



South Bay Apple MUG

Macintosh

August 2017

A Monthly CUPFUL for South Bay Apple Mac User Group Members

Siri Needs Offline Mode, by Greg Barbosa

A few days after having received my AirPods order, I've quickly come to realize how the lack of accessible audio playback controls can hinder the overall experience. In my previous reviews of [true wireless earbuds](#), I've consistently brought up on-device controls as a positive or a negative. When you remove the wire and the controls so many of us have gotten used to, offering a new means of control is necessary.

With the AirPods, the main and only means of audio playback control is by double-tapping above the AirPods' stem. Based on your settings this either activates Siri, allowing you to speak all of the basic playback commands, or controls play/pause for audio. Double-tapping and only being able to play/pause controls aren't enough for daily usage, but relying on Siri, especially when internet connections are weaker, makes for a cumbersome experience at best. These issues highlight the need for Apple to introduce an offline mode for Siri.

I can't overstate how much I love true wireless earbuds as a whole. They are the first wearables that I feel can truly connect us to the tech in our pockets in an unobtrusive manner. In some instances, even past what the Apple Watch is able to offer. The biggest qualm I have with all completely wireless earbuds is how to naturally control them.

My first concern with the AirPods when I got them was if I was going to enjoy controlling them hands-free. Within range of a solid internet connection and in the privacy of my home, using Siri has already become a norm for me. That norm goes out the window when I step five feet out of my apartment. Between an ever-decreasing Wi-Fi signal strength

July 26 Meeting

Tap Forms with Joan King

Tap Forms is a data base program than can run on your Mac and/or any of your iOS devices—iPhone, iPad, iPod, iWatch. But it might better be thought of as a digital filing cabinet for your life. You can have information on your bank accounts, immunization records, insurance policies, home inventory, and any other information you might want to have handy. I had been using Bento for several years when Filemaker discontinued it in 2013. I discovered Tap Forms, switched to it and even gave a MUG presentation on it in 2014. But that was version 2.2.2. The latest version is 5.1 and it has a number of new features. I'll show you how to create a database from scratch, update from version 3 or import data from other sources.

Don't miss the meeting! See page 2 for details.

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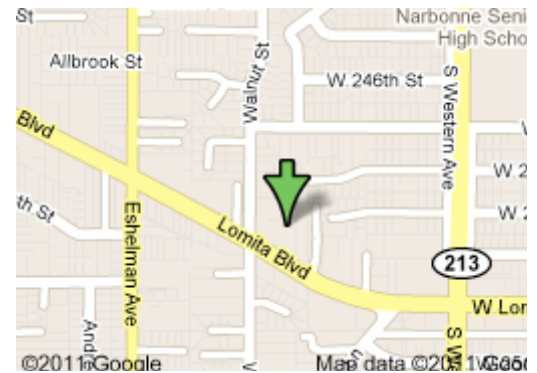
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Welcome to the SBAMUG South Bay Apple Mac User Group

Meetings: Lomita Veteran's Hall,
1865 Lomita Blvd, Lomita
Mail: PO Box 432, Redondo Beach,
CA
90277-0432
Phone: (310) 644-3315
Email: info@sbamug.com

Members, friends and colleagues are invited to attend our monthly meetings (usually the last Wed of the month). The \$35 annual membership dues entitle you to receive this monthly newsletter by mail or online, plus many more benefits (page 8). To become a member or get more info please check our website.



Lomita Veteran's Hall,
1865 Lomita Blvd, Lomita

SBAMUG Meeting Format:

6:30—7:30 p.m. Questions & Answers and Sharing: *Everyone* is welcome, beginners encouraged

7:30—7:50 p.m. 'iSocial' – shoot the Mac breeze with others over a cookie*

7:50—8:00 p.m. Announcements

8:00—9:00 p.m. Program

**Refreshments provided; donations appreciated!*
Submit suggestions for topics or speakers, or articles, ideas & original artwork for this newsletter to pjmyerz@gmail.com by the last Wednesday of each month. Articles may be edited to fit space.

Officers & Volunteers:

President: Kent McDonald
VP: open
Secretary: Wayne Inman
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Server Director: Dave Nathanson
Newsletter: Pete Myers, Bill Berks
USPS Liaison: CW Mitchell
Refreshments: Arnold Silver/Andy Paroczai

SBAMUG Monthly Calendar

July 26: Tap Forms

August 30: TBD

Other Meetings:

- 1st Wed each month – SBAMUG Core Group, 7:30 pm. Join Google+ SBAMUG community, or email: info@sbamug.com.
- 2nd Sat. each month - SMOG, 9AM in Costa Mesa, ocmug.org
- Last Sat. each month - Northrop Grumman-Ham Radio & Computer Swap Meet, 7--11:30 a.m. Meet at SE corner of Marine/Aviation Blvd, Redondo Beach
- Los Angeles Portable Users Group: Mac OS X, iPhone, iPod, MacBook, etc., lapug.org/
- Find more: <http://www.apple.com/usergroups/>

Membership Report – 98 members!

Please wear membership card as your name tag - you may notice your first name is in larger letters on your card - so it can be used as a name tag at the meetings.:

Welcome New Members:

Thank You Member Renewals: Rose Aldape, Wayne Inman, Michael Maiuri, Glenn Scoble, Wayne Miyoshi, Russ Neglia, George Wilde, Jack Pearson, Arnold Silver, Dorothy Weeks.

If your name is not spelled right or your expiration date is wrong, contact cwmitchell@sbamug.com for correction. Or contact CW for everything membership, dues and benefits. Please watch for your renewal letter, then sign and date it and return it with \$35 check (in enclosed self-addressed envelope) or bring letter with payment to meeting.

THE SOUTH BAY MUG (ISSN 1058-7810) is published monthly for \$35 per year by South Bay Apple Mac User Group, 2550 Via Tejon, Suite 3J, Palos Verdes Estates, CA 90274. Periodicals postage paid at Palos Verdes Peninsula, CA and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE SOUTH BAY MUG, P.O. Box 432, Redondo Beach, CA 90277-0432.

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This is the July shareware article. Seven items this month. Three are from the Mac App store. The others have the links to the vendor.

Chemistry Calculator: Easy-to-use suite of calculators, including the following: Ideal Gas Law, Boyle's Law, Charles Law,.... the rest of the list is quite long. OS X 10.10+ App Store, \$0.99

Foxit Reader 2.4.1: Free PDF reader. Smaller than Adobe reader. Can fill out forms, print and annotate. <https://www.foxitsoftware.com/products/pdf-reader/>

Graph Builder 12.7.7: 2D and 3D graphs. Is programmable. OS X 10.11+ App Store, \$19.99

GraphicConverter 10.4.2: This is an all-purpose image-editing program that can import 200 different graphic-based formats, edit the image, and export it to any of 80 available file formats. Batch conversions and tons more. OSX 10.9+ <https://www.lemkesoft.de/en/products/graphicconverter/> Shareware, \$39.95

Itsycal 0.11.4: A tiny calendar for your menubar. <https://www.mowglii.com/itsycal/> 10.12+ App Store, \$0.99

MacFamilyTree 8.2: Genealogy program. Latest version claims new and improved charts. OS X 10.10+ App store, \$59.99

Thunderbird 52.2.0: A free, open-source, cross-platform e-mail and news (NNTP) client developed by the Mozilla Foundation. Has a long list of improvements over earlier version. OSX 10.9+ <https://www.mozilla.org/en-US/thunderbird/>

See you at the July meeting. No physical PD CD will be made. They have been discontinued. I probably won't bring the older physical CD's to the meeting anymore; ask if you want me to bring an older one.

Jim Pernal PD Editor

These apps were announced as the design award winners at the 2017 World Wide Developers Conference:

- Blackbox puzzle game
- Splitter Critters puzzle game
- Mushroom 11 puzzle/problem solving game
- Old Man's Journey - puzzle adventure game
- Severed adventure game
- Lake coloring app
- Bear note-writing app
- Kitchen Stories cooking app
- Things 3 task manager
- Elk currency conversion app
- Enlight photo editing app
- AirMail 3 mail client

For more, see <https://developer.apple.com/design/awards/>

Here are a few additional suggestions from Dr. Dave on how to sort through all the available apps (there are over one million!) to find the ones you want or need:

- I've used the "Apps Gone Free" app, for years to get tons of apps that are free for a short time. I'd have to say it is one of the best apps ever! An app worth having.

<https://itunes.apple.com/US/app/id470693788?mt=8>

- You can also tune in via their website, but the I think the app is better.

<https://appadvice.com/apps-gone-free>

- The same people also put of some good app guides, sorted by topic. They do a lot of the work evaluating apps so you don't have to. They may be slightly over-caffeinated, but they are as helpful as can be. Really a great resource!

<https://appadvice.com/collections>

- Another app I really like, for similar reasons, is AppShopper. They also have a website, and because Apple doesn't like any apps that overlap or duplicate their App store, the website is where these guys are putting their new efforts. Anytime there is an app I am interested in, but don't need immediately, I check it out at AppShopper to see what the price history is, and add it to my wish list so it will alert me when the app goes on sale.

<http://appshopper.com/>

Siri Offline Mode, from page 1

and iOS' inability to quickly switch back to cellular, I have zero luck using Siri when walking from my front door to the elevator. Siri needs an internet connection to understand even the most basic of commands, and that's what frustrates me most. Apple already solved this issue years ago.

Voice Control, Siri's iOS predecessor, could handle offline requests with no issue. In regards to music, Voice Control could play, pause, skip, return, and even play specific playlists all without any internet connection. I had to speak audibly and clearly, but it worked just as well as Siri does for me today. Why these offline functions weren't built into Siri since day one still baffles me. Using Voice Control's original commands in combination with Siri, as either the first or even fallback option would help tremendously.

To over-simplify the idea: Siri could attempt to process the voice command and if it recognizes an internet connection isn't available, it can then fallback to Voice Control's commands.

The AirPods are a great successor to Apple's own EarPods, but the removal of the basic controls in hopes Siri would be enough is already falling short for me. Ironically, I complain about controls while having an iPhone and Apple Watch within hand's reach, and I think Apple realized this too. When playing audio, the user would most likely never be too far away from alternate means of control. That begs the question, "Than why include Siri at all?" If an alternative means of activating Siri and controlling audio playback are already nearby, why give users bits and pieces instead of a complete solution? Why would Apple implement Siri, a dead alternative when internet connections fail, as a primary means of control? Why give AirPods users a "solution" if the solution doesn't work better than their own wired EarPods?

If Apple truly hopes that Siri could become the personal assistant they have preached so vocally in the past, then it needs to gain some basic offline functionality. Especially when Siri is the primary means of control for their latest product.

<https://9to5mac.com/2016/12/23/opinion-apple-airpods-siri-offline-mode/>

Donation

Thanks to SBAMUG members Don and Ginger Whinfrey for their donation of a 24" iMac to the Girls and Boys Club of San Pedro bgclaharbor.org. If you have Apple hardware you would like to donate, email me at pjmyerz@gmail.com.

Amazon's Vision of Computing's Future: An Information Appliance, by Farhad Manjoo

In the late 1970s, Jef Raskin, a pioneering technologist who was one of Apple's earliest employees, sketched out a radical vision for the future of computing.

Computers, he argued, should work like home appliances. The ideal computer would require almost no learning curve or upkeep. You wouldn't have to upgrade its operating system, say, or install different programs to do things. Instead, [like a washing machine or a vacuum cleaner](#), the device would perform a narrow set of useful tasks with the push of a button or two.

Mr. Raskin [started a project at Apple](#) to realize his vision — the first cheap, easy-to-use computer for everyone. [He called it Macintosh](#) after his favorite type of apple, and he assembled a legendary team to build it. But it was not to be. [Mr. Raskin's vision clashed](#) with the loftier ideas of many at Apple, including Steve Jobs, who eventually took over the Mac team and steered it toward building the general-purpose personal computer that redefined the tech industry. Alienated and frustrated, Mr. Raskin left Apple in 1982, and spent much of the rest of his life trying to create the "information appliance" of his dreams. [He died in 2005](#), never quite getting there.

But now, all of a sudden, Mr. Raskin's information appliance is here, sitting on my kitchen counter.

It's called the Echo Show, and it is the latest incarnation of the Echo, [Amazon's](#) voice-controlled smart speaker that has become a surprise hit. The Echo Show is easy to describe; it's an Echo with a screen, and you control it the same way you do any other Echo — by talking to Alexa, its cheery assistant. [As my colleague Brian X. Chen wrote in his review](#), the Show is far from perfect; it has some bugs and you get the feeling that Amazon is still searching for a killer purpose for it.

But these are quibbles. The Echo Show is a remarkable machine, not just for what it is now but for the way it clarifies Amazon's vision of the future of computing. It's

Amazon's Vision, from page 4

becoming the model for a new kind of communal, household computer — a resurrection of Mr. Raskin's idea of an information appliance, as opposed to Mr. Jobs's vision of an all-purpose PC.

One measure of the power of this vision is how quickly Amazon's rivals are racing to copy it; both Apple and Google have their own takes on the Echo.

It's questionable how far these rivals will get. Amazon's business model, which depends on millions of households buying millions of goods, is uniquely suited to selling Echos at low prices, because Amazon is certain it can make money on the device from extra Amazon purchases. (The lowest-priced Echo, the Dot, sells for \$50; the new Show, available to the public starting Wednesday, sells for \$230, but you get \$100 off if you buy two.)

What's more, Amazon is far ahead. The Echo is much more useful than Google Home, which was released two years after Amazon's device, and the [Apple HomePod speaker](#) will not ship until the end of the year. Given that lead, the Echo is beginning to look unstoppable. It is well on the way to becoming the operating system for suburbia.

I suspect you're scoffing. The primary knock on Mr. Raskin's information appliance was that it didn't do a whole lot. This is also the main criticism of the Echo and, now, the Echo Show. These devices can't do anything you can't do on your phone, PC or tablet.

That's true, but it also kind of misses the point. You can make toast in the oven, but you have a toaster because it's designed to perform a specific task reliably and without any fuss.

That's the point of the information appliance, too. There's a whole lot the Echo Show won't do. It won't do email. It won't do the web. It won't play first-person shooters. It is emphatically, purposely not a general-purpose computer. But what it does do — play music and videos, make video calls, tell you the news, tell you the time and weather, and shop at Amazon — it does with such surpassing ease that it feels like a magic trick.

There are a few reasons for that. One is the Show's unusual and quietly innovative interface.

Dave Limp, Amazon's senior vice president for devices, told me that when the company was first designing the Show, it tried to use the same interface that it used for its tablet computers. But the team soon realized this didn't work. For one thing, the Echo Show is designed to be used just with your voice — the screen adds extra information, but you have to look at it only when you specifically ask for visual information (such as when you want a video). A standard mobile operating system, which is heavily visual, just wouldn't work.

Another reason a tablet interface wouldn't have worked is that it felt too much like a computer, and one overriding design goal of the Echo and the Echo Show was to hide any relationship to anything computerlike.

The Show's operating system, memory, storage and other specifications are completely hidden from users. The Echo does have a version of apps, known as "skills," but they aren't anything like smartphone apps. You install them just by asking Alexa to enable them, and when you want to use one, you just name it. To watch a video, you just ask for the video — you don't load up a web browser or the YouTube app and then search for it.

"It's a very different mental model than the traditional computer, smartphone or tablet, where you have to think of which app you want to use and then open it and then dive in," Mr. Limp wrote in an email.

Mr. Manjoo goes on the point out other features of the Echo Show and to predict its future. Read the full article at

https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/28/technology/amazons-vision-of-computings-future-an-information-appliance.html?rref=collection%2Fcolumn%2Fstate-of-the-art&action=click&contentCollection=technology®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=1&pgtype=collection& r=0

Tiny Tip – Delete Me, by Allison Sheridan

I have a tip that is one of the most useful I'll probably ever give you, and is also one of the simplest. I've been wanting to give little tips from time to time so I have created a new type of post called Tiny Tips. I even made a little logo! No, it's not going to be a spin off podcast...

Let's start with the problem to be solved. We all create temporary files for a myriad of different reasons. Maybe you export images from Photos in a specific size just to post to social media. Or you

Delete Me, from page 5

print things to PDF just to send them to someone but don't need a copy. There's a lot of reasons we do this. And most of us plop them all on our desktops. A few of us have a tidy little folder they go in, but the clutter is still there, it's just swept under the rug.

Eventually we buckle down to clean up this mess we made for ourselves, but we have to open each document and image to figure out whether they need to be kept. We procrastinate and fill up our drives with useless stuff. I have the solution.

When you export things that you won't need later, name them "Delete Me". That's the trick. If you save them with this name, you're telling *future you* that it's ok to delete these files! Isn't that brilliant? In this way, when you go to clean up, if you find a photo, even one of your adorable, cherubic grandson, and it's named Delete Me, you know that a real copy is safe somewhere else and this is just a throw away version. Pretty cool, am I right?

But wait, there's an enhanced version of the idea. If you name everything Delete Me, after a while, you'll have multiple files all with this same name, maybe with version numbers after the name. You export a copy of that cherubic little boy and call it Delete Me but there's already a test version of a logo you created with the same name. When you go to attach the image it's awfully hard to tell them apart.

So here's the upper division version of my tip. Create a folder, and call the folder itself Delete Me. Then whenever you're creating a throw away file, just toss it in there with any old name you like. I'll even let you put your Delete Me folder on the desktop. That is, as long as you promise to not put anything else on the desktop. I drag the Delete Me folder into the left sidebar so it's right there for the choosing in any Save As dialog box.

As though you hadn't gotten your money's worth out of this Tiny Tip already, I have one more enhancement to this idea. Get yourself a copy of Hazel from noodlesoft.com and build an action that watches your Delete Me folder. Teach Hazel to simply throw away, anything older than say 2 weeks old. You know it's ok to delete this stuff because you already made that decision by putting it in that temporary folder, so why be bothered ever cleaning it out?

I hope you find this Tiny Tip as useful as I do!

Tiny Tip – MacTracker for Current Price of used Apple Devices, by Allison Sheridan

It will be hard to top the first Tiny Tip. So many people have told me they love the strategy of creating a Delete Me folder! Don't set your expectations that high for every Tiny Tip, though. In the words of Billy Bob Thornton in *Bad Santa*, "They can't all be winners."

When you want the new hotness coming out of Apple, one of the ways to justify your expensive purchase is to resell your existing Apple products. The good news is that Apple devices hold their value really well. The bad news is it's tedious to figure out what your devices are worth.

Traditionally I write down all of the specs of a machine, and then go over to eBay. I search for the same device on eBay while setting the filter to sold items only. Then I create a spreadsheet and start recording the last 10-12 that have sold recently. I keep detailed notes in my spreadsheet on how they might vary from the one I'm trying to sell.

I throw out the super high ones, which are usually those sold by a company. Then I throw out the lowest one if it's got something clearly wrong with it or it has something fundamentally different spec-wise from the one I'm selling. I average the selling price in my beloved Excel to determine a price. If I'm selling to a stranger, that's a fixed number, if it's to a friend who maybe could use a little bit of help with the price, I'll lower it a bit. At least I know the value of the equipment, but this process takes 3-4 hours.

But that's not the Tiny Tip. For Father's Day I got Steve a new iMac, so I needed to figure out what his old one was worth. It's a 27" Mid-2011 model. I was too lazy to walk *all* the way down to his office and pull the specs directly, so I popped open the fantastic free app, MacTracker. (Available in the [Mac App Store](#) and in the [iOS App Store](#).)

MacTracker has been around forever, but it's continued to get better and better over time. The developer now includes all desktops, laptops, iPhones, iPads, Apple TVs, Airport routers and more. You can find out everything about these devices, up to and including hearing their original startup sounds. It's super cool.

But that's still not the Tiny Tip. HERE'S the Tiny Tip. I looked up Steve's iMac model in MacTracker and I noticed something new. The Initial selling price was there, but below that was "*Current Price*" with a US flag next to the price. Boom, you know the current selling price!

Continued on page 7

Mac Tracker, from page 6

But wait, there's more. I noticed that it was in blue, so I clicked it. I got a prompt asking if I wanted to open the link in a browser. I trust Mactracker, and it was awfully sweet of it to ask permission so I allowed it.

The price link in Mactracker took me to a site called bidvoy at us.bidvoy.net. Now here's the really cool part. Bidvoy shows you the selling price of the device over time, based on data pulled from eBay. There's a pulldown to choose from some standard time frames from the last 6 months to 2 weeks, or you can set a custom range. The data points even have a trendline through them.

Below the graph you get the average over the last 6 months (which is the number you see in Mactracker). You can see the weekly trend, how many auctions and the price margin. Not sure what that one was.

Below that you can even see the best time to purchase based on this historical data, and the best time to sell. For Steve's model, you want to buy on a Sunday between midnight and 4 am, and I should try to sell it (if I'm doing an auction) on a Tuesday between 4 and 8 am. They show the prices for those two times, but it doesn't entirely make sense. The average for Steve's iMac is shown around \$600. The best time to sell says almost \$800, but the best time to purchase says \$650. I would think that the average should be between the best time to sell and buy, wouldn't you? Still interesting.

But bitvoy isn't done yet. After the graphs, you can see a list of the same model currently-selling on eBay. For each one they show the current bid price (or buy it now price), the time left, and a red, blue or green badge telling you if it's underpriced, normal, or over priced. If you see one that strikes your fancy as a buyer, you can click on it and go right into the sale on eBay.

One caution on Mactracker and bidvoy. While using it is easy, if the Mac you're buying or selling is not the average model, the price you see here will not be representative. For example, in looking at the current auctions, I realized that this includes not just the i7 version I bought for Steve, but also the i5's that are less valuable. I cranked up the RAM and disk when I bought it for him, so that should be taken into account too.

Using Mactracker and its connection to bidvoy is a great starting point and can get you most of the way there with the simple click of a button. I should mention that the iOS

version of Mactracker doesn't have this current price feature, so you'll need to view it on a Mac.

I've just realized that the definition of a Tiny Tip is that it could be described in one sentence or two but that doesn't mean I can't make a lengthy post about it anyway!

Content-Centric Networking, by Glenn Edens and Glenn Scott

The Internet is more than 45 years old, and it's starting to show its age. To be sure, it has served us wonderfully well. Its underlying technologies delivered the [World Wide Web](#) (still a young adult at around 28 years old) and our global communications network. Even as its user base has swelled to 3.4 billion, these technologies have scaled admirably.

Today, however, all of those users demand a level of performance that the Internet was never designed to deliver. With its growth and shifts in usage, the Internet is being severely strained. That's why you're often stuck watching a "buffering" message when you're trying to watch a viral video.

Increasingly, network engineers find themselves scrambling for patches to improve performance or searching for ways to squeeze slightly more capacity from this creaky infrastructure. What we really need is an Internet that can provide more bandwidth and lower latency to many users at once—and do it securely. Along with our colleagues at the [Palo Alto Research Center](#) (PARC), in California, we've developed a better Internet architecture. We call it [content-centric networking](#), or CCN. With CCN, we've developed a new architecture based on how information is organized within the network, rather than the IP addresses of hosts. That's why it's called content-centric networking—it's based on how content is named and stored, instead of where it is located. We've designed new protocols that can find and retrieve content from wherever it happens to be in the network at a given time and also perform many additional tasks that could make networks faster, more resilient, and more secure.

To understand how all of this works, we'll walk you through how a CCN network finds and retrieves a content packet for a user who is interested in reading an article or watching a video on the Web.

The full article is available at <http://spectrum.ieee.org/telecom/internet/a-better-way-to-organize-the-internet-contentcentric-networking>

PERIODICALS

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