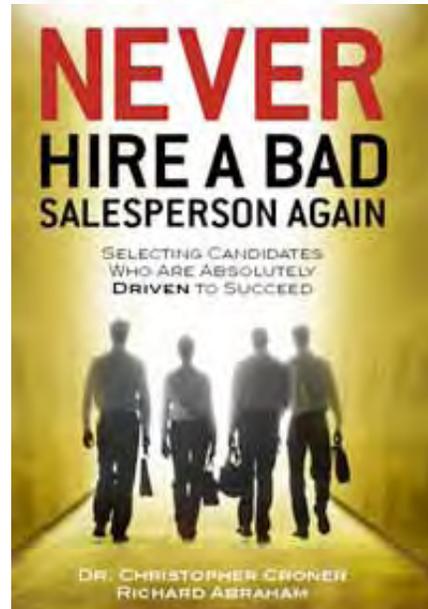
Introduction

What is "Drive?"

Over eighty years of research and field experience show that Drive is the key to successful selling. All great salespeople possess Drive. But up to 50% of people who try to sell for a living don't have enough Drive to succeed. And it can't be taught!

Consider great, driven athletes, like Michael Jordan, Lance Armstrong or Tiger Woods. What motivates them?

When Michael Jordan was cut from his high school varsity basketball team as a sophomore, he worked harder than ever to get back. Lance Armstrong says his own secret is simple: "I make my practices so hard that the races seem easy". And Tiger Woods just refuses to quit. His philosophy — even during his run of four straight majors and 17 total titles — is "You're never there".

Why do so many people in sales with low Drive slip through the standard testing and interviewing process? Because Drive is the toughest of all personality characteristics to identify in advance. It can be faked, it can be displayed in short bursts, and it can be mimicked by a skilled interviewee.

The SalesDrive™ test and interview process has been specifically designed to focus on Drive. If a candidate passes the test, there is a 70% probability that he/she has enough Drive to succeed as a salesperson. The Drive Interview takes the probability of Drive to over 90%.

Certainly, there are many factors that contribute to sales success, but without Drive, the rest are moot. You must hire Drivers, for your key sales positions, to maximize your sales force success.

What I learned

I do not think I have the "drive" to be a full-time sales-person who thrives on commission-only. The three traits needed to be a super salesperson with "drive" is a burning need for achievement, always being competitive in any situation and an overabundance of optimism.

The book tends to break each of these topics down further over the next 156 pages in of course, 3 parts. To be fair their Part One has 5 chapters on the elements of drive and ends with a chapter on the high cost of low performance. That chapter is worth the price of the book.

Part Two covers the filtering processes involved with hiring someone to do the job on testing, rules if interview engagement (also worth the price of the book) the drive interview and interviewing secrets.

Part Three is intended to show us how we can take the A, B and C sales folks and work with them to try and be "A" type sales people. If you read the Intro, you know that "drive" comes with a package deal and is not a "learned" trait as far as sales is concerned, but some "B" types could become "A" types. And we need to channel "C" types into other lines of work.

Interviewing sessions can be canned questions and folks can be coached to say the right things at the right time and "fool" the interviewers into giving them the job, only to find out later they were duds or worse. This book is designed to help us through the process of finding the "A" types for sales so we do not end up costing the company megabucks because of poor sales persons doing a sub-optimal job.

Conclusion

The book is a thinly-disguised ad for Salesdrive.info, but this time it works, and not just because an included bookmark has facts about drive in salespeople and the kinds of questions that should be asked when interviewing sales candidates.

It takes a special breed to be successful at sales – and I do not think I am one of them – but with this book, I have a pretty good idea on knowing how to use this weeding process to separate the wheat from the chaff.

Recommendation

If you suffer the frustration and heartbreak of placing your life's work into the hands of sales people who do not have the "drive" to deliver, then you need this book and website for testing to "do it right".

Photoshop CS3 for Dummies

Reviewed by Dr. Eric Flescher

Author: Peter Bauer
Publisher: Wiley
http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-0470111933.html
Released: April, 2007
Pages: 416
$25 USA, $30 CND, 16 UK
ISBN: 978-0-470-11193-2
Novice/Intermediate/Advanced
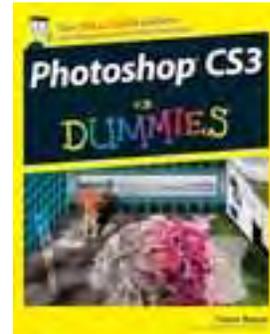
Strengths: Well laid, easy to use and in color. Price is well worth it.

Weaknesses: No CD.

Introduction

Photoshop is the premier graphics manipulation application. From humble beginnings, this program has developed into a "blockbuster," getting better and better, adding new features all the time. While there are many graphics programs that can do some of the tasks, Photoshop is the one that offers the most power and flexibility for the graphic professional. Now with the latest version, Photoshop CS3 has arrived at the next level. Using all the functions is not always easy. To meet that need, a guide for this version, Photoshop CS3 for Dummies, has been published. And many Photoshop users will find this book useful for a variety of reasons.

The author is a Photoshop World Dream Team Instructor and is the author of graphic books, a host for video training titles and much more. His experiences in the field of graphics are displayed in this book and shows his excellent style, knowledge of graphics, and the Photoshop program.

The book spans 416 pages in five sections and twenty chapters. The pages and tutorials are well laid out. There is much white space so the text is not cramped and is very easy to read. Photos and and illustrations are in full color. Tutorials are aided by bold titles, numbered sections and steps. Like many of the dummies books, there are also icons which highlight tips, new features, warnings, technical stuff, remember(ing important information).

Conclusion

I really like this book for the many reasons. It is guidebook, resource guide and is very readable for the novice to the advanced. There is a fine and well done section learning about and using RAW images (Chapter7), fine tuning fixes (Chapter8), using images in text messages (Chapter13), a well laid section on using unsharp mask and working with filters which includes an excellent table (Chapter15).

Recommendation

This book is a great buy for many reasons, This book is more then a "dummies" book. The author communicates in concise, clear and understandable ways covering the strengths and versatility of the application while conveying a remarkable and easy to understand way to use program for your graphics needs. While this is a short review, I want to let you know again that this text will make a fine addition to graphic users, especially to those who are in need of a fine resource and guide to learn about or upgrade skills with photoshop CS3. You''ll be up and running in no time and learning more graphics capabilities. That's why I am ending this review short because not only is well done and I have said much already but I want to start using and learning now and gain some more new insights myself.

Photoshop Lightroom Adventure: Mastering Adobe's next-generation tool for digital photographers

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

O'REILLY®

Author: Mikkal Aaland
http://www.oreillynet.com/pub/au/399
O'Reilly
http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/9780596100995/
$40 USD, $48 CND
Released: July, 2007
Pages: 350
ISBN: 1-0596-10099-X
ISBN-13: 978-0-596-10099-5
Requirements: Photoshop Lightroom

Strengths: Plenty of before-and-after pictures showing how tweaks are accomplished.

Weaknesses: Mostly pictures and focuses on color-management. Some instructions are not up-to-date.

Resources:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adobe_Photoshop_Lightroom
http://www.photoshopsupport.com/lightroom/tutorials.html

Introduction
Adobe released Lightroom 1.2 costs $300 USD - http://www.adobe.com/products/photoshoplightroom/ and focuses attention on image collection and organization, nondestructive file editing, slideshows, print and automatic gallery creation and uploading to websites.

One year ago, Mikkell Aaland began working on his *Photoshop Lightroom Adventure* book with photographs from a team of photographers in Iceland and it is generic enough that what was good in 1.0 is still valid in 1.2.

On first glance, this book comes across as a coffee table book on photography. It is full-color, and looks like something we would read in *National Geographic.* However, to really appreciate it, you will need a copy of Adobe's Lightroom and have knowledge of photography, because this book was meant for folks who are professionals.

On Reading

There is plenty of eye-candy, but the "instructional" parts of the book seem to be a bit rushed and somewhat superficial and this not one of Mikkel's best technical books.

Conclusion

If you like eye candy and look at "show-me" pictures more than text, then get this book. If you want to dig deeper into Photoshop Lightroom, you might want to go online for tutorials.

Recommendation

I enjoy pictures, but the balance is slanted too far towards examples and not enough on technique – unless you need help with color management.

Rick Sammon's Complete Guide to Digital Photography 2.0

Reviewed by Dr. Eric Flescher
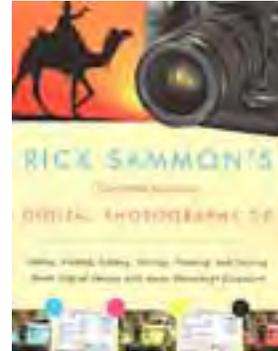
Author: Rick Sammon
http://www.ricksammon.com/bookstore.htm
Publisher: W. W. Norton & Company
http://www.wwnorton.com/
 Released: January 2007
 Pages: 512 pages
 $40 USA $50 CND
ISBN-10: 0393329143
ISBN-13: 978-0393329148
Novice/Intermediate/Advanced

 Strengths: Very easy to read for all levels of photographers. Superb photography and examples to illustrate examples how brilliant photos were made along with comparison and contrasting view, ideas and perspectives which give the user much to think about in terms of photography in general. Utilizes Adobe Photoshop Elements but regular Adobe Photoshop can used as well.

Weaknesses: None found.

Introduction
I found an article by this author in a photography magazine. I was intrigued by his clarity of thought and ideas. After contacting him, I found out about his website and this great book. Now in the second edition, I decided to review his ideas related to digital photography. As an educator and photographer, I always have more to learn and this book has everything I want.

Rick Sammons is an award-winning photographer. I thought it most interesting to read how and when he started with his photography and developing his skills. This information in this insightful book introduces basic technical picture. At the same time, the tutorials and information convey information about the art of photography, while communicating advanced digital techniques. If you think that this book is only for advanced photographers, you are wrong.

This second edition includes all the image editing tips while using the features for the popular Adobe Photoshop Elements application. Of course, users can use regular Adobe Photoshop for the lessons but knowing all these lessons can be applied with the lesser but still very capable Elements, is really good to know for all users but especially those who can't afford the full version of Adobe Photoshop.

File format discussions now has information about Camera RAW files which is most helpful because more and more photographic enthusiasts are trying to use and work with RAW format. These hands-on instructions and insights by the author are especially welcome to all who are working their way to creating better photos by using RAW.

Each "lesson" has one to two pages. Within the 526 pages, there are 170 new color images that have been added from the previous 1000 color photographs. These spectacular photo are great stimuli for visualizing what the author is " talking about". In addition the author brilliantly compares photos and succinctly adds wisdom with each sentence. He points out the many ways and manner with which the photos are better with a different view, angle, idea or adaptive use of the camera. With the easy-reading style, the reader can identify how the author has made the photo better. Then the user can adapt and utilize their own photographic in a similar situation or endeavors.

Conclusion
This is a great book for novice to advanced users. It is for anyone who wants to upgrade their photographic techniques, no matter what level you are presently involved. The price is right and the book is filled with ideas and helpful views. The author not only handles the tutorials in an easy to read fashion but also allows the reader to focus on the reasons for making the photos better. The author allows you to "think" and "peer inside his mind". In this way, the user "sees" how the photos were originally taken but also how the next "version" improved the photo to a higher level. In the same way that the author has taken his photographs to different levels, he is also " communicating to you how to come along for the ride". That way when you are in a similar situation or environment, these new found methods can be practiced.

The author has completed a masterful visual and composed text that is stunning in many ways. The photos and the book are not only a "journey for reading". they are a feast for your eyes, learning and making better photos for now and in the future. What more could you want for improving your photographic skills? The title says that it is a " complete guide". I can't fault him for that part of the title. I am still reading the book to learn more myself to complete more of my photographic education.

The Backlight is On, But Nobody's Home

By Nick Lockwood - reprinted with permission from
http://www.charcoaldesign.co.uk/articles/blackle

Environmentalism is turning the world mad. Obvious nonsense suddenly becomes gospel truth if it is uttered in the course of "saving the world". Apparently even Google is not safe from the ravages of the environmentalist movement. So where will it all end?

I don't mind admitting that I'm not a big fan of environmentalism. This confession is often met with shock and outrage - *"don't you care about the planet? Think of your unborn grandchildren!"*, etc - but believe me, I have nothing against the environment, nor any desire to see it destroyed without good reason.

My hostility towards environmentalism in fact has nothing to do with its central tenet of protecting the environment - what I object to is the way that all logic, reason and any semblance of scientific rigour go out the window as soon as environmentalism is brought to the table.

Never was this effect more aptly demonstrated than by Mark Ontkush at **ecoIron**. Mark reasoned that because displaying white pixels on a screen uses more energy than showing black ones, and given that Google is one of the most popular sites on the Internet, Google should change the background of its search page to black. He estimated that this would save "around 3000 Megawatt-hours a year", or $75,000 on energy bills. It was such a good idea that **Heap Media** actually went and implemented it. The result was **Blackle**.

This is wrong in so many ways that it's almost worth coining a new word for wrong to use in cases as extreme as this one, because ordinary "wrong" doesn't seem sufficient... *"Ecoillogical"* perhaps...

- Even though Google is one of the most popular sites in the world, people hardly spend any time on it, they mostly just type in a search query and go somewhere else right away. Even for the people who have Google as their home page, the only time when it is showing for an extended period is when they are away from the computer, and most computers already have the power-saving feature of turning the monitor off when not in use for an extended period, which is much more energy-efficient than simply showing a black screen anyway. Besides which, many of the millions of queries that Google receives each day are via 3rd party tools or interfaces (such as the search fields in Firefox and IE7, or the Google toolbar, or even Blackle itself) and would therefore be largely unaffected by this change.
- Most CRT-type monitors are now being phased out in homes and offices in favour of LCD flat screens because of various, *mostly environmental* reasons such as the fact that flat screens use fewer materials, take up less space and use considerably less power than a CRT monitor does.
- Flat screens do not illuminate pixels on the screen, like CRTs do, but instead the screen is transparent, and a backlight is shone through the pixels. The brightness of this light is uniform across the whole screen and is not affected by the colour of the pixels. Colouring the screen black on an LCD display is equivalent to putting a lampshade on a light bulb - it makes it appear darker but it does not reduce the power consumption in any way.
- In other words, for the ever-increasing majority of PC systems being sold now, (by Mark's own estimates, 75% of PCs in active use are now using LCDs) running the black version of Google will have *zero* reduction in their power consumption. But here's the real kicker...
- Although the vast majority of power consumed by an LCD goes into powering the backlight, a small amount is used to colour the pixels on the screen. The liquid crystals used by these screens are naturally transparent, and only become opaque when a current is applied. Varying the current varies the opacity. So a white pixel is produced by turning the power off completely, and a black pixel is produced by turning the power up to maximum.
- So yes, that's right, turning the screen black on a modern display without dimming the backlight means that the display is using the *maximum possible* power consumption.
- Going on **G4techTV's** measurements for Samsung LCD TV power consumption, a predominantly white screen on an LCD saves around 1 watt over a black screen. So if 75% of screens are running LCDs, then the power saving of running the white version of Google is 4/15 of Mark's savings estimate for CRTs - 800 megawatts. You can subtract this from his figures, which are dubiously high anyway.

As adoption of LCD screens rises to 100% over the next few years, it is just barely conceivable that widespread adoption of Blackle may actually produce a measurable *increase* in power usage. Of course that 1000-odd megawatt increase would be an absolute drop in the ocean compared to the total power usage of computers, which one would expect to vary much more due to other components such as CPU's etc, but the point remains that the *only possible* effect of widespread adoption of this policy would be the *exact opposite* of its intention.

Some have suggested that by making the majority of the screen black you could then dim the display without any significant impact on legibility - but this is not the case either. If you can read white text on a black background with the display dimmed, then you can usually read black text on a white background at the same brightness level. In fact, Blackle's use of grey text on a black background is barely legible on the screen I'm using now even with brightness turned up to maximum. And you can't just dim the backlight behind the bits that are black either - at least not with any screen technology currently on the market.

Basically it's just a really moronic idea. It is so stupid that it beggars belief that anybody actually went so far as to implement it (although when you consider that every time someone uses Blackle to do a Google search, Google pays Heap Media some money, it suddenly seems like a much better idea from their point of view). The only reason I can think of why it got this far is the Reality Distortion Field (RDF) surrounding all things environmental.

This is the same effect that means self-confessedly ineffectual measures like the Kyoto protocol are praised for "taking a step in the right direction", as if **wasting trillions of dollars** on doing something that is not even *supposed* to have any significant impact on global warming is somehow the *"right direction"*. Even **its supporters** admit that:

Even if the Protocol were implemented by all parties to the Kyoto conference, it would result in a just a 5.2% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions below 1990 levels, reducing anthropogenic emissions from around 7.2 billions[sic] tons per year to about 6.8 billion tons per year. From an environmental standpoint, this agreement falls woefully short of measures needed to head off the warming of the earth.

...and yet somehow this doesn't seem to bother them. Even though Kyoto will simply serve to squander money that might be spent on real, effective environmental measures, they are happy to do it anyway.

It's not uncommon when times get desperate for people to want to try to do something, *anything*, to try and prevent disaster. And when nobody has any good ideas that might actually work, people resort to things that won't. This is presumably how the idea of the rain dance, or the human sacrifice came about.

When scientists started telling us that the Earth might be screwed, nobody wanted to hear that they had no practical solutions for how to prevent it, so the respectable scientists took a step back and we called for the shamans of climate control to do their rain dances and perform their sacrifices in the hope that it might help us.

"Bring forth your garbage and let us read its entrails!" they cried "We must separate the plastic from the paper and the aluminium, for mixing of our waste products angers the gods!"

"You must forsake your earthly trappings, sacrifice your holidays to the Bahamas so that the gods of carbon may be appeased. Give up your four-by-fours and embrace the holy hybrid-electric chariot. May the fumes from your biodiesel appease the mighty ones".

And so we go through this ridiculous rigmarole of separating and subdividing our waste into new categories and abandon luxuries such as patio heaters, sports utility vehicles and recreational air travel. We go to pop concerts where tiresome manufactured bands blare out songs about how we've destroyed the Earth and then spend the money on planting trees to absorb the CO_2 generated by flying them to the concert arena. And at no point do we even pretend that any of this might actually have more than a *trivial* impact on the environment. We do it not because it is the *right* thing, but because it is important that we be seen to be doing *something*.

But no matter how desperate the situation gets (and the assertion that the situation is desperate, or even *existent*, **is hardly uncontroversial** at this point), it is *never* so desperate that it becomes a good idea to do the *wrong* thing. The wrong solution is, by definition, *wrong*. It may seem that taking small ineffectual measures is a step in the right direction, but in fact all it does is squander time, effort and resources that are now no longer available to devote to finding a solution that might actually work.

Environmentalists are trying to tell us that the only way to save the planet is to take a technological step backwards. The logical conclusion of their arguments is that we must revert back to a pre-industrial society to curb the byproducts of modern living. They are telling us this because they are too ignorant and short-sighted to realise that the best way to solve a problem is by *actually solving the problem* rather than second guessing all previous solutions to all previous problems, in case they somehow brought about the current one.

The industrial revolution was *not* just an example of western greed - it was how we dug ourselves out of the feudal gutter. It was how we set ourselves on the path to curing disease, eliminating poverty and generally giving the citizens of our society a chance to aspire to something better than tending cattle or digging ditches all their lives. The industrial revolution was the solution to a vast number of really horrible problems that faced humanity, many of which had a much more pronounced impact on our lives than the ice caps melting would do now. But one solution often introduces new problems, which must themselves be solved. This isn't some big disaster, it's what life is all about.

We encounter a problem. We solve it. We move on.

The really crazy thing about environmentalist thinking is that it somehow blinds us to actual plausible solutions in favour of ridiculous ones. Somehow vast, impractical, expensive, long-term plans become favoured over simpler ones that might actually work. For the cost of Kyoto we could equip tens of millions of houses with solar panels for example, or construct a giant orbital mirror to deflect radiation from the Sun. These ideas sound far-fetched and too expensive to be practical - and indeed they probably are - but I for one would rather waste a trillion dollars on an impractical solution that *would probably work* than waste the same amount or more on one which we *already know for a fact* won't.

And of course the final appeal of the environmentalists is to our guilt. They tell us that it is the *third world* that will be worst affected by climate change. Yes, those poor starving kids in Africa that we all feel so bad about are the ones who are going to be the first to get flooded when the ice caps melt because we refused to stop taking foreign holidays.

This is of course the very worst hypocrisy of the environmental movement, because it is partly our refusal to help the third world to develop the gas-guzzling, coal-burning technologies of our own industrial revolution that is preventing them from becoming "first world" societies in the first place. Our treatment of the third world is like some kind of twisted **Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy**, where we keep them poor and starving so that we may forever be in charge of looking after them and coddling them so people can see how selfless we all are.

So enough of this nonsense. By all means spend time and effort trying to save the planet, but please stop trying to ram half-baked ideas like Blackle or oppressive and pointless measures like Kyoto down our throats. A stupid idea does not automatically become good just because its inventor was worrying about the environment when he had it. An ineffective solution is not worth implementing anyway just because its inventors are well-meaning.

The time to buy electric cars is when they become a practical and affordable alternative to petrol cars. If we really are running out of oil then that will happen soon - if it doesn't then it suggests that something is wrong with the theory of why we need them in the first place.

And the time to start worrying about which colours on your screen are most energy efficient is about the same time that you want to check yourself into an institution and ask for a jacket with really long sleeves.

Feedback for this article may be given here - http://www.charcoaldesign.co.uk/articles/blackle

Re-Energizing America: A Common-Sense Approach to Achieving U.S. Energy Independence In Our Generation

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

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http://www.wingspanpress.com
Released: 2007.
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**ISBN:** 1-978-59594-139-8

Strengths: The Energy Declaration of Independence concept is the anchor for this book.

Weaknesses: Depends heavily on Hydrogen technology as the main solution to resolving energy issues. Has various typos in the text.

Introduction

> The time has come to pursue a bold, visionary energy policy that takes permanent and sustainable action toward ending U.S. reliance on Persian Gulf oil and addressing global warming. But avoiding the failures of the last 30 years requires us to ask different questions.
>
> Re-Energizing America asks these questions—the right questions—and its answers to them provide the basis for transforming the role of energy in society. Its proposals are based on a simple premise: the key to climate-friendly U.S. energy independence is to create collective, personal energy independence. By integrating renewable, hydrogen, and computer technologies with the existing electricity and natural gas infrastructure, we can create a national network of nearly self-sufficient energy consumers— the energy grassroots, or enroots — resulting in sustainable, climate-friendly energy independence.
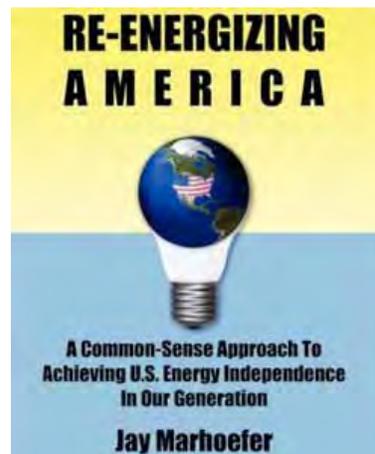
Re-Energizing America contains the following chapters:

1) Common (energy) sense: The case for energy independence.
2) Intelligent generation: Making energy smart.
3) Something old, new, borrowed and green: Excess capacity and the marriage of solar and wind energy.
4) The 8 percent tax-free energy bond: Why intelligent generation is a compelling economic proposition now.
5) Come and they will build it: A bottom-up, grassroots approach to energy independence.
6) Roadtops, slot cars and automatic driver: How the fuel cell will transform the automotive industry.
7) The democratization of energy: De-utilization, intra/inter-sector competition and hydrogen barons.
8) A continental energy strategy: Why Canada and Mexico are crucial to ending American oil vulnerability.
9) Skipping a generation: Why China and India will drive the U.S. quest for energy independence.
10) A floor on petroleum prices: Countering the Saudi/OPEC response.
11) DI2: A second Declaration of Independence.

What I got out of the book

Jay Marhoefer actually signed my copy of the book.

Based on my reading I changed the name of our alternative energy store from *Three-Rivers Solar and Science Center* to *3-Rivers Synergy Centre*. Why? Because Jay is cognizant of the fact that no one source will meet all energy demands and a balanced mix of various technologies makes sense. Thus, "Synergy" of energy instead of putting all eggs in one basket for energy independence.

Ass a lawyer, Jay's approach was to trademark the name "Intelligent Generation". I would have called it Intelligent *Energy* Generation, but perhaps that was already taken at the Trademark Office.

The gist of the book is that we in the United States of America are hooked on petroleum and we are facing an energy crisis if we do not refocus attention on alternative energy sources.

The threat to our independence is summed up in Jay's sentence;

"We, the citizens of the United States live at the whim of foreign oil powers, including those hostile toward our national interests, and depend on their good will and economic self-interest for our ordinary, basic American way of life."

His Declaration of Independence is also a one-sentence line-item;

> "It should be the explicit goal of the United States that by July 4th, 2026 p the 250th anniversary of American Independence – this country will have eliminated its need to import crude oil and its refined products from the Persian Gulf and will have done so in a way that creates sustainable economic prosperity and dramatically reduces production of greenhouse gasses."

I thought the chapter on "Something old, new, borrowed and green" did a great job showing the strengths and weaknesses of dependence on either solar or wind for power production.

What struck me a bit odd was his seemly total dependence on Hydrogen as being the killer app in solving the energy issues of the day, especially with reliance on the yet-to-be-released hydrogen-making systems that cost less than the energy required to produce them.

A whole chapter is devoted to a "what-if" future-think transportation with hydrogen-based fuel-cell system vehicles that have modular chassis to swap out vehicle skins based on the skateboard concept for auto-shopping (pardon the pun) and commuting with the "roadtop". Jay didn't trademark that name yet, but he might.

The chapter on "The 8-percent, tax-free energy bond" was very compelling to me. A scenario of comparing an alternative energy system (Intelligent Generation[tm]) as an investment vs. a 5% CD or other financial investment vehicle (pun intended) shows that this provides a better return than the stock market. He also addresses the tax policy issues and how Congress could help turn things around by offering better incentives. He also looks at these ideas more deeply in the Appendix.

I appreciate the occasional tongue-in-cheek headings such as "Policy wants a cracker", "Utility Theory", "Continental Shrift".

Conclusion

Here is a book that shows down the gauntlet to the energy barons of the world and invites them to shift towards alternative energy solutions that help remove our dependence on non-renewable energy resources.

Prove me wrong, but I don't see Hydrogen as being the "killer app" in this situation today, yet Jay Marhoefer does. Perhaps because of his unique position as energy consultant and strategist, he has some inside information we are not privy to yet.

Recommendation

I'd say if the 2nd Declaration of Independence is intriguing to you, then get this book. There are also source materials and endnotes that contain valuable information as well. This is definitely grist for the mental mill.

Voltaic Converter

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

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http://www.voltaicsystems.com/index.shtml
Released: 2005
$200 USD, others for $240 USD (Daypack), $250 USD (Backpack).
Comes with: Bag, 3 Solar panels (4Watts), Adapters for cellphones, GPS's, MP3's, cameras, 2-way radios, PDA's. Lithium Ion battery, adapters for wall outlets worldwide and Car chargers. USB Charger, AC travel charger, DC car charger. A 9-page pamphlet and Bagtag with a list of chargeable electronics. An iPod Adapter is another $4.
FAQs. Replacement Solar panels - $30 USD.

Strengths: Bags made from recycled PET (post-consumer plastics). Tough, lightweight, waterproof, UV resistant.

Weaknesses: Does not charge laptops. Takes 8-10 hours to charge.

Other Adapters:
http://www.voltaicsystems.com/adaptors.shtml

Introduction

Most of what you read here is from the Voltaic Systems website.

> The Voltaic solar bags are mobile power generators, designed to charge your devices without tying you to a power outlet, which makes them ideal for traveling.
>
> **Just plug a standard car charger into the bag and recharge most small electronic devices including: cell phones, cameras, two way radios, PDA's, and MP3s.** Note: it is not designed to charge laptops.
>
> If you don't have a car charger, the bags come with a set of 11 standard adaptors for common cell phones and other devices. We also offer a full range of optional adaptors.

Embedded in the outside of the bags are three lightweight, tough, waterproof solar panels which generate up to 4 watts of power. This means quicker charge times!

Included with each bag is a Li Ion battery pack which stores any surplus power generated, so it is available when you need it - not just when the sun is up. The battery pack can also be charged using an AC travel charger or car charger (both included). This makes the Voltaic bags just as useful on the grid as off.

Opening the Package

What you need to know up front is that these bags are nice, but are not designed to provide power to PowerBooks. iPods, yes. PowerBooks or other portable computers, no.

I got so excited when I heard about these Photovoltaic bags, I wanted to become a dealer for Voltaic Systems. They were nice enough to send a bag so I could see for myself what $200 USD buys these days. And when I got the bag I discovered it held a LOT of goodies! The Photovoltaic panels come in one of 4 colors, Silver, Orange, Green or Charcoal.

What's Included

1. **Battery Pack:** Stores power from the solar panels (or chargers) until needed. Regulates the flow of power to the device.

2. **Power Out Cable:** To connect to a device using an adaptor. Plugs into the "DC OUT'" plug on the battery.

3. **Adaptors:** Plug into the power out cable to connect a device. Note: Set the battery to the correct voltage first.

4. **Car Charger Socket:** To charge a device using a car charger. Connect to the battery (at 7.2V) or direct to the solar panels.

5. **USB Adaptor:** To charge a device using a USB charger. Connect to the battery (use 5V setting only).

6. **AC Charger:** For recharging the battery from a wall socket. Connects to the "DC IN" plug underneath the battery.

7. **Car Charger:** For recharging the battery from a car. Connects to the "DC IN" plug underneath the battery.

Bag Setup

The battery clips into the front pouch of the bag where it connects to the solar panels. It can also be removed for use separately.

1. **Battery Cable:** Connects the solar panels to the battery. Keep this cable connected when in the sun to capture any power generated.

2. **Solar Power Cable:** Delivers solar power directly from the solar panels (at 10V and up to 400mA). Useful where a higher voltage is required than the battery pack delivers (e.g. for some car chargers or when charging batteries requiring 8.4V or more).

3. **Car Charger Socket:** Enables charging using a standard car charger. Plug into the battery (with voltage set to 7.2V), or directly into the solar power cable for higher power (10V).

4. **Shoulder Strap Power Cable:** Plugs into the battery ("DC OUT" plug) to deliver power to the shoulder strap (not used on all models).

Battery

1. **Voltage Switch:** Controls the voltage output from the battery. Check the device being charged for correct voltage. USB chargers and most phones charge at 5V. For car chargers use 7.2V.

2. **DC OUT Plug:** Connects to the power out cable, USB Adaptor, or the car charger socket to power various devices.

3. **Switch for Torch:** Controls LED torch [flashlight] on the front of the battery. Approximate life 55 hours per charge.

4. **Charge Indicator:** Shows when the battery is charging (red for fast charge, green for trickle charge).

5. **Test Button:** To test the charge in the battery. Green indicates full, amber partial charge, red low. No light indicates empty.

6. **DC IN Plug:** Connects the battery for recharging from solar panels, AC charger, or car charger (located underneath battery).

Now we can see how the goodies are used;

Charging the Battery: The battery stores any power generated by the solar panels until required to charge a device (similar to some solar house systems). Keep the battery connected to the solar panels whenever in the sun. For the best results, place the bag in direct sunlight with the solar panels angled towards the sun. A green light on the battery indicates it is trickle charging. In good conditions it will charge in 8-10 hours.   When the solar panels produce a charge, an indicator light in the center of the Voltaic logo illuminates. **Note:** It will illuminate in some low or indoor light conditions, but the charge will be significantly lower.

The battery can also be charged from the AC charger, or the car charger (by connecting either to the DC IN plug). A red light on the battery indicates a fast charge. When full, a green light will show.

Charging a Device: Voltaic™ solar bags are designed to charge as broad a range of devices as possible. This requires first selecting the correct voltage, then establishing a connection to the device.

Voltage Settings: There are 3 voltage settings on the battery (3.5V, 5V, 7.2V). The solar power cable delivers 10V. To find the required voltage: check the device itself, the product literature, or the device charger for "output" voltage. Most cell phones charge at 5V, USB chargers require 5V. Note: Do not use a higher voltage than required.

Car Charger Socket: Car chargers are available for most devices, so the car charger socket is the default method for connecting a device. They typically function at 7.2V from the battery, or 10V from the solar panels.

USB Adaptor: A USB adaptor is included to connect USB chargers (use the 5V setting). **Note:** some USB chargers only work with computers.

Adaptors: To bypass chargers, we include a set of adaptors for common cell phones and other devices. It is not feasible to include adaptors for all devices; however, additional optional adaptors are available online.

When **charging iPods** you can use the iPod adaptor for all models, connected to the battery pack at 7.2V. For iPod Minis you can use the Apple supplied USB charger connected to the battery pack at 5V via the USB adaptor (however Apple has blocked this solution for other iPods). You can also use an iPod car charger for all models except the new iPod Photo (for that you will need the iPod adaptor).

To **avoid overheating** the contents of your bag on a hot day, it will help to open the zip slightly (as you would the window of a car), or to remove sensitive electronics and just allow the battery to charge for use later.

Other Features: The **Shoulder Strap Power Cable** allows you to run power to the shoulder strap and charge devices in the adjustable phone / MP3 pouch. To use this cable, plug it into the "DC OUT" plug on the Battery Plug.

When the LED inside the logo lights up [the "C"], it indicates that the solar panels are generating a charge. It lights dimly when the panels are in the shade and more brightly when they are in direct sun, reflecting the higher charge produced in direct sun. It will come on in some indoor light conditions; however, the power generated is significantly less than in direct sunlight.

There are various **wire channels** throughout the bag which allow you to run power wires or headphones to different pockets as required. Channels run along the seam of the bag (right side in main pouch), and along the shoulder straps. Holes for wires are marked with the following symbol:

Solar Panels

This is where it gets really exciting. I've always been susceptible to sunlight due to sensitive skin all my life. I burn easily. So getting involved in Photovoltaics and other technologies that are "alternative energy systems" is liberating and for me, makes lemons into lemonade. Sunshine is not "the enemy" any longer. We can harness the power from it pretty much like vegetation does and convert sunlight into electrical power.

Notice that these solar panels have an efficiency rating of 17% and can pack a 4-Watt wallop at 400 milliamps and can produce as much as 10.2 volts of electricity.

The website indicates these units are easily replaceable, but they put them in there pretty tightly and are nearly as thick as ½ your little fingernail. At first I though they were sewn into place, but that is not the case. A zipper hides the cables coming off each panel and terminate into a little black box that then converts to use by either the Lithium-Ion battery or combined to provide juice to a device that can handle 10 volts.

Specifications

	Single Panel	3 Panels
Panel Dimensions	3½" x 7½" 184mm x 88mm	
Weight	4 ounces 120 grams	12 ounces 360 grams
Substrate Type	3mm Aluminum/Plastic	
Substrate Color	Silver	
Cell Type	Monocrystalline	
Cell Efficiency	17%	
Open Circuit Voltage	12.5 V	
Peak Voltage *	10.2 V	
Peak Current *	133 mA	400 mA
Peak Watt †	1.36 W	4.08 W

* Panel output is computed from cell manufacturer's data based on 0% reduction of cell efficiency after packaging of cell strings. Electrical output tolerance +/- 10%
† Under irradiance of 100 mW / sq. cm, spectrum of 1.5 air mass, at 25 degrees Celsius, as per cell manufacturer's specifications.

But you have to plan ahead if you really want that iPod to last. It takes between 5 to 6 hours to charge the battery for iPod use.

Usage Tips

Note: For maximum power output, angle the panels towards the sun. When the panels are in direct sunlight but not angled towards the sun the power declines about 20%. When they are angled away from the sun the power drops off 80-90%. Dirt and scratches on the face of the solar panels will reduce the amount of light hitting the solar cells and reduce the power generated. To clean them use a damp non-abrasive cloth.

Approximate Charging Times

Item	Hours Direct Sunlight *
Voltaic Battery Pack	8-10
Cell Phone	4-6
Digital Camera	4-8
GPS	4-6
iPod	5-6

* Charge times may be increased in cloudy weather, high temperatures, or where panels are not angled towards the sun.

The PowerBook G4 17" used a 54W/hr Lithium-Ion battery that lasts 5.5 hours.

http://www.everymac.com/systems/apple/powerbook_g4/faq/powerbook-g4-battery-life-of-each-model.html

The MacBook Pro uses a Lithium polymer battery (Li-Po) that replaces the Lithium-Ion technology and is designed to last 6 hours. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lithium-polymer The 17" MacBook Pro takes 68 Watts of power, 18.5 Volts DC and 4.6 Amps. I read that it draws 85 Watts. I would need a pretty big Voltaic System to keep that puppy running. And it doesn't exist yet – at least from Voltaic Systems. Don't feel bad, other portables require as much as 120 Watts AC to operate.

The iPhone on the other hand runs on batteries for 8 hours at 3.7 V and 1400 mAh. http://ipodbatteryfaq.com/ipodbatteryandpower.html

Maybe Apple will get the power requirements down even further with the next-gen Mac portables.

Conclusion

Anyway, the Voltaic Systems Voltaic Converter bags would be useful for the roadwarrior who needs to be connected via iPhone 24/7 or who really needs to feel plugged into their iPod all the time.

Recommendation

If you want to experiment with Photovoltaic technology, this is a fun/fashionable place to start.

Feedback from Voltaic Systems

It's not just a matter of how many panels, it's purely a matter of watts and time (in hours).

I believe that a new MacBook has a battery watt-hour capacity when full of around 64 watt-hours.

So, if you wanted to charge your MacBook laptop battery in 2 x hours from a solar charged battery, you would need something equivalent to slightly larger than a 64 watt hour battery to do the job. The solar component can be as small or as large as will handle the charging of that supplementary battery.

What we are anticipating is a 15, expandable to 30-watt solar panel and approx. 60-watt hour rechargeable supplementary battery pack.

It truly is the holy grail of portable solar charging.

Efficiency, lightweight, convenient and safe charging are also factors in a complete quality solution.

Colin Mitchell, Voltaic Systems

Expandable Trek Backpack

Reviewed by Daniel Mackenzie

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200 W. Holly Street
Bellingham, WA 98225
Toll-Free 1-888-212-5301
Fax 360-752-3362
orders@brenthaven.com

Brenthaven Corporate
300 Harris Avenue
Bellingham, WA 98225
http://www.brenthaven.com/

$100 USD, $100.06 CND, 70.94 Euro, 49.49 GBP

Strengths: Lots of padding, protects your notebook, lots of pockets, good quality zippers, comfortable.

Weaknesses: Slides down your shoulders and can get uncomfortable.

Introduction

Many companies that produce laptop protection make backpacks but some of them aren't very good. Your laptop bounces around and it can be uncomfortable. Not with this one. The Expandable Trek is an excellent backpack for anyone with a need to travel with their laptop. Loads of pockets and space also make it easy to take along your peripherals.

Expandable Trek | fits notebooks up to 15.4"

Getting Started

There isn't too much to say here. You just open up the back compartment and slide your laptop into the padded area. That's it. Then, just put it on your back. You can adjust the straps on the backpack easily by pulling on them. The helmet carrier on the front of the backpack can be taken off and put into a small compartment in the bottom if you don't need it.

Using the Hardware

I have had a very good experience with this backpack. All of the zippers are good quality. None of them have jammed or gotten stuck. This is one thing I hate about cheap backpacks is the zippers. They get stuck and then you can't get at what is inside. Anyway, almost every pocket comes in handy. The two pockets on the side can be used as water bottle holders, the one on the very front can be used for pens, pencils and other things like that. A compartment can be expanded or collapsed as needed for extra space. In the main compartment, there are four open pockets, the laptop area and extra space for books, notes, etc. These four pockets can be used for extra peripherals and smaller things. They just come in handy. Also, on the top of the backpack, there is another fleece-lined pocket. Delicate things like glasses or watches can be stored here.

Okay, lets talk about durability. I take this backpack to and from school every day and it still looks brand new. It is made of strong, durable fabric that can stand up to falls, being dragged across the floor and being kicked occasionally. It is excellent. The padding hasn't worn out at all and it's comfortable. Unfortunately, after a while of wearing it, the backpack begins to slide down your shoulders. This can get annoying and uncomfortable. I haven't yet found a way to counter-act this but I'm sure there is a way.

Conclusion

Overall, this is an excellent backpack. It provides great protection to your laptop and anything else in the backpack. The padding is comfortable most of the time and it is lightweight. Anyone who is looking for a good backpack, laptop or not, should check this out. Great job Brenthaven!

Recommendation

Anyone who needs a new backpack would benefit from this product. It even works better if you have a laptop.

HDTV on Your Mac: HDHomeRun From Elgato

Reviewed by Tim Verpoorten from Surfbits

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SiliconDust USA, Inc. is based in Livermore, California and is a wholly owned subsidiary of
SiliconDust Engineering, Ltd., a New Zealand company. HDHomeRun is a trademark of
SiliconDust USA, Inc. and SiliconDust Engineering, Ltd.
http://www.silicondust.com/wiki/products/hdhomerun
http://www.elgato.com/index.php?file=products_hdhomerun
Released: July 2007.
$200 USD.
Comes with: HDHomeRun dual-tuner network device, EyeTV 2 software for two computers,
two RG6 cables, an Ethernet cable and AC power adapter.
Requirements: Digital TV connection, DHCP Server connection for IP address assignment.
FAQs: http://faq.elgato.com/index.php/C125/?catlink=direct
Forum: http://www.silicondust.com/forum/

Strengths: Cross-platform. Network device for TV access by computers.

Weaknesses: Does not work with Analog signals. Requires more licenses beyond 2 computers
for EyeTV (3-packs). Few High-Definition channels available.

Introduction

Over the past year or so I've tested and reviewed several hardware solutions for watching and recording TV on your Mac. The TVMicro and the TVHybrid. Both of them did a good job and used the EyeTV software for a solid solution to scheduling and recording. But I was never really thrilled with the picture. It seemed small and snowy, especially after I started watching my Plasma HDTV in the family room. So when Elgato introduced their new HDHomeRun Digital Network Connected HD Tuner for the Mac, I jumped at the chance to review it.

Let's look at the specs and the features:

The HDHomeRun for Mac is a unique centralized digital TV tuner that connects to your Ethernet network, and can be shared by any Mac using the included EyeTV software. Thanks to its dual tuners, two users can be watching or recording different programs at the same time. Because the HDHomeRun is a network device, you don't need to have an antenna or cable TV outlet near your computer. You just locate the HDHomeRun tuner wherever you have a convenient antenna or cable outlet and connect it to your network.

The HDHomeRun for Mac bundle includes the award winning EyeTV software for two computers. Additional users can be added in affordable 3-packs. Users who already have an EyeTV tuner on their Mac will be able to use both the local and network tuners through the same EyeTV software. EyeTV records digital TV in one quality setting, Lossless. The digital stream is recorded unaltered, so you get full quality digital content as encoded by the broadcaster. With EyeTV you can: Watch digital television on your Mac, Watch and record live TV simultaneously or watch two channels, Picture-in-Picture, Rewind, fast-forward, and pause live TV, Browse EyeTV menus in Full Screen mode, Record hours of favorite TV shows directly on a Mac's hard drive and edit out unwanted content, Find TV shows using the built-in Program Guide, and Store your collection on an external drive, or burn it to disc. You can also export to iPod, iPhone, or AppleTV format.

If you access the HDHomeRun from a Dual PowerPC G5 or an Intel Core Duo processor, you'll be able to enjoy watching 720p or 1080i HDTV (MPEG-2) in addition to the other digital television standards. Since I tested it on my Mac Pro, I had some beautiful HD channels from the HDHomeRun. In fact, the software along with the hardware gave me pictures as nice as my Plasma right there on my Apple Display. The networking feature actually worked better then I'd ever expected.

Getting Started

Bottomline, HDHomeRun worked as advertised and more, but, there are some major hurdles that you need to know about before you purchase this $200 HD on a Mac solution.

This comes directly from Elgato, so it's not something they're trying to hide from you. HDHomeRun can only receive digital signals. It cannot receive analog antenna, analog cable, composite or S-Video. It can only receive digital antenna (ATSC) or unencrypted digital cable (Clear QAM). These are standards only available in North America, so the HDHomeRun is only for that region. If you need to receive analog signals, then consider another EyeTV unit, like EyeTV Hybrid or EyeTV 250. HDHomeRun cannot work with any cable box, satellite receiver, or other external box. It cannot work with any analog (NTSC) input. The HDHomeRun can receive digital TV over antenna (ATSC) or unencrypted digital cable (Clear QAM) only.

Next is the issue of what channels can be received by the HDHomeRun. If you have 500 digital cable channels that you receive with a cable box, then the majority of these channels will be encrypted. A Clear QAM tuner can't receive encrypted digital cable; HDHomeRun can't receive the majority of your digital cable channels. Therefore, HDHomeRun only receives a few cable channels, those that are Clear QAM (unencrypted). It cannot use a cable box, and it can't receive most of your channels. The channels it can receive vary city by city, and some channels may be there one day, and gone in a few months. Essentially, your cable company reserves the right to encrypt and decrypt channels at will, but usually you'll see the networks, and some other content. That said, Clear QAM tuners can receive HDTV content, if available. If you use digital cable, please be aware of the strengths and limitations of Clear QAM tuners before purchasing HDHomeRun. You may want to contact your cable company to find out if any of their channels are in Clear QAM format.

Finally, once you have found all the channels on your cable that are in Clear QAM format, you'll need to find out what stations they are. Since cable companies are not required to transmit names or program information along with the channels that they rebroadcast, there will be some Clear QAM channels that the HDHomeRun can't identify. In order to see program information, you'll need to go through those manually and match them up with their names in the TitanTV guide. That proved to be difficult for me, it may have been the local cable company or maybe my TitanTV guide software, but I seemed to have a lot of channels that were playing shows not on my guide.

The one positive note that came out of it was that Elgato tech support was right there to answer my questions and help me through the problems I had on set-up.

Conclusion

For $200 you can have HDTV on your Mac (If it meets the min. requirements) and the picture is superb. The bottom line also is that for $200 you'll have to be patient and do a little work to set up the HDHomeRun. The choice is yours, but the HD is beautiful.

Provide feedback on this article at http://www.surfbits.com/?p=1300

Dig Deeper

HD TV Antennas - http://www.radioshack.com/sm-hd-antennas-explained--ra-hdantennas.html http://www.pctinternational.com/channelmaster/0612/antennas_outdoor.html

Digital TV Locator - http://hdtv.digitalinsurrection.com/channeldb/index.php

Software

OmniGraffle Professional 4.2.1

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Omni Development, Inc.
2707 NE Blakeley Street
Seattle, WA 98105-3118
1-206-523-4152 x0
1-800-315-OMNI
Fax: 1-206-523-5896
http://www.omnigroup.com/applications/omnigraffle/
Released: November, 2005. Latest update, August 2007.
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4.6 or later.
Standard $80 USD, Pro $150 USD. Upgrades $30 USD.
Demo:
http://www.omnigroup.com/applications/omnigraffle/download/

Strengths: Mac OS X-based diagramming and drawing tool. Apple includes a copy of OmniGraffle with every Mactel box.

Weaknesses: See the **Known Issues** Section. Does not support MS Visio VSD format, but does support MS Visio VDX format.

Forums: http://forums.omnigroup.com/
Other Reviews:
http://www.macupdate.com/reviews.php?id=11441
http://www.macworld.com/2005/12/reviews/omnigrafflepro4/index.php/
http://www.atpm.com/11.11/omnigraffle.shtml
Blog: http://blog.omnigroup.com/

Introduction

"More than just a silly name, OmniGraffle is a powerful, yet easy to use diagramming and drawing tool. OmniGraffle can help you make amazing graphic documents quickly by keeping lines connected to shapes even when they're moved, providing stencils full of common symbols for you to drag and drop, and magically organizing diagrams with just one click. Create flow charts, org charts, network diagrams, family trees, project processes, office layouts - or anything else that can be represented by symbols and lines.

Highlights from OmniGraffle 4 include a new dynamic outline view, diagram styles, a Bezier curve drawing tool, and greatly improved import and export options. OmniGraffle 4 Professional adds master canvases, notes, tables, document scale, improved Visio XML import and export, SVG export, and more."
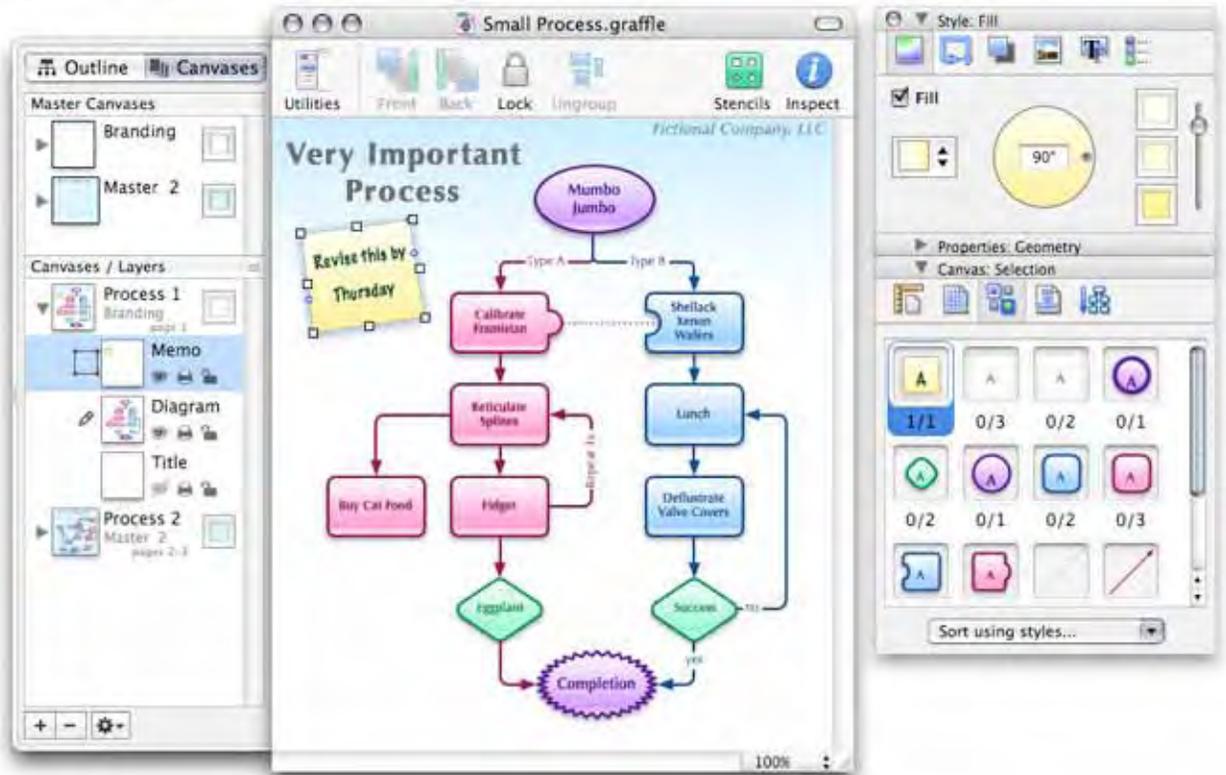
Getting Started

This app is essentially an MS Visio competitor, somewhat similar to *ConceptDraw 7* we reviewed in the July 2007 issue of *macCompanion*.

Download the demo or pay for the Pro version and download the 15.7 MB image file and install the Universal Binary version of the application.

After installation go to the extras page and download any of the "extras" as stencils from various authors on such topics as Address Book integration, AppleScripting, building bricks, cartography quickies, cash flow, clinical report CONSORT template, electronic circuit design, gardening, iTunes CD cover templates, Monte Carlo simulation, Origami creation, Periodic Table element bonding, wireframing and Worldmapping.

I also suggest joining the Omni Forums to see what is happening regarding Omni software - http://forums.omnigroup.com

Stencil Installation Instructions

http://www.omnigroup.com/applications/omnigraffle/extras/

1. Click the icon above of the stencil you wish to download.
2. Wait until the download is complete. If your web browser and system are properly configured, Disk Copy should automatically launch and mount the disk image as a volume in the Finder and you should see a new window containing an OmniGraffle document on your desktop.
3. To make the stencil easily accessible when running OmniGraffle, put it your Library/Application Support/OmniGraffle/Stencils/ folder (within either the top-level Library folder or your user Library folder). See OmniGraffle's online Help for more information.

Known Issues

The following are some of the known issues with the current release of OmniGraffle 4, and will be addressed for a future release.

- There are numerous issues with the shape combinations (Union, Subtract, Intersect) in OmniGraffle Professional which can make for unintended results, they will be addressed in a future release.
- Exported TIFFs can render their shadows improperly.
- Performance issues concerning very large objects with shadows and the "throb" highlight effect when acting as a drag target are still being looked at.
- Temp folders are still being created on network shares at times when files are saved to those locations.
- AppleScript support (mostly to do with tables) is still not 100% complete.
- Some lines when connected to other lines can appear to have 'gaps' in their strokes.
- Rotated cells in tables as well as rotating tables themselves were leading to very unexpected results, we have disallowed the independent rotation of individual table cells as well as rotation of tables for the time being. One can still independently rotate text inside of table cells.
- Creating a table out of selected objects can lead to an improper display of their shadows, this problem corrects itself with the movement of the new table.
- Rich text in notes will copy as AppleScript, however hyperlinks will get lost.
- ColorSync profiles can sometimes be ignored or not embedded depending on export format.
- Some objects in Visio XML documents can import upside down, and certain Asian 2-byte character sets are getting lost.

Standard vs. Pro

With all that, why pay extra for the Pro version?

http://www.omnigroup.com/applications/omnigraffle/pro/

Apple ColorSync support, a favorites dropdown menu, presentation slide show, multiple editing windows, multiple canvas documents and a master canvas, shape combinations, auto-dimensioning ruler, a "make table" option and notes. There are screenshots and some nice QuickTime videos available at the link provided above.

There are also some tutorials on the site as well developed by Don McAllister at ScreenCastsOnline - http://www.omnigroup.com/applications/omnigraffle/tutorials/ These cover the basics, tool walkthroughs, outlining and stencils and the last one listed compares the Standard vs. the Pro features.

There is also a 63-page OmniGraffle Pro manual that can be downloaded from – <http://downloads.extremesims.com/omnigroup/software/MacOSX/Manuals/OmniGraffle-4-Manual.pdf>

Conclusion

Where do we go from here? Well, if you have a person who wants to be shown something instead of being told about it, perhaps OmniGraffle Pro is the way to go for a quick-and-not-so-dirty presentation.

Recommendation

There are still some kinks that need to be worked out, but this is one of the best options for Mac OS X-based drawing. If you want to help make it better, why not participate in the beta cycle?

http://www.omnigroup.com/mailman/listinfo/

PandoCalendar X 7.0.3 — A minimalist KISS Calendar for keeping dates and notes

Reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad   © 2007

Panda System
http://www.pandacorner.com/PandaSystems/PandoCalendar.html
Released: 05 September 2007
Freeware
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4; Universal binary; 1.2 MB Hard Drive Space.

Versions 6.04 and earlier are available for use with earlier operating systems.

Strengths: Simple, uncluttered, focused and easy to use. Exceptional help support.
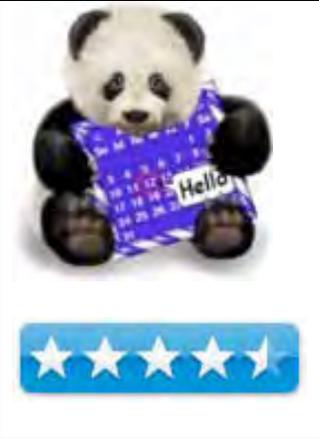
Weaknesses: The new updated system, for now makes it more difficult to extract calendar contents to a text document for annotating and formatting (see minor discomforts.)

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The software was tested on a 1 GHz dual processor PowerPC G4 Macintosh with 2 GB DDR SDRAM running under OS X 10.4.10.

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

Introduction in Including Publisher's Summary
I've not been partial to any of he calendars I've tried out. My least favorite is Apple's iCal followed closely by all the tools developed to keep one contacts in tune with my comings and goings. I have two needs in a calendar tool. First, I should be able to list all of my appointments with enough information to prepare for them. Second, I need a schedule and reminder systems for the repeated events (birthdays, anniversaries, and meetings) that recur routinely during a year. Since the only one using the calendar is me, myself and I; sharing calendars is a needless complexity. The only other requirements I have is to be able to print my schedule so that my wife, who is computer adverse, can know what and where for my external commitments.

I've been using PandoCalendar since I first discovered in the classic days prior to OS X and have been able to be responsible about what's and where's and to-dos of my life in a manner that belies my generally being somewhat professorial (e.g., scatter brained). Therefore it took no great leap of faith, when I read (actual was notified) about this, a new major upgrade of this trusted program to download it for my use.

Annotated From The Publisher's Description — This useful Mac-only program places a fully functional calendar on your desktop. PandoCalendar can display the numerical number of the weeks of the year, display the calendar with European style weeks (Monday being the first day and Sunday being the last), assign notes to any day of the year by clicking on the day in the calendar, and set alarms to remind you of time sensitive events.

PandoCalendar Its appearance is completely customizable. You can change the calendar's font, size, and the colors used to draw the calendar; the calendar background can be entirely transparent, so you can still see your desktop picture; you can center the current week (so you are always able to look back and ahead a full month at a time). You can also have PandoCalendar automatically plot the days you work. Great for people who don't have a Monday-Friday work or meeting schedule!"

Using the Software
What's to do… Move the "PandoCalendar" application to the Applications folder. If desired you set the application to start at startup. I prefer to add it to my dock where it will be less obtrusive.

And for those users who like nice as well as functional, Checkout Pando's Frames for a variety of frames, 27 sets in all, to go with PandoCalendar.
http://www.pandacorner.com/PandaSystems/PandosFrames.html

The help file is extraordinarily thorough for a free ware product and contains information, for those who don't intuit Macintosh Software, to get you started.
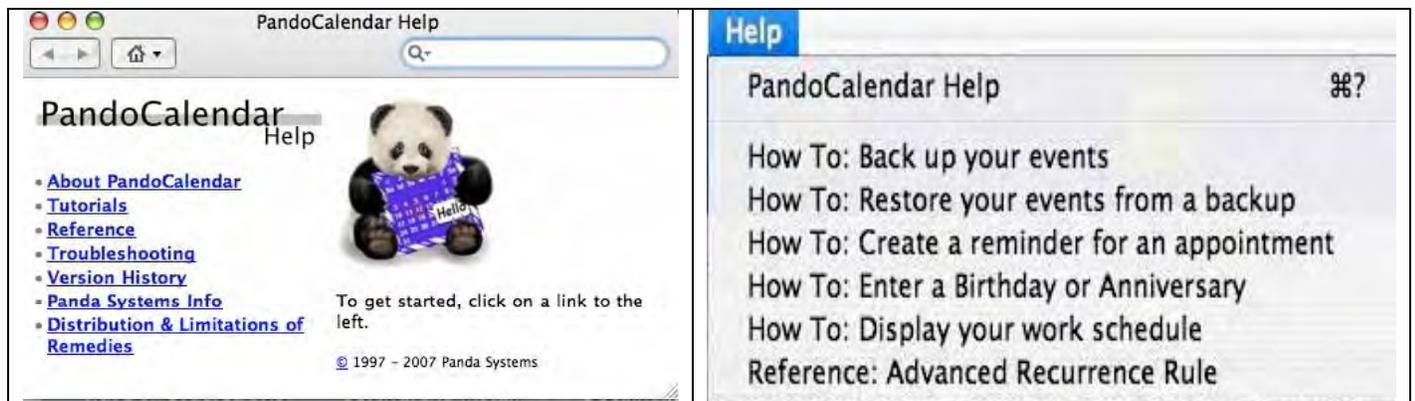
For those folks who don't regularly backup their computers the instructions for backing up your events become particularly important. Now despite the fact that you don't care about the safety of rest of your files, you might want to keep tract of those critical dates keeps the piece in your home and at work. The database used by PandoCalendar is kept in you (home > library, application support folder > PandoCalendar folder > PandoCalendar.eventsDatabase.) Copy it to a floppy disk; you don't really want to be more of a looser than necessary
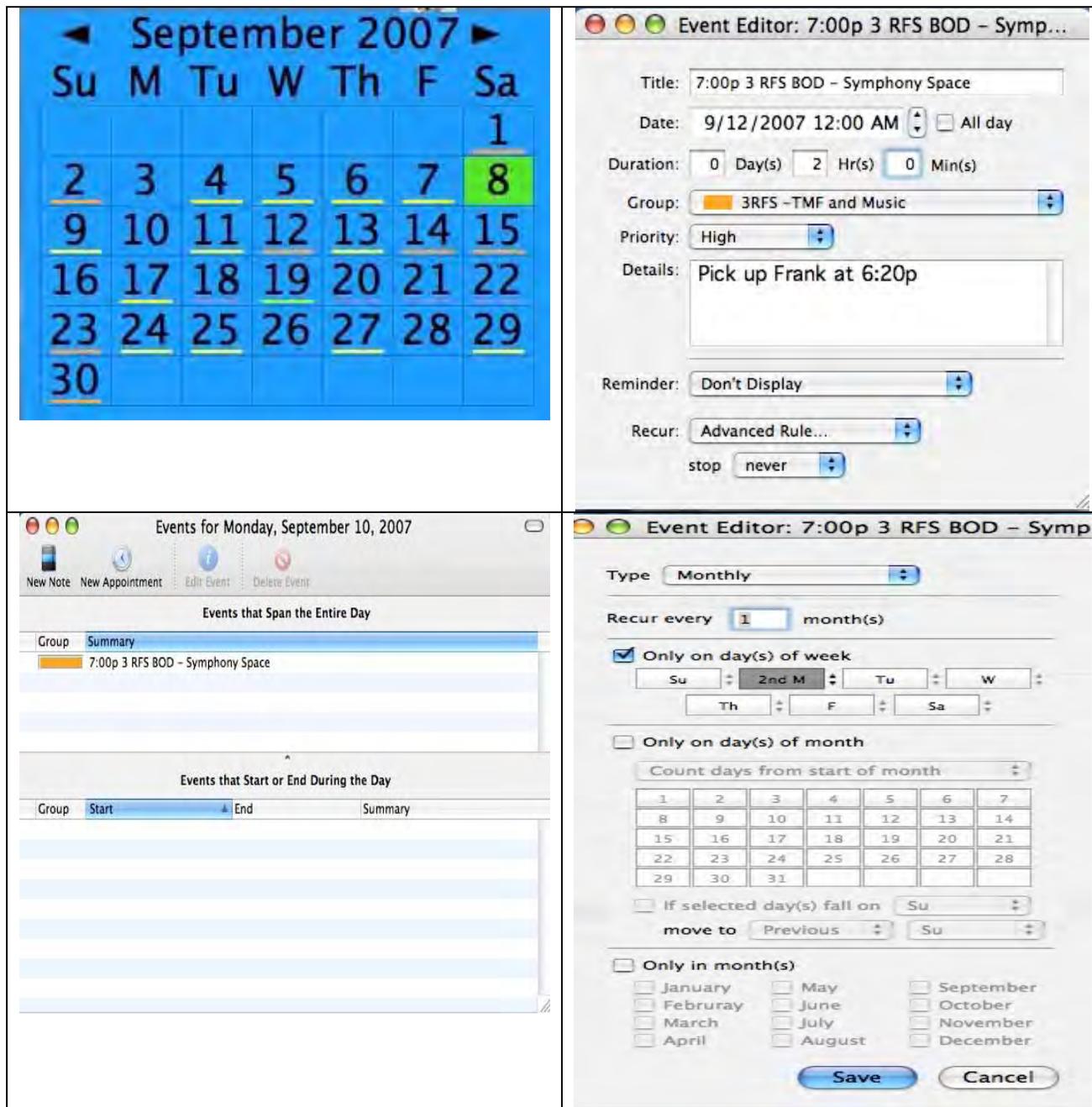
Rather than discuss the specifics of using PandoCalendar for setting individual appointments, regularly repeated meetings and all the rest of the stuff that you'd use a calendar to keep track, here are four screen shots to wet your interest.

Minor Discomforts
Exporting Events to Text — Except for one thing that got lost in the upgrade, I love the new PandoCalendar version 7.x. What got lost was the straightforward ability to export my appointments and notes to a text or MSW file. To do so now, I must print the event range to PDF and then export the PDF (from Acrobat) to editable text. I could work in Acrobat Pro, but MSW is easier to use when I create an event listing that my wife posts on the refrigerator.

Within a day, I received the following response — "In version 7 the event format changed, which required completely rewriting the import/export code. The *older* dBASE files were always of limited use, since no other calendar program could import them. With these considerations in mind, I decided not to spend the time, and delay the update again, to rewrite the import/export code. When import and export are added again, I plan for it to be to the iCalendar format. Of course exporting to a text file will also be an option. Currently, I don't have a ETA for when this will happen."

Conclusion/Recommendation

This is a great product whose price is right. I've used it though all of its iterations from version that predate 5.5.6 (OS 7.5) though version 6.0.4 (OS X 10.2) and now the present version 7.0.3. The product has never crashed, nor have any of my appointments been lost. Indeed, as a result of being a pack rat, I still have the appointments created in earlier versions stored on a backup CD. One of these days, when bored or looking for a déjà vu moment, I'll install them and go pack in time for an hour or two.

If you have no need to share a calendar with anyone else, this is the product for you, try it — it's free.

PS

All things free come with a price. In the case of PandoCalendar is that small a Biblical quotation will appear Sunday at midnight or whenever you check for Sunday events. If you are not a Christian, you can dismiss with quote with a click of a mouse.

 I don't have a problem with this, having at time read both the old and new testament in great detail. Although I'm not strictly speaking a Christian, for me the quote only becomes an issue if you want it to be. I find the quote reflecting the developer's beliefs a small tradeoff for an overall very effective program. [Paraphrased to reflect my view, in part from a review by **EASER** Sep 6 2007 on the MacUpdate site.]

PPS

KISS means: Keep It Simple, Stupid!

PDFKey Pro 3.4.5 — Recover lost PDF password so you don't lose work

Reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad   © 2007

Michele Balistreri — Brik Software
Support@pdfkey.com
http://pdfkey.com/
Released: 29·Aug·07
Shareware Cost: $20 [USD]
System Requirements: Mac OS X 10.3.9 or later, Universal binary 3 MB Hard Drive Space.
Localized: in English, Italian, French, German, Polish and Japanese.

Strengths: A simple and cost effective way of re-access information in partially protected PDFs; or to add such protection to you own PDFs. If you have a need for its functionality, this will be an excellent tool for you.

Weaknesses: In terms of how I create, acquire and use PDF files, I found the PDFKey Pro of limited use. I do not, at least 99% of the time, password protect my files in any fashion. Nor do I limit other's access to them. But then again, I'm not you.

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

The software was tested on a 1 GHz dual processor PowerPC G4 Macintosh with 2 GB DDR SDRAM running under OS X 10.4.10.

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

Software Introduction Including the Publisher's Summary
I am a regular, you might say compulsive, user of the expensive [$250-$460] Adobe Acrobat Pro (AA8 Pro), now in version 8. Despite that devotion, I continuously access and test (time permitting) shareware tools that perform some of the functions of the Adobe Pro application. On occasions developers add a bit of functionality to their acrobat-oriented tools (e.g., PDFPen Pro), but usually they replicate, in well-focused shareware products parts of the parent (Acrobat) software's functionality.

When I first saw the software's name and read a top-level description, I thought it might be a way to extract information from password locked PDF files. You know, the ones produced, in days long gone, by our local Macintosh user's group for their finder newsletter. (I was given that password, a now discontinued practice, which then allowed me to extract a review or tip from that newsletter to use as references.)

It's not a way to defeat author control of a PDF file or Digital Rights Management protected eBooks. [Dream on doc, The MacUpdate site is not the place to look for such tools.] MacUpdate PDFKey Pro is only designed to help you work with PDF files when you've lost your password, or when you need to batch process your PDFs.

What Does it Do — PDFKey Pro lets you easily recover from having lost your copying and/or printing PDF passwords. PDFKey Pro creates an unlocked copy of your PDF, without requiring you to enter a copying or printing password. However, if your files are protected from unauthorized **viewing**, you must supply the password before PDFKey Pro will make a fully unlocked document. Should you make extensive use of passwords to limit reader access (actions such as print or copy) to your files, PDFs can also be processed in bulk, without requiring your intervention.

Using the Software
After a standard installation, the software is ready to use sort of.

When in demonstration mode, PDFKey Pro will process only the first page of your locked PDF documents. Demonstration mode is intended to give you an idea of how PDFKey Pro will work before you purchase it.


PDFKey Pro lets you protect your PDFs with a drag of your mouse. You can set a password to view a file as well as password to restrict printing and copy and pasting of your PDFs. The files created by PDFKey Pro will be identical to the originals and you will be able to open them in any PDF viewer.

PDFKey Pro is very easy to use. Simply drag your PDF file (or files, or folders) to either the "Unlock" or "Lock" icons. If you are trying to lock files, PDFKey Pro will ask you the passwords to use and the actions you wish to disable. PDFKey Pro will then start working on your PDFs. A progress bar will show you that PDFKey Pro is working (small files won't display this bar because they'll be processed before you know it). The resulting files will be placed in the directory chosen in the application preference panel (by default the same folders as the original files) with the same name as the originals, plus an added suffix of either *_unlocked* or *_locked*. Also included with PDFKey Pro are powerful automation tools to use as command line functions and in the Mac OS X 10.4 "Tiger" with Automator. This is a feature I did not test since I use neither of the Macintosh system tools.
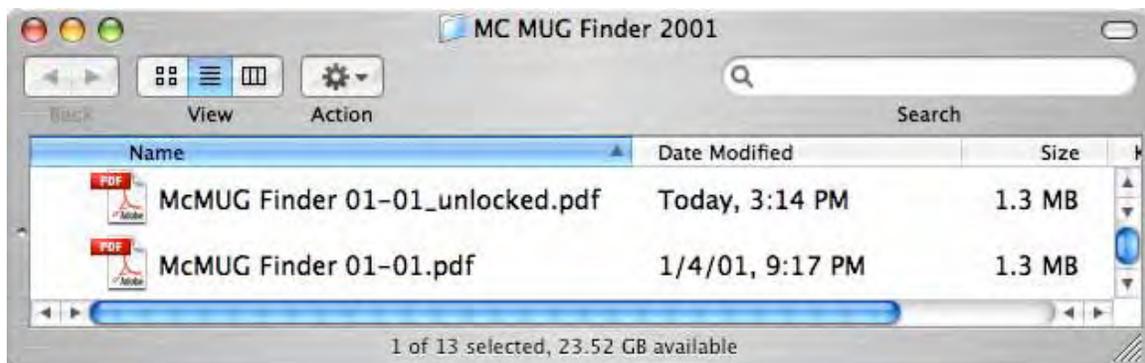
PDFKey Pro is not a universal PDF Password Cracker.
On the other hand, going back to my archive Mid-Columbia Macintosh Users Group collection of the "Finder" newsletter, I was able, w/o using the "provided" password, to extract the page or three that I wanted.

| Locked MCMUG PDF | Unlocked MCMUG PDF |
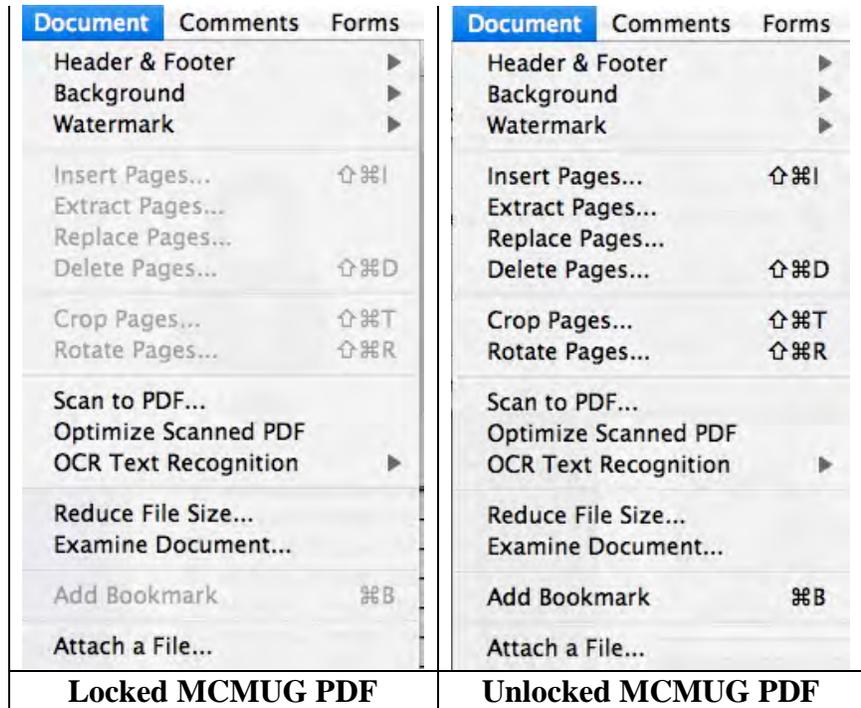
I did put the software through its paces and demonstrated that I was able to:

- Completely unlock files restoring editing and printing capabilities when I set them in AA8 Pro.
- I was also able to protect my PDF files with a password to prevent unauthorized access. I worked with PDF files created in MS Word using the Adobe PDF maker application, as well as document created with Apple's *Print to PDF* function.
- Indeed, as claimed, the software enabled me to restrict usage, such as printing and copying, permissions with a password. [I quickly used the software to *undid* what it did.]

Discomforts
As noted by Rainbird in a MacUpdate review "Does the serial activation code really have to be 87 characters in length?"

Conclusion
If protecting and un-protecting your PDF files is your thing, by all means buy this product. For the first time, I do not recommend working with the limited (first page only) demo. Take a chance; spend the $20 for a full working copy.

What ToDo 1.2.1 — A systematic and multifunctional todo tool to help organize your tasks

Reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad   © 2007

Objective Satisfaction Feedback@objectivesatisfaction.com http://www.objectivesatisfaction.com/what_todo/ **Release Date**: 26, July 2007 $29 USD **Requirements**: Mac OS X 10.4.9 or later; Universal binary; Download 1.8 MB **Strengths**: The product has some unusual and potentially helpful features that allow reacting hieratical (in-depth) organized todo list.	

Weaknesses: A combination of lack or robust help and limited functionality forced me to lean the program by trial and error, something most users will not tolerate.

Previous Reviews: links to previous *macCompanion* reviews on the same product.

For a demo of this product: Demo download page

Copyright Notice: Product and company names and logos in this review may be registered trademarks of their respective companies.
The software was tested on a 1 GHz dual processor PowerPC G4 Macintosh with 2 GB DDR SDRAM running under OS X 10.4.10.

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

Introduction in Including Publisher's Summary
Over the years I've had occasion to test a wide variety to todo lists products, sometimes called PIMs (Personal Information Managers.) These offered a wide variety of features and interfaces but at their core were quite similar. They, like my present todo tool, Kelvin Delbarre's ToDo X 2.1, tool are set up with a two-pane window for categorizing you todo items and then itemizing their contents. Central to each program, each specific item in a list-category or project could further be expanded upon by adding descriptive notes.

Some todo tools allow tasks to be divided in developer defined action mode categories.

Examples of such categories include buy, email, phone or meet. Other products allow including (recognizing) live links (URLs and email) in their contents. Almost all allowed prioritization of tasks using colored labels.

A few of the programs I've read about, but chose not to test, integrated added functionality into your calendar and otherwise created a more intrusive scheduling function onto your computer. (I hate to be nagged and work better as deadline approach.)

Indeed despite the broad array of available products in this genre, the tool you chose is almost more a mater of esthetics and or ancillary features than the product's core ability to track your todo needs.

Now What ToDo
What ToDo potentially changes that paradigm. It is, in addition to being a potentially useful tool for tracking your todos, a computer tool support to a system for maximizing your daily achievements by way of a todo list metaphor. *More about that later.* Needless to say I was hooked when I read the product description on the developers website. After all, I do prize my self on being an absentminded but systematic person.

Developer's Description — "Forget post-its stuck to the screen, no more ink scrawls on the palm of your hand — with What ToDo you'll be organized, stay focused and get more done.

It is geared towards the popular work-life management system Getting Things Done [GTD] [http://www.43folders.com/2004/09/08/getting-started-with-getting-things-done/], described in David Allen's book of the same name. What ToDo is designed to be flexible enough to be used for your own personal to-do system even if a formal GTD system approach isn't your thing. To get to be more productive in your digital life, try What ToDo today." *More about GTD at the end of the review.*

Getting Started/Using the Product
In a typical Macintosh fashion, the downloaded application can be dropped into your application folder. It can be used as a demo, or purchased. In demo mode you are limited to 25 projects and actions, fair from my perspective since you get a taste but cant both have your cake and eat it.

I was disappointed in the developers Help system, which focused on what I considered semi-esoteric topics. Should you need it some minimal support is available online in a Frequently Asked Questions format at [http://www.objectivesatisfaction.com/what_todo/support.html].
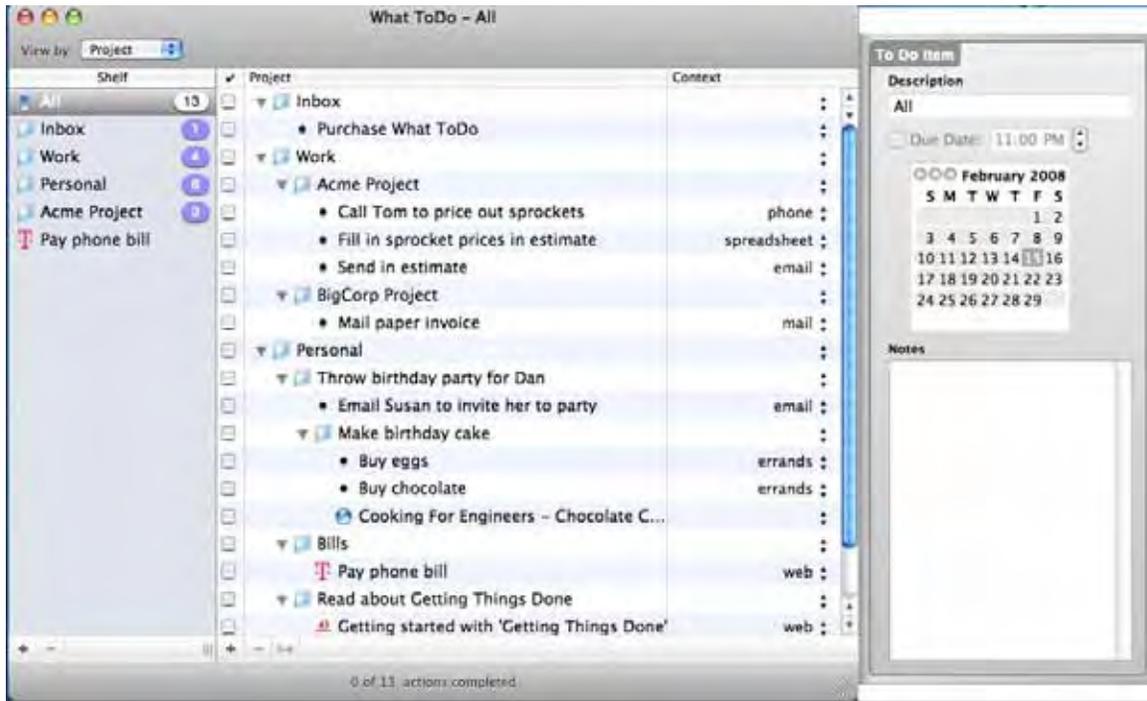
I had no trouble figuring out how to add material to existing projects, create a new database, add new projects, and add content (action items) to them. But then, I've worked

with perhaps a baker's dozen todo and PIM products since getting my first Macintosh SE-30, years ago. The same would not be true for a newbie to PIM products.

The developer has provided, when the program is first opened, a sample database that illustrated the many tools/features in the product. Particularly useful to users, is your ability to not only focus your attention on an item in the list of shelf entries (categories in my parlance) but also to view the database by project, context and due date.

The hardest part of getting used to *What ToDo* was learning the semantics.

1. *The focus and Intents of Shelf Items* — I would call that a category list, *but a rose by any other name...* The web description of the function of a shelf doesn't help my understanding *"With the Shelf, a convenient spot to store shortcuts to important projects and actions, you don't have to choose between ease of navigation and ease of organization"*. Does this mean I can for the most part ignore the shelf?

2. *Folders vs. Shelf Items* — The purpose of a folder in the project window is poorly defined, other than it's a collection of stuff related to a shelf item, and contains all of the todo items associated with its name.

3. *Adding Context To Your todo Items* — How to add the different kinds (context) of items to a folder is obscure until one notices the pulldown window under context. Alas part of that pulldown list is invisible until I scrolled down it search for a way to create a web link. I was specifically interested in adding web links and live email address links, only one of which is possible in the version.

Adding Due Dates — Due dates but not priorities, I discovered, can be added in the ToDo Item Description Pane, by clicking on the calendar provided. Not surprising, but in the absence of help, you're left to figure this out on your own.

In addition selecting email, a context item, did not allow me to enter an email address for an auto-link. Neither did selecting mail give me access to an address list to lookup that information. This feature, if fully activated would make this a superior product, but alas only "web" feature is activated.

The Help Topics, a Disorganized FAQ, Ranges From:
- How do I create a new project? (Also, clicking the + button at the bottom of the list adds a bulleted item, not a folder.)
- How do I add a Web item like the *Pay Phone Bill* in the Shelf, the *Read About Getting Things Done* items, or the *Cooking For Engineers* item?
- How can I edit the contexts?
- How do I synchronize multiple computers using .Mac? (I, doc, did not test this feature since I'm .Mac-less)

FAQ Sample

Q: How do I create a new project? Clicking the + button at the bottom of the list adds a bulleted item, not a folder.

A: In What ToDo, projects are simply items that happen to have sub-items. To create a new project, add an item with the project name you want and then add sub-items to that new item. If you remove the sub-items, the folder turns back into a single item. The goal is to allow you to quickly turn an amorphous to do item into a list of distinct, easily achievable sub-steps.

Also, the Shelf isn't so much a list of projects as a list of shortcuts to tasks you want to keep an eye on. You can drag items and projects to and from the shelf and the other views. Clicking + on the shelf simply adds a new item under the 'All' project and adds a shortcut to it at the end of the Shelf.


Discomforts
There are more of these than I was comfortable with. However, at its core *What ToDo* has the ability to be a very powerful PIM tool. I look forward to the next update and have marked it in my MacUpdate preferences.

Lack of Robust Help Files or a Software Manual — As noted in the previous section, much of what I was able to learn to do with the program, was a result of trial and error. If this program is to be useful, to the ordinary Macintosh users, that lack will need to be remedied,

Poor Context Related Navigational and Menu/Action Support — In the absence, either of a manual or a readme file for guidance, I could not figure out how to achieve live links (bookmarks) for a todo item in a folder. I only discovered the way to specify a web link was by somehow creating a Web-todo item. Initially, I could not figure out how to do so based on a detailed line-by-line check of all the software's menus or initially by playing around with contextual menu variants of those items. The web selection in the context menu allows you to enter a link, activating that todo item. Actually there's also a way to drag and drop a link onto the *shelf*, but I only found that out in the What ToDo FAQ.

> "Just drag a link or address from Safari or Firefox and drop it onto the Shelf, under an item in the Project view, or under a Context in the Context view."

More Context List Woes — The context list, a scroll window whose contents are partially hidden, is rich in "attributes". They include: phone, spreadsheet, email, *snail* mail, errands and web; but when initially just clicking on the scroll bar only the first four are visible. There are actually two blank fields at the top of the context list, which provides one added context category. Why, you need a black context field available for your folders. Ups, I lied… after a new context item is added, it gets placed at the bottom of the list and you're back to having more space to customize your context list. Gee wiz, I could have save time if this information has d been in a readme or help file.

phone
spreadsheet
email

mail
errands
web
Do reviews

A Missing Task Priorities Feature — Why does the software not allow for prioritization of activities? This is a valuable tool that I use all the time in ToDo X.

Perceived Flaws in the Example File —
- Why is *pay phone bill* a separate item on the shelf? It already exists in Personal (shelf) > Bills (folder) and pay phone bill (item). It was, however easy to remove.
- Why are the details on the Acme project duplicated on the shelf despite being nested in the Acme folder.

Actually these are not flaws but rather reflect the nuances of dealing with live links and perhaps achieving a more narrowed focus on your projects. However, be that as it may, I object to replication in my PIMs since this can all to easily lead to confusion. [Note: The duplicate entries in the shelf and in project folder appear to be a form of alias rather than independent entries; at least I think so.]

Lack of information on where the db is stored — On my computer it's at [Harry's Tiger > Users > Harry >Library >Application Support > What To Do > What ToDo.wtd]

Poor Window Related Navigational Tools — Lack of a toolbar item to open and close detail draw and the lack of a clickable spot (like able window to close it w/o going to the view menu

Lack of Functionality of Several of the "Context" Categories — There are no live (finder related) links to any of these categories except for web. They are mere flat and therefore useless ID traits.
- What good is an entry that tells me I need to make a phone call w/o allowing a listing for that number other than in the generic "Notes"
- If information in the todo list is associated to items in a spreadsheet, why can't a link be established to it?
- If I need an email response to a todo list item why not provide a place for it, as is done in the web field.

Conclusion
The developer states, "What ToDo allows you to define projects and specify the actions needed to complete them. You can assign a context, like *errands* or *email*, to each action and view all the actions that can be completed in given context. Unlike most GTD applications, What ToDo lets you create subprojects to organize your tasks hierarchically." True but this is only part of the story.

After spending more time than I wanted on testing the product, I must conclude that this is a potentially powerful but under-developed program. Perhaps the developer's approach is what's called for in support of the DTD methodology, but based on a quick read of that methodology on the 43folders site, that too doesn't make sense.

Although I admire the in-depth PIM-like features in the product, the lack of robust help and still weak support for linking to finder and web data with the *contexts* menu make this a try-it and be prepared to devote leaning time to it, program.

Few of my discomforts are showstoppers, but in aggregate they weaken what is an excellent new metaphor to creating, maintaining a flexible and integrated multifunctional to do list.

Try the demo version — if the enhanced flexibility and function outweigh its present weakness, buy it. Based on the developers continued updating of he program, I suspect many of the flaws I identify can and will be fixed.

PS
More About the Getting Things Done System
As tie permits I shall lean more about the "Getting Things Done" system. Meanwhile, an excellent source of free GTD and other productivity related information is Merlin Mann's website *43folders* [http://www.43folders.com/]. A couple of information rich posts are:

- *Getting Started with "Getting Things Done"* [http://www.43folders.com/2004/09/08/getting-started-with-getting-things-done/]
- *Building a Smarter To Do List Part I* [http://www.43folders.com/2005/09/12/building-a-smarter-to-do-list-part-i/]
- *Building a Smarter To Do List Part II* [http://www.43folders.com/2005/09/13/building-a-smarter-to-do-list-part-ii/%5D/]

A quick scan of the contents of these web sites made it likely, in between publishing deadlines [the 20th to 30th of the month, that further checking the GTD site(s) were worth my time. Whether to accommodate an understanding of the personal benefits of using GTD, I'll abandon ToDo X, in favor of What ToDo, remains a future decision.

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