

The South Bay Mug

MAGINTOSH

A Monthly Cupful For South Bay Apple Mac User Group Members, Mar. 2007

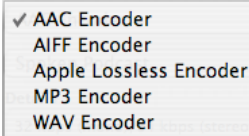
MACHinations

A personal view from Bob

Audio Books - it's more than music

I've been using iTunes for a long time and love it. I store all my music there and am still finding new ways to use it. The latest is for audio books. There's a huge number of them for sale and many on the Internet (e.g. Gutenberg.org) are free. Commercial audio books come on CDs. A typical novel takes 10 or more discs. Each holds up to 75 minutes on as many as 99 tracks. I like to convert CDs to compressed MP3 or AAC files (30 to 60 MB/hour), store them in iTunes and listen to them on my iPod.

MP3 and AAC formats. iTunes encodes imported audio in several formats, selected in the Preferences. I use two compressed and unprotected formats, MP3 (.mp3) and AAC (.m4a). MP3 is the most common. The AAC



format won't play on many non-Apple players, but sound better at the same bitrate and is rapidly gaining popularity. It's also bookmarkable, as I'll explain later.

Bitrate (kbps = kilobits/sec) represents the amount of information, or detail, that is stored per unit of time in an audio recording. In general the higher the bitrate the better it sounds, but the audio file is larger. MP3 and AAC music is typically recorded at 128 kbps or higher, but for audio books 64 kbps stereo (32 kbps mono) is quite adequate. Uncompressed audio (CD quality) takes about 10 MB/min to store, compared to about 1 MB/min for compressed music or about 0.5 MB/min for audio books in stereo.

Join Tracks. Commercial audio CDs have up to 99 tracks, each lasting only a minute or two. A 10-CD book can result in as many as 1000 files cluttering your hard drive. I discovered the "Join CD Tracks" com-

mand under the iTunes Advanced menu that lets you encode many CD tracks as one track. Insert the CD, select the tracks to be joined (I select all) and use the Join CD Tracks command to combine them into a single, compressed file. A vertical line shows the joined tracks, as shown right. Encoding a CD as a single, long track reduces file clutter, but what if you want to stop listening in the middle and return later? Encode with AAC and create a bookmarkable file (.m4b).

1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Track 01
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	Track 02
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	Track 03
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	Track 04
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	Track 05
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	Track 06
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	Track 07
8	<input type="checkbox"/>	Track 08
9	<input type="checkbox"/>	Track 09
10	<input type="checkbox"/>	Track 10
11	<input type="checkbox"/>	Track 11
12	<input type="checkbox"/>	Track 12
13	<input type="checkbox"/>	Track 13
14	<input type="checkbox"/>	Track 14
15	<input type="checkbox"/>	Track 15
16	<input type="checkbox"/>	Track 16
17	<input type="checkbox"/>	Track 17
18	<input type="checkbox"/>	Track 18
19	<input type="checkbox"/>	Track 19
20	<input type="checkbox"/>	Track 20

Bookmarkable tracks let you stop listening, go do something else and come back to resumes playing where you left off. Converting files to bookmarkable AAC files is a little tricky. Fortunately Doug Mac-Adam (dougscripts.com) has an iTunes AppleScript "Make Bookmarkable 2.1" to do the job. Put the AppleScript file in your user library>iTunes>Scripts folder and it will show in the Script menu in iTunes. He also has a small application "Join Together" that will join a collection of MP3 files already in iTunes, to create a single file that can be bookmarked, although it takes longer than joining and ripping from a CD.

Protected Files So far I've talked about unprotected files. Apple's iTunes Music Store sells books in protected AAC (.m4p) format that restricts how it can be copied and played. Audible.com sells a huge selection of downloadable audio books in a protected bookmarkable format (.aa) with some severe restrictions (two Macs, two iPods and burn to one CD).

Beyond Books: There's also podcasts, radio shows, magazines and newspapers. Enjoy.



Bob Brooks
Helping Beginners
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Welcome to South Bay Apple Mac User Group

You and your friends are invited to attend our next meeting. Our membership dues are only \$35 per year, entitling you to this newsletter each month and many more benefits. If you would like to become a member or get more info on SBAMUG, feel free to check out our web site at: www.sbamug.com

P. O. Box 432
Redondo Beach, CA
90277-0432

310-644-3315
Email: info@sbamug.com

Meetings are held at the

Redondo Beach Community Center
320 Knob Hill, Redondo Beach
(see map & directions on page 11)

Officers & Volunteers:

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Vice President:.....LJ Palmer
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Newsletter Editor:.....Dorothy Weeks
Raffle Chairman:.....George Griffiths
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Membership Report:

*(You may notice your name is in larger letters on your card. That is so it can be used as a name tag at the meetings.
Your Membership Cards are in the mail!)*

Current Membership - 174

Welcome New Members -

Alice Patterson, Jerry Strouse, Lin Hamilton, Tom Rische, Sybil Goldenblank, Sean Graham, R. LeMarie, Don Zywot.

Thank You Member Renewals -

Dorothy O'Brien, Douglas Baker, Ed Miyashiro, Paul Curry, George Huling, Patricia Yee, Philip Gruskin, Allan Boodnick, Burt Belzer.

MONTHLY CALENDAR

1st Sat - SBAMUG Core Group Mtg @ announced locations, 10 am
1st Thur - LB Mug @ Emerson School, Palo Verde & Willow, Long Beach, 7 pm
1st Sat - Orange Apple UG, Orange Coast College, Chem Bldg, Costa Mesa, 8am-1pm
3rd Sat - Adobe Tech Exchange Toyota Bldg on Grammercy near 190th, 9 am; \$10
Last Wed - SBAMUG Monthly Meeting
Last Tues - WOCMUG @ Emerson School, Palo Verde & Willow, Long Beach, 7 pm
Last Sat - TRW / Northrop Ham Radio & Computer Swap Meet, 7 am - 11:30 am

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Members are invited and encouraged to submit articles and original artwork for publication. Newsletter deadline is the last Wednesday of the month. Articles may be edited to fit in available space.

Please send to: dhweeks@sbamug.com

SBAMUG March 2007 PD CD

New and updated programs are the theme this month.

Asthma_Logbook_X_v1.1.0.dmg Logbook for Asthma. This database like program keeps a log of peak flow tests, inhaler units taken, health notes and a general notes section. Time and date are added to each record. OS 10.4 is the listed requirement.

DockReboot.dmg A utility to reboot the OSX dock, if it is not responding. Has preferences to do it automatically upon launch, or to prompt you first. PPC or Intel machines.

DragThing-5.7.2.dmg- An alternative dock application/utility. Handles documents, applications, and folders. One click is all that's required. You can have multiple docks. Option to paste clippings into applications, or even do it automatically upon opening a new application. Bob Brooks has demo'ed this program in the past. 10.3.9 or 10.4 PPC/Intel.

FileJuicer-4.7.4.dmg Update of a program I've had before. Extracts JPEG, PNG, GIF, PDF, BMP, WMF, PICT, TIFF, Flash and other image files from within a program. Requires 10.3.9 or better.

gc595x.dmg & gc595sub.dmg Yes, I did skip a version! Honest! More new formats for this jack of all trades graphic program along with bug fixes, and some new tool features, too. The ub version is the Universal binary version for Intel machines. Ub will run on PPC machines too, however if you're like me, who has a PPC machine and registered an earlier version, run the 5.95x version and you will not be asked to register again. (free upgrade)

istat_nano_1.8.zip A useful utility widget. Informs you of your CPU temp, fan speed, battery info (laptops), IP addresses, memory usage, etc, etc. Easy to use, subset buttons for each type of data keep the display from getting

too crowded. You should know by now, widgets are OS 10.4.

No Spin-1.dmg A utility to keep external drives from spinning down. Back when I had an external drive, I did make a CD burner "coaster" i.e. bad CD because the drive spun down. This will also eliminate the few second, but annoying wait for the drive to spin up.

CD for this month will be at the April meeting as the March-April 2007 CD.

Catch you at the March meeting.
Jim Pernal, PD Editor

How Important Is the SBAMUG Newsletter to You?

Should we continue to provide a printed newsletter to the SBAMUG? Did you know that a majority of MUGs do not? We have been doing this for many years through the efforts of some very dedicated people. John Bernardo held down the positions of Treasurer and Newsletter Editor at the same time, but he had to relinquish them this past year. In June '06, I stepped in on a temporary basis to keep things going.

I have been amazed at how much I have learned by putting the newsletter together. I now get to read other MUG newsletters and am part of an email group for MUGs. John was very helpful in getting me started and taking me through his process. I enjoy doing the newsletter, but I need to step back at this time.

Please let me know what your thoughts are on the continuation of our newsletter. Also, please let me know if you would be willing to do something to contribute to this effort. Or is it time to retire our newsletter and stay connected through just the eGroup?

Dorothy Weeks, Newsletter Editor
dhweeks@sbamug.com

How to Become a Literate Mac User, Part V

By John Martellaro

j.martellaro@comcast.net

In this series, so far, we've covered structured knowledge, process, network and system security, and backups.

Now it's time to move on to literacy concepts involving daily operations. The Mac OS X system preferences, Finder preferences, View Options, and basic operations can seem overwhelming, and so one has to develop a feeling for good practices. This can make your life simpler and improve the reliability of the OS and your data.

Also, Mac OS X is a multi-tasking, multi-user operating system, and you may not be the only user on the system. Good housekeeping, strange as that word may sound, is important. When you first start using a Mac, that's a very good time to get into some good habits, but experienced users are always improving their operational strategy. Accordingly, let's take a look at some good practices handling this wonderful operating system that Apple has built.

OS Design

In order to respond to what's presented on the screen of a Macintosh, it's helpful to understand Apple's design philosophy. That philosophy is derived from the fact that Mac OS X is a hybrid system: a beautiful and functional user interface "on top" of a UNIX operating system. (FreeBSD for the sake of simplicity here.) When working with an OS as complicated as this, one has to have a philosophy about what complexities to surface to the user and what things to obscure. Apple calls this the tinkerability factor.

Windows and Linux have a high tinkerability. Lots of configuration options and settings are exposed to the user. The user feels that everything is under his control. Linux and Windows have their own historical reasons for allowing the user (or the administrator) to tinker, mostly related to business rules and administrative control. The downside here is that

the maze of settings can be overwhelming to a user who just wants to get his work done. The Macintosh has a legacy of being used by people who use their Mac as a tool to get some higher order task done, not to tinker with their OS as an end in itself.

So Apple consciously obscures settings that they don't think most users need to worry about. For some extremely technical people, this makes Mac OS X seem overly simplistic, and they don't like it -- even to the point of ridicule.

The option is still there, however, for users to fully tinker, but they must do it on the UNIX command line. Apple judges that anyone who wants very much to tinker with a UNIX OS ought to know enough to use the UNIX shell commands. This makes a UNIX computer useable by mere mortals but simultaneously very capable in the hands of UNIX experts. That's something that's never been done in the history of computers. Once you understand that philosophy, you'll appreciate Mac OS X more.

Windows users who fiddle a lot with endless configuration GUIs are the most likely to feel that Macs are toys. But I've never, ever known a UNIX expert who also understands Windows to have this unwarranted view.

OS Operations

With this design philosophy in mind, let's move on to some practical aspects of OS operations.

1. Accounts. There can be many users on Mac OS X, each with their own login name, password and user settings. However, when you are the only user, there are still good reasons to have multiple accounts. In fact, you should probably have four accounts even if you are the only user.

- An everyday administrative account
- An emergency administrative account
- An unprivileged user account
- A test account

I believe that it is acceptable for the average user to log in and work each day as a privileged, administrative user. Mac OS X security is good

enough to support this. However, very, very rarely, account settings can become corrupted, and it's important to have a backup administrative account so that you (or an expert friend) can log in and fix things. Also, it's nice to have an unprivileged account in case you want to loan your computer to someone or plan to do some experimenting or research at dangerous Websites. When an unprivileged account is exposed to potential threats, it's much harder for malware to infiltrate the OS. Finally, a test account is useful for installing experimental software to make sure it can't possibly damage or infect your system or your everyday account. An astute user will keep the password for each of these accounts different, and auto-login should be turned off. (System Preferences -> Accounts -> Login Options.)

2. Root User. Mac OS X has the unique feature that it differentiates a user with administrative privileges from the all-powerful UNIX root user. This is so that you can install software and make system settings changes without having the power of a *root* user to destroy other user's files and even the OS files to the point where the Mac won't even start up.

Even if you are an experienced UNIX user, it's probably better not to rush into enabling the root user unless you're a developer. If you don't know what the UNIX root user is, have no fear. This account is turned off by default and your computer is thereby more secure.

3. KISS. You've probably heard the phrase, Keep It Simple Stupid (KISS). When working with today's operating systems, it's wise not to install too much software that adds features or customizes your work space. While no user installed software can change protected system files, it can still tinker with your settings, libraries, and sometimes play tricks to create functionality that Apple may not bless.

One way to detect this is when software, instead of just having you drag an application to the Applications folder instead uses an installer and asks for your administrative password during the install. That means that it's probably going to

make changes or additions to a folder in your home folder called "Library." This Library folder is right there along with your pictures, movies, and document folders. It's better if software runs as a standalone application: just double click and run. But if you're presented with a ".pkg" file (other than one by Apple) that wants to go through an installation process, be very certain that you want to proceed and you trust the vendor. Supplying the administrative password to an installer is its ticket to make changes to your system that could cause conflicts. The most conscientious developers provide an "uninstall" option, which will remove all the files the installer placed. Look for this option in the best software.

When you back up, back up your entire home folder. The Library folder has important information about licenses and preferences for your installed software. If you lose the Library folder because it wasn't backed up, you may end up having to reinstall many of your purchased applications and shareware.

4. The User Folder. All user data and accounts are kept in a major OS folder called "Users." Within that folder, each user has their home folder, and for the user logged on, it actually appears as a small icon of a house. This is the only place on your hard disk that's protected from OS updates. If you place personal data anywhere outside your home folder, it's a candidate to be erased if necessary during OS upgrades. That's just the way UNIX works.

5. The Desktop. The files that reside on your desktop are really just stored in a special folder, called, Ta Da!, Desktop. The Desktop folder in your home folder has the property that it displays its files (and other folders) on your desktop. This is not really a great place to store files for the long term, so it's a really good idea to eventually move your desktop files to a logical place, say, Documents or Pictures or another folder that you can create. I have found that, during the time files are temporarily on my desktop, it's good to have them alphabetized so I can easily find them. Do this by clicking somewhere on the desktop, hitting Command + J, and select "Keep arranged by Name."

6. Applications are Folders. One of the neat features of Mac OS X is that applications are really just special folders that look like a single icon. When you double-click the application icon, the OS knows how to go inside that folder, find the executable, gather resources, and launch the application. This makes it easy to copy applications, and it makes it easy for the developer to keep things simple. Often, all the documentation for the application is inside that folder and accessed from the application's **Help** menu. However, just because the author puts things in that application folder doesn't mean you should. Keep your application created documents in your, TaDa!, Documents folder.

7. File Name Extensions. Mac OS X keeps track of file extensions, but some people who are long-time Mac users don't like them. If you're coming from a Windows or Linux environment, you'll probably feel more comfortable with the OS displaying the file extensions. Access this with the Apple Menu, Finder -> Preferences -> Advanced. Yes, Apple makes you look for it. Some of us love these file name extensions that designate a file's type, but Mac OS X, by design, doesn't really need them. It's up to you.

8. Screen shots. It's really easy to take screen shots with Mac OS X, and these come in very handy at times for recording transactions in Safari, grabbing photos, and documenting errors. My favorite is Command + Shift + 4 which changes the cursor to a "+". Then you just drag over the area you want to "shoot" and let go. The image is saved to your desktop.

If you don't like the format of the file that's created (the default in Tiger is Portable Network Graphics (.png)), you can change it with a very trustworthy piece of software called **TinkerTool**. It's merely an application that safely changes some system settings that Apple chose not to surface to the user. I recommend the jpg/jpeg format for screen shots. It's the most widely used especially when you want to e-mail a screen shot to someone using a different OS. You can learn more about screen shots from the Apple menu **Help** item. Enter the key words "screen shot" without the quotes.

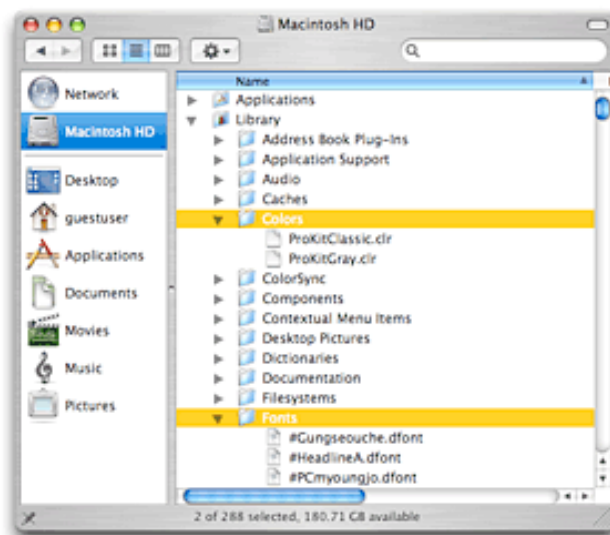
If you're literate about these Mac OS X essentials, you'll find that you'll stay more organized, your data will be more secure, and the operating system will remain more stable.

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<<http://www.applelinks.com/index.php/category/C55/>>
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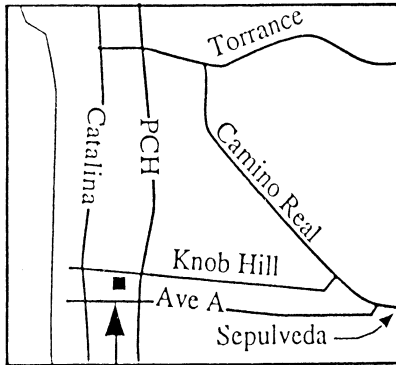
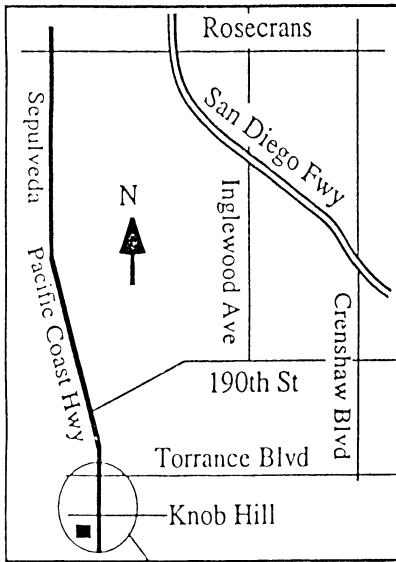
Look Inside Multiple Folders Automatically

Need to see what's inside more than one folder while in List view? Do it the fast way—Command-click on all the folders you want to expand, then press Command-Right Arrow. All the folders will expand at once.

If the file you're looking for isn't there, just press Command-Left Arrow (you can do that, because your folders are still highlighted) to quickly collapse them all again.



Courtesy of apple.com



We're at 320 Knob Hill at
PCH • Free Parking

THIS MONTH'S MEETING

Wednesday March 28th, 2007 7:30PM

320 Knob Hill, Redondo Beach

(see map at left for directions)

The Ever-Helpful Deborah Shadovitz Returns

Come and learn what you need to know if you're thinking of having a business website (or maybe even one just for yourself). Deb's been building websites and writing about building them for as long as the web's been public. Far too many times, people have asked her why their site is not helping them and not achieving what they need – even when they've paid a "designer" a lot of money. She doesn't want to see that happen to us, so she's coming to give us the understanding we need in case we're heading toward sites of our own. She'll cover basic planning, an understanding of how to get found via search engines, and whatever else comes up. If any of your friends are thinking of building a website, and especially if they're planning to hire someone, be sure to give them this excellent opportunity to learn a lot that's sure to save them time and money.

And Of Course:

Come early (6:30) for Beginners Q & A Sessions! We now have two: one in the main hall hosted by Bob Brooks & Jim Pernal and the other in the kitchen area hosted by LJ Palmer

April 25th Meeting Details:

Deborah Shadovitz will be back to share her tips about a variety of things--getting organized, tricking out your Dock, Sidebar and Toolbar, or whatever may be of interest to our group.

GREAT RAFFLE PRIZES TOO, TICKETS ONLY \$1 EACH!

Note from the Editor

Would you like to help keep our SBAMUG going? There are many ways, from occasional to ongoing, that you can help out. If you can, please contact--Glen Terry at: geterry@earthlink.net or other board members.

Any comments or ideas for future meetings? Write it down and drop it in our Suggestion Box at our monthly meetings!

Don't forget we have internet access at our meetings. Bring your wifi capable laptop with you when you show up for our next meeting!



SBAMUG Membership Application

South Bay Apple Mac User Group provides Mac owners and users with a local source of shared knowledge and experience through monthly meetings, training seminars and our monthly newsletter.

Individual and family membership is \$35 per year payable to SBAMUG.

New Member Member Renewal

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____ Email Address: _____

Special Computer Interest: _____

Model of Macintosh You Use Most: _____

How did you hear about SBAMUG?: _____

Comments: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Bring Application & Fees to Meetings or Mail to:

SBAMUG

P.O. Box 432

Redondo Beach, CA 90277

PERIODICALS

South Bay Apple Mac User Group

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