

The South Bay Mug

MACINTOSH

A Monthly Cupful For South Bay Apple Mac User Group Members, Jan. 2005

MACHinations

A personal view from Bob

Ramblings

Macworld Expo. January is the month to hang onto your seat. Rumors galore. On the 11th Steve Jobs will have given his keynote address. In past years I've watched it on the web. The first hour and a half is usually not too interesting. He'll talk about how much music Apple has sold and other financial stuff along with some new revelations about Tiger. The final half-hour he'll conclude with, "Oh, one more thing" and then comes the blockbuster announcement. Since I have to submit my article before Jan 11, all this will be old hat.

OS 10.3.7 is out. After waiting a couple of days and watching reports on MacFixIt and MacInTouch, I downloaded the combo updater, 94 MB, and installed it. People smarter than me offer this advice for any major update:

- Run a disk utility to make sure your drive is OK
- Repair permissions (Disk Utility)
- Install the combo updater. It's bigger but insures you haven't neglected anything.
- Repair permissions again.

Blogs. This is the latest craze and has gotten a lot of attention in the popular press. It's power to the people. You can keep an on-line diary and let others comment on it if you choose. Open a free account on www.blogger.com.

Revolution in the Valley. Apple was the dominant force in the early years of personal computing and has a very colorful history. Several books have been written about it, usually by outsiders or those with an ax to grind. This brand-new, hardcover book from O'Reilly is a wonderful account by Andy Hertzfeld, one of the original Mac developers. Although slightly techie, the book is an easy read and is peppered with photos. It gives a great insight into the development of the Mac and deals a lot with the personalities.

You may have also seen the fascinating story of how the Graphing Calculator was born at Apple.

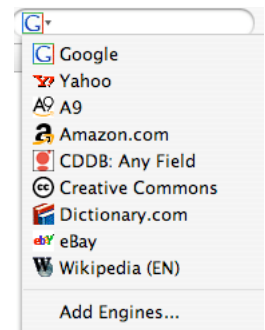
<http://www.pacifict.com/Story/>. The OS 9 version came free with Power Macs since 1994 and now there's a free and commercial release for OS X.

NeoOffice/J. I tried an earlier version of this open source office suite and wasn't impressed. Version 1.1 Beta for OS 10.2 and higher is out; it's free and it's pretty darn good. The installer is 117 MB and you need 512 MB of memory. Be sure and download any patches to squash bugs



that come up. NeoOffice looks very much like Microsoft Office and includes a word processor, spreadsheet, presentation and a drawing module. Unlike Open Office, on which it's based, it does not require X11 and is very Mac-like, although some elements of UNIX seep through. It opens and saves Microsoft Office files, as well as other formats. It's a work in progress, reasonably stable, a bit quirky and slower than MS Office, but the price is right. It's worth a look and I'm sure will get better.

Firefox 1.0 is another open source (free) browser that's very much like Safari with a few extras. It has a great Search feature and let's you copy and paste tables into a spreadsheet or word processor. It has the Google search box, but has a pull-down menu for other search engines, including Wikipedia.



A wiki, from the Hawaiian term for "quick", is a web site that allows a user to add content. Wikipedia is a massive, on-line, participatory encyclopedia. You can contribute. With over 400,000 articles in English it's a fabulous place to find anything about anything.

www.craigslist.org is a place to post free classified ads or announcement. Another "power to the people site".



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Share your Photos

In the October 2004 newsletter I wrote an article titled "You've Got Photos" discussing different ways to share your digital photos. Aside from making prints and displaying them directly from your camera, I focused mostly on the many options in OS X. Although OS X has been out for 4 years, there are some who still use OS 9 and earlier and even some who have old 68K machines. And what about those poor souls who don't have a Mac?

JPEG files. Most digital photos are JPEG (.jpg) files. It's a universal format that works on any computer and any operating system. If you put JPEG files on a CD, anyone can view them on their computer and many DVD players will read and display them. When burning a CD make sure it's formatted for both Mac and PC. Burning in OS X automatically insures this but with earlier systems you may need to specify the ISO-8860 format.

QuickTime. QuickTime software let you view images and movies in a great variety of formats and usually works behind the scenes. It's automatically installed with the System. It's also available free for the PC. Many Mac and PC programs use QuickTime to render their images. Because QuickTime does all the heavy lifting, it's easy for developers to create slide show, movie and image viewing software that use it. Some of these programs are exceedingly small (<50K) and there's lots of them for any OS.

GraphicConverter. This is a wonderful shareware program (\$30) that I highly recommend. It has an image browser and slideshow and lets you edit your photos and convert from one format to another. It's available for OS 9 and OS X and even works on very old 68K machines. For my wife's birthday party a few years ago I installed it on a Quadra 605 (ca. 1993; \$5 at the swap meet) and displayed 120 photos in a self-running slide show.

Slide Freebie v. 2.1 I haven't used this in a long time but found a new version at

<http://www.artlythere.com/slidefreebie.shtml>

It works on any PPC Mac running OS 7 and higher.

Don't forget the software that came with your digital camera. It's usually available for both Macs and PCs and allows photo browsing and slide shows and maybe some editing.

How about our PC brethren? I can't comment specifically on PC software for image and slide show viewing, but I know there's lots of it. Here's some possibilities for photo sharing with Macs and PCs.

- Put your photos on a CD as JPEG files. Your PC friends can use their software to view them.
- Create a QuickTime slide show or movie. Most PCs have QuickTime or can download it for free. You can create a QuickTime movie directly from iPhoto, GraphicConverter and other programs.
- Create a photo web site with iPhoto, Galerie or any web authoring software and upload it to a server on which you have an account. Most ISPs give you free web space. (.mac members can post photos directly to their iDisk from iPhoto).
- Post photos to a commercial web site like www.smugmug.com or www.ofoto.com. Some charge and some are free.
- Create a web site and put it on a CD instead of the web. You don't need the Internet and anyone with a web browser can view it.
- Create a PDF file of your photos. This is a little trickier but pretty easy if you have PowerPoint or Keynote. PDF generation is part of OS X but with OS 9 and earlier you have to buy Adobe Acrobat.
- Create a DVD slide show if you have a SuperDrive and iDVD. It can be displayed on a TV with any DVD player.

It's hard to cover all options for all operating systems but hopefully this will give you a start. Be resourceful. There lots out there and much is free.



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iWorks and AppleWorks

I'm a long-time user and great fan of AppleWorks, but it has gotten a bit long in the tooth. Rumors surface periodically about a replacement so I was quite excited to check out the new iWorks. It comprises a word-processor/page-layout program called Pages and Keynote 2, an update to Apple's presentation program. The two are very similar in look and feel and use the same Inspector palette and tools for manipulating text and graphics. Keynote 2 is a modest improvement over version 1, with more themes, but Pages is dramatically different than AppleWorks. iWorks requires a 500 MHz or faster processor. I'll focus here on Pages since it's so new. This article was prepared in Pages. Can you see any difference from my earlier articles?

Pages is brand new with many sophisticated features.

- It imports Word, AppleWorks 6 and text. It exports Word, PDF, text, HTML but not AppleWorks.
- It has most of the word processing capabilities of AppleWorks, but shines at page layout and may challenge the expensive QuarkXPress or InDesign for some tasks.
- It takes full advantage of OS X with advanced Quartz graphics and type.
- It supports Unicode fonts.
- It can create tables of content and footnotes.
- Styles are easier with a pull-down toolbar menu and styles drawer.
- The toolbar can be easily customized
- Pages has a graphing tool that I found pretty useless. It was agonizingly slow and not very flexible

- Pages comes with over 40 elaborate page-layout templates for newsletters, journals, invitations, resumés, education and marketing that you can customize. These include multiple inside pages to choose from.
- Pages has a media browser so you can embed multimedia content from iPhoto, iMovie and iTunes into your document.
- Pages supports JPEG, TIFF and Photoshop formats. You can scale, rotate and add drop-shadows.

Don't throw out AppleWorks yet.

- It's much faster than Pages and includes spreadsheet, database, paint and draw modules.
- It imports and exports in many formats.
- Outlining is better and easier.

I converted my Feb article, created in AppleWorks, to Pages. Bullet lists did not convert properly and sections and line spacings were messed up, though easily corrected. Both programs export as HTML and I exported the article as HTML from both. Neither did a perfect job, but the AppleWorks export looked better and the files were smaller.

In conclusion, if you have AppleWorks and use it for basic office tasks, it should work well for you. If you want to create sophisticated and good looking page layouts, Pages may be the ticket. Hopefully version 2 will clean up some rough edges and maybe add missing features. Keynote is an excellent presentation programs and the combo price (\$79) for the two can't be beat. In the meantime I'm shopping for a faster Mac.

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A plug for plug-ins, Gmail & Google

PDF files are universal. Any computer reads them and they display the page exactly as it was prepared, regardless of the fonts you have installed. They're quite common on the web but if you click on one it will launch Apple's Preview or Adobe Reader to view it. "PDF Browser Plugin" from www.schubert-it.com is free for personal use and turns your web browser into a PDF viewer. With the help of PDF Browser Plugin you can view PDF documents directly in your web browser, print them, and save them to disk if you'd like to keep them. It requires OS 10.3 or later and won't work with Internet Explorer (which you don't want to use unless you have to). To download a PDF file without opening it in your browser, control (or right button) click and select "Download Linked File As...).

To view a PDF file on your drive without opening Preview or Adobe Reader, drag the file into a browser window and it's displayed so you can view and print it. Although less common on the web, occasionally you run into Word files. Another plug-in from Schubert-It called "Word Browser Plugin" displays Word files. Install the plug-in files in the Internet Plug-in folder in your system or user library.



PDF Browser Plugin



Word Browser Plugin

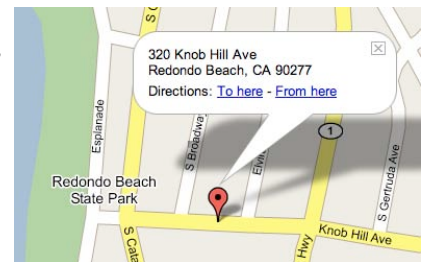
Gmail. There are many web-based mail services available but one that I've been using for several months and really like is the free Gmail, by Google. They now give you over 2 GB of storage on their server and you can use their famous search engine to find anything in your mail folders. My wife belongs to a discussion group that generates over 25 messages a day. Using her

Gmail account she can archive them for future reference without cluttering up her computer and she can access it from anywhere. A nice feature of Gmail is that it groups and displays messages in a thread as a single message.

Google's robots comb through messages and present a few tasteful, text-only ads along the right side, similar to what you see with a Google search on the web. This may bother some people, but I don't have any problem with it. Sometimes it's funny. A message discussing kilns for firing jewelry showed ads for pizza ovens.

Gmail is still a beta project and, for now, there's no place to sign up for an account. You have to be invited. Send me an email and I'll be glad to refer you.

Google Maps. Be sure to check out Google maps at maps.google.com. You can also get a map by doing a Google search. Search on 320 Knob Hill Ave, 90277 and you'll be presented with several map choices — Google, Yahoo and MapQuest. A small section of what you



get with Google maps is shown above. Click on To or From here, enter another address and you get a map with the route and driving instructions. Be careful; sometimes it's not very accurate. Click "Satellite" in the upper right-hand corner and see a satellite (aerial) view. Click on "Local Search" and type restaurant and local restaurants will be shown. Hector pointed out an AppleScript on macosxhints.com that displays a Google map from any US address in Address Book.



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Docs and Apps

It seems like an annual ritual to address the issue of opening files by double-clicking. Double-click a document (doc) and, lo and behold, it opens in the intended application (app). Usually... but not always. Sometimes it opens in the wrong application or you get an “Application Not Found” message. How does your Mac know what application to use? In the old days, before OS X, Mac-created documents had two bits of information hidden inside, the Type and Creator Codes. For example a Word document created on the Mac may have the codes WDBM and MSWD. The first says it’s a Word file and the second says Microsoft Word created it. There are lots of ways to see the codes. Get the free program “Type Changer” to view and change them.

Our PC and UNIX friends don’t use these codes, but rather depend on extensions. A Word file created on a PC would have the form, wordfile.doc, but without any internal codes. Leave off the .doc and Windows is confused and doesn’t know what to do. Since Apple went to OS X, with it’s UNIX foundation, it has been moving toward the use of extensions instead of type and creator codes. For example, Apple’s new Pages program doesn’t use the codes, but rather the .pages extension.

Without any codes, the extension determines the type of file. A JPEG file, with the extension .jpg, will open in a graphics application — but which one? There are hundreds. On my Mac it can open in Photoshop, Illustrator, ImageReady, Camino, Freeway, GraphicConverter, iCab, Internet Explorer, Mozilla and on and on. Initially OS X assigns a default application and that’s what will open when you double-click the file. To open it in a different application:

- Drag the file onto the desired application’s icon
- Drag it onto an app in the Dock
- Open it within an application (Cmd-O)
- Select the file, do a Control-click and choose “Open With” from the application list. Option-Control-click permanently changes it.

You can change the default application by selecting the file, selecting “Get Info” and assigning a new application. If you want this to be the new default for all files of this type, click the Change All button.



If you get an email with an attached file you can save the file to disk and open it with the application you want. Apple Mail lets you Control (or right button) click to open it with your preferred application.

Many different applications will open many different file types. If it’s a Word document and you don’t have Microsoft Word, you can open it using Apple’s TextEdit, although special formats and graphics may be lost. AppleWorks 6, Pages and ThinkFree Office will open Word files, as will RagTime solo (free). AbiWord, NeoOffice/J and Open Office are three free, open source programs that read and write Word files. MacLinksPlus converts hundreds of file types, for which you have no application, from one format to another.

Double-clicking is fun and easy, but it doesn’t always work. Fortunately you have many options.



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Mac Music & Audio

Once a year I write about using the Mac for music and audio, probably because there so much you can do and it's a topic of great personal interest. Download music from the Internet, copy it to your Mac from CDs or record it on your Mac from an audio source (radio and records). iTunes will store, organize, play, convert to MP3 and export music to a CD or an iPod.

Audio Recording Software In OS 9 we had Coaster, a great, free audio recording program. In OS X there are several in the \$30-50 range — Amadeus II and Sound Studio — but I've only found one free program, Audio Recorder. It's pretty bare bones, although it does record directly in the MP3 format by installing the LAME file in your user library. In recent years I've converted a lot of my vinyl records to CDs and MP3s using my Mac. The basic approach is:

- Connect an audio cable from your hi-fi (line out) to the audio input jack (line in) on your Mac.
- If the Mac doesn't have a line input, use a USB adapter like the Griffin iMic.
- Start the music and press the record button in your recording software.
- Edit the music, if the software has this capability.
- Store and play in iTunes.
- Convert it to MP3 format or burn it to a CD.

Audio and MP3 Audio files (AIFF, WAV) can be big but when converted to the MP3 (or AAC) format they are compressed to a much smaller size. The file size for hour of audio is approximately

- Audio = 600 MB = one CD
- MP3 or AAC (good quality music) = 60 MB
- MP3 or AAC (speech, mono) = 10-20 MB

MIDI = Musical Instrument Digital Interface is a completely different way of storing and playing music. Instead of recording the audio waveform, you store a sequence of notes or MIDI "events". Each event represents the note pitch, its time, duration, loudness and the instrument that plays it. It's similar to a player piano roll, where a hole in the paper corresponds to each note played. It doesn't take much to store MIDI events so the files are very small (0.1 - 0.2 MB per hour).

Download MIDI files from many sites. Open a file with QuickTime and it converts the MIDI sequence to audio and plays the tune, using the set of instruments in QuickTime. You can add MIDI files to your iTunes library for convenient access and play back. With sequencing software and a MIDI keyboard you can record your own compositions.

MIDI won't make digital audio obsolete. It works well with keyboard instruments (piano, organ, harpsichord) and percussion, but is not as good at capturing the nuances of string, wind and brass instruments, and least of all, your favorite vocalist.

Podcasting (= iPod + broadcasting) is the Internet equivalent of talk-radio where you can be a talk-show host. It's an audio blog that uses the MP3 audio format. Record your own spiel and put it on the Internet. Others can download it and listen or put it on their iPod to listen to while they jog. There are thousand of podcasts. <http://audio.weblogs.com> shows some of the latest. Many are pretty lame, but when you find some that you like, subscribe and organize them with an aggregator (Grand Central Station) like the free iPodder. I'm jazzed by podcasting and hope to spend more time writing about it in the future.

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How I try to keep out of trouble

This is how I try to keep out of trouble on the Internet. It's my *personal* approach to Internet security and others may not agree with me. I'll ignore the usual, well-publicized precautions, like not taking candy or software from strangers, opening their attachments or giving out personal information.

Virus Software I've used Macs for 20 years. I don't use virus software and am not aware of ever having gotten a virus. I've tried virus software a few times. It's slow to scan my files and it's never found anything.

Spyware These are unwanted programs that hijack your computer and can send out your data. You're off to a good start with OS X as it won't install programs in the System without an administrator password. Install software only from trusted sources. I'm not aware of any spyware for the Mac, but be careful anyway.

Mail Preferences Don't use your email address as your name in setting up your account. If your name is Joe Blow, use that, not jb@aol.com. Incoming messages to jb@aol.com are probably from spammers who don't know your name. If your mail program supports it, download email message headers (To, From, Date, Subject), inspect and delete spam on the server before you download your messages.

When reading a downloaded spam email don't tell the sender you've opened it and confirm your email address. Turn off "allow server access" in your email preferences. Spammers put hidden image requests, tagged with your address, to fetch an invisible graphic from their server so they know you're reading the message. You can still download pictures from trusted senders.

Protect addresses. Keep your email address off public sites. Do a google search on your address to see where it may be posted. I was surprised to find that Google peeks inside PDF files and indexes the contents. I use a graphic, not text, to display my address on my articles since they are posted to the web.

Don't display all the recipients when sending email to a group. Use Bcc: (blind carbon copy) to hide them.

If you run a web site don't put people's email address in plain sight. Use the free SpamStopper to encode the address. There no guarantee this can't be cracked, but at least it's no longer low-hanging fruit.

Shield your computer Your firewall is on by default. Keep it on. If you have broadband Internet, use a router to shield your computer from the Internet. It's like having someone forward a package to you. You get it but the sender doesn't know your real address.

Sending data *from* your computer to the Internet is another story. A router won't stop spyware from sending out your data. Programs like Little Snitch and Internet Cleanup filter outgoing transmissions and alert you to unusual requests before you OK it. I tried Internet Cleanup for a while but gave it up. It was a bit flaky and there were too many programs that send to the Internet. Software registration and updates, Skype, iChat, weather and stock quote widgets are benign but are constantly sending out requests and information.

Turn off file sharing except when you need it. If you have wireless, turn on encryption. WEP is less secure than WPA, but will deter all but the most determined.

Always backup important files and always install security updates.



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More Missing Manuals

I love the Missing Manual series published by O'Reilly. As you know, it's a rare thing these days when you get a printed manual with your software, other than a brief "getting started" guide. You usually have to figure it out from online help or a PDF file and these are usually quite meager. This may be OK to get you started, but with many sophisticated programs, like those in the iLife series, there are so many shortcuts, hidden features and little tricks that you need a "real" manual. There are a lot of good books, but I keep returning to the Missing Manual series because they are inexpensive, easy to read and full of cool tricks and tips. Written in an unpretentious and humorous style, they are suited for both the beginner and advanced user. They contain much ancillary material, such as how to buy a digital or video camera and take good photos and movies. Each book runs 400-500 pages and many in the latest series are printed on glossy paper with high-quality color photos. O'Reilly, at oreilly.com, has recently increased their user group discount to 30%. Use the code DSUG.



Drive Genius 1.1.1



In the old days Symantec's Norton Utilities was the "must have" utility to keep your hard drive in good shape. Now it's off fighting PC viruses and has ignored the Mac. In the meantime OS X has gotten more robust and Drive Utility, that comes with it, is more powerful. Still, there are times when you need stronger medicine. Today the choices are

Disk Warrior, TechTool Pro and the new kid on the block, Drive Genius (\$99) from Prosoft Engineering at prosofteng.com.



Drive Genius is a "Swiss Army Knife" program. It goes beyond the others by offering not only drive repair but the ability to repartition your drive without reformatting, precision duplication of your drive for backup, de-fragmenting, optimizing and checking your drive structure for defects. You can also wipe a drive for secure deletion of files, repair permissions and gather drive statistics. For the adventuresome, there is sector edit. It comes on a bootable CD.

I've not used its repair functions as my drives are in good working order but other functions worked great. I'm always cautious about programs that monkey with my drives and am alert to what others report before jumping in. There are some very positive reviews (see MacAddict and MacFixIt), but also a few isolated disaster stories. Before using the repartition function you are advised to back up your data, but then you might as well use Disk Utility to repartition the drive, which erases the contents, and then restore your files from the backup.

I've been using Disk Warrior, a one-trick pony for rebuilding the disk directory. The latest updater for Tiger, 2.9 MB, uses your original CD to create a new, bootable CD. A minor nit is that the updater to Drive Genius 1.1.1 is 128 MB, a tough swallow for those with a dial-up Internet connection, but handy if you can't find the original CD. Take a good look at Drive Genius. It offers a lot more capability than it's competitors.



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Burn Dragon Burn

New Macs come with CDR drives to create CDs. Many have SuperDrives for burning DVDs. Apple's iLife software, iPhoto, iTunes, iMovie and iDVD are wonderfully integrated with CD/DVD burning and do a great job with Apple-supported drives. Beyond that, it's not very flexible. To burn data files on your hard disk Apple first creates a disk image containing the files. Burning multiple sessions is not very intuitive. To fill the gap I've been using Toast 5 from roxio.com, but recently began using NTI's Dragon Burn 4.1 (www.ntius.com). It sells for about half (\$50 box, \$40 download), has many features and supports many drives, internal or external. The plethora of options can be overwhelming. Thankfully the defaults are what most people use. NTI boasts more data formats than Toast 6, but Roxio has just announced Toast 7, so the race continues.

Dragon Burn 4.1 is equipped with major new features that deliver a more robust alternative to the basic CD- and DVD-burning capabilities available with Mac OS X computers for about half the cost of its competitors.

Dragon Burn 4.1 now lets you record to more than one CD/DVD drive at the same time, and supports:

- VCD/SVCD mastering, although I wasn't able to create a VCD (Video CD) from a QuickTime movie in either Dragon Burn or Toast.
- VIDEO_TS for DVD Video burning
- Image/IMG files
- Picture CD
- Recordable CD, DVDR/RW and DVD-RAM discs,
- 8.5GB DVD+R Double Layer (DL)

Dragon Burn supports 11 data formats (see below), including UDF, a format found on PCs, but not read-

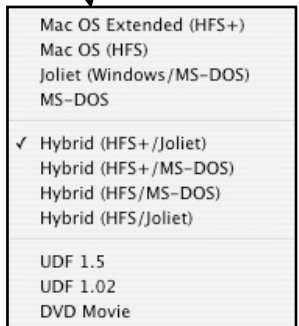
able on Macs.

The program comes with a 76 page manual, sparse for such a powerful program. There's one sentence on video CDs and two on the UDF format. Still, it will get you going and the program is fairly intuitive. When you open it you are presented with a palette of choices (right) for audio, data, picture or video burning. Select a project and data format. Drag files into the project window and burn.

With Live Audio you can convert records and tapes to CD. As you record the audio you can break it into tracks and rearrange and label them before burning the CD. You can also export them to your drive in several formats, including MP3.

Dragon burn comes with Discus NT, a program to create CD labels and inserts using a huge collection of label templates. It looks like a PC program, documentation is minimal and handling of text isn't very Mac-like. Still it's quite flexible and you can create some attractive labels.

Summary: I like Dragon Burn. It has most of the capability I want and complements, rather than replaces, Apple's software. NTI currently has a 50% discount promotion. At \$20 the price is irresistible.





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I ♥ FireWire

I'm not an expert on external FireWire drives but I've put together four of them, three with IDE hard drives and one with a DVD drive. I'll pass along some of what I've learned. They're not expensive. You can buy a FireWire enclosure kit (about \$40) and install your own drive (an easy 10-minute job) or buy one already assembled with a drive installed. The latter may also come with backup software. Aluminum enclosures provide better heat dissipation, whereas the cheaper ones have plastic cases with a sheet metal interior. Most have fans. The heart of the unit is the "bridge board" a small circuit board that connects the drive's IDE connector to one or two FireWire cable connectors. Several companies make the bridge chip. A popular one is the Oxford 911 (the 922 is for 800 MHz FireWire). The power supply can either be inside the enclosure or an external power adapter.



Enclosures come in two flavors, FireWire and USB 2.0. Some have both connectors. Although FireWire drives cost a little more you can boot from them, but not from USB. Enclosures come in various sizes, depending on what's inside.

- The hard drives used in most desktop computers are 3.5-inch and fit in 3.5 or 5.25-inch enclosures.
- 5.25-inch enclosures come with a removable front panel to fit CD/DVD drives. They usually have a built-in power supply.
- Laptop drives are 2.5-inch and use different connectors. Because they need little power they can be "bus powered", taking power from the FireWire or USB cable.
- The iPod has an even smaller drive and can serve as an external FireWire drive.

Unless you buy a drive pre-configured for the Mac, it will be formatted for the PC, but it's simple to reformat it. Open Apple's Drive Utility, select the drive, select the Erase tab, and format it for Mac OS Extended. You can also select the Partition tab and divide the drive into two or more partitions. The figure above shows a drive with three partitions.



To use an external drive, turn it on and then connect its cable to your Mac. After a few seconds the drive will mount and show up along with your other drives. To remove a drive, first close all files and unmount it; then remove the cable and finally turn off its power.

You can shut down and start up your Mac with a FireWire drive turned on and connected. With a System installed you can start up from it. Hold down the option key while starting up and you'll see the volumes you can boot from. This is a big advantage of the Mac, not shared by our PC brethren. With a System on the external drive you've got a handy backup that you can start from in case of trouble.

You can also mount the drives of a second FireWire Mac using the "FireWire Target Disk" mode. Start up the second computer while holding down the T key. You'll then see a giant, yellow, bouncing FireWire symbol on the screen, indicating that it's in the target mode. Then connect a FireWire cable between the two computers and the drives in the second Mac will show up on the first Mac, as if they were external drives. In fact, they are. This is a great way to transfer files from one Mac to another and it's very fast.



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The South Bay Mug

MACINTOSH

A Monthly Cupful For South Bay Apple Mac User Group Members, Nov. 2005

MACHinations

A personal view from Bob

Address Book Woes

One of the most useful functions of the Mac is to store addresses and other personal information. Software that does this is called a “Personal Information Manager” or PIM. Some PIMs handle many things — others just one or two. Probably the most useful function is as an addresses book. There are many PIMs and I’ve used several, including Palm Desktop and Now Contact. You can also create your own address book using an AppleWorks database or even a spreadsheet. Trying to keep them synchronized is a chore. PIMs don’t all talk to one another and some have been discontinued, leaving the user adrift.

For years my favorite information manager was iData Pro and its predecessor InfoGenie. (see Dec 2003 newsletter.) Unfortunately it’s not compatible with Tiger. There’s only one programmer. He’s busy with a new version with no time to support older versions, which is too bad as I have a lot of information stored in iData Pro files. Fortunately the files are text so there are other, less elegant, ways to extract the information.

For many years I’ve used Entourage (part of Microsoft Office) as my email program. It has an excellent, integrated address book that works with other Microsoft programs. Apple’s excellent Address Book comes with OS X and it works seamlessly with Mail and other Mac applications. The two programs do not communicate directly with one another but can export and import using a common file format. Enter the vCard.

vCards are virtual, electronic business cards — a file format for personal data interchange. vCards are often attached to email messages, but can be exchanged in other ways, such as on the Internet. They can contain name and address information, phone numbers, URLs,

logos, photographs, and even audio clips.

Apple’s Address Book, Entourage, the iPod and others use them to store contact information. Open Address Book, select a contact, drag it to the Finder and it will create a vCard, a small text file (see icon right). Drag the vCard file into Entourage or the address folder on your iPod and it will create an address entry for the person. To transfer a set of addresses between programs supporting vCards, select all the addresses and drag them to an empty folder. Each entry will create a vCard (about 1K). Select all the vCards and drag them into the second address book and you’re done.



To email contact information to a friend, drag the vCard into the message and it will create a .vcf attachment. The recipient can drag the attached vCard to a compatible Address book and all the information is automatically entered.

LDIF - Some mail programs (e.g. Netscape) use a different text format called LDIF (Lightweight Directory Interchange Format) to exchange address information.

Tab-text - Many programs, including Entourage, import and export in tab-delimited text format, which you can view in a word processor or spreadsheet. To transfer contact information from one program to another you must match the fields and that can be time consuming. Fortunately there are many conversion utilities and scripts to help.

Compatibility seems to be getting better, but right now it’s a bit of a mess. Hopefully more programs will adopt a common standard in the future.



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Web Browsers

One of the most useful applications on your Mac is the web browser. It's an application that lets you display and interact with HTML documents (web pages) on the Internet or on your Mac. Macs comes with Safari, an excellent browser, but there are others. <http://darrel.knutson.com/mac/www/browsers.html> lists over 80 browsers that work in OS X and most are free. For those still using OS 9 the choice is very limited. Except for iCab, support of OS 9 browsers has ceased. Netscape and Internet Explorer 5 are still viable but don't support new web standards.

Browsers I use are Safari, Firefox, Opera, iCab, Mozilla, Camino, Netscape and Internet Explorer. I just downloaded a new, interesting one called Flock, that's based on FireFox and still a beta. It has built-in capability to add entries to your blog, share bookmarks with del.icio.us, and add photos to Flickr.

The Web Standards Project is a grassroots coalition fighting for standards that ensure simple, affordable access to web technologies for all. They have put together a test page called Acid2 that tests a browser against a battery of web standards. Go test your browser. Safari stacks up well.

Unfortunately there are some web sites that don't adhere to standards and may work with only some browsers, so it necessary to have more than one in your arsenal. Because Microsoft is such a big force and likes to go it's own way, some sites require Internet Explorer. Use Terminal or the free program Safari Enhancer to activate a Debug menu with many useful functions. It lets Safari impersonate Internet Explorer. It can tell a web site, "Hey, I'm Internet Explorer for Windows, so open the door."

Safari was one of the first to support tabbed browsing, a Bookmarks bar and an integrated Google search bar. Other, less obvious, capabilities are:

- Select text in any Safari window, control-click and search using Spotlight or Google.
- Control-click a web image to download it or add it to your iPhoto Library.
- Save a page as a "web archive." This stores all the contents of the page for later viewing.
- Email contents of a web page using Apple Mail.
- Enter text in the Google bar, hit Command-return and the search will open in a new tab.
- View RSS feeds of articles in the browser window. RSS (Really Simple Syndication) lets you quickly scan large numbers of articles.
- There's a search field at the bottom of the Bookmark view to search bookmarks, history or RSS feeds in a specific folder or the entire collection.
- View and download PDF files directly. Control-click to page through it or zoom in and out.
- Turn on private browsing to prevent any browsing information from being stored on your Mac.

Select content (text and images) in the browser window and copy-paste or drag to a TextEdit window. Everything is copied, including graphics and links. Unfortunately, if you select a table its tabular format is not preserved. This is not a problem with some of the other browsers, e.g. FireFox, Camino. Flock and iCab.

Golly! I'm at the end and I've only talked about Safari. Maybe more in future months.

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