

# printout

Keystone MacCentral Macintosh Users Group ❖ <http://www.keystonemac.com>



## FileMaker

by Tim Sullivan

Just about everybody keeps lists: grocery lists, Holiday Card lists, birthday lists... The longer and more complex the list, the more useful a data base can be.

I probably use FileMaker more often than any other program with the possible exception of Safari.

This month we will explore some of the reasons a data base might be useful, how easy it is to create and modify a FileMaker database, and how scripting can add to the functionality of a data base.

**Our January meeting will be held in a room two doors down the hall from our regular meeting room.**

Meet us at

### **Gannett Fleming**

Gannett West Building  
209 Senate Ave ❖ Camp Hill

**Tuesday, January 16, 2007, 6:30 p.m.**

**Attendance is free and open to all interested persons.**

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Keystone MacCentral is a not-for-profit group of Macintosh enthusiasts who generally meet the third Tuesday of every month to exchange information, participate in question-and-answer sessions, view product demonstrations, and obtain resource materials that will help them get the most out of their computer systems. Meetings are free and open to the public. The *Keystone MacCentral Printout* is the official newsletter of Keystone MacCentral and an independent publication not affiliated or otherwise associated with or sponsored or sanctioned by any for-profit organization, including Apple Computer, Inc. Copyright © 2007, Keystone MacCentral, 305 Somerset Drive, Shiresmanstown, PA 17011.

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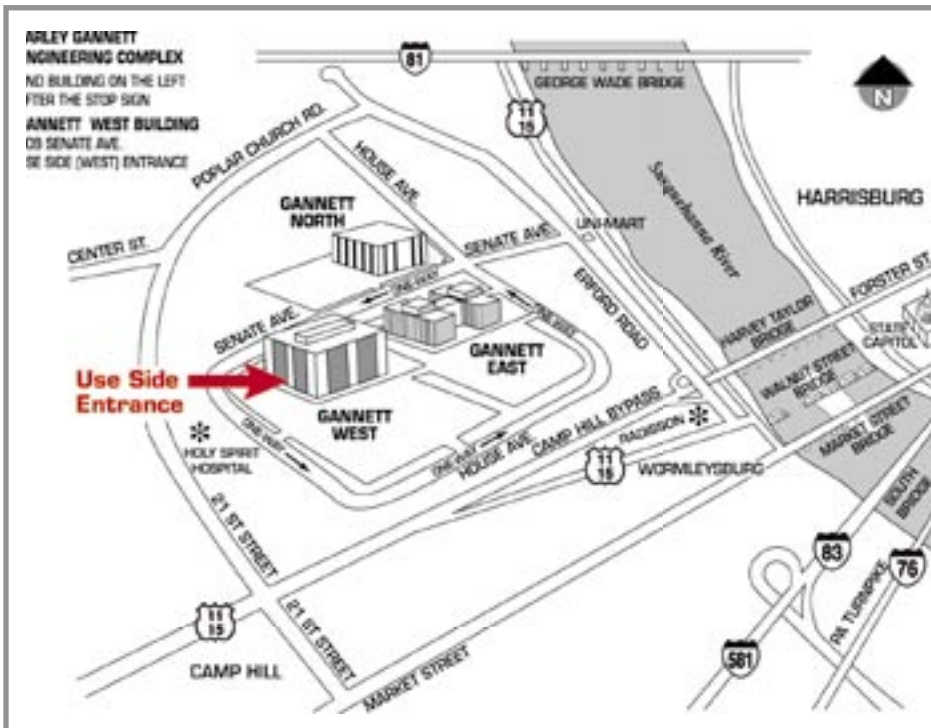
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## Keystone MacCentral Essentials

### Meeting Place

Gannett West  
209 Senate Avenue  
Camp Hill

### Web Site

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# President's Corner

**When** I first started using computers, I found one of the most useful Mac user group meetings to be one which covered Mac maintenance and backups. I learned a lot at that meeting and followed the advice from those more experienced Mac users, although I must admit that I am not as methodical in performing my backups as I should be. Since I still remember that long-ago meeting was so useful, I decided to review the book *Real World Mac Maintenance and Backups* by Joe Kissel. Published by Peachpit Press in 2007, this book is even more useful than the user group meeting I remember because everything is written down and organized into logical chapters.

Chapter 1 is entitled "Start on the Right Foot" and covers what anyone, whether new to Macs, experienced with Macs but purchasing a new Mac or currently owning a Mac which is in need of organization should know and do to help ensure problem-free computing. I will soon be getting a new MacBook at school and plan to have *Real World Mac Maintenance and Backups* beside me as I set up my new machine. No matter how experienced one is with computers, there is always something that can and should be learned. Joe Kissel does an excellent job of presenting the information in an easily understandable and readable manner.

Chapters 2, 3, 4, 5 cover respectively, daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly tasks to perform. One weekly task that I must get better at is uncluttering my desktop. I know that my desktop is cluttered just by looking at it, but didn't know that there can be problems beyond aesthetics. Mr. Kissel's explanation that OS X considers every icon on the desktop to be a window, every open window uses RAM, and thus my cluttered desktop is wasting RAM gives me good reason

to neaten things up. His suggestion to use an application such as NoteBook by Circusponies.com or SOHO Notes from chronosnet.com as snippet keepers is very useful, especially since I bought one of those applications at our November auction but have not installed it yet because of the upcoming new MacBook.

Chapter 6 covers "Things You Might Never Need to Do," specifically repairing disk permissions. I agree with his statement that users do not have to repair permissions as regular maintenance but that if applications are behaving strangely or refusing to launch at all, repairing permissions can solve the problem. I have repaired permissions for other teachers who sadly walked into my classroom carrying their noncompliant laptops and relatively quickly had both the laptops and the teachers returned to productivity.

Chapter 7 tells users what to do when Apple releases a new version of OS X; in brief, buy it, install it, keep current, but make a fresh duplicate of your

startup drive before you install the upgrade, just in case.

Chapter 8 provides information and methods to monitor your Mac's health, including monitoring your drive's S.M.A.R.T. status. (Self-Monitoring Analysis and Reporting Technology.)

Chapters 9-12 cover backing up in detail from choosing your strategy to choosing backup hardware, software, and system. Appendix A covers troubleshooting resources. Appendix B lists backup software, and Appendix C provides basic information on Retrospect, the author's main backup program.

I found *Real World Mac Maintenance and Backups* to be an invaluable resource for experienced users as well as for new users and highly recommend the book. Remember, as a KeyMac member, you are eligible for a discount from Peachpit Press, so ask for the details at our January 16 meeting. See you there! ☺



Now that winter and, at times, hazardous driving conditions are here, it may become necessary to cancel a meeting on short notice.

The board of Directors will make a decision and update our Web Site

<http://www.keystonemac.com>

by 1:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting.

# Keystone MacCentral Minutes

December 19, 2006

## Business Meeting

President Linda Cober began the business meeting by asking board members to give their reports. Eric Adams thanked everyone for making the auction successful again this year. Tim Sullivan mentioned the firmware updates written up in our December newsletter. He strongly advised making backups before running the firmware update as there have been some problems listed on the Mac forums.

Treasurer Jim Carey told members of a board recommendation it had proposed making to members at its last board meeting to ask for authorization for spending up to \$2500 for a new Mac for the club's use. Jim explained that our current laptop does not handle all we ask of it at our meetings. A newer Intel Mac would allow us to do some presentations requiring the new hardware. During discussion, someone asked if \$2500 would be enough for a new Mac and AppleCare coverage on it. Jim said that the board would come back to members to ask for a higher spending limit if necessary. The board would wait until after Macworld Expo in January 2007 to do any purchasing and would be considering buying a refurbished Mac. A motion was made by Lynn Bortner to authorize the Keystone MacCentral board to spend a sum of up to \$2500 for a new Mac for the club. Elizabeth Reinecker seconded that motion. The motion passed by a voice vote of members.

## Q&A & Comments

Eric Adams posed the first question. He is trying to set up a network across multiple offices around the state. He had been told to set up a Virtual Private Network. Other options mentioned at the meeting would be setting up a server outside of his local network and equipping it with a secure password or using e-mail to exchange encrypted files. Discussion moved on to what to do if you forget your password for OS X. If you boot from a System Disk, you can look for the Installer menu and choose the "Reset Password" option. Linda Cober mentioned an e-mail request we got asking for help getting files off of a non-working iMac's hard drive. Tom Bank offered to help. Tom said he was looking for a small IDE hard drive. His son, Tom II, was at the meeting and said he had one for his father to use.

## Program Notes

The December Keystone MacCentral meeting is usually more of a social gathering than a meeting. To that end, we feasted on the goodies members brought in. We did watch two videos, the first being the user group edition of Breen's Bungalow which featured a number of iLife 06 tips. Breen's Bungalow is created by Christopher Breen for Macworld magazine.

## For iPhoto

Storing photos in another location:

- Locate current iPhoto Library folder in your User folder and copy it to another volume where you want to permanently store it.
- Hold down the Option key & launch iPhoto. Dialog box appears where you can choose the Library you want to use with iPhoto. Navigate to the iPhoto library folder you copied and click the Open button. After iPhoto adds all of the photos to your iPhoto library, you can remove the iPhoto library folder from your startup volume.
- Hold down Option key & click the "+" button to create a new Smart Album.
- Control-clicking on a photo or group of photos in an album gives you the option of deleting the selected items from the album. Hold down Control & Option and select Move to Trash to also remove the items from your iPhoto library.

## For iMovie

- The iMovie media browser can contain other items you wish to add to an iMovie in addition to sound effects, iTunes tracks, GarageBand tracks, and iPhoto images. Create a new folder with the items you want to add and drag it into either the Audio or Photos area of iMovie.
- You can use iMovie to remove the gaps from CD tracks that should flow seamlessly together. Drag the clips into iMovie's audio track.



Arrange the clips so they flow into each other without a gap. Then drag a single photo into the iMovie timeline. Choose File>Export. Click the QuickTime tab and choose Expert Settings and click Share button. In the Save As window choose Sound to AIFF. Click Save and iMovie saves the file as a single unprotected AIFF file that contains all the merged tracks. If you want the piece to resume playing from where you stopped it, select it in iTunes and select Get Info and click the Options tab and then enable the Remember Playback Position checkbox.

### For GarageBand

- Podcasts created in GarageBand include a Radio Sounds track. Select this track and choose Musical Typing from the Window menu. When you press a key on your keyboard, GarageBand will play a prerecorded audio file mapped to that key. You can record these sounds in GarageBand. But you can also drag any AIFF file to one of the keys. Pressing that key will trigger the sound you have re-mapped to that key. You can create a sampler with this method.

### For iWeb

- To create a blank page from an iWeb template, create a new blog page. Then from the View menu, choose Show Layout. Select the title on the page and select Delete to remove it. Do the same with the image. The other elements on the page can't be deleted but you can select the text in them and press the Delete key to get rid of the text. You may still be left with some borders. You can hide these by choosing the rectangle shape from the Shapes button. Drag the rectangle over the page to mask anything remaining underneath. In the Inspector, click the Graphics tab and in the Stroke pop up choose None.

We also watched an edition of Breen's Bungalow from the Macworld magazine online virtual CD. That one covered moving files from a PPC Mac to an Intel Mac.

- When you start your new Intel mac, you will be asked if you want to

move your files from your old Mac to the new Mac using Apple's Migration Assistant. This is probably worthwhile for most users. The Assistant will guide you through connecting the Macs with a FireWire cable. If you have more than one volume on the old Mac, Migration Assistant will ask you from which volume you want to copy data. You normally would choose your normal startup volume. If you have already created a user name on your new Mac, Migration Assistant will insist you create a new user for the transferred files. Therefore, it is a good idea to transfer the old files before you do anything else with the new Mac. Migrating a 100 GB drive can take several hours. For other volumes on the old Mac, you can transfer files by mounting the old Mac's hard drive as a FireWire drive via Target Disk mode. You can then do a Finder copy or use a utility like Carbon Copy Cloner to create an exact duplicate of the old drive that is then moved to a new partition on the new Mac.

- Migration Assistant may not transfer your old printer list or a few other settings like Bluetooth device settings in iSync. Use the Printer Setup Utility or appropriate System Preference pane to correct this. You may need to run the Printer Setup Utility under Rosetta. This can be set in the Get Info box. A few applications might require you to re-register them with a serial number. If an application dialog box

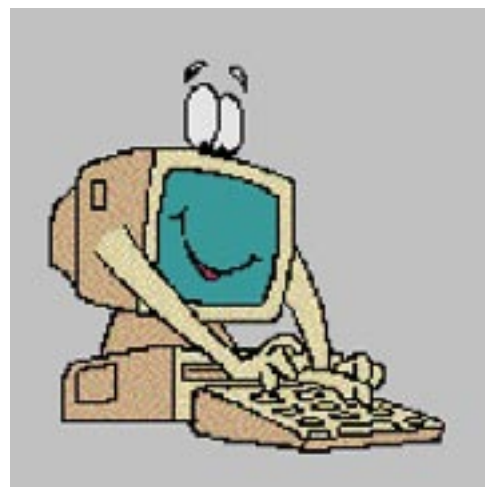
appears stating that necessary files are missing, it might be best to reinstall that application on the new Mac. You might also have to use the Rosetta option if you encounter problems with selected Universal applications that do not work as expected on the Intel Mac.

- To use an older monitor with a new Mac, you may need an adapter to convert the DVI signal from the new Mac to VGA for the old monitor. Apple includes this adapter with new Macs. To use an ADC monitor with a new Mac, you will have to buy the DVI to ADC adapter. Your older SIMMs will not work in a new Mac, however. New Macs use serial ATA drives, so an older IDE drive cannot be installed. But you can put the IDE drive into a FireWire drive enclosure. It should have an Oxford chip set if you will want to boot the new Mac from the external drive on occasion.

We also eventually connected to Apple's web site to watch some of Apple's new TV ads. Linda Smith told members that the **January meeting will be held in a room two doors down the hall from our regular meeting room.**

### Mini Auction

We held a mini auction of several items that came in after the November auction. Proceeds from that were added to our treasury. 🗑️



# Cheap Printers? yes or no

## FAQ: "which printer should I buy?"

I get a lot of letters asking about this or that printer, or "which printer should I buy?" I've even been known to ask around or consult higher up the 'knowledge' chain to get that information myself. Today's question is about "cheap" printers.

First I'd like to say that although this is in a Mac-centric publication, this discussion could apply to any computer user of any platform. The fact that the word "cheap" was in the original reader's post is because most Mac users seem to want everything for free, or for the very lowest price. This condition seems fairly widespread even though demographics show that on the whole, those who use Macs are in an average higher income bracket. I suspect that most of you now reading this article have no problem throwing away a \$65 to \$150 printer you don't like, to buy a new one. But let's assume you're on a very limited income, and need a good printer on the cheap.

### What is a Cheap printer?

Let's qualify all printers under \$150 into the "cheap" category. Since you can spend as much as \$5,000 on a printer, I think one-fifty is a good break point. (There are printers that cost a million dollars, but that's another story.) You can also get printers for as little as free. But remember, you almost always get what you pay for. I got the "free" printer in the bundle deal from Apple when we purchased my daughter's iBook for college. It didn't make it through the first semester.

A \$149 Epson 860 has now served well through the following five semesters.

Comparing printers is difficult if not impossible. Each time I go to

MacWorld Expo, I always cruise all the printer booths. It's a nightmare. None of the vendors ever have the entire line -- only the models they are currently pushing. They'll also be pushing their higher level machines, not the ones you'll find in the mass merchandisers. When I ask a booth person about the particular features I'm looking for in a printer they'll usually say either "I don't know" or "No, you don't want that, you want this" ... pointing at the \$3,000 model they're demonstrating.

### There is no help

Then you arrive at the retail store and ask the same question. They'll usually say "I don't know" or "I have no idea." You'll notice that most of the retail stores are gone now, giving way to the mass merchandisers. Mass merchandisers usually have one thing in common, their floor people know less than you do. (I found myself recently showing the floor clerk how to use one of their displayed printers.) The worst problem with the MMs is they'll get incentive perks from manufacturers. In our local stores it's usually Hewlett Packard. While there's nothing wrong with HP printers, that may not be the brand you wish to purchase. So the clerk is going to sell you an HP no matter what. Some may show only that particular brand.

The only real way to figure out which printer to buy is to try it. Sorry to say that means you either have to buy it or borrow it. One rule I've tried to live by is: Never mail-order a printer unless you've fully tested it first. This is a very hard rule to live by because only the mail-order houses stock the best variety. Buying local however allows you to take the printer back if there are problems. Staples, Office Max and Cruchfield all have a 'no

questions' return policy. (In our area at least.) MacWarehouse is the mail-order house, in my experience, with the most consistent and easiest to use return policies. Of course you have to ship it at your expense.

### Printer Truths

Let's get one thing perfectly clear up front: the manufacturers are low-balling their printer prices not because they like you. They want to sell you the perishables like inks and papers, which are exorbitantly expensive. And don't think for a moment that all the printer manufacturers are in the paper and ink business. There are a few paper and ink manufacturers who private label the products for the printer companies. (There are 147 different paper brands, but only a handful of paper mills. Go figure.)

Likewise, never believe the statistics published by the manufacturers. They test using the most optimum conditions to obtain their data. So you really can't use their paper throughput, ink cartridge life and so forth in your calculations for a purchasing decision. Finally, don't ever believe the printer test page. The companies go to exorbitant measures to make those prints look good; including huge budgets and the best photographers, stylists and designers money can buy. You want your prints to look that good but can't understand why they don't? Well, that's why.

Following the thread we started quite often the computer user buys a printer based on price alone, only to find out later that it wasn't such a good deal after all. Then other times we run across a deal that seems almost too good to be true and it turns out to be a killer printer for mere pennies.

## What to consider in printers

**Price Points** Price does not equate to print quality or even durability. Chances are, a manufacturer will only design and build one or two print engines. So you'll probably be getting the same engine and guns from the bottom model through the intermediate models. Price points are usually based on features: faster print speed, oversized paper support, roll paper support, direct printing, and even PC-Card slots for printing directly from a digital camera or pocket drive memory card. In these cases you have to determine which features are most beneficial to you, and if they're worth the added cost.

**Imaging Media** - Unless you have a specific requirement for laser printing, the inkjets and dye-sub, offer the best quality at the lowest price. Both types of printers will print plain paper for every-day use and photo quality prints comparable to traditional film prints.

**Image Quality** - If you don't plan on printing photo quality prints the lower priced "non photo" printers will do. However, don't think you won't. Sooner or later you'll want to print something really nice. So, to avoid buyer remorse, spend a few more dollars by making sure the box shows the word "photo" in the names of these models. For the best photo quality you'll need a printer engineered specifically to render digital images.

**Resolution** - With today's printer driver interpolation, you really no longer need to worry about resolution. That means a higher printer resolution doesn't necessarily give you better print quality. In the market today, virtually all these printers, even the cheap ones, have sufficient resolution for near-continuous tone prints.

**Paper Path** - Always be aware of paper path -- or the 'shape' of the path the paper takes as it goes through the printer. A straight paper path is the ultimate. However you won't find this in any but the higher end printers, or those with a sheet-

feed "back door" that by-passes the feeder path. Look for a lazy "L" path or one that makes a turn no greater than 90-degrees, preferably through a wide arch. If the printer has a "U" or "J" path, then you'll sometimes have problems printing heavier stock and envelopes. (Ignore the manufacturer's claims. Wrapping three thicknesses of paper, as in envelopes, around pinch rollers in a switch-back spells squeeze, creep or wrinkle.) One printer I tested with a "J" path printed photographs to the heavy 50lb gloss stock beautifully, but also gave the final print a very objectionable 'curl' which was difficult to impossible to remove.

**Inks and Ink Cartridges** - Always insist on at least four ink reservoirs, cyan, magenta, yellow and black. There are five and six color models available which print superb color rendition far better than 4-color models. However you should compare prints from both because in many cases you won't be able to visually see enough difference to justify the additional cost. (The real difference actually is in the shadow detail of photographic images.) If you're not printing a lot of critical-color photo prints on a regular basis, a four-color head should do fine.

## The Truth about Inks

Obviously replacing four color cartridges will cost more than three, and less than five or six. Again this is an end-user decision on cost-to-quality. Demanding color printing demands the higher level printer along with the relative increased cost.

Consumer Reports ranked the leading printer manufacturer cartridges against the leading off-brand cartridges with some predictable results: manufacturer cartridges always print better, and almost always make more prints. The research showed that off-brand carts are plagued with clogged orifices, and often delivered off-color prints. Inkjet USA carts performed so poorly (only 2 out of 12 were good), they were removed from the research.

Don't expect to get any gratification from those complicated ink charts put out by the manufacturers or even in

the magazines. Not only are they very difficult to figure out, they're usually wrong. (The manufacturers intentionally try to confuse and misinform you. It's their job.)

Macworld Magazine recently ran a big printer comparison chart. You could spend an hour studying the results, decide on a cartridge, then try to buy it only to find it's out of stock -- or no longer manufactured. At that point you have to make the decision on the fly anyway. If you're going to be doing a lot of color printing, you're going to have to buy cartridges more frequently.


The bottom line to remember is to use a printer that offers individual ink cartridges. Don't be fooled by the 4-in-1 cartridges for less. They will cost you more in the long run. If you print even 20% of your pages in color you'll run out of yellow when the red and blue are still half full. Now you'll throw away a cartridge half full of ink because the manufacturer has configured the firmware NOT to print if one color bay is empty. Gotcha! With separate carts, you simply replace the one that's empty and keep on truckin'. In most cases, you'll be able to buy an extended reservoir black. This is well worth a few extra dollars because most home and office printers use black most of all.

## Happy Printing

The most important rule of buying any piece of hardware or peripheral for your computer is to get the opinions and experiences of everyone you can. Don't let yourself get backed into a corner where you've got to buy a printer right now, this moment. Begin the shopping process early. Ask around. Invite yourself over to "see" their printer in action. If they really like their printer, they'll be happy to show you samples. If they don't they'll be quick to say so.

## Join a User Group

Here's where you'll find lots of information and "testimonial" advice on any piece of equipment, not just printers. And nothing ever replaces person-to-person help. There you have it!

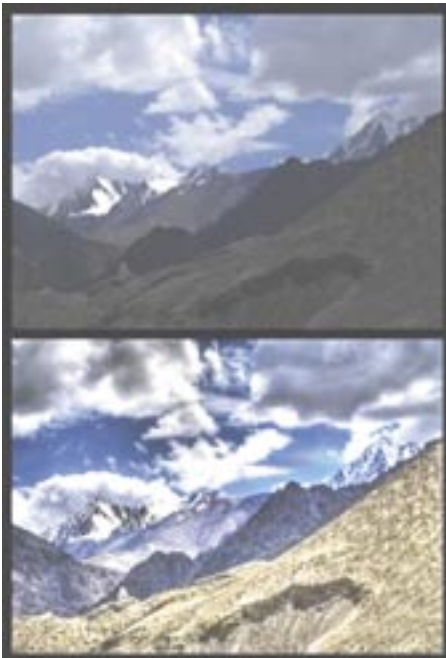
Until next time, happy mousing. 



# Photomatix: A Virtual Magic Wand

**Imagine** you are staring at a magnificent mountain scene - blue sky, dramatic clouds, glaciered peaks, rocks of varied hue. You take a picture but when it's processed you are disappointed. The sky and glaciers show up clearly but everything else is dark or black.

Every photographer has experienced this kind of disappointment. It happens because the range of brightness of objects outdoors is usually higher than a camera can capture or a sheet of paper can reproduce - typically a thousandfold higher or more - so the photographic process must squeeze and truncate the tones to make them fit. Digital processing can dodge some of this problem (see "Reality and Digital Pictures," 12-Dec-05) and now an application can tackle it directly: MultimediaPhoto's Photomatix. As you can see from the before-and-after photo of just such a scene, it works like magic.



**Dynamic Range** — The range of brightness of a scene or an image is called its dynamic range. A sunny scene will likely have a dynamic range of at least 100,000:1 and its range can exceed 1,000,000:1. In contrast, image sensors can record on the order of 1,000:1 (DSLRs) or 100:1 (other cameras), and paper can display a range of only about 100:1. The range of computer monitors is roughly comparable to that of paper.

Note that these are two different problems: (1) the dynamic range of a scene can be greater than a camera can capture and (2) the dynamic range of a digital image can be greater than paper or screens can reproduce. Both of these are problems of high dynamic range ("HDR" in jargon) but the meaning of "high" depends upon the context. There are no established conventions for the use of the term and there is no standard HDR format.

In principle, the first of these problems has a simple solution. If one exposure records too narrow a range of tones, first take enough exposures to record the entire range then tell a computer to combine the overlapping exposures. To combine them you can take some form of average, or you can take light tones from one file and dark tones from another, or you can create an image with sufficient bits to describe every tone in both. In practice these solutions may need some fiddling because the tones in an image are neither perceived nor recorded in neat steps, but in principle they are straightforward.

The second problem is incomparably more difficult. Consider what it might mean to compress tones tenfold. It happens that photographs in news-

papers display a range of reflectance from highlight to shadow of about 10:1. Let's say that you photograph a man reading a paper. If all of the photo's tones are compressed tenfold, then you are likely to see a man reading a sheet of grey.

**Tonal Compression** — High tonal compression is quite a trick, yet Photomatix does it. Photomatix performs its magic like a magician, by directing the viewer's attention. The eye cares little about subtle gradations and minuscule detail; the eye looks for clear contrasts between adjacent tones. "Local contrast" is the jargon. Most of the information we take from a scene comes from local contrast. Photomatix makes sure that we notice this local contrast and slips through the compression on the side. Where it finds clear contrasting tones, first it enhances them and then it compresses the rest.

To see how this works, look at this picture of buffalo herders. The dark image shows the raw file. It is exposed to retain detail in the highlights. To make the picture in the middle I lightened the shadows using Photoshop's shadow/highlight control. For the picture on the right I used Photomatix. Both versions I finished to make as naturalistic as I could. (Note: the herder's beard looks unnatural because he dyed it with henna.)





Although this function is intended for squeezing HDR pictures onto paper - well, any magician who can saw a woman in half can also pull a rabbit from a hat. Local contrast carries most of the information in every picture, not merely in pictures with a high dynamic range but also in pictures with a low dynamic range. Enhancing local contrast within a dull photo can increase its apparent dynamic range.

For an example of this, look at these three pictures. All of these carry the same range of tones. The top one shows the raw file. It contains the highlights and shadows needed to show three-dimensionality, but the lighting is so flat that the highlights and shadows are difficult for the eye to see readily or for ordinary manipulations to bring out. In the middle picture Photomatix has enhanced those contrasts to turn a dull photo into a decent one. The new contrasts I was able to enhance further by conventional means to make the finished picture at the bottom.



**Combining Exposures** — Photomatix's developer sells a plug-in (\$70) that does only tonal compression and a stand-alone package (\$100) that also provides several ways of combining different exposures into a single image. Currently the plug-in works only with Photoshop CS2 although it will probably also work with Photoshop Elements 5. (It also works with Photoshop CS and Photoshop Elements 4 for Windows.)

I usually use the plug-in, because I work with Photoshop CS2 and rarely combine exposures. I have combined some photos to stunning effect but the Foveon sensor in my DSLR has a sufficiently broad dynamic range that I seldom want to do this and when I do, usually I cannot because the camera is not on a tripod or the subject is not dead still.

Images from cameras with a smaller sensor would benefit from this treatment more often, as might scans of film, but I would not expect it to be an artistic panacea, not even when the camera is on a tripod and the subject is stationary. That's because if a scene shows extremes of contrast, it will likely look unnatural if the photo replaces the extremes with moderation.

You can see an example in these photos of a rain forest. On the left, a single exposure captures the extreme contrast of the forest but loses the range of colour in the shade. It shows the forest but not the trees. On the right, a combination of two exposures shows the trees but not the forest.



Since I seldom combine images, I can not compare Photomatix's combining functions with the equivalent features of Photoshop or other products. I can say, however, that Photomatix's

tone-mapping strikes me as more sophisticated than the equivalent functions in Photoshop or in any other plug-in I know of. Sometimes the tone-mapping from Photomatix seems too dramatic, but I have found Photomatix to be so helpful so often that I have learned to try it on almost every picture I take, to see what it will do.

**The First Step** — An image re-mapped with Photomatix is a starting point, not a finished product. After re-mapping an image - which must be done before anything else - I still need to adjust it in all the usual ways, just as I need to after adjusting it with Photoshop's shadow / highlight control (see "Editing Photographs for the Perfectionist," 27-Sep-04). Also, enhancing detail in shadows and highlights enhances noise as well, so the image ends up needing an unusually thorough cleaning. A specialized noise-reduction package like Noise Ninja I find to be essential.

Although Photomatix is an excellent product, it is still a young one. The developer is still tinkering with the algorithms and the user interface. On my computer the plug-in and application have both been stable, but occasionally they have not behaved quite as expected and the processed image does not always look quite like the preview. However, the developer is a single person who handles sales and support as well as programming, so she does not sweep problems under a corporate rug; she deals with them. The latest releases (1.1 for the plug-in and 2.3 for the application) appear to be significantly cleaner than the last ones. Demo versions are free for the downloading.

*PayBITS: If Charles's recommendations for improving photos helped, he asks that you make a donation to Doctors Without*

*Borders:* <http://www.doctorswithoutborders-usa.org/donate/>

*Read more about PayBITS:* <http://www.tidbits.com/paybits/> 

by Tim Sullivan

# January Software Review



## Art Text 1.0.4

<http://www.belightsoft.com/arttext>

Requires OS X 10.4 or later. Universal Binary.

Art Text is an application to create high quality headings, logos, icons, banners and buttons. The program implements the latest Mac OS X technologies which allow you to easily modify any texts and vector shapes into a fancy graphic.

Pre-designed styles, shapes, icon art images, shading materials and other advanced visual effects make Art Text a powerful and intuitive program. Not only professionals, but anyone, who wants to make his text work look attractive, will find a use for the program.

Use the result with iWork, Microsoft Office, BeLight applications and other programs. It will become an indispensable part of your presentations, brochures, flyers, postcards, business cards and even websites.

### Key Features:

- 50+ pre-designed styles to get you started;
- Text and special artwork content (about 300 pictograms) as a source;
- Shading Pro tool (ability to cover/shade anything with shading material - any object can get the glassy, plastic or metallic look, it is also possible to add the effect of smooth or rough surface to any of the objects);
- Option to fill and outline text or artwork with different colors, gradients or textures;
- Apply shadow and glow effects;

- Ability to combine text with background image;
- Bend text using 20 adjustable vector transformation shapes or Bezier splines;
- Ability to export into a file or clipboard in PDF, TIFF, JPEG, GIF, PNG.

Here you can see what kind of headings, logos, icons and banners you can make with Art Text.

### Vector Transformation

A set of adjustable vector transformation shapes or Bezier splines allows you to create effects, that are beyond fonts capabilities.



### Fill, Outline and Font Properties

Fill with color, gradient and texture, option to outline text or artwork, shadow and glow effects can make your work a masterpiece.



### Shading Pro Tool

Shading Pro tool is the real gem, which offers an ability to cover/shade anything with shading material. Extensive set of materials, plus ability

to create your own ones, will make your work fun.



### Using Custom Images for Filling and Background

You can use any of your own images to create collages and decorate text.



### Special Pictogram Content

Use some of the 300+ pictograms, supplied in the program.



## Other Software of Interest

**Arctic Quest for Mac: Catch it, Turn It, Put It in Place and Watch Spring Come to the Long Frozen World**

### Arctic Quest 1.0

<http://www.exclusivegames.com/arctic-quest-mac.html>

Requirements: OS X 10.3.9 or greater



Exclusive Games LLC and Stargaze Interactive are proud to announce the release of Arctic Quest for Mac, an amazingly beautiful game, which will fascinate you with thought-provoking puzzles, wonderful graphics and great gameplay. The game's Windows version has already gained popularity among puzzle lovers all over the world. Arctic Quest offers you a lot of fun and a good chance to test your agility, strategic abilities, reflexes acuity and quick thinking.

With a wave of his icy fingers, the Snow King unleashed a bitter frost on the tropical islands across Earth. Palm trees iced over, fish were frozen solid in the seas and birds could no longer take flight. There, on the edge of his arctic kingdom the Snow King raised his icy palace, and to safeguard his empire, built a chain of 60 puzzles meant to stop even the wisest sage from reaching his castle and breaking the spell. You are the one to solve the puzzles, which take the shapes of animals or other tropical wonders. Arctic Quest offers unique hand-drawn graphics and you simply can't help enjoying those small animated fish swimming around.

The way time and weather change in the game is almost mesmerizing and the ocean landscape of Arctic Quest is a great one to escape to from everyday duties. Arctic Quest is a great game both for beginners and experienced players, as the level of difficulty is rising slowly and it is really easy to learn. At the same time, the difficulty rises significantly by level 11, which makes the snail (time slower) power-up the ultimate one. After level ten, one misplaced tile can bring you to gameover, so you have to think before you place your tiles and do that fast. Arctic Quest offers a very good balance between efforts you put in and gratuity you get after each level.

Arctic Quest is the best way to relax after a busy day but it also makes you think when you play, which makes it great to play with your kids to teach them how to solve puzzles. We can only be glad for Mac users that now have a great chance to plunge into the

world of this thoroughly enjoyable game you just cannot stop playing.

### **Arctic Quest for Mac Features at a Glance:**

- 60 enjoyable levels
- Six valuable bonuses
- Simple mouse-based controls
- Beautiful hand-drawn graphics
- A final duel with the Snow King!

### **Pricing and Availability**

Arctic Quest runs under Mac OS X 10.3.9 - 10.4 (for both Power PC and Intel-based Macs) and costs \$19.95 (USD). Registered customers are entitled to unlimited gameplay, free upgrades and technical support. A trial version of Arctic Quest, limited to 60 minutes of gameplay, is available as a free download at <http://www.exclusivegames.com/download/arctic-quest-mac.dmg> (14 Mb).

### **About Exclusive Games LLC**

Founded in 2003, Exclusive Games LLC is an interactive entertainment software company, focused on development of 3D games for Windows-based platforms worldwide. Exclusive Games LLC also specializes in porting games of the casual type to Mac OS X platform. The company is located in Novosibirsk, the so-called "Silicon Taiga", and has a professional team that put all their experience, taste and fantasy in their games. For more information about the company and products, visit <http://www.exclusivegames.com>.

### **About Stargaze Interactive**

Stargaze Interactive is a young company engaged in shareware games development. It was founded in 2003. The company uses top-level development technologies to create high quality games, which offer simple but rich gameplay and convenient controls. Stargaze Interactive has already gained popularity among gamers all over the world. Many gamers of different ages have tried and enjoyed such gems of Stargaze

Interactive collection as Arctic Quest, Mysteries of Horus and Hyperballoid Series.

**Product page URL:** <http://www.exclusivegames.com/arctic-quest-mac.html>

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by **Linda Cameron**

## **Garment Designer 2.1**

**<http://www.cochenille.com/>**

No more hours spent pouring over the pattern books in a fabric store looking for just the right pattern to make a garment. If I want a long sleeved pullover with a deep V-neckline and contoured shape, no problem! If I would like a similar top with a square neckline, no problem! Cochenille Design Studio's Garment Designer runs in Mac OS X. Choose the type of pattern you want, customize it for the right look and even print it out to fit you or whoever you are making it for. It is exciting and fun for those of us who sew or knit. Standard measurements are included but using software to generate patterns based on our actual measurements is very liberating. I have been using pattern software for years, but the programs I have are getting old even though they still work when run in Classic. In 2 or 3 years, I will no longer be able to run any Classic software because the new Intel Macs do not support it. Thankfully, Garment Designer 2.1 works with the latest Macintosh operating system.

To install this software, an activation over the internet or by phone is necessary. I understand that companies who invest a lot of money to create software do not want to see people pirating it and passing it around for

*Continued on page 12*



## January Software Review

free, but it does worry me a little bit that software I want to install on my hard drive is dependent upon some outer force for it to work. I worry that the company could go out of business someday and I might need to reinstall it on a new computer and won't be able to activate it.

Since the other two pattern programs I have are so old, I am not surprised that Garment Designer is much more advanced. I had hoped there would be upgrades from the other programs which would offer improvements, but they never came for the Mac versions. Garment Designer for Macintosh comes with a nice hard copy manual specifically for the Mac platform. That is a very much appreciated part of the whole package. I personally like to play with the software first, then look at the manual. Others may find reading the manual first works for them. I had a good idea as to what the application might do, so I went looking for the features. When you first open Garment Designer, a default pattern for a top in a Misses size 10 appears. To get a custom fit, you need to create a new Sloper, which is a file that is your actual measurements. Slopers can be created for everyone you sew for and once saved, they are easily accessed in Garment Designer. The measurements are important. Read all the directions carefully and take accurate measurements, even if you need to get someone to help you do it. Garment Designer lets you do a Refined Fit or Simple Fit. The Refined Fit includes more detailed measurements; for example someone may have a bigger gut or flat backside, in which case you would measure from side to side, front and back rather than holding the tape measure around and reading the total. Once the measurements are entered and you have your custom Sloper, you have the choice of choosing between Top, Dress or Bottom for a new pattern. Each category includes more choices such as pants, skirt, vest

and so on. Depending upon which type of pattern you are going to create, there are more choices available for necklines, waists, sleeves, extras such as yokes, bands, facings, pockets and extensions for button closings, etc. This is the fun part—designing a custom pattern. Somewhere in the menus, you can select from fitted to very loose.

As you play around in Garment Designer, you can see the pattern pieces you are creating. If you like, you can choose to show both the pattern and the Sloper. The Sloper is shown as an outline of your body (according to the measurements you entered) beneath the pattern pieces, letting you visualize how the pattern might fit. I found that for some reason when I work with the Pants patterns, they look fine except the waist area is much wider than the sloper. I don't get it. When I printed out a pants pattern, I found that indeed the waist was way bigger than my own which meant I had to readjust the pattern. Now that I know that to be the case, when I am playing around with Garment Designer and the waist is too wide, I can select some of the points on screen and move them in for a more fitted waist. By selecting points you are able to create custom styles in patterns. The only caveat is that some of the other built-in features such as adding bands and pockets do not necessarily adapt to some of the changes you make. As for adding bands and facings to a pattern, they do not print out separately anyway. The lines are printed on top of the pattern. You could transfer your paper pattern to a fabric (like muslin) then cut the facings and bands from the paper pattern and use those to transfer also to muslin. The pockets will print out separately.

A smart feature in Garment Designer is symmetry. Selecting the hem of the front piece and moving it to be shorter or longer also selects and moves the back piece the same amount. If you want to move a section on only one pattern piece, you can disable Symmetry. There are other settings

that can be enabled to allow more to be shown such as pagination, measurements and data, seam allowance and so on. The book warns that turning on too many on-screen options can slow down the program but I have not seen any hint of slowness in Garment Designer. Maybe because my Mac more than meets the system requirements. In fact, the box says that the Macintosh requirements are a PowerMac with System 7 or later and 24MBs of RAM. I haven't tried opening this application in the Classic environment. I am just thrilled to be able to run this program in OS X and would like to move away from all Classic applications.

Before printing out a pattern, you are able to determine how many pages it will use by showing pagination and choosing a tighter layout. If you see on screen that there will be a few extra pages that are not needed, you can print a range of pages, then another range until you get the pattern pieces all printed without wasting extra paper. Showing a grid on screen also prints it on the paper and it is helpful when matching up the pages and determining the straight of grain. The next step is to lay out the pages on a big table using glue or tape, matching up the tick marks. You then cut out the pattern which can be transferred to a permanent muslin pattern. A muslin pattern is usually inexpensive cotton (old sheets can be used) which you baste together to try on before using your good fabric. As I read through the manual, I found there are many features mentioned that are to be added in a future version. The software is installed into a folder in the Applications folder. There is a Plug-ins folder which I leads me to believe add-ons can be purchased later to get more features. In the meantime, whatever You cannot do with Garment designer can be done with work-arounds.

Garment Designer is intended to create patterns for sewing or knitting. I would say that it is aimed towards those who are already experienced at sewing and knitting although a very

determined person could jump in and start learning. The one thing you get when you purchase commercial patterns is a sheet of directions. Garment Designer's manual is very good at explaining a lot, but you don't get step-by-step directions for each garment. Wish list for improvements

- I would love to see Contextual menus utilized in Garment Designer. I tend to Control-Click (or Right-click) on everything to pop-up a contextual menu with commands that apply to what I have clicked on. This would be especially handy when playing around with new patterns where you add a Shape or maybe a facing then you decide you want to delete or undo the last move. Instead, you have to go to the menu and find an item that lets you delete the selected shape or all shapes added.

- I would like to see more intuitive names for commands in menus. Instead of the menu showing "Add pockets" you see something like Left side or Back side. Selecting one of those puts a pocket on the garment, which then can be changed from an assortment of different types of pockets. If I used Garment Designer on a daily basis, I would surely get familiar with all the menus and commands, but if I only use it occasionally, I have to relearn it all over again.

At first, I thought there was no online forum to share information with other Garment Designer users, but I found out there is. Apparently, it was in the installation notes and I overlooked that information. Go to Yahoo Groups and search for Designer School and join the group to get a daily digest or individual messages sent to your e-mail.

As for tech support, you can e-mail them directly and they are pretty quick at replying. If the person replying can't help you, they will forward the problem to the original founder of the company who will try and solve it for you.

So far I have printed out patterns and sewn up a vest, a V-neck pullover and

a pair of pants. I am looking forward to many more projects when I can squeeze in the time. Once you get a pattern that fits you perfectly and if you are happy with the look, that pattern can be used over and over again with different fabrics. I find a good way to store the muslin patterns is to use gallon-sized Ziplock bags. Print out a pattern layout with useful information such as what type of fabric was used, how many yards it took, and the date it was first made. It is a good way to keep the patterns organized with other store-bought patterns.

I love this software and hope to see a lot of updates and future versions that get better and better. Maybe a Universal version will be out by the time I get that Intel Mac.

*Linda Cameron is editor of the Mid-Columbia Macintosh User Group newsletter and has an Alterations business since 1978. She also teaches sewing classes through the local community school.*

*More information and a demo version can be downloaded at <http://www.cochenville.com/>. The full price of Garment Designer for Macintosh is \$165.*

## Apple Updates

### iPod shuffle Reset Utility 1.0.1 for Mac

12/21/06

System Requirements  
– OS X 10.2.8 or later

The iPod shuffle Reset Utility restores First Generation iPod shuffle. The restore process completely erases all music and data on iPod shuffle and reinstalls software version 1.1.5.

#### Note:

iPod shuffle Reset Utility is only for First Generation 512MB and 1GB iPod shuffle. Any other iPod, including Second Generation iPod shuffle is not supported. If you are not sure which iPod you have, see Apple Support

document 61688: Identifying different iPod models

### Security Update 2006-008 (PPC)

12/19/06

System Requirements  
– OS X 10.4.8  
– PowerPC based Macintosh

Security Update 2006-008 is recommended for all users.

### Security Update 2006-008 (Universal)

12/19/06

System Requirements  
– OS X 10.4.8

Security Update 2006-008 is recommended for all users and improves security.

### AirPort Update 2006-002

12/13/06

System Requirements  
– OS X 10.4.8 or later

AirPort Update 2006-002 improves AirPort compatibility in the following computers:

- MacBook Pro (15-inch Core 2 Duo)
- MacBook Pro (17-inch Core 2 Duo)
- MacBook (13-inch Core 2 Duo)

### Aperture 1.5.2 Update

12/11/06

System Requirements  
– OS X 10.4.8 or later

Aperture 1.5.2 addresses issues related to overall reliability and performance in a number of areas, including:

- Contact sheet printing
- Smart Albums
- Watermarks
- Lift and stamp
- Image export
- Versions created using an external editor

This update is recommended for all Aperture users. 