macCompanion

The leopard is out

Masthead

Our special thanks to all those who have allowed us to review their products!
In addition, thanks to you, our readers, who make this effort all possible.

EVO NETWORKS

Data Center Express

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

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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.

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- Single solution for storing and managing data in your organization with up to 1.5 terabytes of storage (1500 GB)
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- Handles 800+ secure remote connections (VPN)
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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.

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Columns

Letter from the CEO

One Angry Cat!
By Robert Pritchett

Michele Patterson may have had a premonition about Leopard as not being the perceived kind kitty, but a hissing kitten, with her November *macCompanion* cover. Anyway, I thought it was cute – until I started reading the post-Leopard debut feedback.

What do I mean?

Well, the early adopters did manage to find chinks in the Apple armor as we heard dire warnings from the likes of *MacFixIt* and others who said the dot-0 version is not the one we want, but should wait until dot-2 arrives before leaping.

Developers are having a hissy-fit about Java 6 not being there in the final version, but hold on, there is a history regarding Java with Apple -

http://stuffthathappens.com/blog/2007/10/28/os-x-java-definitive-timeline/

Steve Stanger's *The Mac Attack* podcast - http://themacattack.us/ Episode #78 does a great job covering the issues. Don't load Leopard if you make money on your Mac until you check all the apps for compatibility and updates.

Even though MacFixIt gave dire warnings they also posted a workaround for those who have pre-876 MHz systems - http://www.macfixit.com/article.php?story=20071029000757347

On my machine, I use Adobe Acrobat 8 Professional to do the magazine. Guess what? Adobe won't have a Leopardized version out until January.
http://blogs.adobe.com/genesisproject/leopardsupport.pdf

It is a good thing I ordered Leopard through Amazon as a family pack and it won't arrive for a few more weeks, because it is coming via snail-mail. I would have not heeded the warnings and just installed it and you would not have had the November PDFed version of this magazine.

You would think that after nearly a year we would have had all the 3rd-party apps working with Leopard, but many of them did not get the final version either, so they got blind-sided and somewhat surprised, but the list of compatible apps is gradually increasing in size. The Developers again are miffed because they didn't get the final version either, and are wondering if their membership in the ADC is worth the money they spent as beta-testers. Apparently somebody posted Tiger on BitTorrent and the ADC developer community was blamed. Well, Leopard was posted on BitTorrent again, but since the ADCers didn't have the final version, apparently it wasn't their fault this time.

By the way, the first Leopard update was released almost immediately regarding the login and keychain snafu. A lot of flack is flying over on the Apple Discussion Forum - http://discussions.apple.com/forum.jspa?forumID=1219 about bugs, fixes and missing pieces.

One of the better balanced reviews is over on *Ars Technica* - http://arstechnica.com/reviews/os/mac-os-x-10-5.ars and I was intrigued by the comments regarding folder graphics, but there are other naysayers who list things they don't like - http://www.tech.co.uk/computing/mac/news/7-things-you-wont-like-about-leopard?articleid=1840222716

Perhaps someone is watching out for me as the inevitable updates get posted by Apple and the dot-1 release is given probably about the time I get my copy to load. And maybe Adobe can expedite the Adobe Acrobat 8 Professional update. Two months for an update? And they were early adopters.

I'm still waiting to find out what the Leopard secret features are that are above and beyond the "300 features" so prominently listed on the Apple website.

Will Leopard learn to be well-behaved or will it continue to scratch and bite before settling down and feeling at home in all the millions of kitty bags we are all carrying?

What works with Leopard? Here is Apple's List - http://www.apple.com/support/downloads/

What breaks? MacFixIt lists those apps – http://www.macfixit.com/article.php?story=20071030122926454

And then there are issues with Security in Leopard - http://www.matasano.com/log/981/a-roundup-of-leopard-security-features

Of interest is Dan Frake's article over on *MacWorld* about what Leopard replaces when it comes to 3rd-party apps for things that should be in the OS but were not – and which ones had functionality folded into Leopard –
http://www.macworld.com/weblogs/macgems/2007/10/leopardgems1/index.php?lsrc=mwgems

Daniel Eran Dilger also has his "10 Myths of Leopard" series going on as well –
http://www.roughlydrafted.com/2007/10/30/ten-myths-of-leopard-1-graphics-must-be-slow/

Keep current on issues by going to *Mac Surfer* - http://www.macsurfer.com/

More about Leopard will no doubt be forthcoming in the December issue of the magazine.

Meanwhile, why not settle down now that harvesting time is over in the Northern hemisphere and enjoy a good read with *macCompanion* magazine?

We would also be delighted if you would visit our advertisers and affiliates and give us a warm fuzzy feeling as we approach the Holy-day season.

According to Hoyle...

Mac OS X Development Beyond Leopard

by Jonathan Hoyle

jhoyle@maccompanion.com
macCompanion
November 2007

"*Beyond* Leopard?!? But Leopard just came out!"

With Apple's highly anticipated release of Mac OS X 10.5 Leopard on October 26, there will no doubt be a plethora of reviews, insights, tips for you to enjoy, including many great ones here in macCompanion. Over the past few months, we have used this column to help prepare developers for the Leopard-skinned future. These include reviews of WWDC, Leopard, Xcode and Objective-C 2.0:

- 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
- http://www.maccompanion.com/macc/archives/October2007/Columns/AccordingtoHoyle.htm

Now that Leopard is in the present, it is sometimes easy to forget that there is still a future ahead of us. There is always something just around the corner, and this is one thing software developers like to pride themselves for being prepared. Knowing what is coming next will often help you today, especially if you plan to keep your application selling after release 1.0. For this reason, we will take this month to get greedy and look just beyond the confines of this first release of Leopard. So if you will indulge me this momentary breach of etiquette, come as we take an unauthorized tour into the near future of Mac OS X software development.

Xcode & gcc

With the release of Mac OS X 10.5 Leopard, Apple has provided Mac software developers the latest upgrade of its tools: Xcode 3. Although there are significant improvements in the IDE, its main component - the gcc compiler - remains unchanged from Mac OS X 10.4 Tiger. As you may already be aware, gcc is an open source compiler, part of the Gnu project sponsored by the Free Software Foundation. Apple's Xcode is the integrated development environment which wraps this compiler. Like gcc, Xcode is free; unlike gcc, however, Xcode is neither cross-platform nor open source.

Xcode 2.x and 3 each use gcc version 4.0.1 as its default compiler, although Xcode does allow you to change to the older gcc 3.3 compiler. Given that gcc 3.3 is not fully ANSI C++ compliant and lacks Intel compatibility, there is little reason for the modern developer to consider gcc 3.3 today. And even when version 3.3 was the default compiler in Xcode 1.5, Apple was recommending its developers to compile and test against gcc 4.0, so as to be prepared for the future. After having taken great pains to migrate Mac programmers to gcc 4, Apple decided not to make any compiler changes with Xcode 3 and Leopard, at least not just yet.

Despite Apple's hesitation to move beyond version 4.0.1, Gnu has been moving forward quite readily on its own. Version 4.0.x updates continued in 2005, with 4.1 released in February 2006, and a succession of 4.1.x updates following thereafter. 4.2 was released in March of this year, with 4.2.1 in July, and 4.2.2 in October. How long will Apple stay with version 4.0.1 before it decides to upgrade? This is of course a matter of speculation, but it seems likely that they will be making a move sooner rather than later. Those Mac developers who have signed up for their free ADC membership can see for themselves Apple's early progress on gcc 4.2.

Apple's **GCC 4.2 Developer Preview** is still under non-disclosure, so I cannot speak on its particulars. (Irrespectively, a shrewd Google search will yield a lot of information for you, including the *GCC 4.2 Developer Preview Release Notes* themselves.) You'll note that the NDA on Apple's Developer Preview is not much of a limitation, since gcc 4.2 is itself freely available and all information on it is open source. Essentially, I can speak on Xcode 3, and I can speak on gcc 4.2. I just can't speak of gcc 4.2 within Xcode 3. Therefore, I will address these separately.

Xcode 3: Where We Are Today?

Xcode 3 has added a number of powerful new features that improve the Mac development experience. The most notable is the change of the default debugging format from STABS to DWARF. In STABS, debugging information is hard-linked into the actual executable itself, grossly inflating file size. The STABS portion was typically much larger than the executable itself and thereby slowing down the link process. DWARF only soft-links this information, making the executable much smaller. DWARF has the additional benefit of being more C++ friendly, handling namespaces and inline functions much better. For those still using Xcode 2.3 or higher, DWARF is available (although off by default); my recommendation is for all users of Xcode 2.x to switch to DWARF now.

Another significant improvement in Xcode 3 is its increased security. One such security improvement is the inclusion of what's called "stack canaries". A stack canary is essentially a guard band between scope variables and a function's return addresses. Object size checking is also done, by replacing (for example) strcpy() with a parameter checking equivalent. Neither of these new features is turned on by default, presumably to allow for better code optimization. You must turn these items on in your Project settings.

Perhaps the best guard against malicious programs is in the treatment of space allocated by **malloc()**. In previous versions of Xcode, such space could be used to hold executable code. This is rarely desired by the developer, and is often exploited by malware copying unpleasant code into its contents. With Xcode 3, **malloc()**-ed space is non-executable by default. Developers who wish to make it executable memory must use **mprotect()**.

gcc 4.2: Where We Will Be Tomorrow

When looking at the change list of gcc over the past two years, we see that there are a number of improvements made since the version found in Xcode. As stated earlier, learning about these and other changes in gcc do not require you to sign an NDA with Apple, as Gnu publicly releases this information as gcc evolves. Gnu has separate web pages documenting the modification history for gcc 4.0.x (last version 4.0.4), 4.1.x (latest 4.1.2), and 4.2.x (latest 4.2.2 as I write this), and you can view them here:

gcc 4.0 Release History: http://gcc.gnu.org/gcc-4.0/changes.html
gcc 4.1 Release History: http://gcc.gnu.org/gcc-4.1/changes.html
gcc 4.2 Release History: http://gcc.gnu.org/gcc-4.2/changes.html

Rather than parrot what is already in these release notes, I wish to concentrate on two of the more powerful features in 4.2 that will likely make your life easier as a Mac developer. Both of these are changes specific with 4.2.x.

Parallel Universe

One of the most powerful new features of gcc 4.2 is *OpenMP*, a multiprocessor support capability. Consider a simple, yet common, task of summing the values of two arrays and placing their sum in a third array:

```
for (i = 0; i < numItems; i++)
    z[i] = x[i] + y[i];
```

Suppose this code snippet lives in a critical area of code which you would like to optimize. Machines with multiple processors could be used to parallelize this loop, by dividing the work across each processor core, dramatically improving performance. Unfortunately, writing the threading code and implementing the required mutexes to support this is quite complex, and would necessarily require a great deal of code debugging to get it right. If such a procedure is needed throughout different areas of the code, it gets even worse.

With OpenMP, however, only two directives need be added:

```
// parallelize this loop
#pragma omp parallel shared(x,y,z,chunk) private(i)
{
    #pragma omp for schedule(dynamic, chunk) nowait
    for (i = 0; i < numItems; i++)
        z[i] = x[i] + y[i];
}
```

The first **#pragma** informs the compiler which data objects are being shared across threads, and which is private. The second **#pragma** handles the **for** loop chunking. This code is an order of magnitude easier to write, as it simply directs the compiler to perform the parallelization. *OpenMP* is implemented by POSIX threads, thus making them quite solid and secure.

Visible Means of Support

In today's software development arena, programmers find that they must increasingly interface with other programs. Frequently, this means loading shared libraries written by other people. Unfortunately, not all of these programs are well modularized, and global functions and variables used in these libraries may have generic names which can easily clash. Such short-sighted authors declare global variables, functions and types with names like **Max**, **Run**, or even something as embarrassing as **i**. Even careful programmers may accidentally hit upon name collisions unintentionally. Authors of shared libraries must struggle between using obscure names unlikely to clash and keeping their source code readable.

The C++ mechanism for avoiding such name collisions is to encapsulate related the objects into a namespace. Items within one namespace do not collide with identically named ones in another namespace. A minor risk that remains is that two libraries might use the same namespace name, such as **MyNamespace** (although this is admittedly pretty unlikely). The bigger problem is simply that many developers are either ignorant of, or simply too lazy to use namespaces.

In gcc 4.0, this problem can be handled with the visibility attributes. A library author can define his structure with the **`__attribute__((visibility("hidden"))`** suffix, as so:

```
// hidden structure
struct InternalStruct
__attribute__((visibility("hidden"))
{
    int     field1;
    double field2;
    void    *field3;
}
```

When doing so, no one outside this library will see this structure defined, The gcc 4.2 compiler takes this functionality to the next level by automatically hiding functions and variables associated with a hidden type:

```
void    MyFunction(InternalStruct   &inStruct);      // automatically hidden

    std::vector<int>                myVector1;       // not hidden
    std::vector<InternalStruct>     myVector2;       // automatically hidden
```

C++ developers may even hide entire namespaces in the same manner:

```
namespace hiddenSpace
__attribute__((visibility("hidden"))
{
    // implementation details all hidden
}
```

Anonymous namespaces have no name, so it is not possible to associate it with this visibility attribute. To address this, gcc 4.2 implicitly makes all items in an anonymous namespace (as well as items outside it that use them) static:

```
// anonymous namespace
namespace
{
    struct myStruct
    {
        ...
    };
}

void foo(MyStruct &myParm);      // static
std::vector<MyStruct> myVector;  // static
```

These visibility improvements do more than simply avoid name collisions. It also significantly improves linker performance, as fewer variables and types need be considered whilst building your program.

Stepping into the Future

These are merely two of the more significant changes found in gcc 4.2. There are of course many others. If you wish to be prepared for the next generation compiler, my recommendation is to keep an eye on gcc 4.2. It is this author's opinion that it will not be long before the future will (once again) be here.

Coming Up: Next month, another exciting episode in the According to Hoyle. See you in 30!

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

November 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. Most, but not all of the Tips I share come from — Paul Taylor's Hints & Tips column http://www.mac-hints-tips.com and are used with his permission. 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:

- **Hacking Toward Happiness —** Life hacking
- **The Perils of Flash Drive Backup**
- **Activity Monitor Tips —** End the hidden activities some applications
- **Getting Help from Apple**
- **Erasing Safari's Memory** — *Shortening* Safari's Long Memory
- **Dictionary Help in Adobe Acrobat 7 Professional**
- **We've Ranted About Backups –** Another Reminder to Stay out of Trouble
- **Linotype's Free FontExplorer X —** Master Your Font Collection
- **Creating Thin Spaces in MS Word**
- Copy CDs or DVDs with Apples Disk Utility

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Hacking Toward Happiness — Life hacking

Time Magazine picked up one of the most interesting new movements in computing. A developing art called Life hacking. "Beneath the bits and bytes that shape the character of Silicon Valley, there's a booming digital subculture committed to the art of self-improvement, geek style. It's known as life hacking, and it's all about sweating out the best ways to crank through e-mail, sabotage spam, boost productivity and in general be happier." Check out the article by Jeremy Caplan at http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1635844,00.html or delve deeper at http://www.Lifehack.org

Doc_Babad for macCompanion

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The Perils of Flash Drive Backup
Many of use routinely share data with our friends who work on a windows platform, requiring that our flash drive be configured as DOS drives. The reason is that our Macintosh computers have always been able read PD formatted media, but the reverse is seldom true.

For most things we use our drives for, having it formatted DOS doesn't matter. Indeed we, unless checking get Info, don't even realize the drives as not Macintosh formatted the Macintosh OS doesn't care.

Don't copy applications onto a DOS formatted volume, like a flash drive. They will lose their resource forks and report a -39 end of file error. There are also file name restrictions on a DOS volume as well. To preserve them if you must, use .zip or .sit compression to encapsulate them. An advanced tip would be to put a read/write disk image (.dmg) or Sparse Disk Image (.sparseimage) file on the flash drive, mount that and copy Mac files onto that. Then unmount the image before unmounting the flash drive. Of course, if this flash drive will be exclusively used with Macs, it's easier to just erase it, with OS 9 drivers, as a Mac OS Extended volume with Disk Utility.

Bradley Dichter *LIMac Forum, Long Island, NY*
Hints & Tips August 2007

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Activity Monitor Tips — End the hidden activities some applications

Reader Randy H. would like to know how to end the hidden activities of some of his applications. He writes: "How do I list all the running programs in my Mac -- and stop the hidden parts of the ones I've quit? This question assumes that covert remnants of programs are running subsurface and do not show on the Force Quit list, as evidenced when the Mac gets slow or even locks up or almost. Not a frequent event, but when it happens I give up and do a time wasting restart. (On the PC, many programs run hidden; same with Mac?)"

Activity Monitor (which you'll find in the Utilities folder inside your Applications folder) lists all currently running applications -- both those that Force Quit can see as well as hidden applications. When I suspect that a hidden process is mucking up the works, I launch Activity Monitor and, from the pop-up menu at the top of the window, choose My Processes. This shows just running "real" applications (and their associated helper programs) and widgets. None of the hidden Unix stuff appears in the window (which is good, because you don't want to mess with this stuff unless you really, really know what you're doing.)
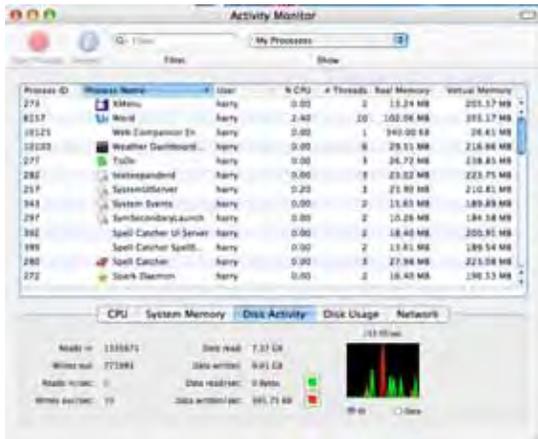
Most items that appear are intuitively named and some even have icons that hint at their association. For example, Microsoft's Database Daemon, which is associated with Entourage, has an Entourage-like icon. iChatAgent likewise bears an iChat icon.

When I've located an item that appears to be gumming up the works (a helper application that didn't quit with its host application, for example), I select it and click the Quit Process button at the top of the window.

Activity Monitor offers this additional advantage: It can show you what's occupying your Mac's mind. Just click the % CPU column to see which applications are hammering on your Mac's CPU. Or take a look at the Real memory column to view the RAM-hogs you're running.

Note that quitting the hidden processes may do you no good whatsoever. For example, if I've had a browser open for a few days, my Mac slows down. Quitting processes in Activity Monitor does no good. Rather than mess around looking for the culprit, I do the expedient thing -- I restart my Mac -- and I'm back to working at normal speed.

Hunting Processor Hogs
Christopher Breen
<mailto:mac911@macworld.com>

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Getting Help from Apple
If you don't often visit it, you might be surprised at the volume of useful information available on the Apple website. In particular, the Knowledge Base has thousands of articles, many of which deal with recognized problems and difficulties with Apple software and hardware.

These articles cover ground not mentioned in the relevant applications' Help files, which are designed to help you with normal use of the applications, rather than to trouble-shoot them. Some articles extend the information in the Help files; for instance, there are several dealing with backup and recovery of iTunes music libraries.

In recent times, Apple has made access to the Knowledge Base easier. Simply go to the basic Support page <http://www.apple.com/support> and click the product icon most relevant to your query. (If you can't see the one you need, click the link "Show me the complete product list.") Arriving at the appropriate product page, you'll find a number of headings and links that may well lead you to the information you need.

Otherwise, enter a few key words in the provided search box and press Return. The search results will almost certainly include a number of references to Knowledge Base documents. Further, many Knowledge Base documents have internal links to other relevant documents, so that while you can print them out, reading them on-line may really be the way to go.

Steve Cooper
AUSOM News, Melbourne, Australia
Hints & Tips August 2007

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Erasing Safari's Memory — *Shortening* Safari's Long Memory
Question: Reader Bill Zagotta is unhappy with Safari's long memory. He writes: "Safari does a nice job of trying to guess and fill-in the web address I am about to type...sometimes. But after a restart, when I type "g" to go to Google, it guesses I want to go to a genealogical web page. I have tried to clear out caches and to reset Safari and to delete the items it seems to be remembering for a 'g.' Nothing will eliminate Safari's memories of web addresses I have visited. How can I erase all or undesired web address in the Safari brain?"

Response: Regrettably, Safari doesn't provide a single command for getting rid of these memorized entries. They're concocted from Safari's bookmarks, cache, and history. You can get close by choosing Reset Safari from the Safari menu but using it can be problematic. In the first place, it doesn't touch your bookmarks so some of those entries will still appear. Secondly, it will clear more data than you probably want it to. In addition to clearing the history and emptying the cache, it clears the Downloads window, removes all cookies, and gets rid of any names and passwords you may have asked it to save.

You can do this piecemeal. Start by choosing Safari -> Empty Cache. Then choose History -> Clear History. Then go into the Bookmarks area and clear out bookmarks you don't want. [Doc sez, this is a one at a time ort *shift-click* kind of effort.]

Or you can just adopt one of a couple of new habits. The first would be to type more than just that first letter "g." Try "go" and see if that brings up Google. Or bypass the whole autofill thing by clicking in the Address field, pressing the Space Bar once, and start typing. Autofill doesn't work if the first character is a space.

Finally, you can help prevent additional entries from being added by choosing Private Browsing from the Safari menu. With this option enabled, the Web sites you visit won't be cached or added to Safari's history and therefore don't later appear as Autofill entries.

By Christopher Breen
Mac 911 Tip of the Week
mailto:mac911@macworld.com

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Dictionary Help in Adobe Acrobat 7 Professional

If you're ever proofreading a PDF and realize there may be a better word to use than the current one, you're in luck. You can find word definitions or access a thesaurus by Control/Clicking when using the Hand tool. Select "Add Note" from the Contextual Menu that appears. Type the word into the Note window and highlight it. Control/Click once again and select Lookup "."

Dictionary.com will launch in your Web browser, already pointing the definition for the highlighted word.

Note: Of course, this won't work if you're not connected to the Internet.

Doc sez, *of course if you were using the macC recommended Spell Catcher, now in version 10.2.3 you'd be connected without having to be online. Read all about it in the April 2007 macCompanion.*

Layers Magazine via LIMac Forum, Long Island, NY
Hints & Tips August 2007

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We've Ranted About Backups – Another Reminder to Stay out of Trouble

Invest in an external FireWire hard drive for backup purposes. Sooner or later you'll have directory damage that can't be repaired. Use the free Carbon Copy Cloner to copy everything to the drive. Start off the drive and use Disk Utility to erase your internal drive, then use Mike Bombich's outstanding Carbon Copy Cloner (now version 3) to copy everything back, then reset Startup Disk back to internal drive.

I reviewed Carbon Copy Cloner 2.3 in the June 2004 issue; it been updated but never superceded. I've got a couple of partitioned LaCie F.A. Porsche designed 250 GB drives that I alternate between smart backup and a full backup. I like these, aside from their dependability, because they take very little desk space (1.4 x 4.4 x 7.4 in. (H x W x L) A word to the wise, it pays every few month to take 5 minutes and start up your computer from your backup drive; a precaution most people for get to take. If the backup drive boots wonderful. If not you'll have more problems recovering from a crashed hard disk. It can be done, but that's another tip. The only time I could not get a backup to boot, I erased that partition and backed up my drive again.

Bradley Dichter *LIMac Forum, Long Island, NY*
Hints & Tips August 2007
with adlibs by doc_Babad

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Linotype's Free FontExplorer X — Master Your Font Collection
Among those who use (or just own) many fonts, there is always a debate over which font management utility does the best job, or is most reliable, or is easiest to use. For most of us, the one that comes with Mac OS X (Font Book) does a great job, especially now that the Tiger version is so much more reliable than its predecessors. Most "power users," however, prefer a third party alternative such as FontAgent or Suitcase.

Recently, many of these users, including doc_Babad, have found a new favorite — Linotype FontExplorer X, published by the famous font foundry Linotype. According to all reports it works extremely well and is free of the problems and bugs that have plagued its competitors. It uses a layout very similar to that of iTunes, making it easy to understand how it works.

Best of all, it's free! When the beta was released some months ago in a free version, everyone assumed that the final release would be commercially priced, but that wasn't the case. Version X 1.2.2 is still free from <www.linotype.com/fontexplorerX> or <http://www.macupdate.com/info.php/id/19514/linotype-fontexplorer-x>.

Evidently expects to make some money from the fact that FontExplorer X incorporates a link to the Linotype store where you can buy more fonts (just as iTunes has a link to the Music Store). Be that as it may, the "store" part of the utility is quite unobtrusive. If you're interested in font management and like a freebie, Linotype FontExplorer X is certainly worth a careful look.

AUSOM News, Melbourne, Australia
Hints & Tips June 2007

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Creating Thin Spaces in MS Word
Word does not include a feature to automatically create "thin spaces." Some people require a space that is narrower (thinner) than the regular space, to place just a small amount of space between items on a line. There are a few workarounds you can use, however.

The first workaround is to use a regular space, and then format that space (and only that space) to a point size smaller than what is used for the surrounding text. This requires some trial and error to get the appearance just as you like it. The drawback to this approach is that if you use justified text, Word for the Mac automatically adjusts the width of the spaces on a line to fit the overall goal of justifying both margins. This, of course, defeats your purpose.

You can also use non-breaking spaces, and then format them to a smaller point size. Non-breaking spaces are not "resized" by Word when justifying text. A final option is to adjust the character spacing before and after the item that you want to include additional space. This does not add a real "thin space," but instead instructs Word to "space out" the items.

This is done by following these steps:

1. Select the item (such as an em dash) together with the space before and after it.
2. Choose the "Font" option from the Format menu. Word displays the Font dialog box.
3. Make sure "Character Spacing" tab is selected.
4. In the Spacing drop-down list, select "Condensed" or "Expanded," depending on your needs.
5. Using the "By" setting to the right of the Spacing drop-down list, indicate in points how much you want spacing condensed or expanded.
6. Click on "OK" to close the dialog box.

Again, this approach may take a bit of trial and error on your part to get the desired effect.

MacWordTips.com
Hints & Tips August 2007

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Copy CDs or DVDs with Apples Disk Utility
OS 10.4's Disk Utility makes it easy to make an exact copy of a CD or DVD that can be stored on a hard drive as a disk image, or burned to a CD or DVD for future use. First, insert the CD or DVD you want to backup into your Mac. Next, drag the icon of the CD or DVD to the Disc Utility application (which is usually stored in the Applications Folder > Utilities Folder.) In other words, drag and drop the CD or DVD icon on top of the Disk Utility icon. (Or, launch Disk Utility, and select the CD in the menu bar at the left margin of the Disk Utility window.)

Disk Utility will launch, and then it will immediately open a window asking you to name the new disk image, and where to save it. Go ahead and save the image to your desktop.

In the Image Format drop-down menu, choose DVD/CD master. This is especially important if you want to burn a copy of the disk, and have it function as an exact clone of original CD or DVD you hope to backup.

Now click "Save." A new disk image will be created on your Desktop, with the extension ".cdr," It may take a few minutes to create this file.

If you click on the disk image, you'll see it works just like a CD or DVD. You can store this new disk image on a hard drive. If you want to burn it to CD or DVD, you should again use Disk Utility. Otherwise, you'll only be burning a copy of the disk image, and not an actual CD or DVD master.

To burn a CD or DVD master, open Disk Utility and look for the disk image of your CD or DVD, on the left side of the window. Usually it's at the bottom of the list of drives. Now, simply select the image, and then click "Burn." Follow the directions to burn the disk.

This is a great way to back up expensive software titles and game titles. Many games that require a disk to run will run off of the disk image – great for traveling.

Doc sez, *you can also easily to this with Roxio's Toast, my favorite tool for copying information to CD/DVD as well as to a disk image*. The details differ slightly, but the doing so is quite intuitive.

Ed Shepard
LIMac Forum, Long Island, NY
Hints & Tips August 2007

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Harry {doc} Babad   That's all, folks…

The Northern Spy

Tinker, Tailor, Leopard, Lawyer

By Rick Sutcliffe - Reprinted with Permission
Technology News and Views Since 1983
November 2007

Apple took the big leap(ard)
on October 26th with the release of System 10.5, boasting, per the
company's own count, the results of their tinkering with and re-tailoring
some 300 spots on the coat (plus some they chose not to count). Fix-em-
updates began the next day. Seems to the Spy that this release will
quadfurcate the user landscape.

At the (self-proclaimed) uber-geek (SPUG) level of the feeding chain,
every new feature will be seized upon, tested, weighed, and criticized. Some
will salivate. Others will sue for breach of promise, calling Apple long on
hype, short on delivery, especially of ballyhooed features so secret they still
haven't been revealed, if they ever were secret, if they ever existed at all.
'Course, core animation will keep programmers busy building new look-and-
feel--if for no other reason than that they can (which is also the answer to
the question "why did you wire your house with Cat 6, Dad?") OTOH, is
Finder really as good as it can get, so polished and finished it doesn't need
any work excepting an unfinished-looking sidebar?

Features to like probably will include screen sharing (via .Mac), spaces
(virtual multiple monitors), time machine (not a conventional backup
program, but does work within Mail, iPhoto, and Address Book) and a
number of badly-needed improvements to the previously wimpy Spotlight.
There are also numerous small interface changes, including improvements to
Help.

One the Spy can't see anyone liking are the transparent menu bar and changes to the dock (stacks). Keep in mind that he rarely uses the dock, because DragThing is so superior a launcher. Iconoclasts like him will also wait till 10.5.1 before trusting Leopard for production environments, and even then he will look for ways to continue running OS9 for some applications like NisusWriter whose X features--sigh--haven't caught up yet. One he might not try for some time is the brand new Mail. Eudora is still good enough, even though its current incarnation is end-of-life. He's also not an iChat person, so that new app leaves him cold, nor would he likely use a speech interface--yet.

At the fanatic loyalist ordinary geek (FLOG) level, a few of the new features will be seized upon and used in ways iSteve never dreamed of. New industries will spawn to supplement those features, old ones whose business was based on attaching similar features to the more scantily-clothed Tiger will die. The latter will sue for the loss of their livelihood. iSteve may not sue the former for thinking outside one of his black boxes, but the next decimal release might well contain poison-pill code that bricks all their innovations. If so, those blocked will also sue.

Regular users of the Mac/gentry ordinaire (RUM-GO) may or may not upgrade, and if they do, might not notice the new features unless they go looking for them. Leopard does not, after all, look and feel radically different under everyday use. People in this group might join the uber-geeks' class action lawsuit, claiming they've been cheated of the upgrade price.

The dwindling un-Macified bandwagon (make your own acronym), with its heavy load of keyboard-stained, ostrich-like wretches still labouring under the limitations of that other operating system will toil on, smugly, blissfully, unproductively unaware of how much they could better themselves by using an Apple OS from, say, two or three versions back. Colour them bored through with a Robertson fastener by their OS and hardware providers. Perhaps they'll sue someone on general principles.

Is 10.5 compelling? Yes, for some of the security improvements, no on many other items taken individually, marginally yes on the overall weight and quality of the new OS. After all, there is far more of substance to this upgrade than your average once-every-seven-years W*nd*ws debacle. In the end mGates' little former company may sue everyone who buys Leopard, claiming misunderstood childhood, unappreciated genius, and besides, that Apple ought to be restrained from making a product so superior that they can't copy it for at least two decades, that their very superiority is therefore monopolistic. Who knows? By the time such a suit could come to court, MS may no longer be viable, the monopoly having indeed gone the other way.

Meanwhile, the iMinions rake in the cash, driving Apples' profits (nearly a billion last quarter, beating all estimates), market share (now around 8% overall, up to 15% in some niches) and stock value (never mind a current number, it goes up too fast) to dizzying new daily heights ($200 within reach despite hiccups in the DJI and the Ybuck). Some 2.1 million Macs sold in a quarter tell us Apple is growing at several times the computer industry average--without even counting iPod, iPhone, and now iOSX10.5 sales. Per Apple's own guidelines, look for next quarter revenues at $9.2B, though the Spy notes iSteve consistently lowballs and repeats his own suggestion that $10B is within reach.

Who was that Michael somebodyorother who said a few years back that Apple should be folded and the investors given their money back? Hands up all those who remember debates over whether iBM ought to buy out Apple with pocket change. Given that iBM has exited the microcomputer industry, apparently for good (a wrong call by the Spy, as long-time readers will recall), and given that Apple's market cap has now surpassed that of Big Blue and iNtel, one could ask today if iSteve might want to buy iBM.

Despite all the ibillions in the bank, the answer has to be a resounding "no." What would he get but a company with almost no relevance to Apple's core business and target audience, an aged star that has fallen and can't get up. Such a merger might serve up delicious irony, but would of course result in everybody suing everybody else over monopolies, ultimately bringing the entire industry to its knees from an inability to pay all the lawyers in the universe at once.

No, if there's anyone iSteve is cozying up to, any company one might speculate about normalizing a "significant other" partnership by tying the formal corporate knot with a stock exchange, it would be Google (the next one up in market cap). In today's market, vertical integration means one division to deliver the e-applications, and another to make hardware of all sizes and price points on which to run those applications. For instance, the pair could team up to produce both their own cellular network and the handset/PDAs to access it. Of course there's no Googlephone. Why would there be when the iPhone is so enticing for co-branding on a Google-operated network?

And, following up on that last thought, it seems clear to all the watchers, rumourmongers and claimants to "inside information" (none of which labels may legitimately be pasted on the Spy) that the Apple hardware lineup sports gaping holes that are standing up and begging iSteve to be filled. The goal must obviously be a seamless range of consumer products from credit-card size to super-computer-on-a-desk tower. Any enterprise market (servers, etc.) is a bonus.

It's equally obvious where the gaps are, and pundits play at filling them with iPod/iPhone-on-steroids cum daughter of Newton PDAs from one end, and subnotebook cub-of-Leopard cat dens on the other. The Spy's take? iSteve will do both, starting by January 2008. (It's probably already too late for Christmas.) Given how he no-sweats the nano stuff, Newton-3 might be the best bet for starters. OTOH, given that Apple's marketshare for notebooks is already in the 15%+ range, the next market prescription may well be to tell Leopard to "take one tablet and leap on it"--giving everybody else's laptop production lines a good long rest.

What is becoming apparent in the chase for marketshare is that Apple has significant upward momentum and W*nd*ws has quite the opposite. By the time Redmond understands why Vista is a turkey, many thanksgivings and two or three new versions of OS X will have come and gone.

Oh, and speaking of members of the board/bored/gored, the Spy notes with more than passing interest that the Nobel committee now gives away statues and money for what zealous UK courts have categorized as political polemic, too one-sided and misleading to be suited for educational purposes. Ah, well. People have either been right for the wrong reasons or wrong for the right reasons before. Happens all the time in tech fields. Perhaps your view of this whole thing depends on whose oxymoron you think is being gored.

But does this mean those same courts will invalidate, say, shrink-wrapped warrantees as convenient falsehoods? OTOH, one could ask why the court of public opinion creates superstars in the first place, only to discard them a few years later on realizing the inconvenience of their aging. As a passing peripherally related thought, does Madonna really think changing record labels will restore her misspent youth? Does anyone think a Nobel implies a presidency or have that other lot got it Clintched? Would the Gates contribute to a run despite the Apple connection? Just wondering about at random. Decisions, decisions.

And, what about those energetic hackers with enough time on their hands to crack the latest iPhone OS iteration? OTOH, what about the Apple developers who made them do it by issuing an upgrade that killed their earlier efforts? We're into the usual finite regression between protectors and hackers that only ends when the former are forced to give in. Yawn. Seen this one before. Spy's sixth law. Wake me when the rerun is over. And, what in turn does this say about those who claim the only reason the Apple OS hasn't been cracked is that it occupies too small a niche to bother? Think of the cracker community bragging-right bling that would attach for producing a MacOS X virus that actually worked.

Speaking of reruns, the latest format war, this between Blu-Ray and HD-DVD appears to be winding down, with Blu-Ray now outselling its rival some two to one in the U.S. Can't colour this one over yet, but it may not be long.

The pitter patter of little feats

The Canadian Copyright Board has decided to tax music downloads (retroactive to January 1996) to support recording artists. This is really going to mess up Apple's iTunes accounting, but government (and their creations) are always (by their own definition) right.

Apple has limited iPhone sales to "no cash, please" and "two per customer" in an effort to squelch the unlockers. Lotsa luck, folks.

FileMakerPro 9 (and possibly earlier versions, but they can't be bothered checking) are apparently incompatible with Leopard. No word on whether one division of Apple will sue the other for failing to communicate across the campus. Whoops. The iLife team did better. Its compatibility updates are already available on the Apple site. Oh BTW, and lest we forget, many other apps are likely to have compatibility problems. This reportedly includes some Adobe products. Buyer beware at times of an OS upgrade, and don't bother suing if you upgrade and some app or utility fails.

Greenpeace is suing Apple over the presence of PVCs and brominated fire retardants in the iPhone, claiming Apple has broken the law by not disclosing hazardous substances on the label.

A company called Digitalreg is suing a batch of others, including Apple, claiming that anyone selling DRM-protected material owes them for a 1998 patent. Wouldn't it be easier to forget about DRM altogether? In the long run it can't work anyway. Spy's six law again. Won't we have fun when quantum computers can decode any copy protection scheme in zero time? Entire cracker-protector wars will flame out in milliseconds, saving the rest of us from the inconvenience of noticing.

Meanwhile, a class action suit has been launched against Apple over the locking of the iPhone, so preventing it from being used on other than the blessed networks that kick back a chunk of the monthly fee to Cupertino. Given recent decisions in related cases, expect the courts to force Apple to sell unlocked phones, or at least to require unlocking once an initial carrier contract expires. Even if this doesn't happen in the United States, it surely will in other countries. Worries that this will adversely affect the bottom line by reducing revenue from exclusivity kickbacks are ill-founded. If Apple sold nothing but unlocked phones, revenue would increase dramatically.

VOIP provider Vonage is being sued by AT&T for patent infringements. Seems AT&T claims patent on the means of using standard telephones to connect over the Internet.

Comwave Telecom Inc. is a Canadian company marketing VOIP products, but all set to be an Apple iobstacle. Seems their products are marketed under the name "iPhone", and they're objecting to upstart Apple using their trade name in Canada.

More lawyer work. Aren't we lucky? Shall we sue cannabis smokers for releasing hazardous substances into the atmosphere? University students for being unprepared for calculus, but taking it anyway? More lucratively, why not sue casino owners and governments for playing on people's stupidity without first telling them they can't win? Indeed, in the Spy's own fiction, it's a capital offence to practice law for money. Perhaps it's an overreaction to create a fictional society where expected behaviour is entirely based on responsibilities and no one mentions rights, but surely our own is deeply flawed by being the other way around.

New Versions Noted in Passing
Drag Thing is now up to version 5.9 and supports Leopard, has a few new effects, themes and small bits of functionality added. As usual, it can be downloaded from the Spy's mirror.)

Smith Micro's venerable file compression utility Stuffit is up to version 12, reportedly with enhanced performance and a new stuffing engine.

Only slightly less venerable file Office 2004 Mac has been updated to 11.3.8 to sort out a security vulnerability in Word. To upgrade use the Microsoft upgrade utility.

A couple of the Mozilla browsers have been bumped a small version, Firefox to 2.0.0.8, and Camino to 1.5.2.

Carbon Copy Cloner has reached 3.0.1. If the Spy didn't already have Retrospect, he might not bother. CCC is terrific.

World Wide Weight
is the subject matter of this month's key book--yet another from perennial top publisher O'Reilly (no, the Spy does not own shares, but at times like this....) This one is High Performance Web Sites--Essential Knowledge for Frontend Engineers, by long-time Yahoo engineer Steve Souders, and its target audience is the tailors of complex and potentially slow-loading web sites.

The book is organized around fourteen rules for decreasing the weight (and therefore the wait) of web sites. Some of the rules--reduce the number of HTTP requests/DNS lookups/redirects, use external scripts and stylesheets, employ compression, and cache frequently loaded pages (by using an expire header)---could have significant benefits for almost any web site's loading time. On the other hand employing content delivery systems to parallel HTTP requests is only applicable to large sites loading heavy content.

Rules such as removing duplicate scripts are more along the line of debugging. Avoiding CSS expressions and configuring ETags constitute advice to the too-sophisticated who are trying things that don't work. Suggesting one put stylesheets at the top is either in this category or is preaching to the converted, as few do otherwise. By contrast, putting scripts at the bottom has mixed benefits--yes, scripts block other downloads, but many pages depend on script execution to render correctly, and they therefore belong at the top (i.e. Your kilometerage will vary on this one.) Finally, the practice of minifying or obfuscating scripts can certainly reduce load size and time, but it's only worth taking the trouble after the site code is rock stable and unlikely to be changed.

The book comes complete with plenty of examples and assessments of major sites against the proffered advice. The YSlow tool the author has developed is publicly available from Yahoo as a FireBug addon to check compliance of any site with his "rules", making the material instantly accessible and useable--something any book should offer these days.

This is a good one. Anyone concerned with web site performance needs to read, understand, and implement as applicable--this particularly so if the site in question is a weighty one (lots of graphics, scripts, and dynamic activity.) And yes, it does apply to Ajaxified sites as well. Give this one an A+.

--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

Apple OS X1 11.5: http://www.apple.com/macosx/features/300.html

YSlow: http://developer.yahoo.com/yslow/

Drag Thing: http://www.dragthing.com/

Stuffit: http://www.stuffit.com/mac/index.html

Mozilla: http://www.mozilla.com/

Carbon Copy Cloner: http://www.bombich.com/software/ccc.html

SpinTips Series

Creating a Successful Mac Product

By Ed Prasek - Reprinted with permission
http://www.spin-studio.com/spintips1.html

For nearly as long as there's been the Macintosh, developers have worked to figure out the magic recipe for creating a fantastic Mac application, one that's loved by users around the world, recognized as a staple of the Mac platform, and which enjoys the respect and admiration of Apple itself. And if said product makes it into retail and generates a ton a revenue in process, life can't get much better.

During my 10 years at Apple as part of its Worldwide Developer Relations organization, among the most frequently asked questions I received from developers was some variation of, "What do I have to do to create a really compelling application?" or "What kind of application does Apple view as really compelling?" Of course, these developers weren't asking me for engineering assistance … not if they knew better, anyway. What they were really asking about dealt with the business strategies behind the creation of a great application.

Needless to say, there is no one magic answer or tip I or anyone else could give them, because it simply doesn't exist. Rather, there are a variety of strategic and tactical tips that span the development of a Mac application, its entry into the world of distribution and retail, and the way it's marketed to potential customers around the world.

With that said, welcome to SpinTips. SpinTips is a series of delves into the depths of product/application management, distribution & retail, and marketing/go-to-market initiatives from the strategic business side of the fence.

Here then is the first piece in the series, *Creating a Successful Mac Application*. These are 10 strategic and tactical tips developers might want to take into account when creating a really great Mac application. Of course, these are just tips … implementation of these tips will vary from one developer to another, and from one type of product/application to another. That said, here we go; …

1 First and foremost, with very, very rare exception, don't create products that compete with Apple products or upset Apple's product strategy. More times than I can seem to remember, I've seen developers create products intended to circumvent Apple's product strategy, and then fail to understand why Apple doesn't want to build a strategic relationship with them. If you want to successfully work with Apple, you cannot create products that work against its strategies. Oh, we won't get into the very, very rare exceptions I mentioned above, because they don't apply to 99.9% of Mac developers.

2 On the other side of that same coin, third-party products should complement Apple products, even bringing out the strengths of those products. Doing so creates a strong "solution" story for customers, and for Apple as well. It also creates a strong solution story for your product. Apple will be far more willing to pay attention to, and promote, products that make already great Apple products even better. For example, great earphones for iPod, professional themes especially for Keynote, etc.

3 Pay close attention to Apple's market segment movements and strategies, and then create innovative, well-designed products that fill consumer needs in those market segments. As it currently stands, Apple's strategic markets include design, film & video, photography, music & audio, education, small business, IT pro, science, iPod, and iPhone.

4 Products should always employ an interface that's in line with Apple's user interface best practices guidelines. Apple has taken considerable measures to ensure a clean, elegant, uniform interface experience for Mac users. Nothing upsets the applecart—no pun intended—more than requiring users to learn a whole new interface layout.

5 Products should be as simple and intuitive to use as possible. To a large degree, there's a very good reason why Apple products either don't come with manuals, or boast only very small manuals: they don't need them. If consumers have to rely—and that's the keyword here: rely—on a manual to find their way around your application, or figure out how to use it, you've lost them.

6 Products should target the proper customer audience. More often than you might think, developers create and distribute products they intend for one particular market segment, but which serve the needs of a different market segment altogether. Over the years I've had countless meetings with developers where they would enthusiastically demonstrate their latest wares, and tell me how much their target market segment was going to benefit from it. The problem was that somewhere along the way, their development process veered off from creating a product for the market segment they intended, and instead resulted in one that

served a completely different segment. And since the developer was so close to the product, they couldn't by themselves see what had happened until it was very clearly pointed out to them. Such products are nearly guaranteed to result in marketplace failure.

Always, always, always—and I can't emphasize that enough—make use of the Mac logo and Mac OS X Universal badge on your product packaging and collaterals (as permitted by Apple's licensing agreement, of course). No other visual validators are as important when it comes to letting potential customers quickly know your product will run on their Mac systems.

Make sure your applications employ the latest Apple technologies. For example, every Mac application you develop and release should be built with Xcode and be Mac OS X Universal-compatible. Always make sure the technologies used in your applications are in line with Apple's technology strategy.

When it comes to updating your products, for as great as backward compatibility is, there comes a point when you have to move your installed base forward by updating your products to run on the latest (or upcoming) version of the Mac OS. To stay "locked in the past" for too long means you'll be forgotten about like yesterday's leftovers, both by customers and by Apple itself. After all, how much do you think anyone pays attention to Mac OS 9 products any more? And believe me, there are still some of them out there. Heck, how much do you think anyone pays attention to Mac OS X 10.2 product anymore?

Don't try to create an application that's supposed to be all things to all people. Such a feat is practically impossible, results in a nearly unusable application, is the epitome of bloatware, and is impossible to effectively market. It's never good to be a jack-of-all-trades-and-master-of-nothing, especially when it comes to creating consumer products. Rather, make sure your application has one main purpose, and that its features and capabilities are superbly implemented and focused exclusively on letting your customers attain that purpose.

Let Spin Studio Take Care Of It At Spin Studio, we're Mac industry experts and highly experienced at helping developers navigate these issues and much, much more -- bring us in to assist with your strategic business needs. Spin Studio applies its highly creative and innovative experience in marketing, business management, design, product development, and more, to successfully deliver unparalleled results to both developers and companies within the Mac industry, as well as assist clients with the creation, launch, and management of exciting new products. Contact us today to discuss how we can assist with your strategic marketing and business needs.

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ONPOINTCONSULTING

Closing the Gap Between Strategy and Execution

Taking It to the Top: Seven Ways Top-Performing Companies Get Ahead of the Pack…and Stay There

*Becoming a top performer means a) adopting proven leader behaviors and
b) creating the right organizational structure and systems.
Here are some simple steps for achieving both.*

By Richard Lepsinger   - Reprinted with permission

All leaders want to be part of a top-performing company. All employees do, too. And partners and customers seek out businesses that are at the top of their game, as well. It's natural to want to spend our working hours engaged with dynamic organizations that flourish, not struggling ones that flounder. But have you ever wondered what *makes* a company a top performer? I have—and when my company did a research study on a related subject, we discovered some surprising answers.

Our research on how top-performing companies prepare for and manage change and what they do to ensure they are able to execute plans and strategies effectively reveals some interesting similarities and differences between the most and least successful companies.

First, the similarities between the two groups are striking. Companies in both categories can point to visions that employees believe are clear and strategies that are perceived to be realistic. They have employees who understand that the "customer is king" and who are engaged and have the skills required to do their jobs.

What, then, differentiates the very best companies from those that are less successful? Top-performing companies are characterized by cultures that are flexible, adaptive, participative, and innovative—and they operationalize these cultural attributes through leader behavior and organizational structure and systems.

Leader Behavior: Four Ways to Lead Your Company into "Top-Performer" Territory

Leaders in top-performing companies are capable in four areas—managing paradoxes, leading change, participative leadership, and leading by example.

If you're a leader, you need to ensure that you're comfortable in all four areas. If you're a CEO, make sure all your leaders meet the following criteria:

• **Get comfortable with managing paradoxes.** Leaders in top-performing companies are better at finding the right balance between what appears to be mutually exclusive outcomes: achieving short- and long-term goals, establishing control and providing autonomy, ensuring stability and managing change, and keeping costs low and quality high while growing the business. They are also better able to manage the sometimes contradictory needs of customers, employees, and stockholders/owners.

• **Understand (and use) the five magic keys to managing change.** OnPoint's research identifies five behaviors that enhance the ability to lead and manage change effectively:

Be forthright about the change and its impact. Sixty-four percent of the 655 participants in OnPoint's survey said that open and honest communication from leaders, even when they don't have all the answers, would make change easier. People want leaders to be accessible and to engage in "change talk." What is change talk? It's an open discussion of the pros and cons of making the change or maintaining the status quo, and of the behaviors required to support the change and boost people's confidence in their ability to transition successfully to the new way of doing things.

Model behaviors that support the change. It is not enough to just say the right thing or even enthusiastically communicate the benefits and the business case for the change. Employees want to see those words backed up with behavior. That is how they judge how effectively someone is leading and managing a change.

Set realistic objectives and milestones. As employees reach realistic goals and milestones, they become more positive about the change and will see its benefits. Targeting unattainable goals will frustrate and demoralize employees during the first few critical months, and the time and energy you've spent preparing for the change will have been a waste.

Don't underestimate the resources required. The over commitment of existing resources or underestimating what it takes to accomplish objectives is a primary cause of change initiatives' failing to meet their intended outcomes. Keep in mind that your employees have commitments to annual performance goals in addition to the work they need to do to make the change a success.

Maintain enthusiasm and excitement among your employees. During the first month of a change, managers meet with employees to get their support. After the first month, though, those managers return to their day-to-day jobs, and employees can lose focus. Leaders need to model behaviors that support the change for the *duration* of the initiative, not just at the kickoff.

• **Involve team members in the decisions that affect them.** Participative leadership matters. In 2006 the NBA introduced a new basketball and never asked the players for input while it was in development. As a result, the players refused to use a new ball they felt was difficult to handle.

Involving the players early on would have increased the quality of the ball *and* the acceptance of the "new ball" decision.

Employees should be involved in critical decisions that affect them, and they should be able to freely share their thoughts and concerns. It gives employees a sense of ownership and nothing truly great can occur in the absence of that.

• **Lead by example.** Leaders in top-performing companies understand that people will not trust or follow them if they are not willing to live by the same values and support the same priorities they require of others. Take, for example, two contrasting approaches to the "leadership by example" factor: Donald Carty, former president of American Airlines who offered gigantic "stay bonuses" to senior executives after asking employees to take significant pay and benefits cuts, and Carlos Ghosn, CEO of Nissan, who, when he took over the floundering company in 1999, pledged to step down if Nissan failed to show a profit in 2000. Carty lost credibility and had to step down, while Ghosn is celebrated as a "master of execution" and a "turnaround artist."

Structure and Systems: Three Ways to Change Yours for the Better

Of course, having the best leaders in the world won't matter if your organization isn't set up in a way that allows them to use their skills. As our research revealed, your corporate structure and operational systems are just as important as your leader's behavior.

Here are some goals to shoot for:

• **Strike a *proper balance of centralized and decentralized responsibility* and ensure that people at all levels have the freedom to take action to achieve results.** This improves responsiveness and allows issues to be managed right where they happen.

When Mark Hurd took over as CEO of Hewlett-Packard, he understood that the key to success was to make the Compaq acquisition work. He did just that when he reorganized the company into three divisions, with each division having its own sales force, making the heads of the divisions responsible for sales. He also reorganized the IT function. Instead of having eighty-five data centers, he centralized them into three. Essentially, he decentralized the sales force and centralized the IT function of the company. This is the opposite of the way the company was organized before, and it ensured the organizational structure would be better aligned with the business strategy. One measure of HP's success is that operating profit increased during 2006 by 31 percent.

• **Excel at *coordinating decisions and actions across organizational boundaries*.** In 2006 Ford demonstrated how difficult this is. When the company decided to update the Ford Focus the North American operation wanted to simply refresh the existing model, while the European operation wanted to develop a new version of the model. The two groups couldn't come to an agreement, so they each did what they wanted to do. The North American group updated the existing model, and the European group developed a new model. As a result, Ford couldn't share parts or take advantage of economies of scale and it cost the company money.

• **Ensure that** *systems are aligned with strategic initiatives*. For example, if your strategy calls for "innovation," does the organization have systems in place to facilitate organizational learning and creative thinking? To encourage innovation, a company needs a mechanism to screen and fund these ideas.

Individuals shouldn't have to struggle to find support and resources to help develop their ideas. People frequently cite the efforts of Art Fry and Spencer Silver, the 3M employees who invented Post-Its, as a shining success story of personal initiative and perseverance. We would ask, "Why did those guys have to work so hard? Wouldn't it have been better for everyone if a support system had been in place?"

The bottom line? Being a top-performing company is a rigorous challenge—one not for the faint of heart. Indeed, recent events at Dell, Motorola, and Chrysler illustrate how difficult it is to execute effectively and maintain top performance year after year. Still, the results are worth the effort.

Becoming a top performer requires constant attention to the differentiating factors discussed above and a willingness to review and continuously improve products, services, and the business model itself. But the alternative is settling for mediocrity, and in a global economy mediocrity is the kiss of death. After you claw your way to the head of the pack, and after you realize how much fun you and your employees are having, you'll be glad you didn't settle.

# # #

About OnPoint Consulting:

OnPoint Consulting is an organizational and leadership consulting firm that specializes in helping companies close the gap between the creation and communication of their vision and strategy and the achievement of their business objectives.

OnPoint combines practical, research-based tools and models, state-of-the-art business simulations, action learning, and in-depth experience across industries to deliver high-quality and high-impact leadership and organizational development initiatives. OnPoint's solutions are designed to reflect each client's organizational culture and business environment.

OnPoint's organizational assessments provide practical, actionable data to help drive execution and enhance organizational performance. The firm provides value-added analysis and interpretation, along with customized approaches to help its clients translate issues into action.

For more information, please visit http://www.onpointconsultingllc.com

Views from the Ivory Tower - November 2007

By Ted Bade

I always thought Macs were gold, but... - This news event really made me chuckle. As you know, some people love their Macs so much that they modify the Macs exterior to reflect their personalities and artistic feelings. This is known as "Modding" the Mac. Somebody took this to the extreme by giving their MacBook Pro a real 24 caret gold exterior! Take a look at this blog that shows some images of the gold-modded Mac! Wow, I would love to have that one myself!

http://technabob.com/blog/2007/10/05/gold-macbook-pro-finished-looks-amazing/

Personalizing a computer was unheard of until Apple came out with this new machine called the iMac! Since then, the flood gates have been opened. People who just want to use a computer in their home or for fun have ever since added personal touches to their machines. When the iMac first came out, I recall being truly stunned by a woman who was all too willing to pay extra for a color coordinated USB hub (an almost Bondi Blue one) and another who told me that she just loved the way the iMac fit into the color scheme of her study!

However, this gold-plated MacBook Pro takes the all time cake! I hope the owner has an opportunity to enjoy the golden interface of Mac OS X as well as enjoy the machines new exterior!

Apple adopting the ZFS filesystem? - Rumors have been flying and now partially confirmed, Apple will be implementing the ZFS file system into Mac OS X. When I first heard this, like most Mac Users I said, "What is it?" So I did a little research on it.

The ZFS filesystem is a system developed by Sun Microsystems to handle a LOT of data very efficiently. The acronym once meant zettabyte file system, but like so many acronyms, it had become the term. (Does it annoy you when someone says VIN number? ☺).

In any case, a zettabyte is a very large number. People comfortable with scientific numbering systems will recognize it as 10^{21} or 2^{70}. For non-math people, it is as many time larger then the terabyte as the terabyte is larger then the kilobyte. Many many times more data!

I found a short article that explain a little about what the ZFS file system is all about in the MacDailyNews site. http://macdailynews.com/index.php/weblog/comments/15155/

 You can also see the Wikipedia entry for additional information on the ZFS file system.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ZFS

Essentially this system looks at the hard drives connected to a computer as a pool of storage. It then makes use of this pool as it sees fit, organizing files and backups of these files. If you insert a new drive into the system it will automatically incorporate it and when you need to remove a drive it shifts data around to empty the one leaving. The system apparently works fast even when dealing with large bundles of data and incorporates features that keep the disk and the data healthy. Which means no data loss.

I guess that Apple's new feature, Time Machine, makes use of aspects of the ZFS file system. I expect that we will see more of it in the future. I expect that it will be a real benefit for people working with video, as well as people who collect large numbers of songs and photos, or just about any other type of data.

Apple grows to #3 PC sales position - In a recent article carried on electronista they pointed out that Apple has ranked in the number three position for PC sales. Dell and HP are the two retailers ahead of Apple. Take a look at their article, it is informative.

http://www.electronista.com/articles/07/10/17/idc.pc.share.est.fall.2007/

The fact that Apple is ranking well compared to other PC manufacturers is good news for Mac fans. While the Mac isn't yet the most popular computer, it is definitely moving up. People are buying and enjoying their Macs, which is good news for any dedicated Mac user!

A new Cat - Finally, in late October, Apple released Mac OS X 10.5. (I have to poke fun at myself for saying that. If I was using Windows it would seem like it was released years before it was expected!) Apple released many new features in this OS, most of them are things I really expect to enjoy and value. You can take a video tour of the major items and read to your hearts content about it by visiting Apple's Mac OS X web area, but there is nothing like trying it for yourself.

http://www.apple.com/macosx/guidedtour/

During the week before its release the MacNewsNetwork reported that several value added retailers said that the pre-orders of Leopard have exceeded that of Tiger.

http://www.macnn.com/articles/07/10/22/105.orders.double.104/

As reported by an article on the CRN site. Reasons for this increase are said to be due to the length of time since the last release of Mac OS X, new features, and users dissatisfaction with Windows Vista.

http://www.crn.com/software/202404408

As with every version of MacOS ever released, there are many features that are not explained to users. This is either because they are relatively insignificant or significant to only a certain sub group of users. Some features are in the OS but are not turned on, so you need to either run a Terminal session or a helper application to make them work. In any case, there are usually many articles written by testers that bring some of them to light. One such article I found documents 16 interesting features of Mac OS X 10.5 that Apple didn't bring to light. Take a look at the article, you might find a few that will make your life easier.

<http://sitening.com/blog/2007/10/16/16-coolest-new-features-in-mac-os-x-105-that-you-didnt-know-about/>

There are going to be several articles on Leopard. We will share a few here and comment next month.

One gotcha associated with Leopard is that BootCamp, which has been a beta version since its release, will expire at the end of October. Which means those users that take advantage of BootCamp to satisfy their needs to run Windows only applications will definitely need to upgrade to Mac OS X 10.5.

Here are some of the features I expect will benefit the way I use my Macintosh;

Stacks - One of the earliest tricks I learned with Mac OS X was to place a folder full of items I wanted easy access to, on the Dock. Using the right-click and hold of a two button mouse will open a list showing the contents of this folder. The stacks feature does this for you with a lot more flair. Items downloaded via the Internet no longer clutter the desktop, but are placed in a stack folder are can easily be accessed by mousing over the stack icon on the dock. Depending upon the number of items in the stack folder you get an arc of icons (for a few items) or a grid for a larger number of items.

Like a lot of users, I download to the desktop for several reasons. By always going to the same place, I don't have to wonder where the item went. The desktop is also very accessible. While its real folder might be several layers down on the hard drive, it is right in your face when you use the Finder! However, another reason I use the desktop is as a reminder. An icon on the desktop means there is something I need to attend to. I am hoping that the Stacks feature will still allow me to use the icon in your face reminder system and organize my desktop better. I have some stunning astronomy images I use for desktop backgrounds and I just hate it when a generic icon covers something interesting!

QuickView - This is a really hot feature that lets the user inspect the contents of a file without running the application that created it. It is handy in the way that Dashboard is handy. When you need a quick look at a document to see if is the one you really want to open and work with or to quickly check some information. However I find it humorous that in a time when memory is cheap and computers are powerful enough so that one could run almost every application they own at the same time, Apple comes up with a system that makes it so you don't have to do this!

Coverflow for the Finder - This is really eye candy, but I happen to like the Coverflow view. Just like the iTunes feature, using this method in the finder, you flow through the icons of items in the folder you are viewing. You can even access the file's contents without using the creation application for those items that QuickLook can handle. This is a really handy feature. I often spend a lot of time trying to find a specific image after I download from my camera. (Yes, I know it is probably heresy that I don't download directly into iPhoto, but I have my reasons). With Coverflow, I can now flow through the images in the folder, and even look at them to find the one I want to work with. This would work for PDFs, movies, documents, and many other file types.

Time Machine - This feature, coupled with an external hard drive to back up stuff, gives the user the ability to "go back in time" and recover a file that was accidentally deleted. Of course this means that one needs to have a backup drive running all the time and if you typically download or create and delete a lot of files, storage might become an issue. But I am sure Apple has provided a means of honing this feature so that it works well with any user. It is one of those things that will benefit the average user a lot. Time machine also works from within an application providing the ability to go back to an earlier version of a document.

Spaces - I know I have spoken of this one before. I love using this feature on the UNIX boxes that I work with. Essentially it is a way to organize the applications you are running in separate spaces so that they don't get in the way of each other. For instance, you can open your web creation tools in one space, and your browsers in another. When you create a page, flip to the browser space and view what you created, then back to the editor space to make changes. It is really a lot more efficient then moving windows around. If you have mail open, it can be in another space, so it doesn't get in the way, but when you want to check mail, you just jump to that space.

I find it a lot easier to do my work when it is organized into spaces. In the current version of Mac OS X, I hide any application I am not currently working in, and use the command-tab feature to jump back and forth, but doing this unhides them. I really think Spaces will make working on a Macintosh a lot easier.

Apple's Mail program seems to have a lot of improvements. So many in fact that I have actually decided to try it. I have to admit that I am fond of Microsoft's Entourage and believe that it has done a really good job for me. But after the last couple of demos I have seen with Mail, I am ready to convert. Well, at least, give it a try. I might even do a review of Mail right here in *macCompanion* land!

One very interesting aspect of Mail is called data detectors. It is a feature that understands data type and makes it really easy to select it and store it in an application that makes use of it. For instance a Phone number or address. With a quick click Mac OS X recognizes it as such and gives the user the option to move the data into address book. It can also recognize an event and let you transfer the event from the email into iCal. Pretty slick.

iChat has some newer features. First of all you can apply several different the eye candy effects such as distorting the image, coloring the background, changing the background to be a specific image, and so forth. This is fun stuff but not necessarily important. More importantly is iChat's ability to allow the remote user to interact with you by being able to share your iPhoto libraries, presentations and most importantly the Finder itself. I think the sharing feature will be really cool. Instead of sending those vacation images, you can share them with a friend over the Internet. Also being able to work on a document or a presentation with another remote person is a feature many will enjoy. As a person who spend time helping other people figure out how to get their Macs to do something, the ability to share their Finder will be a nice feature. Of course, I see a lot of potential for not so nice event based on these abilities. If anyone ever wanted to write some nasty code for a Mac, being able to access the Finder would be one way to do a lot of damage! I expect Apple has implemented a lot of security with this and it probably requires a password based confirmation from the user whose Finder is being shared.

Apple financial information - At the end of October Apple posted it's fourth quarter financial results and they were once again pretty good. They reported a $6.22 billion and net quarterly profit of $904 million. (When compared to the previous quarter of .84 billion and net quarterly profit of $542 million, this is a good increase).

Apple shipped out 2,164,000 Macs, representing 34 percent growth from the same quarter last year and exceeding the previous quarterly record for Mac shipments by 400,000. They also sold 10,200,000 iPods during the quarter, representing 17 percent growth over the year-ago quarter. Quarterly iPhone sales were 1,119,000, bringing cumulative fiscal 2007 sales to 1,389,000. (Even with all the complaints about the price drop)

"Apple ended the fiscal year with $15.4 billion in cash and no debt," said Peter Oppenheimer, Apple's CFO. (see Apple's financial letter on their web site. (With that much cash, it's no wonder anyone with a lawyer wants to sue them!)

http://www.apple.com/pr/library/2007/10/22results.html

Their stock also went up almost $4 per share after this announcement. (although to put it in perspective, it has been jumping up and down by $2 to $3 every day or so for the last couple of weeks.) At the close of the day on October 22nd, it was prices at $174.36. Pretty nice Apple. Right before the release of Leopard it jumped almost $12/share, Wow!

Personally, I am very happy to hear about the growth of Mac sales. While some of those numbers are people replacing older Macs, I am certain some of that growth represents new people coming to the Macintosh platform.

As always, keep on using your Mac!
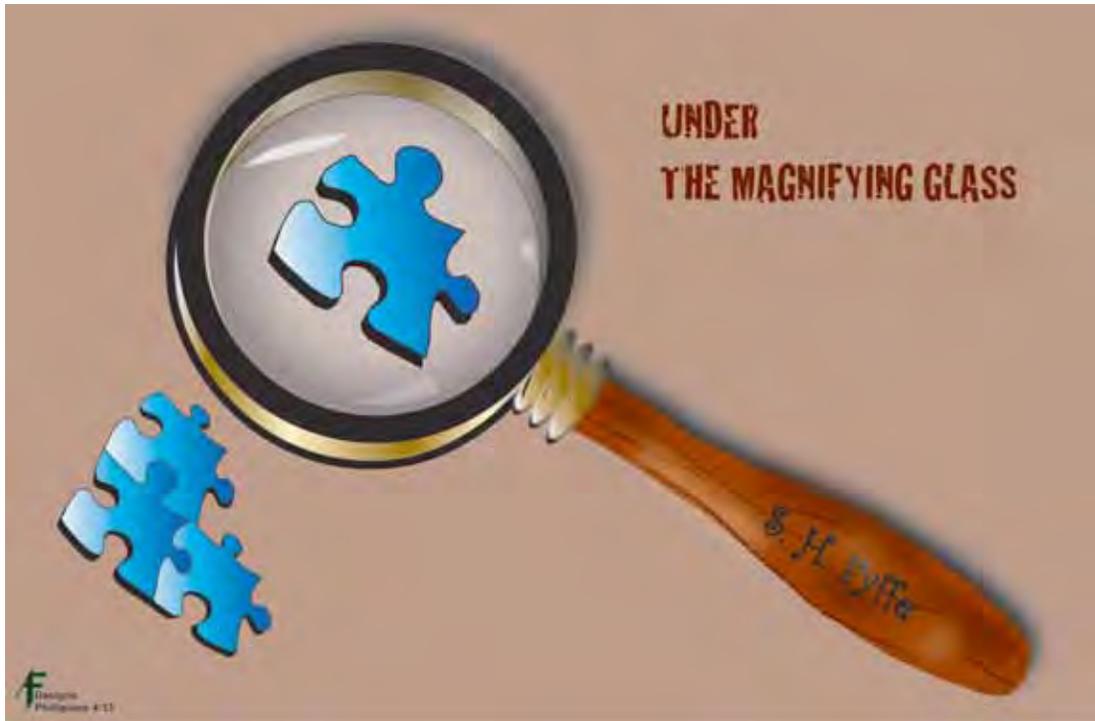
Under the Magnifying Glass
The Magic of Qualifier Keys
By Steven H. Fyffe
sfyffe@maccompanion.com

During *The Adventure of Black Peter,* in a rather whimsical moment, Sherlock Holmes said, " I have investigated many crimes, but I have never yet seen one which was committed by a flying creature". (1)

"Why in the world would I want to do that?" That was likely your first thought after completing your first "guided discovery" (2) assignment in last month's column (3).

What? You haven't done your assignment? Stop now. Click on Reference link #3 (below) and try the assignment for yourself ... don't worry, I'll be here when you get back. I need to finish my coffee anyway ... the finger tapping sound you hear is just me sitting here waiting.

Back already? Great! You have now discovered that holding the Shift key, while resizing a Quick Time window, allowed you to change the movie's aspect ratio.

The Shift key altered the function of another key or action. Thus, it became a Qualifier key. Wasn't that fascinating?

Tavern patron: A toast to the greatest detective in all the world.

Holmes: Thank you, gentlemen. I am touched.

Watson: I can vouch for that! (4)

OK, perhaps not, but I did warn you that we are discussing "trifles." You've got to admit that it was fun, was it not? Anyway, enough with the belly laughs. I promise, you will remember the short cut to change the aspect ratio of a Quick Time movie, if you have a sudden urge to do so.

Why don't you sit back now? Let's discuss together what we have discovered in our inductive exercise. Although many have a long experience with Qualifier Keys, perhaps you have not systematically investigated their power. You may have often heard or read short cut tips. Maybe, you have even tried them out for yourself. Why not set a goal to discover the power of Qualifier keys in both the Operating System and in third party applications? Hey, I think "Under the Magnifying Glass" will do just that ... after all isn't that what inductive learning is all about.

In fact, we have already started on our great detective journey together. We discovered one of the oldest know Qualifier Keys, the Shift key.

"I take a short cut when I can get it." Sherlock Holmes in *The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez* (5)

The Shift key predates computers, going back to the time of typewriters (6). Indeed, it has remained in the same basic location on the keyboard for over 150 years. When a rifle manufacturer, named Remington, decided to go into the type writing machine business (7), there was a need for a change from lower to upper case letters. Thus, the birth of the Shift key.

Case Shift Key >>>

Now, I challenge you to another inductive adventure. Here are a few more "guided discovery" (2) assignments to try...

1. Click on any folder. Now, in the Finder menu click on File. In the drop down menu, you will see an option called "Add to Sidebar". With the menu still open, now press and hold the Shift key. What change do you observe? Try out both options, to have easier access to you folder.

2. Now, let's explore a little deeper into the Operating System. Click on the Apple logo in the upper left corner of the Desktop, then select System Preferences, and choose Dashboard & Exposé. Notice the boxes under "Active Screen Corners". Click on the blue drop down option menu. Now hold down the Shift key. What happened? This is how to create a "hot corner" with the Shift qualifier. For example, you could set the lower left corner for the Screen Saver. Without the qualifier, every time your cursor ventures there, the Screen Saver starts, whether you intended to do so, or not. With the qualifier key, all you need to do is click the qualifier and then move your mouse cursor to the corner ... no more accidental Exposé moments. For even greater fuzzy feelings, instead of the Shift key as your qualifier you could use the Ctrl (Control) or Command (Apple) keys.

3. Some applications combine various Qualifier keys into Keyboard shortcuts. Try this while you are on the Desktop and Finder appears in the upper left corner of the Tool Bar, next to the Apple logo. Click the Shift, Command, and C key, at the same time. Now do the same with Shift-Command-A and Shift-Command-U. What did you discover?

4. By the way, in TextEdit, Pages, and other text entry boxes, what happens when you are typing and press the Shift key. WOW, the invention (8) of an Upper/Lower Case Shift qualifier was a cool idea!

How many other uses of the Shift, Control, and Command Qualifier keys can you discover?

This week, Jared went with grandma and Papa to the park. What would appear as a puddle of muddy water in the parking lot to an adult, Jared saw a great sea for adventure. He hopped and ran. He found a stick to splash and create waves. He investigated the tire tracks leading away from the muddy puddle. Oh the joy of it all. The muddy water made it all the more of an adventure. Grandma and Papa could not stop laughing at him as he explored the possibilities of his muddy puddle.

Please come back again next month as we look at our Macs in a whole new light ... putting the trifles "Under the Magnifying Glass". It will be fun, but don't be concerned if your trousers get a little muddy. Thanks for dropping by.

Reference Links:

1. http://www.bcpl.net/~lmoskowi/HolmesQuotes/q.detection.html
2. http://eltj.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/52/1/88.pdf
3. Under the Magnifying Glass - Observation of Trifles =
4.   http://www.maccompanion.com/macc/archives/October2007/Columns/UMG.htm

5. Without a Clue (1988 movie) = http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0096454/quotes
6. http://www.bcpl.net/~lmoskowi/HolmesQuotes/q.Holmes.html
7. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Typewriter
8. http://abaris.rider.edu/special_collections/typewriters/T-001.jpg
9. http://www.freepatentsonline.com/4204780.html

![Books]

Fonts & Encodings: From Unicode to Advanced Typography and Everything in Between

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

O'REILLY®

Author: Yannis Haralambous
Translated by P. Scott Horne

O'Reilly
http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/9780596102425/index.html
$60 USD, $72 CND
Released: September, 2007
Pages: 1,307
ISBN: 1-0596-10242-9
ISBN-13: 978-0-596-10242-5
Requirements: A desire to learn about the nuts and bolts of typography.

Strengths: Shows how the magic is made in digitizing print to pages and the Internet.

Weaknesses: One or two typos related to either the editor or translation.

Introduction

This reference is a fascinating and complete guide to using fonts and typography on the Web and across a variety of operating systems and application software. *Fonts & Encodings* shows you how to take full advantage of the incredible number of typographic options available, with advanced material that covers everything from designing glyphs to developing software that creates and processes fonts.

The era of ASCII characters on green screens is long gone, and industry leaders such as Apple, HP, IBM, Microsoft, and Oracle have adopted the Unicode Worldwide Character Standard. Yet, many software applications and web sites still use a host of standards, including PostScript, TrueType, TeX/Omega, SVG, Fontlab, FontForge, Metafont, Panose, and OpenType. This book explores each option in depth, and provides background behind the processes that comprise today's "digital space for writing":
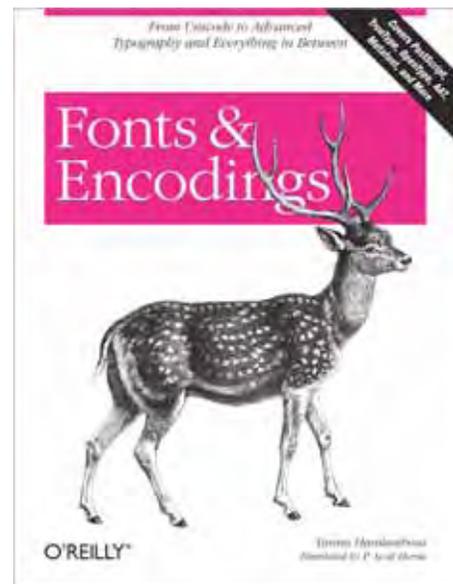
- Part I introduces Unicode, with a brief history of codes and encodings including ASCII. Learn about the morass of the data that accompanies each Unicode character, and how Unicode deals with normalization, the bidirectional algorithm, and the handling of East Asian characters.
- Part II discusses font management, including installation, tools for activation/deactivation, and font choices for three different systems: Windows, the Mac OS, and the X Window System (Unix).
- Part III deals with the technical use of fonts in two specific cases: the TeX typesetting system (and its successor, W, which the author co-developed) and web pages.
- Part IV describes methods for classifying fonts: Vox, Alessandrini, and Panose-1, which is used by Windows and the CSS standard. Learn about existing tools for creating (or modifying) fonts, including FontLab and FontForge, and become familiar with OpenType properties and AAT fonts.

What I Learned

I had no idea that getting an image of a letter was so complicated and math-intensive when moving it from the keyboard to the screen, nor did I realize how many different languages still need to be programmed into Unicode. I loved the comment that "ink is the liquid of wisdom".

At first we are introduced to printing history and how fonts developed over the centuries. That information is balanced with modern-day coding and algorithms and visuals of the progress from ancient to modern.

My readings brought me to this website - http://www.ethnologue.com and I discovered that there are no less than 6, 912 living languages, each with their own idiosyncrasies and special glyphs.

I also found that the Unicoders have a long, long way to go to capture the various symbols used on planet earth for communications. I don't think we will get to a universal translator until we have gotten all the languages captured first.

The author laments that his ancestral language was not represented entirely (Greek print parts and pieces) and then he shows how the Unicode system has advanced over time to its present condition where improvements have been and can be made. I really did not realize until towards the end of the book that the author originally wrote this book in French and that explains some of the fun sentences and print samples.

The author is also obviously very cognizant of how fonts are treated with Mac OS 9 and Mac OS X and dedicated quite a few pages to the topic. He also demonstrated his command of Windows, Linux and other Unix variants and how they each treat "print". Yannis also points to some excellent font apps and tools for editing and creating fonts before showing how to enrich fonts with advanced typography.

The Appendices make up nearly half of the book with font format treatments with the final section discussing Bézier curves. But I have to think that the printing press ran out of paper before he could finish the book, because there is no "conclusion" or any treatment of the future. Perhaps there will be a sequel if this book is accepted and becomes a "best-seller".

Fonts and Encodings looks like a labor of love by someone who really enjoys his work. Since Yannis runs a company that specializes in high-quality typesetting, I think he found an outlet for his frustration and he shows how typographical challenges can be overcome.

Conclusion

If you have even the most remote interest in typography and want to look at the incredible nuts and bolts behind this fascinating technology, this book really is the reference to come to.

Recommendation

Yes, this book does indeed put the pieces of the typographical and font puzzle together. Why not grab a copy and see for yourself. After all, a lot of minds spent a lot of time and effort down through the centuries so you could read this legibly and in your own language. Now you can read about how they did it and are still doing it today.

iPod and iTunes for Dummies (4th Edition)

Reviewed by Dr. Eric Flescher

Authors: Tony Bove and Cheryl Rhodes
Publisher: Wiley
Released: October 2006 (there is a 5th edition)
 Pages: 432
 $ 22 USD, $ 15 CND, 15 GBP
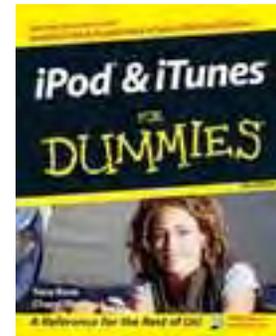
 Strengths: Good breadth and depth of information. Solid basics about the iPod and iTunes and covers different generational information about the iPod even video. Last section is most useful for intermediate to advanced users but possibly before chapter 16 as   well.

Weaknesses: Black and white. Music Match, working with your iPod music library is for PC windows (only).

 Novice/Intermediate/Advanced

Introduction

The iPod has ushered a revolution into the music world with its computer music presence. Together the iPod and its popular software, iTunes are listened by many music lovers, that use PC and Macs. It is nice to know that this software and hardware are now available for both PC and Mac users but also has has expanded from just audio but now includes video. To assist with the learning for all users is the nicely updated book iPod and iTunes for Dummies (4th Edition).

The authors have written books related to computing, desktop publishing and multimedia. In addition, Tony is a composer and touring musician. So I decided to check out the book for an in-depth look at the mp3 player and the software. In addition, since I don't play music, I wanted to find out what Tony could teach me about music that relates to the hardware and software and if there are any new "twists" I could learn.

The book includes 28 chapters which span a full range of ideas and information about iPod and iTunes.   Part 1 deals with setting up and working with media content while Part 2 focus is on managing your media content. Part 3 keys on the iPod while Part 4 has information on using advanced techniques with audio encoding and working with your iTunes library. Part 5 outlines additional ways to work with your iPod while part 6, "The part of Tens" has information on problems, solutions and tips for the equalizer. The index includes Musicmatch Jukebox, managing the library while the bonus chapter 3, includes advanced Music match techniques. Chapter 4 rounds out this bonus section with internet resources.

Of course, the review would not be the same without pointing out the other helpful informational icons "peppered" throughout the book. These are part of many of the Dummies books that include additional helpful information to find and learn about. Five icons that are placed throughout the pages. These (Tip; Technical stuff; Warning!; Remember; on the Web) serve to include precise additional information that assists along the way regarding the instructions.

I don't take the music with me all the time as a I travel, workout or use in my car. I myself don't yet have an iPod but I enjoy my music on iTunes on my computer. I don't have thousands of songs that I listen to and I prefer to listen to some radio stations or watching TV while I work out. But I do appreciate the iTunes features. Keeping up with the iPods is important computer wise but also keeps me abreast when I might be one for my wife and/or myself.

Conclusion

This book is well written, is easy to read and provides much that is useful to beginners and intermediate users.   The basics are well covered with helpful hints along the way that you might not know about Chapter 6, planning and using content was particularly good as there was information on AirTunes and more about streaming radio. Additional information about updating, library information, using your iPod for a TV or as well as the iTunes organization of files and sharing was also solid. but the best part I found most useful, were the chapters beyond 16. Loads of good information about wireless information, sound and music ideas including nice section about utilizing the equalizer, encoding audio, enhancing your music library, mobile iPod on the move and more. Ten iPod problems and solutions is well done. There is also four chapters (on a Windows PC only) , found on the internet dealing with Music Match, to work with your iPod music library. This is the first time I have seen information about this so if you have a PC, iPod and iTunes this may be most helpful.

Recommendation

All in all this book is a good resource library for those starting with iPod and iTunes on a Mac or PC. Even if you don't have an iPod, the section on iTunes and learning how to use the radio section and more is beneficial. Solid in breadth and depth, easy to understand and has more to help you master iPod and iTunes. That's not bad for a black and white book.

Macs for Dummies

Reviewed by Dr. Eric Flescher

Author: Edward C.Baig
Publisher: Wiley
http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-0470048492.html
Released: October 2006
Pages: 408
$22 USD
ISBN-1O: 0470048492

ISBN-13: 978-0470048498
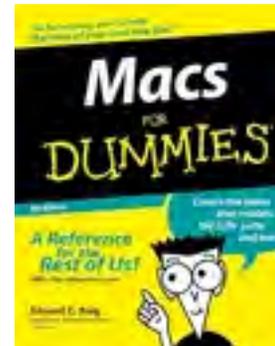
Strengths: Highlight icon notes (technical stuff, remember!, Tip) are very useful. The screenshots are very readable. Information on the use of windows Boot Camp and difference types of Macs. Decent information about the iLife suite of applications.

Weaknesses: Bland. Black and white with no color.

 Novice/Intermediate

Introduction

The MacIntosh computers are relatively easy to use. However for "newbies" to the Mac world or those who are upgrading, finding information to help use their machine is a nice idea. Books abound with ideas how to use computers in many ways. But sometimes users want a book that has hardware, software and more in one book. That is where the book Macs for Dummies comes in handy for those looking for information on latest Mac models, the iLife software suite and more.

The author is the USAToday Personal technology columnist has written this book into six parts and 23 chapters. A nice introduction let's us know that he is a relative newcomer to the Mac world but now uses his Mac/Apple computers for everyday work. So I really wanted to see how this book played out in terms of his experiences and ideas while using the macs.

Part 1 deals with chapters that start from the beginning and work from there. Desktop information, introduction to the different types of ports are laid out in free flowing fashion to give a better understanding of these essentials. Freebie programs and the Mac models are outlines and covered as well.

Part 2 gives a basic understanding of word processing, printing and the (Tiger) operating system.

Part 3 leads into all thing things Internet, getting connected, doing online research,shopping online, sending email and learning about .Mac online area.

Part 4 informs about the suite of software iLife which is free with your mac. Learn about the basics and using the six applications and some nice ideas, sound advice for starting your photo library, music, movies (If you want more in depth information about any of these applications, it is best to buy a book that goes more into depth with these applications).

There is then a nice section on using Intel based Mac with Windows XP on your Mac by using the software Bootcamp (which will be a feature in the new MacOS Leopard in the near future).

Part 5 has good and solid practical information concerning networking and diagnosing problems. Part 6 is called the "Parts of Tens" and deals with great information on websites that may be useful, learning about dashboard widgets and more great ideas and information.

The last chapter (23) is entitled "10 things to leave you with" is well done. Some of the included ideas and information screen capture, remote madness, using speech recognition etc may be part of your Mac arsenal that you may or may not want to work with.

Along the way you will be aided by icons which introduce you to tips, warnings!, technical stuff and (things to) remember. There are some cute mac related cartoons that grace each section. The screenshots are bland and colorless but most are big enough to give the user a good sense on what is needed and helpful (there are no arrows or circles or other pointers within these screenshots for additional help however.

Conclusion

For the Mac beginner and those starting out, this book is a good starter. I can't really say it is " a reference for the rest of us." It could be a good guide for many beginners and possible intermediates. This might be especially true for those who are using the Tiger operating system or have migrated from the PC world and/or want to utilize the free iLife suite of application software for photos, videography, music and more.

Shooting Digital (2nd edition)

Reviewed by Dr Eric Flescher

Author: Mikkel Aaland
Publisher: Wiley
http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-0470042877.html
Released: November 2006
Pages: 287
$40 USD, $48 CND, 26 GBP
ISBN-10: 0470042877
ISBN-13: 978-0470042878

Strengths: Breadth and depth related to topics are well done. Section on RAW has solid information. Good writing style and easy to understand. Book has been updated since the previous version. Chapters include notes, screenshots, sample photos and solution oriented boxed off areas to help with the understanding. Book cover a wide range of topics concerning digital photography including underwater, portrait, aerial photography.

Weaknesses: User needs to know their camera and how to use it before trying this book.

Introduction

There are a plethora of books on the market concerning digital photography. If you are interested in "going beyond the basics" and searching for a guide for taking better pictures, what do you search for and where do you start? The book should have RAW format information, photographing in different settings and beyond, techniques usage, organizing your photos and additional information that gives an insight into new ways to use your camera an d how. If you are looking for these to start with, you might want to try the book Shooting Digital (2nd edition).

The author by his own emission says that this book is "not for everyone". It has been updated since the previous version, and chapters include notes, screenshots, sample photos and solution oriented boxed off areas. The author says that the information is this book contains the wisdom of 30 professional. So with that in mind, I was interested to find out more since I " went digital" in 2000.

As I started to look through this book, I was looking for insights into what makes this book, if any, different then other books that focus with digital photography. I was looking if this book had more information that might help camera users who are trying to go beyond what they might already know concerning digital photography.

The author is an award-winning photographer of ten books, has his photos published in Newsweek, Wired and other magazines and has photos exhibited in Paris and Prague. The 12 chapters in this 285-page book cover a wide range of topics concerning digital photography. The information includes screenshots, notes, example photos, illustrations and special instructions, pulldown screens (Macintosh highlighted). This is not a book that starts you off learning about your camera. This book assumes you have a digital camera and know how to use it. Interestingly information entitled " your camera and equipment" is covered (p.47 , Chapter 2) but in many cases should be covered in the first chapter. So it is best acquainted with your camera before you start with this book.

The Chapter 1, "before the shoot", is a nice introduction to choosing the right camera.

Chapter 2, "Shooting RAW", is a solid tutorial on how to use RAW formatted pictures but more importantly when to use. Also the comparison of RAW to other formats is done very well. Optimizing and sharing are also covered. The part of the screen windows that I think would have helped is arrows or some feature to show the differences in the color adjustment area instead of " searching" for the differences when comparing the screens.

"Shooting great portraits, "Chapter 3, helps communicate information about types of portraits. While I don't do many portraits I still found some of this chapter might help in creating better photograph while photographing family members.

Chapter 4, "Photographing children, pets, and social events", delves into to meeting and overcoming potential obstacles.

Chapter 5, " shooting action", covers hardware , potential ideas and good information on photographing objects in motion.

Chapter 6, " shooting digital on the road" covers a lot of troubleshooting areas.

Chapter 7, " shooting exterior and interior", provides tips and ticks for professionals who work on many areas related to the outside and inside.

Chapter 8,, "shooting beautiful landscapes" focuses on what makes a good landscape, maximizing quality and much more . Since I do much landscape photography in this area, I was interested to find out what I could discover that might be new. Part of what the author does is share secrets and ideas that other photographers work with. There are several websites that various known photographers communicate their ideas and methods. What is nice is that these tips can be adapted to just about any digital camera with basic exposure controls. These focus on three methods: Trial and error; reading the histogram and finally bracketing exposure. These three modes can be used at any time, under many different situations to meet many needs that might occur when you are taking pictures. While these three might not be new, the information about the styles and how these are communicated in this chapter are refreshing and gave me some new ideas. These included additional information concerning extending dynamic range through blended images, maximizing depth of field, control through ISO and composition and content are sections that are well communicated and that I learned from as well.

Chapter 9, "shooting black and white", a new section for this version, includes information for those who want to use black & white. Since I don't shoot black and white I did not read much of this section but others might find it informational for their needs.

Chapter 10, "shooting your stuff", has simple to more sophisticated ideas about indirect natural light, basic photographic studio ideas for packaging attractive and informative shots under varied circumstances (photographing to sell, taking taking pics for informational shots and more).

Chapter 11, "shooting past the boundaries", covered software solutions that were interesting for some who want to try new photographic endeavors or are already doing so. Among the "new ideas" were shooting beyond visible light, digital underwater shooting (nice page on using certain camera including one I use kodak 290), aerial-digital shots from the sky, night shots, digital grid photos, mini-movie creations and panorama use.

Chapter 12, "organizing and sharing digital photos" includes the use of Photoshop Elements organizer, iPhoto and twelve options additional image-management software. (Resources which allow for sharing online only include two and does not differentiate between which allow for Macintosh uploads). I really liked the information concerning Image management, especially as it included technologies and procedures (reading histogram, fine tuning white balance , sensor extended and extending exposure latitude with software). This chapter section is nicely written and informative and is one of the best I have seen in terms of explanation.

Conclusion

This book assumes you understand your camera and know how to use it. If not find a book that specifically is targeted to your camera and then use this book. The main focus of this book is using your camera in many ways and in that vain, this book does a great job and succeeds. The breadth and depth of many topics are covered well. The book will help assist you with using your camera for several photographic endeavors. This in-depth knowledge and insights are nicely done. Many will find this book can take you to the next level in one or more of the topics. Even if you don't want to utilized all the chapter (topics) at first , this book is a great guide and will be a a good resources for the future to broaden your photographic activities.

MyMahj 4.1 — *A fine freeware Mahjong tile game*

Reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad   © 2007

Author/Developer Oliver Playez Link: http://www.mymahj.com/ Contact Support@mymahj.com/ Release Date: 15 September 2007 Freeware **System Requirements**: Mac OS X 10.4 or later; Not apparently Universal binary); File size 7.5 MB for both2D and 3D Games	My Mahj ★★★★½

Strengths: A visually clean, easy to play fee version of the classic Shanghai/Mahjong tile game.

Weaknesses: The help system assumes you've played the game before and are familiar with its layout/setup characteristics.

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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

Introduction to Shanghai/Mahjong

By now you folks know that as a break from things that so fill my mind that I can't to sleep; I collect. Collect, but not these days cook, recipes. You may have read my articles in which I describe the hunt and how to annotate and if needed reformat and illustrate captive recipes. What you may not know is that I'm a long time Mahjong/Shanghai gave addict.

It all began, years ago when I, a proud SE-30 owner discovered an Activision game called Shanghai, provided initially as floppies. As Mac's evolved in power and gained hard drives, so did Shanghai become more feature -rich and for some challenging. CDs replaced floppies and the game variants got more complex.

The computer version, unlike chess or backgammon, is not as interesting as real person face-to-face the Mahjong games beloved by generations of Oriental gentlemen and later on Jewish ladies and their friends. According to Wikipedia, Mahjong involves skill, strategy, and calculation, as well as a certain degree of luck. Depending on the variation that is played, luck can be anything from a minor to a dominant factor in success. In Asia as well as in some American communities, mahjong is also popular as a gambling game. Some of these elements are lacking in most of the computer versions of Shanghai/Mahjong I've played. To learn more check out [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahjong]

Nevertheless, the now classic computer tile matching game is well loved my thousands of folks who forsake adrenaline rushes for quiet play. But as all such things evolved the computer versions became more complex. Activision's single floppy based Shanghai game morphed into a two CD set Shanghai: Great Moments and Shanghai II: Dragons eye. I then ran across and started enjoying Aspyr media's Mah Jong Parlor. By then I was hooked. I eagerly awaited each new fortune cookie, my reward for a game won.

The game changed from a passive low stress one-player (solitaire) mode or friendly two-player version to newer versions having either a challenge or tournament theme. Other developers added a pilgrimage wrapper, al la Canterbury Tales. You played the various games in strict order each, like shoot-em up levels, becoming more challenging. You started at the beginning of your journey and the story unfolds as you move from game to game. Like a treasure hunt, at the end of a series of games, you win jewels, not fortune cookies.

Almost all game versions are extensively sprinkled with oriental graphics and at times a Confucius oriented theme. More eye candy was often added with animated backdrops well designed to both entrance and distracts you from the game.

Game Play — The purpose of the game is to clear the screen of tiles by clicking on two identical tiles (or two seasons or flower), Only exposed tiles can be removed at any given moment. A tile is exposed **if** there is no tile over it, and if there is empty space on its left or right side.

Simple, Not Quite — the tiles are stacked in one, originally a great turtle shaped solid pyramid, and in evolving versions an assortment of oriental 3D-glyph like structures (e.g., serpents, rats, dragons, pigs, lion monkey) and the other layouts from the Chinese Zodiac. Inherent in rendering the zodiac images, as 3D tile sets, the game variations ranged from easy to hard, creating an enjoyable challenge.

The Games Further Evolves — Progress, newer developers added both medieval and contemporary layouts, including a hollow pyramid, a variety of medieval castle ramparts type structures, columns from a roofless Greek temple. Anything you could visualize and lay out as a 3D tile set, had likely been tackled. There is even a great wall of china, with all the tiles spread out in one large single thickness collage. Tile layouts, tens and more tens of them were created, mostly non traditional and not linked by themes. Indeed most of the new layouts, like the *Arch de Smoove* defied the laws of gravity, all in the interest of keeping you amused.
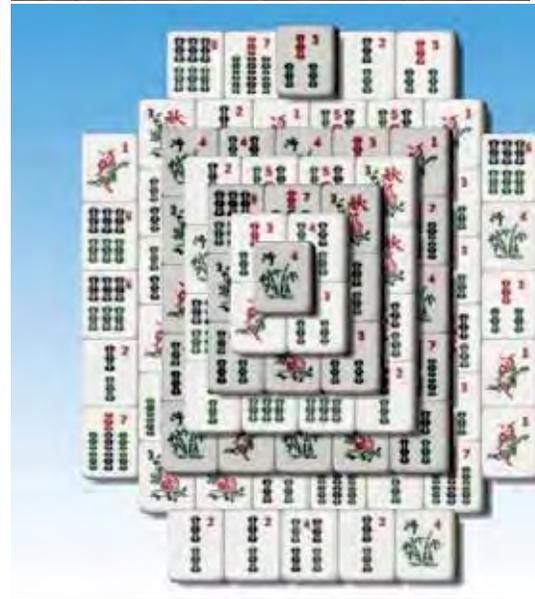
Developers also added alternate tile sets, incase the oriental ones were not to your taste. These include wooden block toys, cute critter, birds or butterflies, the letters of the alphabet, and mini scenes. There's also Egyptian and Celtic theme game versions, as well as lots of Star Trek tile sets. The Treckie set is embedded in one of the newer games released by major game developers like Aspyr, Ambrosia and Bonehead Software. [Sorry, I don't remember which.] Incase your 2D depth perception is poor, there's in some games, the ability to view the tile set in 3D, from several angles.
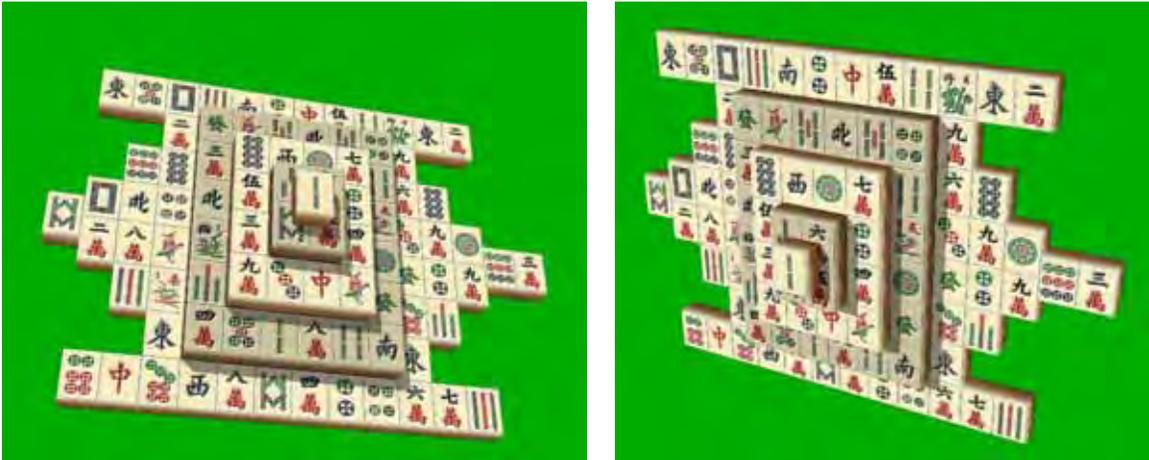
Then, much to my chagrin, a few the newer developers starting requiring you play against a clock or at least tracked your time; yuck. Another has added a fiendish unique random board generator in a recent posted version produces new and interesting boards every time you play. [Are they winnable?] Find out for your self with *Random Factor Mahjong*.
Here I am, I'm trying to relax but my choices of new game variants keep getting narrowed.

What followed next, as time moved on, were games that added "Tetris-like" elements, tiles falling from the *sky* while you tried to remove the pairs that already had landed. This mode, in an Activision game version, was called *Action Shanghai*; talk about adding stress factors.

I may, if I'm in the mood, review *Random Factor Mahjong*. I'm more likely, as a fan of Celtic music, to check out Rhiannon's Realm a Celtic Mahjong variant.

MyMahj — From the tone of what I've written you can gather that I like keeping to the simple, relaxing Oriental tradition version. Therefore I was please to find the freeware MyMahj 4.0.

In case, unlike me, you're looking for more challenge and adrenaline oriented gaming, go to the end of this review.
I've provided, for you consideration, a list of most offerings (mahjong) found on the MacUpdate site for you consideration. All of those I've quickly screened, have a "demo version. A quick try of a demo often and quickly convinced me not to add them to my collection. There are also a few additional games variants that may amuse listed when searching MacUpdate for the term *Shanghai*

Getting Started

The game comes in two versions, one a standard 2D board, *MyMahj2D.app* that I'm comfortable with. The other called *MyMahjGL.app* is a 3D version. Using 3D effects, you can tilt the board for a better look at exposed tiles.

After a few minutes of 3D play, I reverted back to the standard board, but added an optional tile shadow effect. The shadows are unsymmetrical, after all light comes from only one direction in these games. The shadows please me, although they do make harder to recognize free tiles on the shaded side of the board.

Getting Started — Drag and drop either or both 2/3D versions to your applications folder. Double click and start to play the layout that appears. Alternatively, tweak the game's background, sound, a tune few preferences (found in the menu bar) and a minute later, the games display has been customized to your taste. Here's the 2D version with a pretty background scene. =>

You can select easy or "normal" play modes and then select the layout you want to play. [I could not figure out the differences in game play when using the default layout, called *turtle* in other game versions.

One feature common to those in newer shareware games is MyMahj's ability to randomly generate layouts. Play the layout, if you like it save it to your collection of existing ones. But you cannot, in this version, create a series of sequential of new layouts to find ones that look interesting. That would allow you to save a number of fun-looking layouts to play at your leisure.

Discomforts:
Changing Background Color — I prefer to play Mahjong against a neutral background, one with out any background images or worse yet a moving background. Thankfully the developer avoided the later. Changing the background is easy. [Graphics Menu > Background > None] The default background color was a bilious green, the color of the felt on a craps table. I could easily, from the graphics menu, change the color to a sky blue, but also the change did not take. When I restated the game, alas, I was back to yuck green. *Victory, I wrote Oliver about this problem, and after a week or so, he fixed it by releasing version 4.1a. Horray, my chosen background color persists, after restarting the game.*

Screen Display – Game Appearance — On my large 21" monitor, there was too much background showing, I would have preferred the focus in only on the playing pieces rather than have them diminished by the background.

Limited Number of Layouts Provided — Although the 15 layouts available in this free game, provide both plenty of challenge and some reasonable diversity, by current shareware game standards they a fewer than I expected. MIA, the game does not contain some of the classic shanghai zodiac layouts which I've come to enjoy.

Randomly Generated Layouts — I could not figure out how to randomly generate successive layouts. I would have like to find a few that looked interesting, and then save those for future replay. However, on my system, using auto play to test a new layout occasionally crashed the application. [I had not saved the new layout prior to testing; in any test of the auto play function.] *Discussing this issue with developer, he agrees that most of the randomly generated layouts are uninteresting. He may indeed eliminate this feature from the next significant upgrade.* From my perspective, that we be no loss in the games quality.

Conclusion/Recommendation

If a simple relaxing, low stress game of Mahjong is your thing, download and play MyMahj. It free. If your need more complexities, check out the game lists I provide below and take your pick. I for one, although I have eight installed Mahjong/Shanghai games on my hard drive, am delighted with MyMahj. As always my score, 4.5 macC's is a result of my being a trough grader, rather than there being problems with the product. I rarely find a developer to be as responsive to feedback as Oliver Playez, kudos for caring.

PS

MacUpdate Mahjong Game List

Crazy Eggs 1.1.7 - Click and clear Mahjong-like game.

Random Factor Mahjong 1.1.2 - Mahjong style game play in a puzzle/levels format.

MyMahj 4.1 - Solitaire Mahjong game in 2D and 3D.

Mah Jong Solitaire2 2.21 - Tile pyramid game.

Mystical Mahjong 1.4 - Mahjong Solitaire set in a forest setting with relaxing music.

Mahjong Solitarus 1.6 - Enhanced solitaire game.

MahJong Tradition 1.6.5 - True MahJong game.

Bo-jong 2.2 - A fun mahjong style puzzle game.

Luxor Mahjong 1.0 - Recover stolen treasures of Ancient Egypt.

Smack Mahjong 1.0 - Mahjong game with 50 layouts.

Damejong 2.1 - Authentic game of Mahjong as played in Asian countries.

Absolute Shisen-Sho 1.0.1 - Chinese game inspired by Mahjong.

Absolute MahJong 1.0 - Different variations of Mah Jong tile game.

Mah Jong Quest 1.0 - 150 tile games.

Mah-Jomino 1.0 - Blends the challenge of mahjong & dominoes.

Mah Jong Letters 1.01 - 3D Mah Jong tile game.

Mah Jong Deluxe 1.01 - Tile puzzle game.

Ancient Tri-Jong 1.1.1 - Solitaire with Mahjong style.

Mahjong Towers Eternity 1.0 - Game with more than 40,000 layouts.

Mahjong Palace 1.0.4 - Multi-layer tile game.

Aki Mahjong Solitaire 1.1.1 - Addictive hybrid mahjong game.

Burning Monkey Mahjong Solitaire 1.1 - Solitaire game.

NingPo MahJong 1.0 - Tile-matching solitaire game

RuniX 1.0.3 - MahJong tile matching game.

Greenware

Peak Everything: Waking Up to the Century of Declines

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Author: Richard Heinberg
http://www.richardheinberg.com/books
Publisher: New Society Publishers
http://www.newsociety.com
Released: October 16, 2007
Pages: 224
$25 USD, $30 CND
ISBN-10: 086571598X
ISBN-13: 978-0865715981

Strengths: Offers a few more thorough-provoking ideas on the fall of mankind over the next couple of decades – and a glimmer of hope every once in a while.

Weaknesses: Tends to reveal left-of-middle leanings, politically.

Other Reviews: http://zone5.org/2007/10/04/book-review-peak-everything/

Introduction

This book is a compilation of a few essays written by Richard Heinberg in his Museletter series - http://www.richardheinberg.com/museletter

The 21st century ushered in an era of declines, in a number of crucial parameters:

- Global oil, natural gas and coal extraction
- Yearly grain harvests
- Climate stability
- Population
- Economic growth
- Fresh water
- Minerals and ores, such as copper and platinum

To adapt to this profoundly different world, we must begin now to make radical changes to our attitudes, behaviors and expectations.

Peak Everything addresses many of the cultural, psychological and practical changes we will have to make as nature rapidly dictates our new limits. This latest book from Richard Heinberg, author of three of the most important books on Peak Oil, touches on the most important aspects of the human condition at this unique moment in time.

A combination of wry commentary and sober forecasting on subjects as diverse as farming and industrial design, this book tells how we might make the transition from The Age of Excess to the Era of Modesty with grace and satisfaction, while preserving the best of our collective achievements. A must-read for individuals, business leaders and policy makers who are serious about effecting real change.

What I Learned

Richard Heinberg likes to write essays, give seminars and speeches on why mankind is going downhill fast because we used up many of the natural and non-renewable resources with ½ grabbed in our generation with nothing to give our descendants.

He renames "Climate Change" as "Climate Chaos" (I call it the weather). He uses such terms as "diachronic competition" and defines that as competing with future generations for resources. He blames the Great Depression on overproduction. He writes that we are "mired in the banality of consumerism" (planned obsolescence) and that pushed us towards conservationism.

He would like us to reduce our addiction to petroleum products and preaches that we will soon see the generation of decline because the previous generation has been using up all the resources.

Richard Heinberg thinks "Urinetown" was a neat comedy – even as the end result is a doomed town where everyone eventually dies from lack of water. Real funny stuff. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urinetown

Is Richard Heinberg a Malthusian? He sure sounds like one even as he claims the book and the others he refers to that he and others have written in the recent past, are not "doomism".

The book consists of 11 essays on technology, agriculture, the Arts, 5 Axioms of Sustainability, parrots and peoples, population, resources and human idealism, the end of an era with peak oil and climate change, and activism, the Boomer's last chance, a letter from the future and talking ourselves to extinction.

I tend to disagree with many of his conclusions and assertions, but I am intrigued by his thought-processes as he walks through scenarios based on a left-of-center life experience. I grew up in a culture of hope, a positive mental attitude, a knowledge that God promised us that "there is enough and to spare" for all mankind, if we tend to our own stewardships wisely. So it bothers me a bit to think we are "in decline" on so many fronts and also see that the haves and have-nots are polarizing towards extremes.

I too am not looking forward to another world war based on anarchy and scrambling for a few remaining tidbits of food or a few remaining drinks of water. Richard's "Letter from the Future" paints a chilling scenario that is a po9ssibility if we don not do a global course change in our energy consumption. We still have positive options that can change the course of history towards improving mankind instead of dooming it towards doing less with less instead of more with less.

Richard does point to "permaculture" and back to self-sustaining local communities where everyone knows everybody else and a return to a healthy farming community environment. I tend to agree with him on this one where only 5% of our food processing is being done by 5% of the population and is not looked upon as appositive career move. I moved to the city from a dairy farm. I really would not mind going back as hard and demanding as that life was.

Are we really in a "Century of Declines"? Richard Heinberg thinks so. Personally, I am going to dedicate myself to see that it does not happen through sustainable living activities. We are going into World War IV (WWIII was the Cold War) and I want to avoid it.

Will it take such things as the Post Carbon Groups, http://www.postcarbon.org, Relocalization Network http://www.relocalize.net and Transition Towns Movement http://www.transitiontowns.org to expedite the process?

Will environmentalism take over as the "new religion"? Richard Heinberg does not address that in this book – perhaps he will address that in one of his Museletter essays sometime in the near future.

Conclusion

Richard Heinberg asks tough questions about resource use on a global scale and offers some interesting possible solutions that can be done today, locally to reduce our dependence on non-renewable energy.

Recommendation

Yes, I do recommend reading this book. The cover is showing a house of cards built on current technologies. It wouldn't take much for it to all come tumbling down. There are ways today to avoid that house tumbling down on top of us and Richard Heinberg does a pretty good job showing us that perhaps thinking locally and acting locally isn't such a bad idea after all.

Renewable Energy — Hype, Myth and Hope

By Harry {doc} Babad   © 2007 Edited by Julie M. Willingham

Introduction

There are all sorts of folks, including our president, who are trying to tell you the cure-all for global warming and being held hostage to oil-rich third world dictatorships is renewable energy. A combination of snake oil, paid for by the taxpayer subsidies, supported political correctness (don't look), and a deep lack of understanding of the laws of physics devalue the true value of this form of critical form of supplementary energy. A recent survey by the BBC indicates to me that people are more concerned, worldwide; with global energy concerns than are their politicians.

GLOBAL ENERGY CONCERNS

Concern about harm to environment / Concern competition will lead to conflict

Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, India, Italy, Kenya, Russia, UK, US

Figure shows % "very" and "somewhat" concerned
Polling conducted: 26 May to 2 July 2006
Sample size: 19,579 people in 19 countries
Margin of error +/-2.5 to 4%

Source: GlobeScan/PIPA
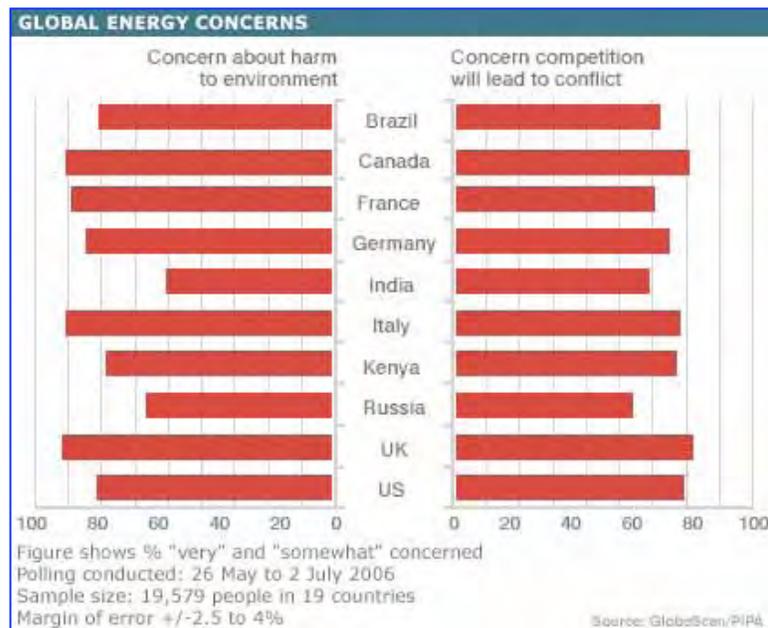
In this article I share my views on the real potential of this valuable but low-density energy form, after the hype from false expectations and pseudo-economics are put to rest.

It's not that I'm against supporting the need for harnessing renewable energy. What I object to is the smoke and mirrors that both energy providers and our government are using to avoid dealing with the forced reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, both in electricity generation and for transportation.

Here are a few of my pet peeves:

•We don't pay the full toll for gasoline, unlike Europeans, because we might have to take actions about the way we drive, pollute, and waste energy.

• C A F E Standards (Corporate Average Fuel Economy) for US transportation are effectively below those 10 years ago, because the industry and their lobbyists buy off Congress. As a result, we do not penalize the gas-guzzlers the American public loves so well.
http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/cars/rules/cafe/overview.htm

• Don't mention carbon taxes; if we implement them the lobbyists say we'll be in the middle of the next depression. This despite that the historically documented experiences that every hue and cry about unsustainable costs from industry is overstated. Most such analyses have been blatantly and self-servingly overestimated. When real data become available after a requirement is added, such as CAFÉ standards or a European carbon tax, the benefits always exceed the losses. This is also true when unbiased economists do the analysis. [Reading the *Economist*, a British new magazine, over the last three years, has provided some interesting insights into the unsubstantiated lobbyist's "it costs too much" claim.]
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Economist

• A hydrogen economy is our savior, despite the fact that hydrogen is most effectively generated by electrolysis of water. I'm still awaiting a potential payout for nuclear fusion as a source of energy. However, hydrogen fuel for transportation may be a future reality. The electricity for that alternative, for at least the next 10-20 years, to generate the hydrogen must come from either fossil fuels or from nuclear energy. Sorry folks, photosynthetic hydrogen is a low energy density (ED) process (more about ED later).

• Subsidizing the petroleum exploration industry despite sky-high profits, $11.9 billion in subsidies via (in part) percentage depletion allowances to the US oil industry in 1995. For details, see http://archive.greenpeace.org/pressreleases/climate/1998jun9.html

• Not allowing low cost ethanol from entering the US achieved by charging prohibitive tariffs (54 cent per gallon) on Brazilian ethanol. All of this while subsiding corn production resulting in rising food prices both in the US and around the world. By assuring that the price of corn and other grains keep rising, we are in effect, taking food out of people's mouths so we can drive our cars.

I strongly believe in the use of renewable energy, where energy densities warrant it, preferably unsubsidized to eliminate the economic distortions created by taxpayer support of already well-off energy and farming sectors.

What's renewable and what's not?

Wikipedia described renewable energy as utilizing natural resources such as sunlight, wind, ocean tides, and geothermal heat, which are naturally replenished. Renewable energy technologies range from solar power, wind power, and hydroelectricity, to the use of biomass and biofuels for electricity generation and biofuels for transportation.
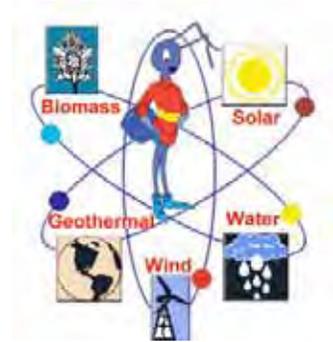
About 13 percent of the world's primary energy comes from renewables, with most of this coming from traditional biomass like wood burning. [There's a whole lot more third world than first world out there.] Hydropower is the next largest source, providing 2-3%; more modern technologies like geothermal, wind, solar, and marine energy together satisfy less than 1% of total world energy demand. The technical potential for their increased use is very large, but remember that all energy alternatives have hidden costs and consequences. [E.g., hydropower floods ecosystems and solar farms take up acres of land.]
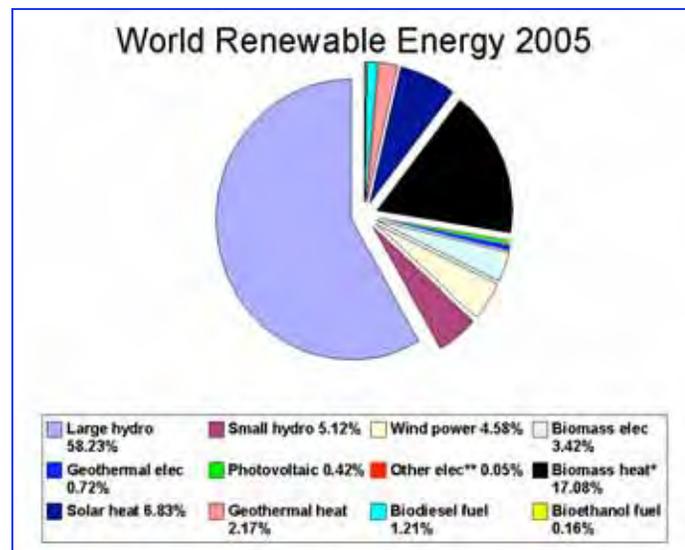
There are several significant issues that taint our understanding and the ultimate benefit of the of renewable sources to free us from our dependence on energy sources that spew greenhouse gases (coal, oil, natural gas.) For example under some circumstances biomass and biodiesel alternative only time shift releases of such gases but the net amount generated remains relatively constant.

Issues We Need to Consider —The energy issues facing our world consist of several different but interacting segments, some technical and some philosophical. These are the ones that jump to my mind — yes, a mixed bag.

- *Encouraging Energy Efficient Mass Transportation Methods* — We need to be more efficient when moving materials to where they're needed from where they are grown or manufactured. And moving people, too; suburbs are nice but create negative transportation related greenhouse effects.

- *Support Sustainable Development, not Luddite Approaches that Foster Individual and Cultural Deprivation* — We in the United States and other developed nations need to be very conscious of our planet, acknowledging that everyone on earth has the right to a better living standard. If, as I believe, it is an inalienable right for a people to have enough energy to establish and maintain a life-enriching, laborsaving standard of living, then how will this be worked out for everyone? If the United States and other countries try to solve global warming without using sustainable means, it will be not only immoral, but it will cause wars that will make the costs of global warming solutions passé.

Our goals should also include moving toward greener electricity generation methods and the greening of transportation fuels. The alternative is important, because few will voluntarily give up their motor vehicles, and the largest present demands for automobiles are in India and China.

Energy Density: Why it matters

Although I've not found a formal definition of energy density outside of pure physics and mechanics, I like to poke at it in a number of interdependent ways. I know that someone mathematically inclined can convert the various factors I list below into a common scale; but for now, why bother? In dealing with energy alternatives, I believe the ideas of high-to-moderate or low densities will suffice to get you oriented to energy densities.

- What is the average amount of electricity, for solid or liquid fuels, you can generate from a ton of fuel using today's generating technology? The range for this item includes both newer generating stations and old. For example, a pound of enriched uranium fuel is about 100X more energy rich than a pound of coal. The energy content of a pound of uranium or thorium, if spent nuclear fuel is reprocessed, as is done in France, and fully utilized (not yet), is equivalent to about 3.5 million pounds of coal. It's inherent in the physics. For burnable fuels, a good question is how many pounds of wood or corn stalks equal a pound of coal when used for an electrical generation?

- What is the average amount of energy, a credible range, you can generate from an acre of densely populated generators, either solar, wind or tidal?

- Given the variability of potential energy, how much electricity can you generate for a given head of falling water (hydroelectricity from dams)?

Let's get real nit-pickingly detailed about energy density related ideas:

- An absurd Quest: How about generating the electricity for your house by running a turbine powered by the rainfall on your roof?
- How big a wind farm do you need to run a moderate sized aluminum smelter?
- How many solar cells, at 27% efficiency, does it take to run a car? [Hint: checkout the Business Week web site.]
  http://www.businessweek.com/autos/content/jul2007/bw20070713_195996.htm

I've generalized about energy density in the table below — but until real numbers are generated and independently peer reviewed (not by lobbyists or their paid consultants), Table 1 only provides you with a birds-eye view of the issue.

Energy Type/Density	Source Location	Potential Focus	Problem Addressed
Biomass Direct Combustion [LD]	Regional, Mostly Rural	Electricity Generation - Fuel Oil/Natural Gas alternative	ES/GGU
Methane from Landfills [LD]	Narrowly Regional	Electricity Generation - Fuel Oil/Natural Gas alternative	ES/GGU
Biomass Conversion [MD]	Moderately Regional	Electricity Generation - Fuel Oil/Natural Gas alternative	ES
Geothermal [HD]	Narrowly Regional	Electricity Generation - Fuel Oil/Natural Gas alternative	ES
Hydroelectric [LG HD]	Narrowly Regional	Electricity Generation	ES
Hydroelectric [SM HD]	Moderately Regional	Electricity Generation	ES
Photovoltaic [LG/HD]	Narrowly Regional	Municipal or Industrial electricity	ES/RGG
Photovoltaic [SM LD]	Broadly Regional	Off Grid Electric	ES
Solar Thermal [LG MD]	Narrowly Regional		ES
Solar Thermal [SM LD]	Broadly Regional	Off Grid Heating	ES/RGG
Tide Power [MD or HD]	Coastal, varies by tide levels	Municipal or Industrial electricity	ES/RGG
Wind Power on Land [MD to HD]	Regional, varies by location	Municipal or Industrial electricity	ES
Wind Power (Offshore) [MD to HD]	Regional, varies by location	Municipal or Industrial electricity	ES
Acronyms: ES – Energy Security; GGU — Greenhouse Gas Unfriendly HD – High Density; LD – Low Density		LG — Large Scale (many acres) MD — Moderate Density RGG - Reduce Greenhouse Gasses SM — Small Scale (limited acreage)	

Table 1 — An Overview of Energy Density and Fuel Use

I have been somewhat arbitrary in cataloging generation methods as small, medium, or large density because no quantitative standards yet exist for these terms.

But let's take a peek at what I consider small projects. Powering my home, supplementing the electricity used for my hybrid car, or generating electricity for a small grocery store — that's small scale.

Powering a residential neighborhood, a moderate sized medical complex — let's say in Richland WA, or a Wal-Mart Superstore could be considered medium scale. There is an intermediate scale that generates about 50 MW of electricity that might be able to provide electricity to 50,000 residential customers, but that has not yet been actualized. From another perspective, 7.9 million MWh is enough to supply electricity for 740,000 households. [Yes I know I'm mixing and mashing energy units…] However, running a refinery, chlorine-caustic plant, a factory for producing automobiles, an aluminum plant, or large sections of Spokane or Seattle, that takes high-density power.

…And back to renewable energy
The Wikipedia shares: "Renewable energy technologies are sometimes criticized for being unreliable or unsightly, yet the market is growing for many forms of renewable energy. Wind power has a worldwide installed capacity of 74,223 MW (equal to one newer present generation nuclear plant.) It is widely used in several European countries and parts of the USA. The manufacturing output of the photovoltaics industry reached more than 2,000 MW per year in 2006, and photovoltaic power plants are particularly popular in Germany. Solar thermal power stations, which produce hot water, operate in the USA and Spain, and the largest of these is the 354 MW SEGS power plant in the Mojave Desert. The world's largest geothermal power installation is The Geysers in California, with a rated capacity of 750 MW.

"Brazil has one of the largest renewable energy programs in the world, involving production of ethanol fuel from sugar cane, and ethanol now provides 18 percent of the country's automotive fuel. While *only* highly *subsidized,* emphasis added, ethanol fuel is also widely available in the USA."

As an aside, a medium-large sized nuclear power plant generates about 500-1,000 MW of power. Neither I, my neighbors, nor the folks in Mexico are willing to pay more for our food, so folks can drive their gas-guzzlers a bit more greenly. The screams of anguish have only begun to resonate in politicians' ears… soon they can count the votes.

Doc sez, all of this progress in the advance of renewable energy is wonderful. However, it's not a *comprehensive* solution to meeting high-density energy demands for manufacturing or concentrated urban living. And as we all read, more and more people are moving from urban areas to cities, not only in China and India, but also in other developing countries.

Solar Facts, a Case in Point — I happened to be a fan of solar voltaic energy for supplementary power generation. I recognize, believer in technology that I am, that energy efficiency is improving and cost per watt of power will drop. I am willing to bet on a future outcome of a 10X drop in the price of solar voltaic cells in the near future. This does not change the technical basis that, as opposed to the simpler photovoltaic cells you might find on the roof of a house or on a solar-powered calculator, which make use of about 15% of the energy available in sunlight, "multijunction" cells are about 27% efficient and so far cost about 100 times more. Therefore, except in space and in sunny remote regions, no one uses them. Neither does it take into consideration the life-cycle costs for creating the solar cells and building the associated infrastructure to add the produced power to the grid [more about life-cycle costs later in this article]. But in spite of these things, temporary obstacles I hope, my heart says solar voltaic is a good energy alternative. That's enough to turn any economist I know *green*.

How do we use energy in the US and around the world?
Based on information published by the Department of Energy, world market energy
consumption is projected to increase, in the base case, by 57 percent from 2004 to 2030.
Total energy demand in the non-OECD countries increases by 95 percent, compared with
an increase of 24 percent in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and
Development (OECD) countries. Total world energy use rises from 447 quadrillion
British thermal units (Btu) in 2004 to 559 quadrillion Btu in 2015 (25%) and then to 702
quadrillion Btu (57%) in 2030 (Figure 1). Global energy demand grows despite the
relatively high world oil and natural gas prices that are projected to persist into the mid-
term outlook (2030).

Figure 11. World Marketed Energy Use by Fuel Type, 1980-2030
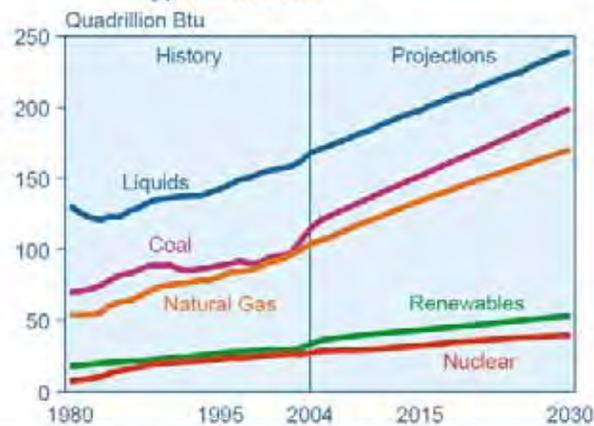
Sources: **History**: Energy Information Administration (EIA), *International Energy Annual 2004* (May-July 2006), web site www.eia.doe.gov/iea. **Projections**: EIA, System for the Analysis of Global Energy Markets (2007).

U.S. Energy Usage, by Sector (2004)
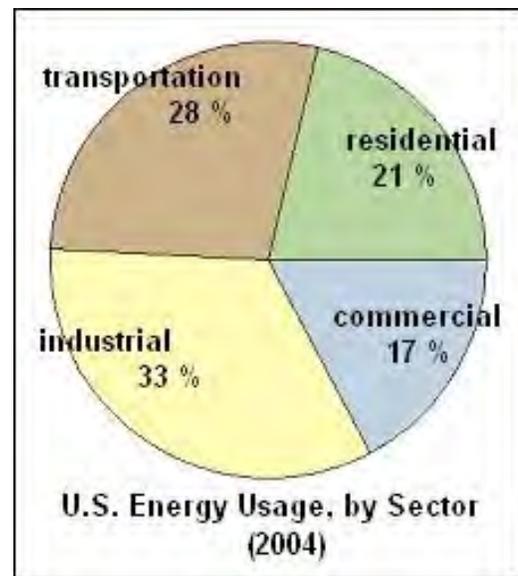
The electric power sector accounts for about two-thirds of the world's coal consumption
throughout the projection period, and the industrial sector accounts for most of the
remainder. Coal and natural gas remain the most important fuels for electricity generation
throughout the projection period, together accounting for 80 percent of the total
increment in world electric power generation from 2004 to 2030 in the reference case.

Liquids remain the most important fuels for transportation, because there are few alternatives that can compete widely with petroleum-based liquid fuels. On a global basis, the transportation sector accounts for 68 percent of the total projected increase in liquids use from 2004 to 2030.

Unless there is a drastic and unprecedented change in the direction taken for energy generation for both electricity and transportation, most of this energy will come from fossil fuels. Of course, then the world's population will remain hostage to both greenhouse effects and, for most OECD nations, to third world oil suppliers.

Figure 6. World Electricity Generation by Fuel, 2004-2030

Sources: 2004: Energy Information Administration (EIA), International Energy Annual 2004 (May-July 2006), web site www.eia.doe.gov/iea. Projections: EIA, System for the Analysis of Global Energy Markets (2007).
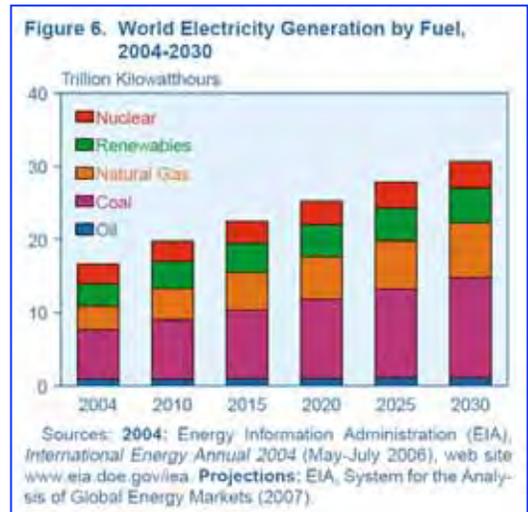
Renewable Energy and Global Warming

Energy density is only part of the story; global warming causing greenhouse gas generation is another. Let's examine all curent renewable energy options, without even considering their costs from a life-cycle perspective. You should instantly be able to recognize they fall into two "greenhouse gas" categories: carbon dioxide generating or not.

Renewables such as biomass, whether as direct fuel, or by burning it, or by converting it to transportation fuels, only defers the Pied Piper's bill. Without an ability to permanently dispose of greenhouse gasses, called sequestration, you're only shuffling the CO_2, not decreasing the amount generated or preventing its release. At 100% efficiency, that means you're just staying even, not reducing the amount of green house gases released. That's better than burning coal, oil, or natural gas, and better supports energy security. However it does not actually reduce the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

Different fuels contribute varying amounts of greenhouse gases, as shown in Table 2. The table does not take into account the amounts of greenhouse gases generated during the mining of coal or uranium, or when drilling for oil, or refining the uranium and oil, or transporting any fuels to a power plant.

Energy Source	Approximate Amount of CO2 Released in 1999 (Pounds CO2 per MWh)	Total Power Generated in the US (2003)
Fuel oil	1,900	100 Billion (B) KWh
Natural gas	1,300	600 BKWh
Coal	2,100	≈ 1,950 BKWh
Nuclear Power	None	750 BKWh
Solar Energy (Electric)	None	All Renewables 350 BKWh
Hydroelectric Power	None	
Wind Power	None	
Others (Tide and Geothermal)	None	Green = No direct CO_2 releases

Table 2 - Carbon Dioxide Releases From Various Types Of Power Plants

Table 2 does not take into account the greenhouse gas costs of manufacturing the equipment used for energy generation. Such life-cycle greenhouse gas data is becoming available for the nuclear industry and is certain to be refined as the international war on greenhouse effects is fought. Table 3 lists some recently published International Energy Agency data on the more compelling life-cycle emissions from energy generation.

Power Generation Type	Gram-Equivalents CO_2 per KW-hour
Nuclear Power	2 to 59
Hydroelectric	2-48
Wind	7-125
Solar	13-731
Natural Gas	389 to 511
Coal	Preliminary data from the IEA suggest several times greater than natural gas.
International Energy Agency [IEA] analysis results reported in the August/September 2007 *Insight*. *Insight* is a Nuclear Energy Institute publication.	

Table 3 - Approximate Life Cycle Emissions From Power Generation

Conclusions

To meet the goals of energy independence and battling the greenhouse effect, we must support and make appropriate use of renewable energy. However, unless they become orders of magnitude more energy dense, renewables can only supplement, not replace, high energy density sources of power.

Let's not be blinded by the hype! Renewables will support enhancement of quality of life across the world, but basic energy needs still require use of hydroelectric, nuclear, space-based solar collection (still a dream), and, for now, the extensive use of fossil fuels. A possible path forward includes:

- Increase our ability to use renewable energy sources such as the wind, sun, hydropower, and the tides, perhaps even the heat of the earth. We need to start, even though most experts don't believe there will be enough energy from these means to meet total global energy needs.

- Find the means to enhance conservation without Orwellian controls and loss of living standards. It's the art of using less energy in our lives, but minimizing the pain. (E.g., use fluorescent lights instead of tungsten bulbs.)

- Let's clearly publicize the subsidies that hide real costs. Let the taxpayers decide whose getting the gravy and who's being ripped off. Remember, costs count, and sooner or later they catch up with you.
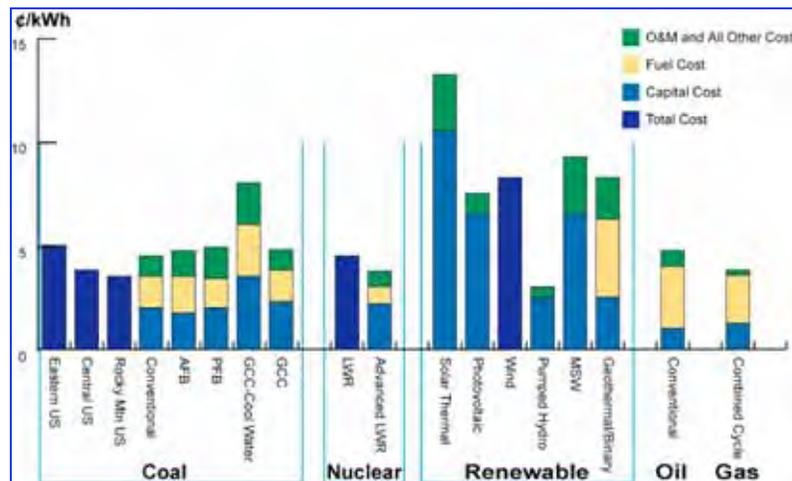
- Mandate standardized Life-Cycle Accounting (e.g., nuclear vs. coal or oil) as part of give-away programs our well-lobbied representatives live on. Stop hiding actual greenhouse contributions from the cradle-to-grave costs of power generation. The nuclear industry does this; it's required by law. Why can't coal or solar energy be *forced* to do the same?

- Fight back on lobbyist hype. Name names and list dollars donated to our public officials. The lobbyists prevent making tough decisions such as:

-
  - o Road taxes based on energy efficiency that should relate to vehicle weight. This should also help rebuild our shattered infrastructure.
  - o Establish transportation energy requirements (e.g., fleet mileage limits)
  - o Validate and widely publish the real cost of corn ethanol and other globally positive greenhouse/energy solutions beloved by special interests.

- Establish tough unsubsidized Cap and Trade systems or carbon taxes. The Europeans blew it in their first round, but the updated system is much more realistic. As an alternative, create a system of value added taxes [VAT] for the products created by polluting industries. That ought to keep the economists and politicians busy for a while. It would penalize polluters who would find their products more costly and harder to sell. If implemented — a big if — perhaps it can sway coal rich nations (US, Russia, China, India) think twice before adding more no longer cheap power plants. [No, I'm not smoking funny stuff, but am dreaming just a little.]

Reality Check — Burning carbon-based fuels in power plants or as transportation fuels clearly adds to the global warming issue. Nuclear energy, hydroelectric power, and renewables are the only presently known ways to generate power with minimal impact on global warming. We need to support all of these.

We can also cover significant parts of our farmland in sunshine and wind-rich states with wind solar farms. This seems a poor alternative to energy density, but it does generate the overall power we need. Since I could not find reliable acreage information on acres of land per MW from solar or wind, I could guess how much agricultural land we need to convert. One could then create a new state song that allowed one to praise the virtues of being *surrounded by acres* of solar cells or wind farms, rather than as in Washington State, acres of clams.

Added Reading

I thought about adding a reading list to this article, but two things stopped me;

• First, a hundred or so references would get old fairly quickly.
• Second, most of you who are non-believers would find alternative articles by pundits, often with no technical or economics credentials, to refute my arguments. They know they can save the world, given the power and dollars to do so. I only know that there are no black and white solutions, and all solutions have hidden cost over their lifetimes.

So check out Wikipedia and the major international and national web sites that are related to energy. These include those about energy maintained by organizations like the IEA, the IAEA and maintained by federal agencies. Check out advocacy sites; but like all things on the web; take all of them with a grain of salt.

Enjoy, and if you have thoughts on this column, write an article and submit it to macC. We'll only edit your grammar, not your beliefs. Remember, rants and raves are okay, but do so politely with your set of *perceived* facts.

PS

The figures and tables included in this column were generated by the US Department of Energy, the Energy Information Administration, a variety of agencies sponsored by the United Nations, the International Energy Organization, the British Broadcasting Corporation, and other widely peer reviewed information sources.

Zoom: The Global Race to Fuel the Car of the Future

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Authors: Iain Carson and Vijay Vaitheeswaran
http://www.vijaytothepeople.com
Twelve Books
http://twelvebooks.com/books/zoom.asp
Released: October 2007
Pages: 352
$28 USD, $32.50 CND
ISBN 10: 0-446-58004-X
ISBN 13: 978-0-446-58004-5

Strengths: Provides excellent history of the car and oil industries.

Weaknesses: A few typos, Hardcover book-binding was over-glued. Info in various chapters is duplicated. No weblinks in the bibliography.

Introduction

Oil is the problem. Cars are the solution.

Zoom identifies and gives voice to a Great Awakening sweeping the industrialized world - a growing realization that in order to protect the environment and lessen our dependence on oil from volatile Middle East countries, we must rethink and recreate the automobile. This is happening, now, all over the world, in Japan, Silicon Valley, India, and China, as entrepreneurs, environmentalists, and inventors collaborate on a new generation of cars powered by hydrogen, electricity, bio-fuels, and digital technology.

You may think the solutions are decades away, but *Economist* correspondents Iain Carson and Vijay Vaitheeswaran prove that the revolution is underway now by introducing readers to an inspiring group of visionaries who are trying to remake the automobile and energy industries. We also meet the petroleum and automobile executives in Michigan and Texas who are fighting for survival, and the savvy leaders at Toyota who have transformed their company into the world's top automobile manufacturer.

Every political candidate running for national office advocates energy reform. *Zoom* offers a lucid and compelling way forward.
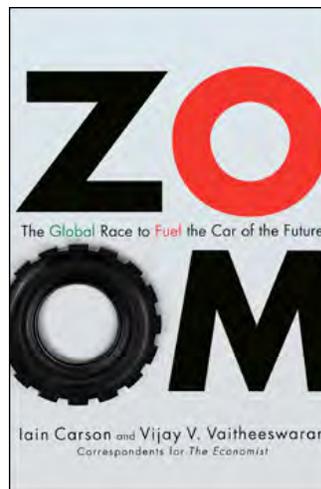
What I Learned

The authors did a great job compiling the twin industries that feed off each other – vehicles and oil.

The book is full of wonderful play on words and touches of humor in the provocative titles and subtitles.

Once again, these authors have also fallen prey to the hydrogen technology as the saviour of worldwide transportation with fuel cell technology as the "next big thing". They also offer facts and figures for Red China and India and do a lot of name-dropping on various up-and-coming folks who offer alternatives. And I see that the book is a snap-shot in time and provides a rich look at current events.

The premise is that there will be plenty of oil for at least another 30 years, but the alternative technologies need to ramp up quickly to avoid a global meltdown.

For the car industry, apparently Toyota is the poster child for alternative transportation technologies as they numbly thrust and parry with other car manufacturers for world domination.

More could have been said about all-electrics, but we will have to wait patiently for the highway legal units that can go the distance at a price we can all afford.

Now if we can really get the hydrogen-producing electrolysis equipment in place to generate hydrogen from dam site, nuclear facilities and as windpower storage systems, we may be going places.

I was most intrigued by the study of nations that are and have been oil-rich, but dirt poor due to the "Oil Curse" and those who are working on diversification as the black gold gets used up.

I found it also interesting that Osama bin Ladin targeted oil to $144 per barrel. He just might get his wish.

I was rather dismayed at the desire of certain movers and shakers to prop up oil prices with tax floors to keep oil above $30 per barrel (currently touching closer to $100 per barrel) as a strategy to provide incentives for alternative energy innovations to flower, fruit and mature.

The book is in 3 parts and 9 chapters and discusses highway robbery by Detroit and Big Oil, whether or not the industry dinosaurs can dance, geopolitical complications and oil addiction, how Asia could save the planet or perhaps the Silicon Valley whiz kids can jump in and swim against the tide as they develop clean fuels and smart cars as they explore biofuels, cellulosic ethanol and "hydricity".

In places, the same themes and verbage keep popping up over and over again almost as a mantra about dancing dinosaurs and middle-east oil control.

Conclusion

This is another thought-provoking book that trips down memory lane and attempts to predict the future, but this one is from the view of economists.

Recommendation

These authors do have the ears of powers-that-be. Hopefully they are being listened to and can make a positive difference in the world as they tweak political ears and help pull money-strings to make things happen. This book is a good spring-board to get up to speed quickly on the current state of affairs regarding the oil and vehicle industries and energy alternatives.

Software

Enjoy the fruit — **Spread the seeds......**

Learn What You Need

TeachMac is a searchable library of multimedia computer tutorials in the form of downloadable modules. View them with the *free* TeachMac application. With TeachMac you get:

- Inexpensive training for home, school and business
- On demand computer instruction for all skill levels
- Customizable lessons to meet individual needs

Teach What You Know

TeachMac is a powerful learning and teaching tool that becomes more powerful everyday as users share their knowledge. With the *free* Module Maker application and a screen capture utility, you teach what you know and share it with the world. Offer your creation for free, or charge a modest fee and earn 100% of the royalties from individual sales. Visit our Module Authors page for details and downloads.

www.teachmac.com

Download the free application and browse our growing library of modules for Mac and Windows.

TeachMac

A Better Finder Attributes 4.6.5 — Do the tweaking needed to make documents more compatible to your installed system and applications

Reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad   © 2007

Developer: Frank Reiff (Publicspace.net) http://www.publicspace.net/ABetterFinderAttributes/index.html/ reiff@publicspace.net **Released:** 17 October 2007 $15 USD **Requirements**: Mac OS X 10.4 or later; Universal binary; 6.7 MB Hard Drive Space.	

Strengths: Changes the file attributes that the Finder won't let you touch.

Weaknesses: list, separated by comma.

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

A Better Finder Attributes [AFBA] allows you to change file attributes that the Finder won't let you touch. Specifically it allows you to change file and photo dates and times, as well as other useful file attribute for reasons I summarize below. Quickly change the following file attributes: modification date and time, creation date and time, batch adjust the Exchangeable Image File (EXIF) time & date that JPEG pictures were shot to compensate for time zones or incorrectly set camera clocks and more. Now why would anyone want to do that. Let me share some reasons, reasons that depend on who you are.

Photographers, both professional and amateur can use the program to correct and edit EXIF information. They can also to adjust photo shooting or creation dates, to compensate for incorrectly set camera clocks or incorrect sorting in the Finder.

System Administrators can use ABFA to remove Macintosh invisible file, such as DC_Store files, prior to burning CDs or DVDs they share with non-Macintosh users. They can also use this tool to set the files' creation and modification dates to appropriate values before placing them onto a network server for group access.
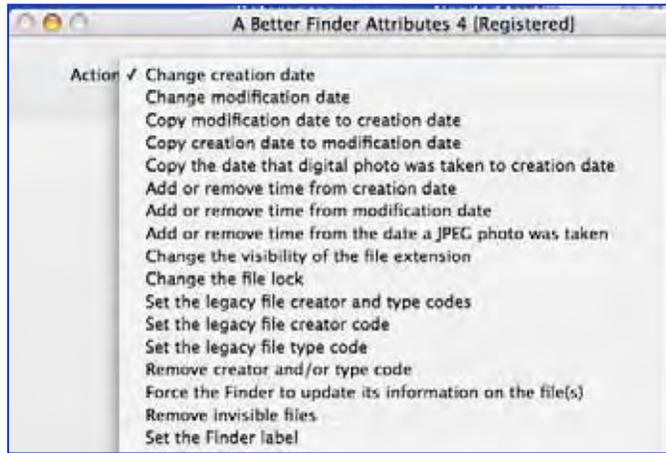
Developers, according to Frank Reiff, have a use for this application, but I could figure out how they would uniquely use it. It seem from the ABFA website, that they used in a manner similar to Web site maters and or systems administrators

Curious Reviewers, me, can play with the software as I describe in the next section.

Getting Started

As usual for well-developed and designed products, installation,, a drag and drop to my applications folder worked flawlessly. A few mouse and keyboard clicks later, to enter my Serial Number I was ready to play.

As its developer pointed out, "you can use AFBA as a stand-alone application, dragging & dropping files onto the application icon or directly into the file list window. Alternatively you can use it straight from the Finder using either the context menu or the command-control-A hot key combination.
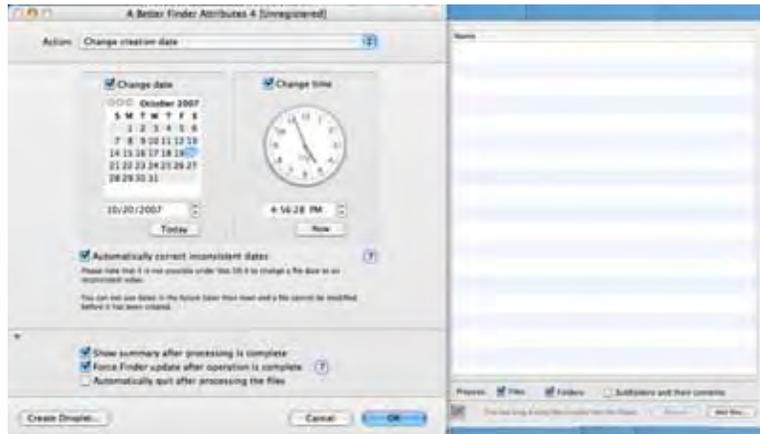
Tweaking attributes with the application is done in the *file list window*. It displays your currently selected files along with the attributes you are about to change. The file list can be attached to the main dialog or detached into a separate window."

Since I had only few items that I'd want to use the product on, but overwhelming sense of curiously, I used it to:

- Change the modification date and time on a few MSW, PDF and JPEG files. While I was at it, why not change the creation date — Okay, all of that worked.

- Working with the recipes folder I use to create my mmmRecipes CDs and DVDs, I used ABFA remove invisible files (including DS_Store) from entire folder hierarchies. Because of the waning the developer provided, I tried this on a duplicate of my recipes file; it worked and I was able to burn a DVD w/o any DS_Store files associated with every folder on the CD/DVD disk.

- I played at locking and then unlocking some files I used as template for reviews and articles. That action prevents the name and the contents of the file to be modified. That worked, but I prefer to just lock the folder my files are stored, and dragging out a copy therefore giving me template I can use. *I know, since most of my templates are MSW documents, that I can use the template feature in MSW; that awkward so I'd do it my way — aren't Macintosh system wonderful.*

- I also played at using ABFA to show or hide the file extension for a grab bag full of file, but had no immediate use for that feature

- Having needed to do so in the past, I quickly explored resetting the Mac OS 9 legacy creator and type codes. Useless to me now, since I'm unlikely to need most of the archive files I created back in the MSW 5.x or FileMaker 4 days; but by updating the codes, I was able to crack these files with my current software. What I don't know, not having taken the time to check, was whether my current software MSW 2004 or FMP 6 would have opened these unaided.

User Manual — An online user manual can be accessed at:
http://www.publicspace.net/ABetterFinderAttributes/download.html/

Conclusions and Recommendation

Although I'm mot a digital media professional or web master, I have used ABFA to clean up CDs before burning them on CD or DVD by removing unsightly and to PC users, confusing invisible files. My PC using friends keep asking about the DS_Store files they find on my recipe disks. It's easier to remove them, thus avoiding confusion.

I played with setting the files' creation and modification dates to appropriate values as well as testing other ABFA features. Now I don't need this wonderfully performing product! I am neither a heavy user of digital media, a system administrator or a developer. What I tried worked.

Would I use the product again? Surely, when ever I was going to release a new update on my recipe collection. However, what I tired and more importantly what little, alas, there was that I googled, make this a likely priority buy for those of you who do serve in the identified roles. Using the product to change file and photo dates and times, as well as other Finder hidden file attributes, things you need to do routinely make this product a potentially important tool in your working life.

Check out the demo; this may one of the better useful, bit inexpensive tools, you added to your working software collection.

PS

If you're a photographer, check out:
http://www.applelinks.com/index.php/more/a_better_finder_attributes_465_adds_batch_finder_label_setting/

Also there's Chris Marshal's all to brief review:
http://www.chrismarshall.ws/?p=584

Avenir 2.3.6: The Writer's Workshop - An authoring tool worth your time

Reviewed by Derek Caudill   © 2007   Edited by Harry (doc) Babad

Company: Return Self Software
Developer: Todd Ransom
Developers' Web Site: http://returnself.com/
Developer Contact: avenirsoftware@mac.com
Forum: http://returnself.com/forum/
Released: August 13, 2007

Cost: $30 USD

System Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4 or higher; Available as a Universal Binary.

Strengths: Clean familiar interface, smooth integration with existing OS X features, user flexible, strong developer and user-base support, strong page layout alignment and text formatting features, interactive user Tutorial, auto save and backup features, Growl support, too many additional helpful features to list in this section.

Weaknesses: Out of date help documentation, help documentation doesn't discuss all features, lack of basic page layout display features, occasional interface-access bugs. Terminology may confuse some.

For a 30 launch demo of Avenir, simply download and install, when starting, just click the Use Demo button: Demo download page

The software was tested on a Digital Audio 733 MHz PowerPC G4 Macintosh with 1.25 GB SDRAM running under Mac OS X 10.4.9 – 10.4.10 and took only 10.7 MB on my non-Intel system.

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(**Reviewer's Note:** I have been informed that Avenir does not use standard outline terms to describe its interface features. For those who are familiar with such terms, and in the hopes of a clearer review, I have tried not to use Avenir's terms too often. For clarification, Avenir uses these terms:

- Instead of Element, Avenir uses "Object"
- Instead of Group, Avenir uses "Category"
- Instead of Character, Avenir uses "Actor"
- Instead of Filter, Avenir uses the term "Smart View"

- To describe the outline and narrative as a whole, Avenir uses the word "Project" and
- To describe the groups and their list' of elements, Avenir uses the word "View".)

Now the use of the developers specialized terms is no big deal, but may confuse those of you who actively use outlines, or have tried other authoring software.)

What Avenir Does

I'm the type of writer that usually has so many ideas when I start writing a story, I can't keep everything straight. I have folders full of partially completed stories that I just didn't finish because I got blocked on an organizational level. Being so disorganized, and a wannabe fiction writer, I am desperate for any type of help.

I hope to find such help, for those afflicted with creative disarray, and myself, in applications that promise aid in outlining our creative thoughts and in putting them all together in a clear to read narrative.

Two such applications I have found are Mariner Software's *Montage* for screenwriters (Reviewed by Mike Hubbartt in the May 2007 issue of macCompanion), and Real Self Software's Avenir for fiction writers.

Avenir is a program focused on helping wannabe and established fiction authors create detailed outlines that include information on every element of their story, and then using that outline to create a clear reading narrative.

According to Real Self Software's website, "*Avenir is a new kind of software for writers. Part word processor, part database, completely focused on the creative process. Whether you are brainstorming for your first short story or putting the finishing touches on your latest best-seller Avenir provides the tools you need to manage the creative process from inception to publication.*"

Avenir's promise has great potential, and could very well live up to the positive expectations of its developer's plugs.

How Avenir Does It

Avenir treats every element of the narrative, characters, locations, scenes, and even the chapters themselves, as separate "Objects", each with their own notes section. These elements are then grouped together into "Categories" based on what kind of element they are, i.e., all the character elements are put in their own group, all the scenes elements are put into theirs, and so forth.

By doing this, Avenir lets the author keep detailed notes on every element for reference when actually writing their novel. These notes can be anything. For example, an author may create a character named Bob, and then write notes detailing Bob's favorite food, color, and where he went to school. Likewise, the author can write notes detailing the locations where events in the story take place, so that when writing descriptions in the novel, he or she can paint a picture with words.

Additionally, Avenir also includes three additional groups of notes designed to keep track of any research materials needed for the narrative, and to keep track of the current tasks that the writer is doing, to help them stay focused, i.e., spending an hour developing Bob's educational history.
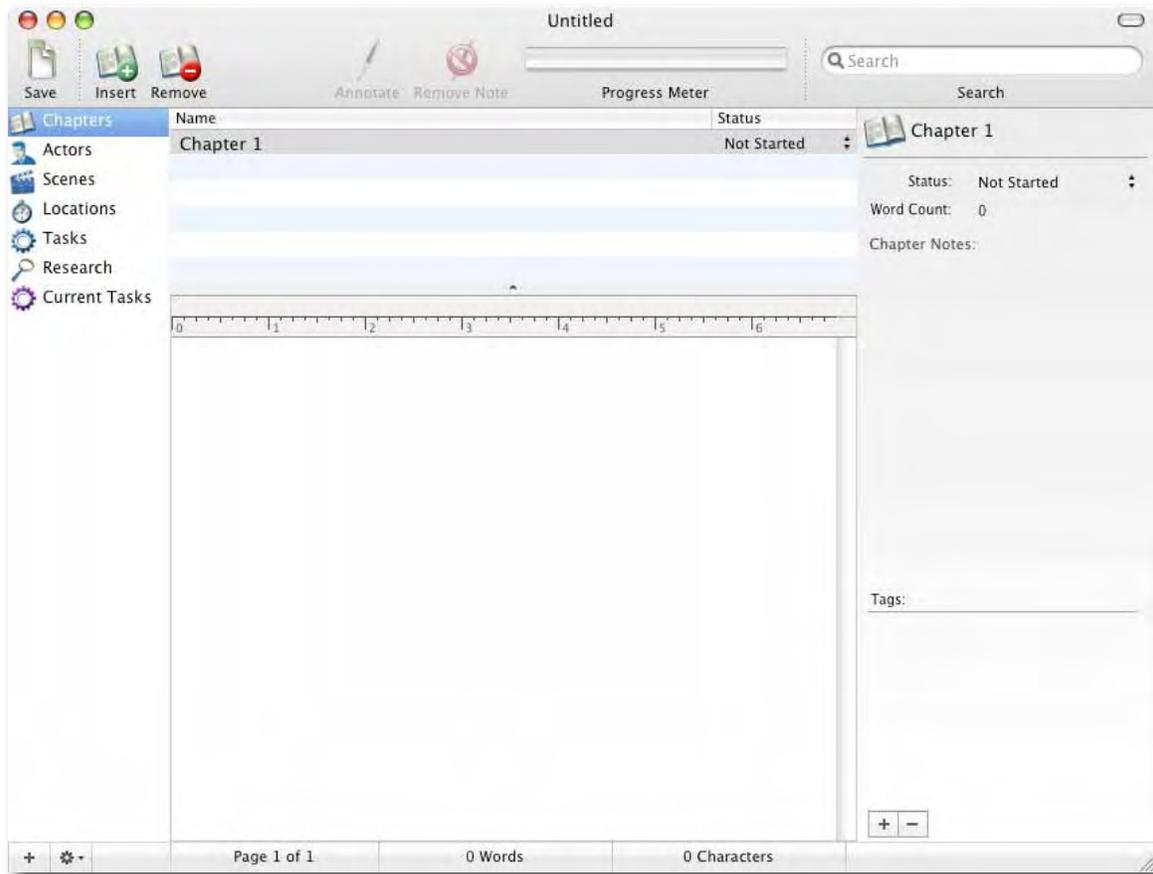
Avenir's interface (main working window) is straightforward. It consists of only three columns. Each of the groups can be seen on the left hand side, and when clicked, expands into the second column to show each element's parts in a list. (The group clicked and the list of elements is referred to as a "View", for example, the "Chapters View".), When an element is clicked, it will call up the notes in a second row in that column for that element.

The third column contains little pieces of information that connects each element, such as which chapter a particular element appears in. If the author wishes to group different types of elements together, it allows the author to create tags to link them. These could then be used to create filters, or a "Smart View", that show all the elements that contain a specific tag.

For example, the author could have over a dozen characters created, but wants to view only those in the Smith family. The author could add the tag "Smith Family" to each character that is a member. Then create a filter that when clicked only shows those Smith family related characters.

Story Element Integration - All of the elements of the narrative are created and organized in this fashion. When the author is ready to begin writing the novel, their ideas on what they want to do with a story and each element have been captured. Where they want to go with each element of their story is not only well thought out, but documented for easy reference. This way, they can focus on putting the narrative (story) together when writing, instead of making it all up as they go along and throwing it all together.

Using Avenir to create, in effect, a detailed outline of story elements lets the author take all the pieces, and fit them into the place where they belong. The software's straightforward interface also allows for a short learning curve for using Avenir. The author can spend more time creating their outline, and writing the novel, than spending time learning how to use the software.

Additional Features to Ease a Writer's Task

Avenir expands the functions of the basic "how-it-works" details described above with a variety of additional enhancements (tools) that aide in actually creating the outline, and writing the narrative.

When creating the notes for each element, the second row of the second pane acts as a TextEdit.app-like environment that by default only includes basic font formatting tools. This allows the author to segment the notes or create emphasis using **bolded**, underlined, or *italicized* text.

When the author begins to create actual chapter contents, the "notes row" changes to feature not only those basic font formatting tools, but also basic paragraph, and tab, alignment tools. In other words, the software defacto changes from a plain-text editor to a more word processing-like tool.

Getting an Uncluttered View - While Avenir's main interface is unobtrusive and clean, some might find working with multiple columns distracting. Such a user can create the notes for each element in a separate window that sits above the main interface. This lets the user switch back to the main interface window to access the other groups, and then back to the element's notes separate window. For element notes, the all-standard formatting features are available in that separate window. This is true when creating chapter content, but that separate window takes on added features of a "Chapter Editor window" retaining the paragraph and tab alignment features.

Chapter Editor - tutorial.avenirproj

Zoom   No Value

Styles | Spacing | Lists

This lesson is best viewed in the chapter editor window. If this chapter is not opened in its own separate window please double-click "Chapter Editor" in the list of chapters in Chapters view to open it in the chapter editor window.

The chapter editor window offers several additional features.

Annotations

Up until I wrote Avenir I always did all of my proofreading and revising by hand, on printed copies. Why? The same reason editors do it that way -- it was the only way I could make notes. Click on any of the blue underlined words to see what I mean.

To annotate a section of text, first highlight it with the keyboard or mouse. When text is highlighted the pen icon will become enabled. Click

Styles | Spacing | Lists

of text but you can also use them as a means of navigating large chapters.

Chapter Notes

In addition to keeping annotations on specific sections of text you can keep notes that apply to the entire chapter. The nice thing about chapter notes is that they are always visible, unlike annotations, which change depending on the selected annotation.

Zoom

Finally, the Chapter editor window gives you the ability to magnify the text in this window without changing the font. The leftmost button in the statusbar at the bottom of this window shows you the current zoom level. Simply click the button to change the zoom.

100%   •   Page 2 of 2   399 Words   2297 Characters

In such a stand-alone window, the author can split the screen horizontally or vertically. As a result of this feature they can reference one part of the chapter while writing another. Any word can be "annotated" to include clarifying additional notes. The user can automatically go to the location of these annotated words via a drop-down menu on the window's toolbar.

For those that find anything but text on the screen too distracting, the writer can even clear the entire screen, OS X menubar included, and replace it with a colored background on which nothing else appears but the text they are typing; done via the "Chapter Editor Window".

It is important to note that all throughout the chapter content creation process, the author can click back and forth to review their notes that they created while outlining their novel, and they can even edit them as well.

Additional Capabilities

While the primary focus of Avenir is to help create a detailed outline for a fiction narrative, it goes above that purpose by including additional tools that help not only with the outline creation process, but also helps to keep the author focused. While full descriptions of all of these abilities are beyond this review's scope, several that I found impressive include:

1. Setting a word, page, or time goal for each writing session, and a separate word goal for the entire project using the built in Progress Meter.
2. Checking how many times a particular word is used, and what the ten most commonly used words are, with the built in Word Frequency Meter.
3. Performing many of the functions found in the toolbar and menubar using contextual menus.
4. Performing batch functions on multiple elements.
5. Adding graphics to any notes by use of drag and drop.
6. Turning text into clickable links to any webpage, from any group.
7. Copying any format styles and pasting those styles into any group.
8. Converting text into other formats; e.g. ALL CAPS, Title Case, lowercase, and Smart and Straight Quotes.
9. Using many of the features built into Mac OS X such as the systems' spell checker, font palette, special character palette, and the services menu.
10. Working with Growl (http://growl.info/), featuring a variety of notifications for the user to choose from.
11. Automatically saving the project every ten minutes, not only in the original location, but also to a user set backup folder, and to the user's .Mac account as well.
12. Renaming, deleting, and/or creating additional groups to fit specific element types.
13. Saving custom outlines as custom templates for future use.
14. Using at least three built in templates; the default Novel template that it opens for new projects, one based on the Snowflake method of writing (http://www.advancedfictionwriting.com/art/snowflake.php), and another based on the Novel method with a Submissions group already included.

Gripes and Suggested Features

Avenir at this stage of its development does its job well, but, in my opinion, it could be improved.

• *Non-standard Outline Terminology:* While I don't really consider Avenir's terms a problem, to appease those who are a stickler for the standard outline or authoring terminology, I would suggest that the developer list in the built in tutorial, and the manual, a conversion chart of sorts for Avenir's terms, much as I have at the beginning of this review.

- *Help Documentation Manual Out-dated:* While I found that the included help documentation manual was an invaluable resource while I was doing this review, I was disappointed that it wasn't up to date with the current version of Avenir. There were too many references to features and tools that no longer exist in the current software version.

- *Tutorial and Manual Detail:* I was concerned that there wasn't more discussion listing all of Avenir's features in more detail. The included manual and tutorial are downright skimpy. Too often I found myself having to figure out how things worked. In some instances, features are left out completely from the manual, but are found in the tutorial, and vice versa. Worse yet, they aren't covered in either place! E.g. the trait of the Word Frequency Meter to highlight the ten most commonly used words. I had to post to the forum to find out what was going on when I saw those words mysteriously highlighted.

  > (**Reviewer Tutorial Related Side Note:** I would imagine that this lack of consistency and cooperation between the manual and the tutorial could be a real deal breaker for new users, thankfully, the problem is lessened somewhat by the helpful forum community that offers tips, advice, and all kinds of help. In fact, in the future, the manual-tutorial inconsistency problem might not even exist. The developer, and a forum member who acts as surrogate tech support, 'George the Flea', are working on creating an online Wiki to altogether replace the help documentation based on "George the Flea's" descriptive and easy to understand walkthrough of Avenir. You can find the latest version of this walkthrough, and all the discussion about it at: http://returnself.com/forum/index.php?topic=411.0. (Note that as of this review, the walkthrough would be applicable to versions 2.3.3 and up.
  >
  > I've had several conversations with 'George the Flea'. He stresses that his walkthrough isn't for those who are already fairly familiar with Avenir; it is "*painfully step-by-step*". I assume that the Wiki, if completed, could come to replace the built in tutorial as well.)

- *Page Layout:* I would like to be able to see a page layout view in Avenir like in Word and AppleWorks that shows the pages as separate, with borders. With the similarity between Avenir and TextEdit.app, I was surprised that there wasn't a page layout view available.

- *Page Margin Control:* I would like to be able to set the page margin measurements, when printing the chapters myself. I also would like to have more room on a page to type. Since Avenir makes available other page layout and alignment tools, I find it odd that margin control is missing.

- *Headers and Footers:* I would like to be able to include footers. Being able to set up a "back page" that has automated page numbers and user set headers and footers for every page, such as those that can be created in applications like Adobe InDesign, would be a really slick touch in case I wanted to print my narrative out myself.

- *Thesaurus Access Needed:* Avenir needs to make a Thesaurus available to us sometimes word-poor authors. Integration with Mac OS X's dictionary is nice, but I have never been able to access the operating system-included Thesaurus that is supposed to be included with the system dictionary.

Bugs Encountered In Avenir

I only encountered a few bugs with Avenir's functionality, none of which were very serious:

- *Annotation Issues:* Several times, while working in the main interface, and in the "Chapter Editor Window", neither the Annotate, nor Delete Annotate toolbar buttons would light up. This occurred when I selected text to annotate, and even when I placed the cursor in the annotated word with the intention to delete the annotation.

  The buttons would sometimes light up for the first selection, but after that, they were very finicky, sometimes working, and sometimes not. At first, I thought that maybe it was because I was selecting spaces to start with, but that wasn't the case, and closing the "Chapter Editor Window", or switching groups didn't help. I could use the menu to add and delete annotations, so I wasn't stuck, but I eventually had to quit Avenir, and restart it to get the buttons working reliably again. This has only happened to me once, but is still something to be aware of.

- *The Vanishing, Almost, Tutorial:* I've had several problems getting the tutorial to display consistently. It also seems finicky, as sometimes it opens, and other times it doesn't. Often times I would try to bring it up from the Help menu and nothing would happen; I eventually had to close the project I had open, and only then would the tutorial open again. I did manage to get the tutorial to open once after I had reopened the project, but it was lacking all the toolbars, and all but the left hand pane was missing. The rest of the window didn't show up again in the tutorial until I clicked on a group. As with the annotations issue, restarting Avenir seemed to clear this up, and I haven't encountered it again.

Conclusion

Avenir features a clean work environment that doesn't distract me from the task of writing. Gone are countless toolbars, floating palettes, and innumerable options that seem to be in hiding. You know, the "extras" that haunt upscale word processors or other writing aides. Avenir contains many useful easy to access tools that provide a solid foundation for building an outline of a piece of fiction and then writing it. Those feature rich tools make writing easier. I find its ease of use makes Avenir an excellent and well-designed tool to help any new, or experienced, fiction writer start, control and complete their project.

Add to that mix the flexibility the writer is given to modify their outline, as the authors ideas change, elements begin to lose their importance, and as new elements come to the author's mind, it's clear that Avenir delivers on it's developers claims, and comes close to living up to its potential.

Although I've provided a list of bugs encountered, none of them required me to contact the developer for help. None caused Avenir to be anywhere near unusable, or even remotely unpleasant to use, and after evaluating my gripes and suggestions, Avenir still remains suited to its task.

An added bonus for the users is that Avenir has as its developer, Mr. Todd Ransom, who is dedicated to making Avenir the best it can be. This is evidenced not only by the many writer friendly features he's added to the software, but also by his public interactions with Avenir's user-base.

Mr. Ransom uses the Avenir forums to start discussions that both help in explaining the features of Avenir, and as a place to gather user suggestions for features they would like to see changed or added in future versions. Such discussions also help give him a feel for how the user-base perceives and make use of Avenir so he knows what changes would be beneficial. If there are any problems that creep up, Mr. Ransom is quick to respond, and to issue updates if needed.

A Critical User Requirement - Before beginning to use Avenir, I can't stress highly enough how beneficial it would be for any new user to work through the included tutorial and help files. Doing so doesn't take long, and really helps change ones perspective that Avenir is just another word processor. Believe, me, it's not. Take it from a guy who will at times live up to the stereotype of jumping in head first and never reading directions or manuals; if you don't go into Avenir with the basic understandings that the tutorial and help files provide, you could seriously hinder your efforts at creating a detailed outline and a clean reading narrative.

Not that Avenir is very complex, or difficult, to use. On the contrary, it is very easy to use, it just requires changing how you think when writing your novel and trying to win your next Pulitzer Prize. Remember, the outline comes first, don't put the cart before the horse!

I can see why it's built exclusively for the Mac, as it truly make's you "*Think Different*" about how you start, and write, your projects.

Recommendation

Try It - Buy it! - I recommend Avenir to anyone looking for help in putting together his or her thoughts as a basis for a story or novel.

(In fact, I know a few PC using authors that I'm going to tell about this to perhaps sway them to try out an Intel Mac.)

While Avenir doesn't have all of the bells and whistles of Microsoft Word, or even AppleWorks, it doesn't need them; it's not a tool for letter's, memo's, or brochures. It's for fiction writing. Its focus on capturing all the usual story elements, (e.g., plot, characters, time-line, locale) using an outline is just what an easily distracted author needs.

Avenir has enough tools to fulfill its purpose, both as a tool to capture your ideas, and to organize them into a lucid well organized piece of fiction. Once a budding writer tries Avenir, they will be amazed at how much easier it is to not only organize all their story elements, but to also finally finish writing that "Great (Insert Country here) Novel" that is growing within them.

Try it out; the only drama you'll encounter will be in the fiction that you'll use Avenir to create.

Getting Started with DEVONthink Pro Office 1.3.3 — One of the most feature rich, and agile database grounded PIM I've yet worked with

Reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad   © 2007

DEVONtechnologies, LLC
http://www.devon-technologies.com/products/devonthink/index.html

$150 USD, with a 25% educational discount available. $146.56 CND, £ 73.48 UK, 106 €. [Cost based on conversions factors only.] *Copes of the related DEVONthink personal and Pro are less costly.*
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.3.9 or higher, Universal binary; 133 MB Hard Drive Space not including the sizes of the generated database files.

Strengths: A powerful, flexible organizing tool. Excellent tutorials via DEVONthink Demo Movies, a detailed and well-illustrated user manual, and reasonably illustrative examples database files.

Weaknesses: I really did not have time to truly become an expert at this powerful, but easy to use product.

For a demo of this and related products: http://www.devon-technologies.com/download/index.html A 150-hour test drive version is available for download.

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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

Introduction

I have been along term user of several DEVON Technologies products including DEVONnote and DEVONagent. I am, as many of you know, both an information junkie, and a lover of things database.

I am presently using DEVONnote as my major tidbit organizer, things ranging from the serial numbers of all my software to information and links to all the media sites that interest me… with about 1000 items and growing my this PIM database. I also keep FileMaker Pro 6 or 8 databases in which I collect a variety of addresses (professional contacts, supplier, and of course friend and family. I also have databases in which I catalog various media collections including books, CDs & Vinyl, and DVDs. You knew books were media didn't you?

So why on earth do I need another organizational tool? Well the developer's description hooked me. "In today's world, everything is digital. From shopping receipts to important research papers, your life often fills your hard drive in the form of emails, PDFs, Word documents, multimedia files and more. Questions eventually pop up, like where do you store all of this stuff? How do you organize these very different file types, and even better, how do you find the exact file you're looking for the second you need it? It's almost as if you need a second brain just to keep your digital life straight."

I thought I had the tools to do precisely what the developer claimed, but I thought I'd better check things out to make absolutely sure.

My appetite was further whetted when I read, "DEVONthink Pro Office [DTPO] is the solution to the digital age conundrum. It is your second brain, the one and only database for all your digital files, be they PDFs, emails, Word docs or even multimedia files. Boasting a refined artificial intelligence, DEVONthink is exceedingly flexible and adapts to your personal needs. And if the files are not digital yet, digitize them with DEVONthink Pro Office."
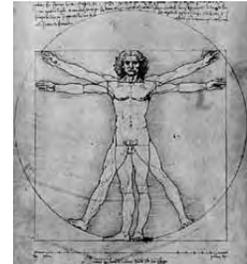
Gee Whiz, what can DEVONthink do for me that I can't handle with a combination of Acrobat Pro 7 and my set of scanners. [A Fugitsu ScanSnap M500 and my venerable HP ScanJet 8250, both with document feeders.]

But perhaps my greatest concern, no concern is too strong a word, was how well the product would play with my DEVONnote's files. Let's see what I found.


Getting Started and Using the Software

Installation was pure Macintosh and simple, a drop and drag to my applications folder and then entering my serial number. I was ready to input into a newly created database.

> As an aside, DEVONthink more, usefully, stores your databases in your document folder, or wherever else you want them to be. This is unlike DEVONnote that stores that information in your *Library > Applications Support> DEVONnote* folder.

Unlike Microsoft Word 2004, Mindjet's MindManager or Acrobat Professional Pro 8, I could not just jump in and create a database on the fly. Well I could, but I decided to be more organized, just this once. By its nature developing a data-based information collection about any complex project is just a bit more difficult… at least form me, then just pounding out an article in a new word processor or dinking with a downloaded PDF recipe file or creating a form in AA8. I also, jumped right in when crating my DEVONnote database; after all it was just a collectio9nb of semi-organized tidbits. DTPO is the sort of product that's easy to chippie with, but to make my results valuable, I needed to spend some time defining the key organizational elements of my project. These are for a book, the initial chapter list, for an article the key focal points.

This is in keeping with the developer's guidance *"To make the best use of DEVONthink Pro's built in artificial intelligence, take some time to set up a good groups structure. The more focused each group is, i.e. the greater the difference in it's contents are from the contents of other groups, the easier it is for DEVONthink Pro to find an appropriate group for a newly added document. Try to not mix groups and documents in a group (does not apply to link documents.)"* That being said, being a compulsive and active user of DEVONnote, getting started was easy.

I spent a fair amount of time (not in front of my Macintosh) thinking about how to work with, if not formally test this feature-rich product. My main concern was how to learn to use the programs features which where an order of magnitude richer that DEVONnote. For a feature comparison between the various versions of DEVONthink and DEVONnote check out [http://www.devon-technologies.com/products/devonthink/comparison.html]
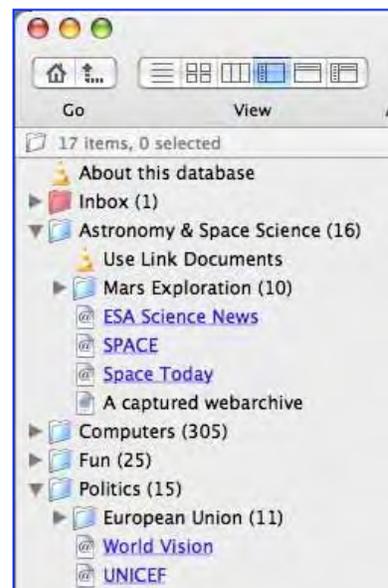
> The developer notes, "To make the best use of DEVONthink Pro's built in artificial intelligence, take some time to set up a good groups structure. The more focused each group is, i.e. the greater the difference in it's contents are from the contents of other groups, the easier it is for DEVONthink Pro to find an appropriate group for a newly added document. Try to not mix groups and documents in a group (does not apply to linked documents.)"

For better or for worse, unlike the publisher's DEVONnote which I use as a grab bag for bits and pieces, in which I instantly created and over the months evolved categories (groups) for organizing dumped snippets, the DTPO information organizer was going to take some greater thought. No it's not the software it's defining the organizing structure for my projects.

I actually, a good guess, approached learning more about DTPO somewhat backward. I started with a downloaded example of a research project, and then migrated to the manual. Now the example wasn't what I, as a fallen academic and scientist expected, but what the heck, it pointed me in the right direction. Why, because the developed illustrated the collected (sample) results of several research efforts, rather than one project.

Why did the sample help kick-start my efforts? — When I booted the program for the first time, its resemblance to DEVONnote when the DTPO program. This resemblance was followed by a feeling of déjà vu when I opened up the research example. I immediately recognized two things:

First, the overall data structure, nested groups (folders) and documents were similar. (E.g., text of all varieties including RTF/RTFD files, text clippings, URLs, and images)

Second, The tool bar on DTPO was significantly more complex than DEVONnote, as befitted its richer features.

Comparison DEVONthink and DEVONnote Toolbars
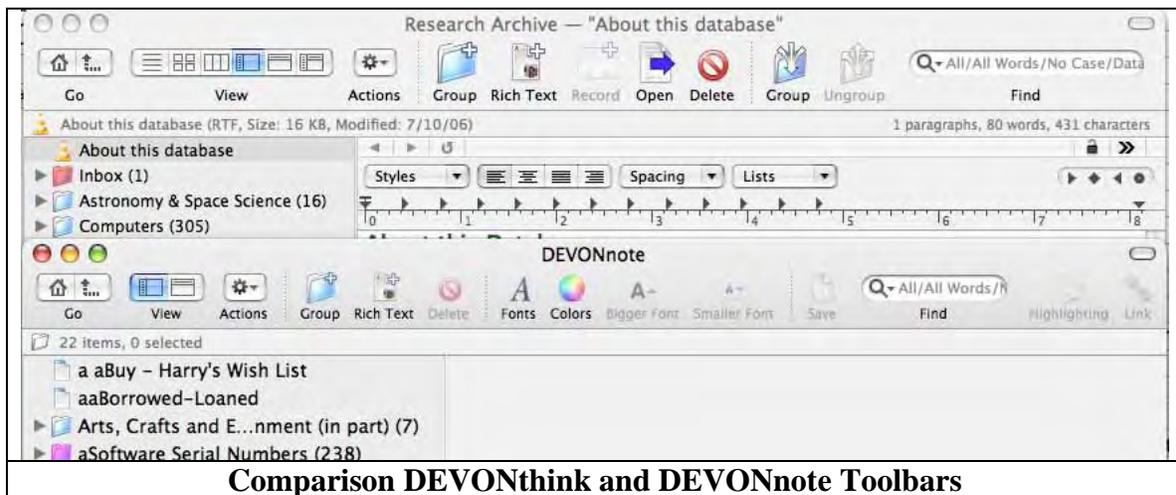
Of course the various versions (personal, professional and office) of DEVONthink ranged in supported document import capabilities, with DTPO being the most capable. Check out the DEVONtechnologies website for brief descriptions of these examples. http://www.devon-technologies.com/support/academy/dt_examples.html]

> **READER ALERT:**
> Just because I'm familiar with DEVONnote and found growing into DTPO easy should not dissuade you for trying this great program in one of its variation. I started gaining from the organizational useful featured of DEVONnote when I first opened it up so many months ago. I saw nothing when diving into DEVONthink, that would have gotten in my way had I started there. The major learning curve for both pieces of software was in organizing my thoughts to best frame information, whether on a grab bag basis or for a specific project.

Okay, What Projects Am I Going To Use DTPO To Organize—Today and Next Month

Yesterday and Today
- Consolidating all the information, used and unused for my macC article on *Renewable Energy - Hype, Myth and Hope*. The article is done, but I amassed 10-25 times more information then I could use. That information is too valuable to leave lying round in scattered folders on my hard drive.

  I've started integrating that information in my DTPO database, but that job is not complete. But then databases are living things, so that' lack of completion is okay. Some of this material I gathered, much of it unused, will be useful for the new book I'm planning.

- I'm starting to collect and then use DTPO to organize information for a textbook on *Energy, Transportation, and Global Warming* that is just a gleam in my eye. I have a start on this one, having worked out a rough chapter structure and am, as time permits, tying resources to each chapter group.

Tomorrow
- I just started collecting background information, doing some preliminary note taking, and consolidating references for an article on the *History of the Limerick*.

- An article or series of articles on cyber locks for macC. I got acquainted with the state of the art uses for such devices at a meeting I attended last February - the itch to write about the subject keeps getting worse but I've not gotten a mental handle around the topic.

> *Test Focus* — Let's get real, in the few weeks I've been working with the product, I've neither had the time to become truly expert, or to build robust and complete databases to support all but my renewable energy article.
>
> *Test Goal* — Learn to be comfortable enough with DTPO to make it easy to construct and easy to expand databases from the MB's of material I've so far gathered on the more complex projects I am undertaking. Therefore the title of this review as *Getting Started*, defacto as introductory.

Because, just because, I did a quick scan of the manual, and then dove right in to building *Renewable Energy - Hype, Myth and Hope*. Database.

The organizational features I used for this effort were the article's section headings. I eliminated the article introduction, as a group, because I felt was not needed as a distinct database grouping. I also renamed the conclusion, for database purposes, to *Renewables Action Needed* I because from a future use purposes, it was clearer than *conclusions*. What I actually did, after setting up a hierarchical group (folder) structure was simple.

- I took all of the important technical information, both narratives and tables, from the article and turned the various paragraphs into RTF notes.

- I collected all of the images associated with each article section and added them to the graphics folder. Then,

- I collected all of the URLs I used a reference material sources and added the to the Links folder

- I then browsed though my energy related hard drive folders and added a few more items to my grouping.

    o Is this complete information set? No!
    o Is it a useful and working example of the use of DTPO? Absolutely!

The work I've reported and the other information gathering in DTPO have given me a sense of comfort, and therefore confidence in my ability to use this versatile product. Enough said, let me generalize about my initial activities to learn to use this product:

I focused, in a somewhat undisciplined manner on the energy related databases. These two items had references and notes in common, because I started collecting stuff about the subjects. The information files, were completed for the Renewable Energy article (this issue of macC) and had spent many months starting to compile references and notes for my book.

What I Did — Although I skimmed the detailed downloadable manual that is available as both a screen (421 pgs) and print (210 pgs) version, I found it more detailed that I needed to get started using the product.

 I further check the developers website for examples of database on which I could base my efforts. I concluded that from the list of templates (Table below) that the *Research Archive* database would serve me best. I did consider, after a quick check, using *Paperless Office*, since the two databases have useful elements in common. These are simple way to organize bunches of stuff for future use.

Office Productivity	
• Paperless Office Database (4.3 MB)	**General Purpose**
• Email Archive Database (3.7 MB)	• Simple Notepad Database (32 KB)
• To-Do List Database (3.6 MB)	• Images Database (8.3 MB)
Research & Project Management	Sharing Information
• Research Archive Database (8.7 MB)	• Web Publishing Database (88 KB)
• Project Management Database (4.1 MB)	
DEVONthink Example Databases	

Fort those of you who like to read about feature sets, I've NOT added these to this article. You can read about them on the developer's website at: http://www.devon-technologies.com/products/devonthink/uniquefeatures.html

Needless to say, as I worked with the product, its rich features were available as needed. I was particularly please with the broaden set of data types (formats) that could be imported into a database and with many of the linking features. I'm still learning how to make best use of those for cross-referencing purposes.

Review Limitations

Deaf and Mostly Medialess — I neither enriched my database collections with sound and movie files stored on my hard drive. Since I neither work with sound and movie files, I was limited to both collecting and at times enriching my database notes with simple images. But from my perspective *I didn't miss a thing being both sight (film) and soundless.* My hard drive is grateful that I did shall not bloat it beyond recognition with music and large video files embedded in DTPO. Neither do I need to copy the contents of a database to an iPod! R upload it to a website.

Printing My Database — I also made no attempt to export the finished product (database) as a website or to an Apple Pages document to print. The later is an alternative the developer mentions on the web site. I own, but don't use Apple's pages, but have yet found no need to print the entire contents of a database.

Full featured Intelligent Search Capabilities — I did not, with the simple samples I created, test out DEVONthink Pro family's built in AI based the search capabilities. DTPO can quickly search, according to the developer, and find relationships based off the things you put into it. I more completely test that feature and share my findings in my upcoming 3Rs article on getting my new book organized.

Discomforts and Unanswered Questions — *Although it was a photo finish with our publication date, I got response from Eric Boehnisch, when he returned from vacation, of DEVONtechnologies to my key questions/discomforts.*

Compatibility with My Present Document Storage Modes — My main concern about the product is not directly related to the software itself, but rather on how I collect and manage, at least at present, data.

Background — At present, based on many years of use, I collect references as consecutively number-short tilted documents in folders on an external drive. My original collection was paper-based, but each of the ca. 1500 documents was indexed as part of my references database. I've would welcome a way, as I can in Apples Finder to continued to use this practice, for electronic documents but have learned from my past experience and have created a new and more flexible FMP data base, based on how librarians actually do such things. In addition, I am scanning the documents I want to keep, to PDF files, with my Fujitsu M550-PPM high-speed document scanner. Surprise: The software can link to my ScanSnap scanner so scanned data can be ported directly into my database.

My Concern — will incorporating the needed documents into DTPO dramatically increase the amount of duplicated space for materials on my hard drive, the one I work on; not the stored reference volume? I don't yet have an answer to that question, but have a call in the developer. *The DTPO manual states that a link is possible, but I've not figure out how to do this.* Simply using an alias as a placeholder for a document doesn't work. DTPO, simply imports the document, be it a PDF or a text file. [Solution: Simply drag it in holding down Command and Option. Or, use File > Index… approach. Doc Sez, The Command and Option drag approach works.]
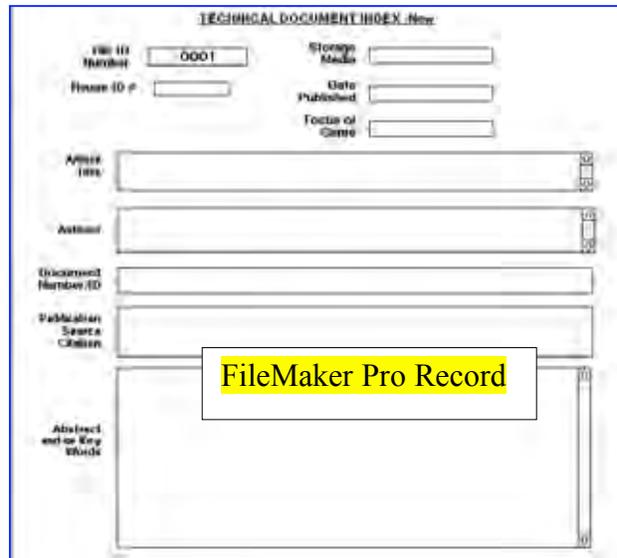
View Options and Display Issues —
- I'm a stubborn old coot and want always to view the contents of the groups I created in list format. Alas there's no present way to choose that as a preference in DPTO, the software default to icon view. Yuck! [Solution: Hmm, it should when you de-check 'Open groups in new window' in Preferences > General you should see the contents of a double-clicked group in the last view format you had selected. Doc Sez, it worked, good deal, list are the way to go.]

- I would welcome a way, as I can do in Apples Finder [View > Show View Options >Large Icons] to enlarge the icon (folder) size that is a bit smaller than I'd like to view. — Eric has added this to the list for Version 2, some time in 2008.

Lack of Strong Contextual Menus — I love contextual menus. Not only do I use the one that are part of my workhorse programs, but also I have installed shareware/freeware CMs to further ease my computing. That's why I was disappointed that DEVON think Pro does not have (use) have contextual menus. I read in a MacUser review note [Kosovar1] that instead the DEVONthink software family relies scripts available from the scripts menu or the commands in the Services menu? I overlooked the lack of strong CM support in DEVONnote When I discovered that the more feature rich DTPO program had not made more extensive use of this type-saving feature, I was disappointed. Am I missing something? Is my not finding extensive action specific CMs due to an incomplete exploration all of DTPO's features? [Explanation: Eric provided me a detailed response which I will publish in next months doc's hints and tips column.]
n

Lack of Spotlight Integration — Some folks [Lev at MacUpdate] are all uptight that DEVONthink doesn't support spotlight searches. As far as Spotlight is concerned, all that stuff you have in DT just doesn't exist. Neither does my other favorite database program FileMaker Pro 6.x. I could care less; I loath spotlight and would remove it from my computer if I could do so without damaging my OS.

My Path Forward with DTPO

I plan future a DTPO related follow up article, as a 3Rs column, on its usefulness, for organizing materials I collect for my planned book *Energy, Transportation, and Global Warming.*

Why? — Two reasons:

• I've not yet scratched all the rich features provided by its developers.

• I have, for a textbook on *Nuclear Energy* that is undergoing peer review collected, for the book, somewhere between 500 and 1000 MB of information. It is stored in a collection of 10 chapter-specific and a bakers-half dozen related unused stuff folders. Some of that material will be useful in my new book.

> BDTPO — Why the spread in references resource sizes? I put less important references, links, search results (DEVONthink), and unused graphics into separate folders than material I actually used or specifically reference in the draft book. It will be a while, working a bit at a time to get all of these bits and pieces input into my new DEVONthink databases.
>
> PS: PDPTO is means pre-DPTO, but you knew that.

I'm hoping I can successfully use DEVONthink Pro Office to organize the reference material I already have on that project as a crossover to the new book. Then I can work out what additional information I need, collect it, and perhaps shorten the writing period.

Conclusion

Despite the other PIM and database tools I own, I began to use DEVONthink in some of the ways intended by its developer. "Use it as your document repository, your filing cabinet, your email archive, or your project organizer. You can even collect and organize data from the web for your own use."

It indeed enable me to both file documents according to where I plan to use them and with finding similar items that I'd precious scattered about my hard drive. I also believe that it can help me make connections between documents (reference materials) that I might have missed on my own. It can, according to its developer, even master huge data collections with a few simple clicks, saving you time and aggravation. I plan on testing that premise when organizing my new book.

Using the software was easy, having previously mastered both DEVONnote and had created a bakers dozen databases and other "snippet and more detailed document" information storage vessels.

I agree with the publisher that "DEVONthink is not only a simple database, it's a flexible work environment, too, with powerful management features suited to any professional project. It provides you with all the tools you need to effectively work with your documents. Use the integrated RTF editor to write new documents, or open the document in a third-party application. You're sure to enjoy the application's flexibility and customization options."

I'm not sure which version of DEVONthink (personal, professional or Office) would best suit your needs but wish I had started with this product, rather than my well loved DEVONnote.

Recommendation

Buy whichever version of the product best appears to meet your needs. DEVONtechnologies has a flexible upgrade program that allows to more to the more feature rich products with minimal fuss. The addendum to this review shows the differences, with respected to data types handled, by the various versions to DEVONtechnologies database products.

PS

I'm sure I can find a way to concert my DEVONnote to DEVONthink, and will welcome the extra features and flexibility. A direct drop and drag of my DEVONnote database to the DEVONthink icon did not work — the file formats are apparently different.

Yep, I can do it now! Although I could only move one group (folder) at a time, I was able to transfer all of my files to from DEVONnote to DEVONthink. That makes one less application on my hard drive,

Addendum (A partial features list**)**

Supported File Types	DEVONthink Pro Office	DEVONthink Professional	DEVONthink Personal	DEVONnote
Plain and simple text, RTF/RTFD, text clippings	X	X	X	X
Microsoft Word	X	X	X	X
URLs	X	X	X	X
HTML, XML	X	X	X	As plain text
iChat / Yahoo Messenger logs	X	X	X	X
AppleScripts	X	X	X	X
BibTeX files	X	X	As plain text	As plain text
Images	X	X	X (10,000 items)	–
PDF and PostScript files	X	X	X (10,000 items)	–
Multimedia files	X	X	X	–
CSV/TSV files	X	X	As plain text	–
Browser Bookmarks	Import	Import	Import	–
iPod (notes)	Export	Export	Export	–
Web Site (HTML)	Export	Export	Export	–
Address Book	Import	Import	–	–

RouteBuddy
Reviewed by Ted Bade

Company: RouteBuddy.com

web site: http://www.routebuddy.com/index.html

Demo URL:
http://www.routebuddy.com/routebuddy/download/index.html

$99.50 USD for software. Maps range from $39.50 to $69.50.

Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4, 1Ghz G4, 1Gb RAM.
(recommended: 1.8Ghz G5 or 2Ghz Core Duo, 2Gb RAM).

Universal Binary support: Yes

Equipment used for testing: 1.8GHz G5 PowerMac and 1.5GHz G4 PowerBook

Experience needed: The interface requires a bit of getting used to as does the best methods of entering address for searching.

Strengths: Detailed maps. Very responsive and helpful customer service people. The company seems very open to suggestions and wants to create a great product.

Weaknesses: A bit slow at times, stiff minimum hardware requirements, "a work in progress" means there are some issues. Large detailed maps mean long downloads and stiff hardware requirements. Quirky results on occasion.
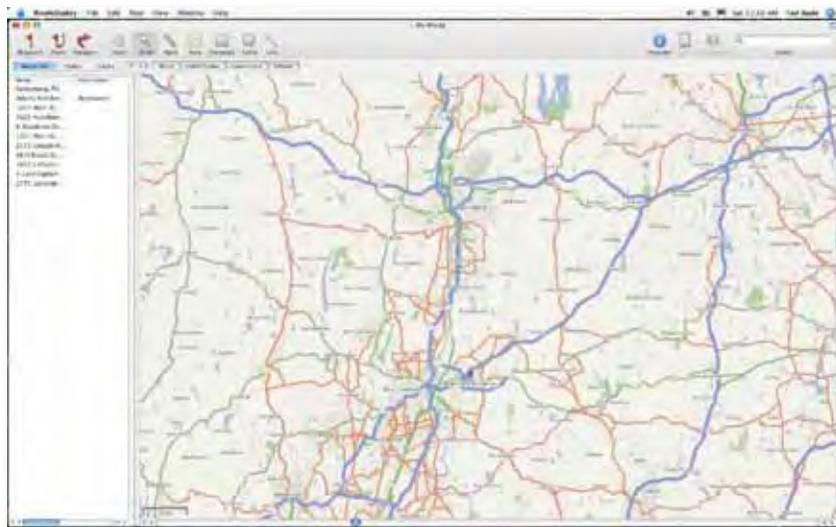
Introduction

RouteBuddy is a Mac OS X exclusive mapping program. You can purchase and use maps of just about any place in the world to work with it. RouteBuddy adds features you won't find when using online map programs, especially the fact that you don't need to be connected to the Internet to use it and you don't loose your work once you leave the program. If you travel a lot for business or fun, you will want to consider putting a copy of RouteBuddy on your Mac.

Getting Started

For this review I got a copy of the program and the maps for the United States. So my experience with the maps concern that particular area. While I expect the program will perform about the same with other maps, I don't know this for sure. Other maps could have more or perhaps even less detail to contend with. Which may change how the program functions.
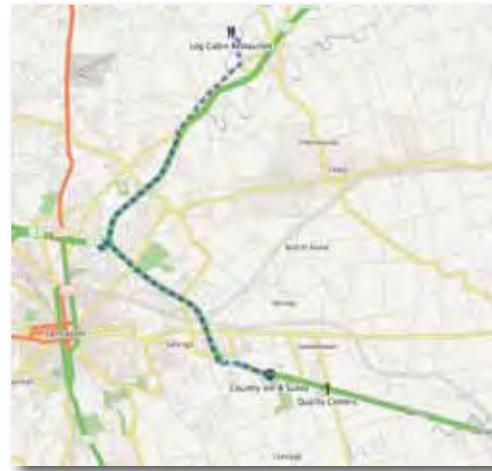
Side Note: There is an issue with maps which revolves around how they are updated. From what I have learned, map companies send people out to drive routes and look for changes in the roads. Stores and other points of interest locations are updated by a different group that need only look at directories to find new ones and remove those no longer in business. So you might find a business located in an area where the roads haven't been updated yet!. For instance, in my area, a ten year old housing development and the associated roads don't show up, but a 3 year old Starbucks does! This is an issue with maps and not with RotueBuddy, but it is something that always annoys me with electronic maps.

Check out RouteBuddy's web site to see all the places one can buy maps for (http://www.routebuddy.com/maps/index.html). Maps cover Europe, UK, Asia, and the Middle East. (I was surprised that South America and Mexico were missing from the list, but I have heard they are on the way.) As would be expected, each map has a price, which range from $40 to $70 USD. You can either download the map you buy using the Internet or have a DVD shipped to you from the UK. The maps are large, so expect to spend some time on the download. For instance, the United States maps are 6.6 Gigabytes in size! Remember, this means you get a lot of detail, the US maps contain 4.6 million points of interest, (and NO, I didn't count them all ☺).

There are several resources available to us today to help with a road trip. You might own a GPS or make use of online map features like MapQuest or Google maps. So why would anyone want to buy a map program?

First of all, the display size. Ever notice how small the windows on those Internet Map sites are? RouteBuddy can be made to fill your entire screen with its map. If you have a number of places to visit in an area, you can zoom out and see how they all relate to each other. Since RouteBuddy creates routes by clicking on two or more way points, seeing the places you need to go on a map makes it easier to visualize your path. With Internet Maps you tell the program you want to go from here to there then get a map for that trip. Say you created a trip from one place to another, then discover a cool restaurant to stop at on the way. With RouteBuddy, you just add the restaurant as a way point, then add it to your trip if you like. Of course, you could not add it to the trip, but leave the icon for the way point on the map, just in case you want to make a stop. Doing this makes it easier to visualize your trip and when best to add in the stop.

Along with this is the ability to put several of your own points of interest on a road map. With an Internet map application, you might be able to see all restaurants in an area or a particular destination, but I haven't discovered how to easily show the three or four restaurants your want to try, the three museums, the train station, and the hotel location all on the same map. With RouteBuddy this is easy. You find the locations you want, add them as way points, and they stay on your map until you delete them. Once they are on the map, you can easily create trips between any of them.

Another advantage of having RouteBuddy on your Mac is that you don't need the Internet. Okay, I realize that it is pretty hard to go anywhere these days and not be connected. But it could happen. The server could be down, or you could be visiting a park or forest when you decide to plan your trip back, including a stop for food.

RouteBuddy's display in clean. Most of the window displays the map of the area you are interested in. A side window lists the Way points, routes, or tracks you have created. The top of the screen provides access to tools and menus. While there is no manual for the program yet, online information is usually all that is needed to answer many questions and their tech support people are very responsive to questions.

There are two ways to locate something using RouteBuddy. Either enter an exact address, or search for the item by what kind of point of interest it is. The biggest problem I had using RouteBuddy was learning how to give it addresses in a form that consistently works. It is important to learn the program's rules for entering an address. It isn't hard, but perhaps not what one would expect. Google Maps does a lot better a job on this.

First of all, less information is better. Believe it or not, I got better results by leaving out the town name and just providing street address, state, and postal zip code. There are some issues with designators like south or east added to a street name. 15 south Manny road might not find a match, but 15 Manny road might locate #15 on South Manny road. When a street had both a name and a route number, there are often issues. Generally, both the people in the area and the map software will use different names for this road. This means sometimes you need to try a few different approaches to finding an address that works. The more I used RouteBuddy, the more I found I was able to enter information in a way it likes and consistently get results. Once one gets past the learning curve of how to enter addresses, finding a location with RouteBuddy is pretty easy.
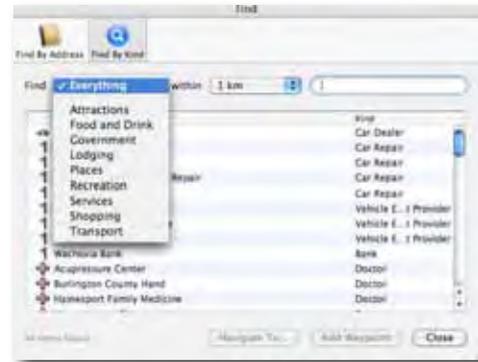
When I began this article, I was planning short driving vacation to another part of the country, I had ample opportunity to try many of RouteBuddy's features. One thing I discovered was that many of the places I wanted to visit on my trip were already in the program's giant Point of Interest (POI) library. With my GPS, I was in the habit of searching for the street address of the place I wanted to visit. This is because convincing the GPS to search for a POI in a location you are not currently at is involved. RouteBuddy made this task a lot easier. Rather then searching for a specific address, it was easier to center on the city I was visiting, then use the program's ability to search POIs nearby. When I found one I intended to stop at I then made permanent way points for it.

When you use the find by kind you can choose how far from the center point to search, and narrow the search by selecting a specific type of POI such as lodging, shopping, food and so forth. If you have a name for a particular place you want to locate, you can also use the name as a filter, getting even more exact results.
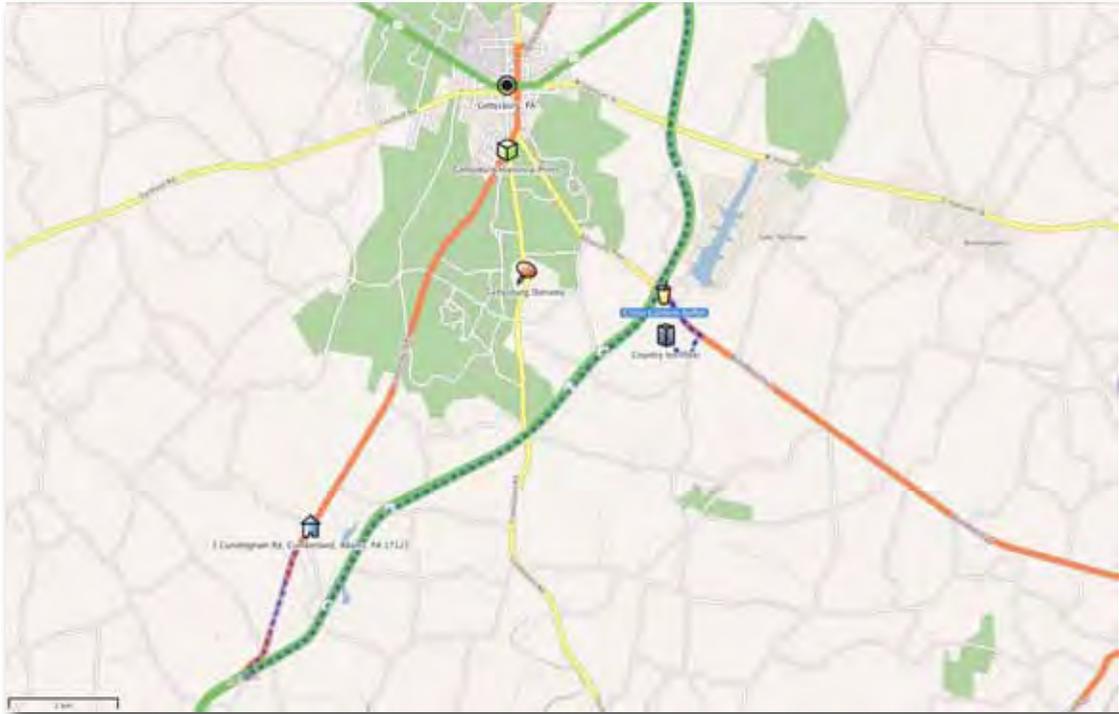
For instance, I was searching for a particular restaurant we wanted to try in the town we were visiting. I started by setting up the find by type to list restaurants in a wide area around the center of the town, then I slowly typed in the name of the restaurant. Before I was finished typing, the correct restaurant had popped up on the list. The only trick here is to make sure that you search a wide enough radius to catch the point of interest.

As with all map programs, I should caution you, Restaurants especially, come and go. You might use the program to locate a place that sounds great, but which has been out of business for a while or pass a very good choice because this location hasn't made it into the database yet. One major hit on points of interest with RouteBuddy is the lack of contact information for a POI. While it will place an icon on the map for you, it doesn't provide an address or any contact information. With my GPS I get an address and phone number. After several disappointments, I have learned to call before I start out on a trip.

Once you have way points located, you will probably want to create routes from one to another. Another issue I had with RouteBuddy is that is has a **visual only** interface for creating a route. This means you need to see all the way points of a particular route on the screen in order to make a route. This works great in a small section of town, but becomes an issue when trying to make a route that spans several hundred miles. Because of the level of detail on the maps, zooming out to a high level means the program has to deal with a tremendous amount of data. Unless you have a newer Mac with loads of RAM, both zooming out to a level where you can see both distant way points and creating a route, will gobble up your machine's resources and take time.

I wanted to create a route from my home to a hotel 300 miles away. Getting a view that showed both those way points was a chore. If I ask RouteBuddy to show a particular way point on the map, the zoom level changes to show the way point and some surrounding area (a very nice feature). From the local area, you then need to zoom out enough to view both way points. Doing this zoom out was a real issue on my 1.8 GHz G5. A quicker method is to zoom out to world view, then use the mouse to drag a rectangle over an area including the way points of interest. Then sit back and wait while the program draws it out.

Also, when creating a route over long distances, RouteBuddy spent a lot of time crunching numbers. Depending upon the speed of your machine, it might take a while before you see a route appear. You can watch the screen as RouteBuddy draws traces along every possible road combination between your two points. Once it comes up with the best match to fit your request, it draws a final line showing the roads it suggests you take. If you select the name of this route in the side area with the Route tab clicked on, you can open it and see the detail of all the turns needed to complete the route. Other then adding a way point to direct the trip in some way, there is no means of manipulating the route it creates. In one instance, I got a very odd result when creating a long distant trip.

I really feel that this interface for creating a route is rather clunky. I would be happier with the program asking for a route from address one to address two. It would even be nicer if the program let you select a group of way points (in the order you want to visit them in), and then create a route from one to the next and so on.

There are a couple of oddball things with RouteBuddy's interface. The one that took me the longest to deal with was the fact that when you search for a location and then select the correct one from a list of possible hits, the program doesn't automatically place a permanent way point icon on the map for you. To add the way point you must click on the "Add Way Point" button after selecting the correct item. I found this confusing mainly because when you click on the item in the list, it does place a **temporary** icon on the screen, showing you it's location on the map. But when you close the search window, this icon disappears. The company's logic is that by doing this, the user must take a positive action and so only those items they really want stay as way points. My feeling is that if I click on it the item, I would rather it stays and later delete it if I really don't want it. (Note that double-clicking on the choice adds a way point, something I accidentally discovered while testing the software.)

Another gotcha is a menu item called, "Zoom to Fit". Selecting this menu item zooms out to fit the entire world onto the screen. Which is probably not what any user would anticipate or really want. I could have accepted it to zoom out to include the entire area of the map I own. What I had expected was that I could select two or more way points and click on this button to fit them all on the screen. Zooming out to the world level also creates a few problems as there are some issues with locating addresses from this world view. If you happen to be centered on an area of the world that has maps you don't own, the program will sometimes give you a hard time or simply won't locate a valid address on the maps you do own. You have to zoom into the areas covered by the maps you own for the search to work.

Be careful about clicking on a way point. I discovered, by accident, that once you place a symbol on the screen representing a POI, it can easily be moved by click and holding on it. I discovered this while trying to play with a map view, I clicked on an way point icon and moved it from where it should be to another location. This is a big issue for me. I tend to use the mouse to move about the map. It is really easy to accidentally grab a way point and relocate it.

When using the program, once I found a POI, I would name it so I knew what it was. I would also select an icon which reminded me of what type of a POI it was, like a house or information symbol, or whatever. Since the way point icon wasn't locked onto a location, when I moved it, I now had an icon saying something was were it wasn't. Imagine what could happen if the kids played pass the icon on your maps!

You get you biggest speed hits when working with a largest area. Try creating a trip from the East to the West Coast of the USA, and your computer will grind to a halt as RouteBuddy tries to account for every little detail along the way. While I have no issue with detail when in a local area, when considering a trip from Hartford Connecticut to Whittier California, I don't care if there are 200,000 small roads along the way, I want to travel on and think about only the major highways!

There is supposed to be a way to search using Google, grab the results from this search, and paste it into RouteBuddy and have it create a POI way point for it. I didn't have any luck getting this to work. This would be handy, since it would allow the user to take advantage of Googles search abilities to add Way points to their maps. Apparently, Google keeps changing what information their "link to this address' boxes create, and RouteBuddy is always a step behind. Still, this will be a really cool feature when they get it to work consistently.

All my comments might make it sound like I didn't like this program, I really do like it. While it definitely has some issues, it does provide a lot of information that is accurate. It was really cool to sit in the hotel at night and take a look at the streets and routes in the area we were visiting. Not to mention there are no flashing advertisements to annoy and distract while doing this! It was also useful that the points of interest I had planned before leaving were already on the map I was looking at.

Conclusion

RouteBuddy has a lot of features I didn't even explore, because they are outside my needs. For instance, it can interface with a GPS and take a record of a track you hiked or traveled in any fashion, then draw it onto the map. This might be useful for a person who takes a long hike or even an ultra-light flight and would like to see the path they actually took.

RouteBuddy is a mapping tool. Like any tool, there is a learning curve. It is also a work in progress. The company is always making changes and improvements to this program. They also appear to be very open to suggestions. A user who is really interested in this program can get involved with their forums and make suggestions that will be considered.

Recommendation

If you are interested in a map program that works on Mac OS X, you should definitely take a look at RouteBuddy. It is the only Mac OS X option and I think this program the company making it has a lot of potential. It may have a few issues right now, but every time I had updated the program as I was working on the review, it got better and better. Speaking with their customer service people, I got the opinion that a number of the things on my complaint list were actually going to be improved. I liked RouteBuddy and would recommend it for anyone who wants to have a map program on their Macintosh.

Sequel

Reviewed by Daphne Kalfon

Yamaha
Steinberg Media Technologies GmbH
http://www.steinberg.net
Sequel microsite:
http://www.sequel-music.net/
Released: March 28, 2007
$100 USD, $102 CND, £50 GBP, €72.07 Euro
Requirements: Power Mac G5 1.8 GHz or Intel Core Solo
1.5 GHz processor, 1 GB RAM, 6 GB of free hard disk
space, OS X Version 10.4, display res 1280 x 800 pixels,
CoreAudio compatible audio hardware, DVD-ROM drive,
internet access required for license activation.
Forums: http://www.steinbergusers.com/forums/ubbthreads.php

Strengths: Lots of built-in features; good value for what you are getting.

Weaknesses: Somewhat glitchy; could use some improvement in making the program generally more user-friendly, intuitive and easier to navigate. Loop sound quality is generally better than non-loop instrument sound quality.

The Sequel microsite contains lots of information about Sequel including a short overview tutorial which covers the following: working with loops, recording audio, recording instruments, editing, mixing, live performance and mixdown/export. There are also 3 video tutorials: "Rock", "Electro", and "Hip Hop". On the site there's also a player which contains tracks created using Sequel so that you can get an idea of what it can sound like, and information on system requirements and purchasing. Speaking of purchasing, I went to the Canadian site for Steinberg to see how much it costs to buy Sequel in Canada, and couldn't find any way to purchase Sequel via that site. What was available were online upgrade downloads for those who already have previous copies of Sequel.

Introduction

Sequel is perhaps Steinberg's answer to Apple's GarageBand in that it has been created to make recording, editing, mixing and performance of music to be as easy and fun as possible for the novice as well as for those who may already play an instrument and have some knowledge of music. The emphasis here seems to be on those with little or no musical knowledge however. It comes with more than 5000 audio and MIDI loops, over 600 instrument sounds, many built-in sophisticated audio effects, track presets and a state-of-the-art audio engine.

Getting Started

I inserted the CD into the drive and following the instructions, double-clicked on the software install icon, and the software installed just fine, although it seemed to be quite a long process of about 10 minutes or so. Then the Syncrosoft licence control centre software tried to install, but after some time it appeared that the installation had hung up or crashed. I then had to force quit the licence control centre installation and hunt around on the cd to find the installer for the licence control centre separately to install it manually because otherwise there was no way to get to the Download License Wizard. Once the licence control centre was reinstalled, the Download License Wizard started up and I was then able to complete the activation for Sequel.

Once again, as with other software I have installed previously. I stand on my soapbox and say this is ridiculous. Who needs license activation? Simple serial number authorization please.

If you haven't turned on your external audio interface before launching Sequel, the program may not detect it. I forgot to turn on my interface before launching Sequel and after trying a few things, found there wasn't a way to select my interface so I had to quit Sequel and restart the program.

Using the Software

After running Sequel, I first opened and listened to several of the demo files to get an idea of how things look and work in Sequel. One of the files was really hiccupping during playback and I'm not sure why as my CPU was doing just fine.

The first page of Tutorial 1 features a screen shot of the Sequel interface. It consists of 3 main areas: the Pilot Zone which allows you to control all of Sequel's main functions, the Arrange Zone, which is where all your recording, editing and arranging, and the Multi Zone, which is where your mixing, effects processing and advanced editing take place. The Multi Zone also contains the media browser for finding audio and MIDI loops and a project settings page among other things. Positioning the mouse pointer over each symbol in the Multi Zone brings up a small text window explaining what it is.

One of the first concepts covered is saving projects in Sequel, and mention was made of a "Program Settings" page, which I couldn't find anywhere. In any case, the manual instructs you to click on the "save project" button in the Pilot Zone. I did that, but there was no way to type in anything as next instructed. I also found it confusing that they would get into the whole saving concept when "Sequel Tutorial 1" hasn't even been introduced yet.

Moving along, the first tutorial is "Recording" and as instructed, I find and open the project provided. I actually already had it open but opened it again just to make sure I had the right one. Once again I try to perform the save function but it doesn't seem to work. Could just be me… In this first tutorial you are shown how to record a guitar line into a project, add a drum loop and play back the results. I find it interesting that the first tutorial would be that of adding a guitar line into a project, when it states that this software is primarily aimed at those with no musical knowledge, and those with little musical knowledge. I would think the first tutorial would rather be geared to the enthusiastic novice who just wants to put some loops together.

I followed the steps in the manual, but was unable to preview any loops. It would seem that this program isn't terribly intuitive if after following the instructions carefully, there was no visible means of listening to any of the drum loops. I figured that it might be a navigation error in Sequel, so I tried a different selection other than what I had first selected, in terms of category, sub category, style etc. and then was finally able to bring up drum loops to preview. It seems that if certain category selections are made that don't agree with Sequel's predefined arbitrary search criteria, no drum loops will come up for preview. Something to keep in mind when you are browsing loops.

I then previewed quite a number of drum loops and thought the variety and quality was good overall. I then selected and dragged the drum loop I wanted into the arrange window, exactly as described and shown in the manual, but it didn't seem to be working, and trying variations of this procedure didn't seem to help either. This looks like this is a rather big glitch in the program, seeing as its main premise is that of music creation by means of putting together various prerecorded loops.

The rest of the tutorial dealt with recording live guitar. Since I'm not a guitar player, I tried just recording a piano sound. I created a new track and chose the sound "acoustic piano". I found the previewing and choosing of the piano sound and of subsequent sounds to be glitchy and not terribly intuitive, which could be quite problematic for the notice user.

I then moved onto the tutorial "Recording Instrument Parts". Following the instructions, I selected a sound to use with the tracks already present in the project. Just after I made my selection, I decided I'd rather use another sound, but there are no instructions on how to bring up the instrument menu so that you can choose another sound. So I stuck with the sound I had and following the steps, recorded in a new part. I played it back and it sounded fine.

I went back a little in the chapter during the part about recording guitar, and followed the steps to activate cycle record, but was unable to get the pointer to turn into a pencil as described. I positioned it in the ruler section of the arrange window, but no change was evident, and so I was unable to draw in the section I wanted for cycle playback. After repeated attempts however, the pencil did show up, though intermittently, and I was able to draw in the part I wanted to cycle playback, and have it play back in that mode. It seems that the pointer has to be exactly in the right spot for the pencil to show up. This is important to know if you are a novice user and not used to these kinds of maneuvers.

I then moved on to the next chapter in the manual, "Editing". I went through the various features for editing audio events such as renaming, resizing, splitting, moving, muting, repeating, copying and erasing events. I liked the feature of being able to mute only certain events on a track, as opposed to only being able to mute the whole track. Following this is a brief introduction to the sample editor. The next section in editing dealt with the editing of instrument parts in the Key Editor. As with the previous tutorials, I ran the corresponding project from the Sequel Tutorial folder. Functions such as deleting, copying and resizing notes, creating or drawing notes, and the controller lane were covered. Explanations are given on how to change your cursor into a pencil tool, how to resize the key editor, and how to make the notes in the Key Editor larger using the zoom slider.

The next chapter in the manual covers Mixing. I tried out the various features found in the mixer page such as fader settings, pan, mute and solo and EQ. The EQ feature was well done with its graphic display and presets. Then in the audio effects section I tried out track effects via the track inspector page using the compression and flange effects as shown in the manual. The flange effect comes with presets or you can effect changes manually if you like. I checked out a number of other effects such as amp simulator, reverb, delay, and modulation, the latter of which includes autopan, chorus, flanger, phaser, rotary, tremolo and vibrato, most of which come with a fair number of presets. I noticed that if I scroll through the effects presets, trying each one out, a little too quickly sometimes, I crash the program. In all the effects are of a decent quality. Effects can be added to instrument tracks, individual parts, globally to all tracks and finally to the master channel.

The manual goes on to cover things like live performance, provides more detailed chapters on the Pilot Zone, Arrange Zone and Multi Zone, as well as the chapters "Advanced features", "Setting up your system", "Key Commands", "Effects reference", and "Index".

Conclusion

Sequel is a good program for the novice as it contains pretty much everything one would need in order to start creating music right away. It comes with lots of built-in features that allow for infinite possibilities and variety, and most importantly, for hours of fun.

Recommendation

If one is strictly working on a PC, Sequel is another software option for today's novice music creator. I do recommend first checking out everything about Sequel that is available to see on the microsite mentioned at the beginning of this review.

textSoap 5.7 Standard — Make your garbage-ed and garbled up text messages come clean!
By Harry {doc} Babad   © 2007

Unmarked Software, LLC
http://www.unmarked.com/textsoap/
Released: 6 October 2007

Shareware: $30 USD
Available As a more feature rich deluxe edition
Demo: 30 days with limits on cleaning abilities

System Requirements: Mac OS X 3.9 or later;
Universal binary, Leopard ready. Uses a. 13.3 MB of
Hard Drive Space

Strengths: The software analyzes your text, detects paragraphs and lists within your text, and rewraps your text so it wraps naturally within your document or message

Weaknesses: None that mattered.

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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 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
As have many of you, I continue to receive emails, as well as at times attachments that contain text both alphanumeric and symbol rich stuff, I'd rather not be there.

I also write a large number of articles, often based on information found and collected as snippets of information gleaned from the Internet. Such information can be copied from either PDF or Web based text format.

When pasted into MS Word, many of these snippets contain large quantities formatting related junk — a real mess.

Such text artifacts as well as those created by some email clients and compression systems, or by specific software text, style and font encoding practices make require a fast easy to use text cleanup tool to handle the text imbedded junk.

I've been using a combination of the Find-Replace feature in MS Word to tediously remove unwanted characters and style attributes. I routinely use the *SmartWrap* plugin (Selznick Software) to cleanup klutzed up Eudora email messages.

As my text cleaning needs expanded, I seem to have outgrown *SmartWrap*, so started looking around for a more powerful alternative.

Recently, I read on the MacUpdate site, that a product called "TextSoap is a tool designed to easily scrub up your text, ridding you of those annoying forwarding marks, invisible characters, and poor formatting that you often find in email and long text documents." I thought I'd give the product a try.

> Note: *To be fair, I've not recently done any in-depth exploration of SmartWrap's full capabilities — perhaps in a future review. But that in the future and this is now.*

Getting Started
Installation of textSoap was a simple drop and drag operation. Add a password I did not initially chose to add TextSoap to my dock or make it a startup item because it was easily accessible via Macintosh OS X *services menu* or via a *plugin* in Eudora, or so I thought. *More about my mistaken assumptions later in this review*.

The reader should be aware that textSoap has no preference pane to tweak. The pallet of *cleaners*, bit of code that tell the software how to change your text, serve as all the preferences you need. Immediately booting the program, after pasting a garbled email message onto my clipboard, I immediately noticed that TextSoap has some of its *cleaners* listed in a floating window, its *standard group mode*, that could and did handle many text transformations associated with my email text problems. I had pasted an entire multiple paragraph email message into textSoap, and could work on it as a whole, or buy selecting parts of the text to clean.

This 15-item grouping also served me well when doing a more detailed test described below. What made it more impressive was that it could do so with a click, one for each cleaner I wanted to apply

What You Copy Is What You Get — The text you want to work with is added, automatically pasted from your clipboard, to the textSoap application. Two items appear on your screen. The main textSoap window is called *Clipboard text*. That window has many of the features of a good text editor.
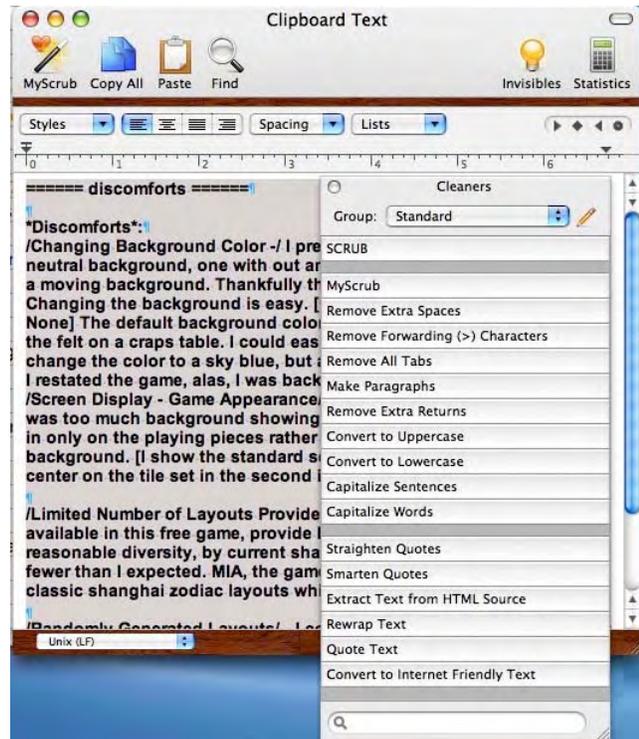
The images below illustrate textSoap's interface;

Availability of Alternative Groups of Cleaners — In addition to the clipboard window, a second window appears that contains a list of cleaners. The standard, default, list contained most of the tools I needed, but a peek at the library became an experience in psychedelic confusion.

There are at least 80 and perhaps 100 items in the Library list most of which mean nothing to me. . Fortunately, by allowing my mouse cursor to hover over an item, textSoap help came to my rescue. A popup window provided me with a short but clear description of that cleaner's function.

```
○                Cleaners

Group:  Library                    ✏

Convert MIME-encoded Characters    ▲
                                   ▼
Make Paragraphs

Remove All Tabs

Remove Control Characters

Remove Extra Returns

Convert to Uppercase

Convert to Lowercase

Capitalize Sentences

Capitalize Words

Convert Bullets to ASCII

Straighten Quotes

Smarten Quotes

Expand Tabs

Extract Text from HTML Source

Rewrap Text

Quote Text

Wrap At 50

Wrap At 60                         ▲
                                   ▼
Wrap At 70

Q
```

Testing textSoap

Having TextSoap available, which I didn't at the time of writing my macC article, an article based on researched information collected from the Internet, could have saved me time. Indeed it literally felt like hours, time that I wasted reformatting my *found* materials.

Therefore I tested the product for this review on the original rough set of collected notes for my *Renewable Energy* article. That *grab bag* MSW formatted document was filled with 30 pages of stuff I collected from a large number of PDF documents, scanned and OCRs magazine articles, and cut and pasted from web pages. Much of this stuff served as background or reference materials for what would become this month's macC article. The exercise: Use the appropriate set of cleaner, reference by reference, to scrub that text and turn it into useable Lucida Grande paragraph, table or list formatted paragraphs of text. What can I tell you? It worked. No I did not time myself, but the scrubbing operation went smoothly and was fast, despite my initial learning curve.

More About Using the Software

A Dan Frakes Macworld Mac Gems Column (December 1, 2004) although old, summarizes its usefulness of this product better than I can. I've added a few of my favorites cleaners/cleaner functions and adlibs to Dan's list (below) so you know I'm really working hard at this review.

Dan states "As its name implies, textSoap cleans your text, but much faster than you could ever do using your mouse, arrow keys, and delete key.

Simply paste your (selected) text into the textSoap text window and then select your favorite *cleaner*—a set of rules that tells textSoap exactly what you want done with your text—and your text is clean as a whistle, ready to be pasted wherever you like."

A list of features, focused around *cleaner* functions follow later in the review.

Dan also noted "If having to paste your text into the textSoap window sounds like a hassle, textSoap offers at least four *other* ways to clean text without such a step.

- "In applications that support contextual menus, you simply highlight your text, right/control-click to bring up the contextual menu, and then choose the desired cleaner from the textSoap item.
- "In applications that support Mac OS X's Services, you can instead select the desired cleaner from the Services submenu.
- "In supported applications—including BBEdit, MailSmith, and Eudora— textSoap actually provides a palette listing all your cleaners; just select some text and click a button.
- "Finally, textSoap is AppleScriptable, so if you frequently work with text in an AppleScript-aware application, you can call textSoap cleaners from within your scripts—a killer feature for streamlining your workflow."

Based on what Dan Frakes had written, I decided to check out the differences between textSoap standard and deluxe edition. [http://www.unmarked.com/textsoap/compare.html/]

Alas, since I was using the stand edition of textSoap, I was pretty well relegated to a cut and paste world. But there was a bit of light in the dark clipboard only related tunnel. The standard edition did, the developer notes, OS X Services support. I'd used the OS X services features with a number of the application I'd installed on my computer. So as part of this review I also checkout that feature.

Yes I now know the deluxe edition has a Eudora plugin, and accommodates use of contextual menus, but I was not smart enough to realize that the deluxe edition was what I needed to review. As far as accessing textSoap from the services menu feature, that was a complete bust. More about that in the discomforts section of this review.

Examples of the software's capabilities, slightly tweaked, taken from the developers web site:
- Clean messy emails, websites and other text littered with odd characters, hard returns, quote marks, extra spaces, and other junk.
  — *Absolutely this worked perfectly*.

- Total control of your text and its style.
  — *The rich text editor features available in the clipboard window gives you that control.*
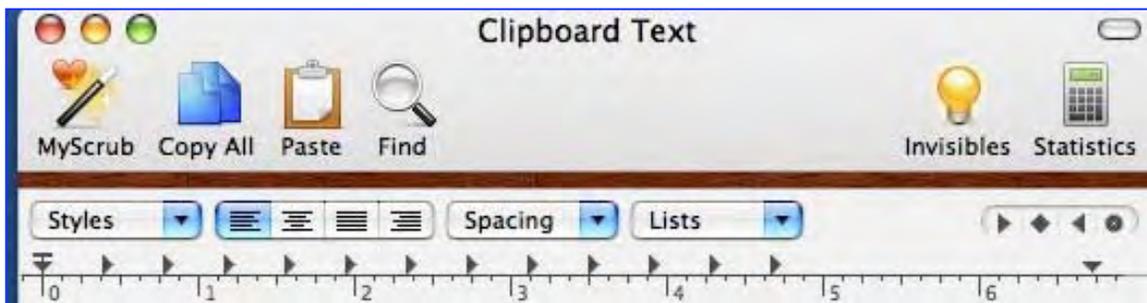

- Maintain style information as your text is transformed – re-reformatting is such a drag.
  — *This worked each time I did a cut and paste back and forth between MSW and textSoap.*

- Transform text based on its style.
  — *I found no immediate need for this feature.* **Note:** After reviewing this article the developer noted that this feature is mainly used for such tasks as creating HTML tagged text based on the style. Using custom cleaners, you can convert rich text to a HTML file that uses your tags and style sheets. An example of this is provided at http://unmarked.com/textsoap/ccleaners.html.

- Style text based on its content.
  — I found no immediate need for this feature, indeed I don't even know what it means, unless its related to active web or email links.) **Note:** The developer noted: "This feature allows you to search for text (usually with a regex pattern) and then apply a style to it. For example, you could bold uppercase words. It is the inverse of "transform text based on its style". Both of these terms will get better descriptions so that users can better understand how the features work."

- Use Over 100 built-in cleaners available to you with simple, one click access.

- Quickly create custom cleaners to meet your specific needs, using over a dozen, simple, building blocks. No programming skills required. Just drag and drop.
  — I did not test this feature, having no immediate need for it.

- Group cleaners by task functionality allows you quick access to tools for the specific job at hand. — *Deluxe edition only*.

- Keep your articles at just the right length with on-the-fly word count. — *Use the statistics button on the textSoap toolbar.*

- Mac OS X Services and Contextual Menu support allow direct access to TextSoap Deluxe features within your favorite applications. — *Deluxe edition only.*

- Application plug-ins for BBEdit, TextWrangler, Mailsmith, and Eudora (*Hurrah*) offer even more integration options. Making a change in Eudora, prior to saving that message as a text file, is quicker and easier than in usual text handling tool, MS Word.
  — *However, that feature was only available in the deluxe edition only. Therefore I remain a captive of my clipboard.*

Review Limitations

Cleaners Galore — Since I don't program or create web pages I did not have occasion to test most of the 100's of cleaners provided by the developer. Indeed most of them could have been written in either Greek or Russian for all I know.

However since I routinely copy and want to transcribe the contents of e, PDFs and emails, the cleaners I did use were both easy to identify, with an occasional peek at the help like, and fast. Although MS Word contains a find-replace feature, using it on garbled text is much slower. I do like textSoap's Find-replace window, is easier to use then the one provided in MSW. It nicely complements the available *cleaners*, if needed.

Customized Cleaners — I had not need to create custom cleaners to meet your specific needs, using over a dozen, simple, and building blocks. Its all Just drag and drop but I had no immediate needs for this feature. Neither did I have my need to group cleaners to crate custom use specific lists.

Discomforts

The Missing TextSoap Services Menu Item — In addition, despite attempting a work around by saving material to a RTF document, I could not get that MS Word based document to show textSoap in the services menu. Neither when putting material into a TextEdit document could I bring up a textSoap item in the services menu. Restarting my computer did not help; neither could I find any hints or workaround in the applications otherwise strong help files.

Note: I revived some feedback from Mark Minz, its developer, that noted; "it was unclear if you were trying to use Services in MS Word. Unfortunately, Microsoft does not support OS X Services in MSWord (my fingers are crossed for MSOffice 2008), but OS X Services cannot be used in MSWord. However, Entourage does support OS X Services. Go figure."

Zooming the Clipboard Window — Let's fact it, I've got old eyes. When I transferred a number of items to the textSoap clipboard for a test PDF, they were just too small to read. I could grow them to legibility using show fonts and increasing their size, but that seems a long way around my problem.

Zooming the Help Files — When checking the help files, I found the text was also too small to read. However by using short cut that works in Safari and Firefox, I could grow the text. Try Command-Shift-Plus. You can reverse this by using Command-Minus. Unfortunately this was a trial and error result since that alternative command-greater-than or command-shift greater-than shortcut did not work.
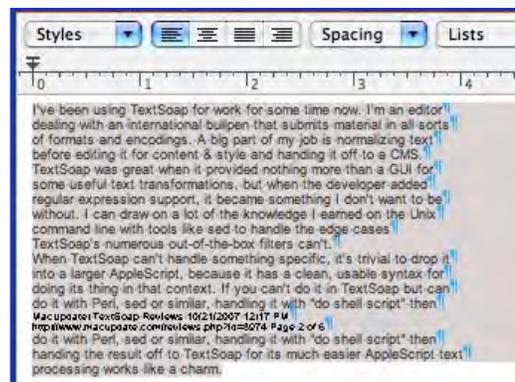
Note: Mark replied, this is a great idea. If you are dealing with just plain text, you can mimic this by setting the Clipboard workspace to be plain in unmarked software support, in Preferences > General and then changing the Plain font to a larger size in Preferences > New Documents.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From cleaning text snippets in my email messages, to scrubbing character full DOS formatting prompts occasional PC generated documents, textSoap makes it easy to quickly scrub and effectively reuse information. I found it exceptionally useful for quickly scrubbing the material I'd collected as background information for an article; snippets full of odd formatting, and line break.

textSoap has a clean easy to use user interface and integrated well with all the text, mail and word processing applications I used it with thanks to the universality of the Macintosh clipboard.

I agree with its developer and other reviewers that the application is an effective *text transformation tool* designed to make you and me more productive. I recommend that you use it or all your text manipulation needs. By moving text to the TextSoap clipboard or perhaps via the service menu, you grab only what you need to change. That done, there's dozens of general things and hundreds of specific things you can do to it to make that text look just as it should, regardless of where you found it.

At $30 it is a bit pricier than Selznick Scientific Software's $18 SmartWrap [Now version 2.7.3 — [http://www.selznick.com/products/smartwrap/index.htm/]], but seem s to be richer in features and except where noted (CM and Apple Services access), performs in a flawless fashion. One real problem remains, based on my review, I now lust for the Deluxe edition!

I got instant gratification from watching garbled text become clean and well-formatted paragraphs, just the right material for my articles. You can seek gratification too! Try it — Buy it!

PS

I was delighted with the depth of feedback provided by Mark Munz, the product's developer.

VectorWorks Designer 2008 with Renderworks

Reviewed by Robert Pritchett

Nemetschek
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Columbia, MD 21046
410-290-5114
FAX: 410-290-8050 7150
http://www.nemetschek.net/
http://www.nemetschek.net/upgrade/
http://www.nemetschek.net/training/library.php?movie=2008movies
http://www.nemetschek.net/designer/new2008.php?feature=interface
Renderworks Feature List:
http://www.nemetschek.net/renderworks/featurelist.php
http://www.nemetschek.net/renderworks/new2008.php?feature=prese
ntation

Released: September 13, 2007
Service Pack 1 Updater: October 10, 2007
Upgrade $665 USD, New - $2,395 USD.
Training: http://www.nemetschek.net/training/index.php
Training CDs: $450 USD http://www.nemetschek.net/training/trainingcd.php
Webinars: http://www.nemetschek.net/training/vlearning.php
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4.10 or later, QuickTime 6 or later, PowerPC G4 or later, DVD-ROM, 2 GB RAM, 6 GB hard drive space. For Windows – XP SP2 or later, QuickTime 6.5.2 or later, Pentium IV or newer and same DVD-ROM and space requirements as Mac.
Comes with: Two Books (Fundamentals and Design Series), TwoDVDs and One CD (Installation, Upgrade Companion and Professional Learning Series – Core Concepts Training).

Strengths: It beats the socks off AutoCAD. Cross-platform.

Weaknesses: The setup process is a bit of a pain, but that could be my machine and not a VectorWorks issue.

Community: http://www.nemetschek.net/community/index.php
Gallery: http://www.nemetschek.net/gallery/
Useful Sites: http://www.nemetschek.net/community/addons/other_links.php
3rd-Party Plugins: http://www.nemetschek.net/community/addons/plugins.php
Symbol Sets: http://www.nemetschek.net/community/addons/symbols.php
Textures: http://www.nemetschek.net/community/addons/textures.php
Earlier Review: Version 12 –
http://www.maccompanion.com/archives/january2006/Software/Vectorworks12.htm

Installed on a 1.5 GHz iMac G5 with Mac OS X 10.4.10 and 1 GB DDR SDRAM.

Introduction

For the designer or firm who does it all, VectorWorks Designer has it all. It combines the exclusive technology in our sophisticated design programs—Fundamentals, Architect, Landmark, Spotlight, and Machine Design. VectorWorks Designer 2008 is the most comprehensive and user-friendly solution for all your design needs, allowing you to use one program for everything, from conception to completion. Enjoy advanced production, superior presentations, and streamlined collaboration features.

Dream it, design it, dimension it, detail it, and deliver a powerful presentation with VectorWorks Designer.

RenderWorks seamlessly integrates into all VectorWorks solutions to provide you with sophisticated photorealistic and hand-rendered effects. Whatever your objective—realistic or artistic, you can create stunning presentation materials to help you sell your ideas.

Set Up

The package I received is an NFR (Not For Resale) version that expires in one year.

To get started, you need Internet access to get assigned an authorization to configure the setup for VectorWorks Designer 2008. I found it to be a bit of a pain to run what should have been a cut&paste activity that turned into a retype-and-hope-I-got-it right activity - Four times six with dashes in between. And the website-based authorization was four lines of 4 letter words I had to type in by hand because I was unable to copy/paste. Well, it is a nearly$2,000 software package after all and I'm sure Nemetschek would rather do this than use a dongle for anti-piracy efforts.

Above you see a whole bunch of links to pages related to VectorWorks Designer 2008 that has all the other modules as well as Renderworks.

Comparing it to Version 12 of VectorWorks and the review I did in January 2006, I would have to agree that this is a complete rewrite of the program and is worth the upgrade cost for those who have been using VectorWorks in the past.

If you want to get away from AutoCAD, you can, because this app works cross-platform. And if you use a Mactel box, Nemetschek also programmed for that, so you can indeed have the best of both worlds because VectorWorks 2008 is still Universal Binary.

Some Gotchas

There are a few things that can and cannot be done with VectorWorks when dealing with no-VectorWorks environments for Computer Aided Design, such as DXF/DWG files (AutoCAD). And that is because there are no equivalents to what VectorWorks offers. One would be the worksheets that are generated off the drawings. Others would be such things as textures, rendered views, image props, lights, some EPS or vector PICTs, graying of layers and classes, individual layer scales, record format info attached to arbitrary objects, RenderWorks background images, oblique cavalier and oblique cabinet projections, object names attached to arbitrary objects, layer transfer modes other than Paint, design layers with perspective view and some layers and classes, depending on export options.

Some things don't import into VectorWorks from DXF/DWG files, such as named views, lights, tables, rtext, SHX fonts, gradients, textures, cropping block and images, the user coordinate systems (UCS), custom line styles and shape files, DXF groups (named selection sets,), certain objects from industry-specific variations of Auto CAD if they do not have proxy graphics saved in the files.

Why VectorWorks is Valuable

One of the "secrets" of VectorWorks is that it does worksheets for tracking data, creating cost and material lists, performing calculations and generating reports and these can be added to drawings and printed with them or separately. Tables may even be imported from MS Word, if necessary, but the worksheet functionality is integrated in VectorWorks, so no external apps are really needed to do the job. It is a real timesaver and all architects and designers who use VectorWorks know this.

VectorScripts are also another time-saver and can be used without needing to become an expert in the VectorScript language. If necessary, the VectorScript Guide is included in the Help menu and also as a PDF.

And what Computer Aided Design program would be without also having the capability of animation and going back and forth between 2D and 3DF easily? How about hybridizing 2d and 3D in the same drawing and then animating that into a realistic movie? VectorWorks uses QuickTime for capturing animations. You've probably seen a few of these "walkthroughs" in virtual facilities on the Internet and TV that have us stepping or gliding through hallways, up and down stairs, circling around inside rooms, etc. This is accomplished in 3D with either the Orbit Point or Move Along Path tools.

If you work with other programs besides AutoCAD, such as Google's SketchUp, 3ds, or KML, those files also can be imported and VectorWorks can export to them. Energy cost implications can be addressed to the Department of Energy analysis engine as a DOE-2 export file. Converting drawings to PDF is also possible using Adobe Acrobat in Windows systems or the Print function in Mac OS X.

Another time-saver is the Adjacency Matrix. This is a spreadsheet item that architects use to specify spaces and area requirements in a tabular format. Worksheet data can be exported as a tab-delimited file and then imported back to create the matrix. I don't know why it can' be done entirely within VectorWorks, but at least that option to export and import is there so it looks nice. At the same time, bubble diagrams (graphical view of data from space planning) space links can be established as well as adjacency scores (layout efficiencies) and stacking diagrams (floor-by-floor representations).

In Machine Design, there is a animated cam tool for seeing how cams work as well as a Geneva Mechanism (it produces intermittent rotational motion of the driven part while the driver rotates at a constant speed).

Project Management is also integrated in VectorWorks with a full set of features for managing and creating complete and fully-referenced annotation of project files. This is done with callouts and keynotes issue mangers, and batch printing.

Drawings can be "improved" by adding Stipple Objects (random patterns resembling hand-drawn shade effects), vector-based sketch effects using wobble points (offsets from trueline) anywhere from careful to tentative, hatching (sketch style), viewports, chain extrudes (multiple polygon/polyline profiles for 3D), figure attributes (humans in different poses) among other items.

Training

The package I received has the Core Concepts Training CD that gives an overview of what is found in VectorWorks such as the drawing environment and interface, selection and navigation, snap constraints, units and scale, 2d an d3D objects and creation, parametric types and resource libraries, rendering and file organization, worksheets, databases and scripts, importing and exporting files and additional help. It also provides a taste of the other training CDs covering Essentials, Architect, Landmark, Spotlight and RenderWorks. Those come in a package that costs another $450 USD, which I did not receive.

Why Bother?

I've been working on the Three Rivers Renewable Energy Resource Center project. A typical architectural firm can take a percentage of a project anywhere from 5% to 10% or more of a project from conceptual to management to completion. I worked for years in an architectural firm that milked projects to death by "Hanfordizing" (what we used to derisively call turning a relatively simple project a career) projects with AutoCAD. It drove me absolutely nuts watching this process and making me feel powerless and the customers nearly penniless, because I used a better computer and better tools to get in, get the job done and get out but I was constricted by the process and was stuck using the modus operandi.

With VectorWorks, we are given the ability to turn on a dime, so to speak and do exactly what I wanted to do years ago by speeding the process exponentially, doing the job better and providing a rendered product that looks much better than professional, in less time than it takes to break a sweat. The tools are there for the taking by any architectural firm and the "little guy" can compete with the major architectural firms on the same ground and can d o the job quicker, better and for less money using VectorWorks. I've seen it happen.

Conclusion

Nemetschek has a package that is near perfect, designed for architects and designers that plays nice with others, in both 2D, 3D or a combination thereof. VectorWorks is the epitome of "enabling" technology.

Recommendation

The architects I know make a comfortable living using VectorWorks and keep this app a closely guarded secret and laugh at those (quietly) who still use AutoCAD to make a living. They were there, and did that too. Now they don't, so take their lead and follow them. With VectorWorks 2008, you can't go wrong. Get the best tools for the job.

By the way, while reviewing this, an update was released within weeks of distribution that handled a few issues I personally did not experience. The programmers Nemetschek uses do an excellent job with the product. They listen to their user base and act on the suggestions. Because of that, they have an ever-growing loyal following of an application that more than competes favorably with other Computer Aided Design programs. The best thing they did was never abandon the Macintosh - which not only shows they have good taste, but that they were open to innovation and acted on it much more thoroughly than their competition. For that, they have my vote of confidence.

xPad 1.2.5 - Keep all your notes in one place

Reviewed by Harry {doc} Babad   © 2007

Developer: Garrett Murray
feedback@getxpad.com
http://www.getxpad.com/
Released: April 24, 2007
Freeware

Requirements: Mac OS X 10.2 or later, additional features in Panther, even more features in Tiger. Not apparently Universal Binary. Disk space: 3.2 MB plus your notes.

Strengths: A fine tool for collecting and organizing snippets of information, in a simple user defined manner. The user interface is clean and intuitive, making this an easy to work with tool for every day use.

Weaknesses: Being constrained to a single long list of documents, without being able to organize them into nested folders, was a bit of a trial. In addition, the lack of a cross-document find function limits the product's usefulness when you snippet collection gets large. These and other discomforts with the product are listed further in the review.

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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 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

I confess, Mia Culpa, I have a weakness for notepads and organizers — the simpler, more intuitive and more flexible the better. I'm a dedicated and long time user of DEVON Technologies shareware product DEVONnote, reviewed in the March 2006 macC, [http://www.devon-technologies.com/products/devonnote/] But I'll still take the time to test new products that others, who are not as finicky as I am, might want to adopt. I am especially drawn to free products that promise to perform well. Therefore, this review of Garrett Murray's *XPad*.

Remember, the whole purpose of notepad programs is to both allow you keep snippets of collected information for future use, and to have them organized in a manner that you can easy search and access that information when you need it. Unlike filling individual folders with groups of short MS Word or TextEdit documents, images, or links, the purpose of a notepad program is to keep the information together in as easy to access organized manner.

Developers Product Summary — "xPad is a notepad/scrapbook application with robust drag and drop support. With it you can manage an unlimited number of documents using a single window interface. Color-coded categories and document sorting allows for easy organization of text documents." According to its developer, xPad is a single solution replacement for Apple's combined applications — Stickies, NotePad, Scrapbook and TextEdit.
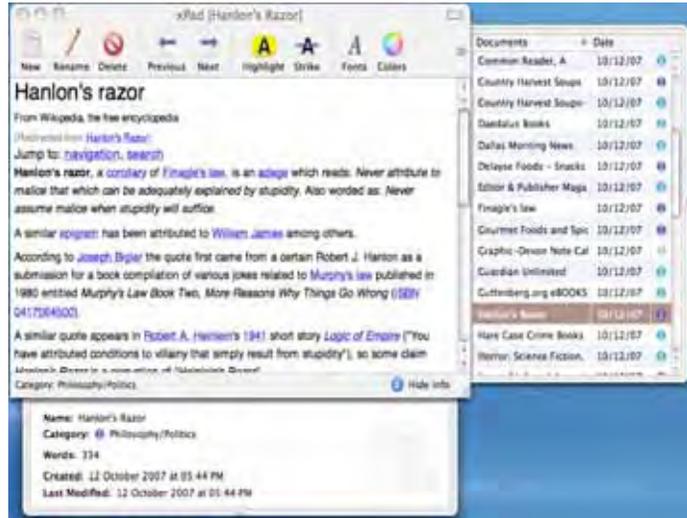
Getting Started/Using the Software

Do the drop and drag thing, double click on the installed application, tweak a few preferences (if you like) and XPad is ready to use.

Dan Frakes Macworld's Gem of the Week (June 12, 2007) summarized X-pad's overall features better then I can. "XPad gives you a number of useful organizational tools. For example, a Documents drawer gives you quick access to any note, and you can name and categorize each note and see the date each note was last modified. You can also sort notes by name, date, or category. An Info drawer shows the current note's name, category, creation and modification dates, as well as a word count. Notes offer full RTF support; paragraph formatting (including styles, tab stops, spacing, and lists), and character-level formatting. You can also perform non-contiguous selections -- select some text in one part of a document, hold down the Command key, highlight text in another part of the document, and then perform actions on both selections." Check out the rest of Dan's review at:
<http://www.macworld.com/weblogs/macgems/2007/05/xpad/index.php?lsrc=mwgems>

Testing, Testing, It's all in the Testing — What did I do to test this product? By now those of you who are regular readers of mine, should know. I grabbed 5% of the information in my DEVONnote (DN) database/notepad and transferred them over to XPad. Why only 5%? Well I've about 1,000 entries in DN, it doesn't take that many samples to test a new notepad product. I also worked with the product, on and off, for a week, adding items to XPad that I was also going to add to DEVONnote.

Transferring Files to XPad — After a little bit of experimentation, I found I could add either a single document or a group of them from DN, or the Finder to XPad. All I needed to do was to select them and drag them to the XPad icon in my dock.

Much to my delight all the links in the individual documents be they email or Internet, worked perfectly. Folders, when dragged, however were morphed into a single document with that folder's name. Alas the documents the folder contained were ignored by XPad; reasonable since the Pad organizational scheme is indeed a one level deep long document list. It was easy to open the folder and drag its contents to XPad.

Adding Web Pages — Although I was not able to import either the web pages (links) I'd stored in DEVONnote directly to XPad, I could easily add the page by opening it in Safari or Firefox and adding it by dragging the URL to XPad's Icon. Surprisingly, This method did not allow me to drag a link from m desktop into XPad. Another surprise was that the web address that was added to XPad was transferred as a document whose name was that link. However I needed to activate that link by selecting it and the control clicking to make it active.

Importing Images — My initial attempts to drag a few JPEG files into the document did not work. However creating a blank document and dragging the image into it worked just fine. Of course that image wasn't, it was an RTF document. Indeed I could, like in any text processor, type a few words describing the image's origin or purpose to ease a getting older memory. However I could no longer work with the *image* in a graphics program.

Assigning Categories — Categories are just labels, more of them then are available in the Finder, but labels nevertheless. Having predefined a set of categories, I could then sort though my list of newly added documents and assign them a category.

Bottom Line — All the items that were either formatted as text of rtfd file were imported smoothly, their names intact and all their contents correctly formatted with, where appropriate, links activated.
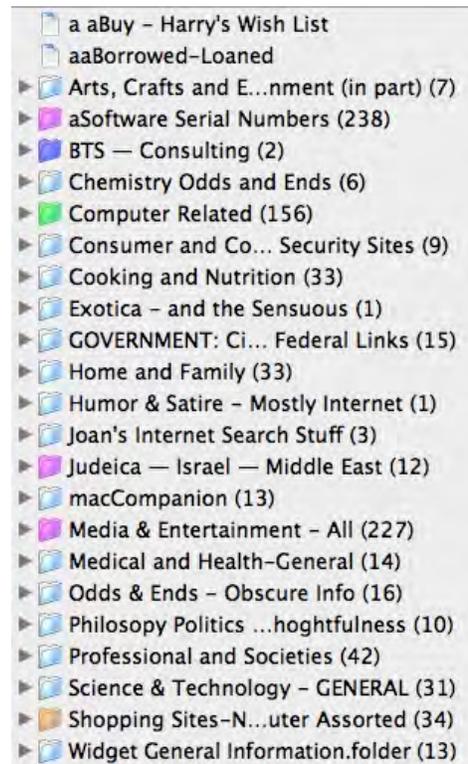
Features

- A capable text editor that out does Apple's TextEdit product

- Automatically saves and opens your documents
- Allows both rich and plain text editing
- Drag and drop documents from Finder the XPad Icon (in the dock)
- Easily backed up data file [~/Library/Application Support/xPad]
- Flexible Sorting based on Categories
- One window Interface, Store unlimited documents
- Simple export by dragging a document's name to the Finder.
- Utilizes categories with color-coding to label documents according to any system you develop.

Discomforts

Weak Find Capabilities — I found no means of searching for a key word or two across the entire document set. The find feature only worked within a given document. That makes it useless of searching you entire document collection to glean information.

Limitations of Mere Category Colors – Unlike the labels in programs that range from the Apple Finder to Eudora. You cannot edit the color names to give them real names. How hard would it be to allow a user to set up colored labels to indicate what the colors mean? For example, Action (red), Odds and Ends (pink), Professional (dark blue), Computing (violet), Entertainment & Media (orange), Food & Cooking (green), or Home (bright yellow).
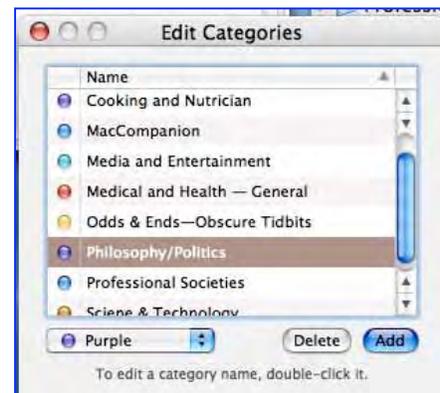
Trapped in a Single-Level List — Unlike the ability to create nested file folders in DN, categories, XPad's has no equivalent of folders. Categories are only a label, not an hieratical organizing feature. XPad only allows a single level of documents which you can organize by color coding them When working with thousands of notes; added depth, using folders, is essential to keep things well organized.

Weak Help Files — I attempted, using the Help File, to find out more about importing graphics. In addition, I wanted to learn more about the find function. Despite a number of variants on the terms *Images* or *Graphic* all I got was a result telling me "No pages with your search words were found" This despite that the help panel listing included an time called *How do I import documents?* Although that file told me I could import Rich text with attachments (images), that one-liner did not help in satisfying my need to just directly import graphics files into the program.

When wanting to learn whether it was possible to search across the documents I'd added to Pad, I bombed out.

Edit Categories Window Size — I soon exhausted the size of the window used to add and edit categories. It would really be helpful, if users could resize the window, downward, to allow them to see all the entries. This is of a particular concern since the document collection in XPad is essentially a long flat files list of documents, with no ability to crate order by using nested folder.

Conclusion/Recommendation

After detailed testing, I determined that XPad (1) was an easy-to-use simple notepad supported by a strong text editor and (2) it could not serve as a serious PIM to collect and organize thousands of pieces of information for easy retrieval. As a result, with some disappointment, I reviewed the product only on that basis, and did not score it against the flexibility of DEVONnote. If you needs are simple, and you need a better tool than the combination of Stickies, NotePad, Scrapbook, check this product out. It free, with a simple to learn interface that could well serve you serve as an agile text editor and for storing tidbits of information. If however you going to collect hundreds of snippets, which you need to search for just the right fact, pass XPad right on by.

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Besides our website and consulting efforts, we also create *macCompanion* as a freely available PDF-based monthly. It averages about 100 pages per month. July 2006 was the 4th-year anniversary of this labor of love. The *macCompanion* staff is an all-volunteer team of writers and reviewers from many parts of the globe, and they also have a great wealth of knowledge and experience in their backgrounds. That base of talent also continues to keep growing as the Macintosh Professional Network expands.

Statistical Analysis

We are very excited about our site statistics! The multilingual-capable *macCompanion* website is close to 2 million page views a month and readership continues to increase rapidly through our "whisper campaign".

We continue to get greater visibility every day. Many of the various 35 computer operating systems (with many moving towards the Mac® OS X™ environment), 115 online search engines, 269 countries and domains and 319 online robots have discovered us – and continue to do so. So far, over 201 other websites have also linked to us. Many of our readers have made our site one of their favorites. While nearly 70% of our readership stops by for a quick visit via RSS feeds, over 23% spend between 1/2 to 1 hours at a time going through over 250 different pages on our site (mostly archives). Many of those who quickly drop by, come to get the monthly PDF issue of *macCompanion*. Over 35GB of bandwidth was used in December 2005 alone for download purposes. Previous months have averaged around 20GB. Trend analysis indicates that will continue to increase as folks decide to "Move to the Mac".

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The *macCompanion* Staff