

printout

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

Leopard training DVD

by Gary Brandt

Our March meeting will be a continuation of the Leopard training DVD. We should get a look at Cover Flow and Smart Albums in the sidebar. Also new in Leopard are Stacks in the Dock. Apple has issued an update to Leopard since this DVD was created that gives users new options for stacks. It seems they received a few complaints.

The DVD also includes a section on configuring System Preferences to customize some of Leopard's features and functions. Chris Breen covers security settings and Spotlight's new features. If you use Apple's text to speech, you may want to try Alex, a new voice that is included with Leopard.

The DVD gives a brief overview of the iLife '08 applications. Although iPhoto '08 seems to be getting good reviews, the same cannot be said for iMovie '08. It appears that many users can not get used to the major changes Apple has made. The new version is a complete rewrite. Safari, iChat, Address Book, and Mail all have additional features that are explained in the video.

We will try to get through as much of the video as time allows. We encourage you to come out and learn with us.

Keystone MacCentral is gearing up for another great auction. The auction is scheduled for the April meeting this year. We have been receiving quite a few items from our generous donating vendors with more still due to arrive. You can check a list of these items on our web site. The list will be updated as items come in. ☛

Meet us at

Gannett Fleming

Gannett West Building
209 Senate Ave ❖ Camp Hill

Tuesday, March 18, 2008, 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 © 2008, Keystone MacCentral, 305 Somerset Drive, Shiresmanstown, PA 17011.

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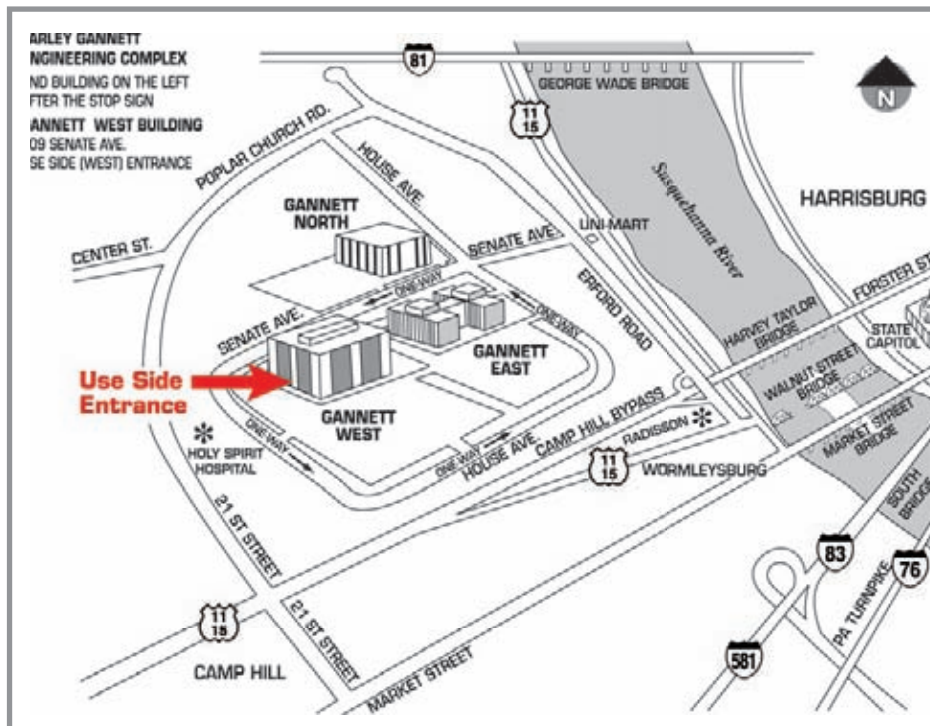
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Meeting Place

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Web Site

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305 Somerset Drive
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President's Corner

I had been planning a column telling you all about the day my two "best in class" students and I had at the Pennsylvania Educational Technology Expo and Conference (fondly know as PETE&C) Student Showcase on February 12 at the Hershey Lodge and Convention Center, but the weather gods had other plans. Last year, my two students and I were able to attend and show our projects before a snow storm caused many attendees and numerous schools to end the day early. Thus, we were briefly able to visit the vendors, including Apple, after our show time ended. This year, however, the snow started falling sooner. I was hoping for merely a delay to the school day so we would still be able to attend PETE&C, but no such luck. Schools started canceling for the day, and West Shore joined the crowd. If school is cancelled, so are all field trips, so this year's students lost out on a great experience. The coordinator of the Student Showcase was nice enough to send the students the "goodie bag" they would have received for being chosen to exhibit; the big Hershey bar, for example made them feel a bit better, but we were all disappointed. Since snow has been a factor two years in a row, I wonder why PETE&C always meets in February. April would be a much better choice, in my opinion.

In fact, your KeyMac officers decided to move our annual auction from November to April in hopes of avoiding bad weather, and April is fast approaching. (How's that for a segue?) In addition to the auction for which great donations are arriving almost daily (check the website periodically to see will be up for bid), we will also be having a party. KeyMac will provide soft drinks, ice, cups, plates and napkins and we ask you to bring goodies to share. The auction, no matter which month it is held, is my favorite meeting of all, and I suspect the same is true for most of you, so start making plans, looking over your hardware and software, and deciding what you would like to sell. You still have over a month to get ready, but don't dally because April 15 will be here before you know it. No, I am not shilling for the IRS, just

reminding you that our auction will be held April 15. With that date, how could anyone forget?

On another topic altogether, here's a useful tip for those of you whose mailbox is governed by a System Administrator who periodically sends annoying e-mails saying, "Your mailbox is over its size limit." For example, my school e-mail account has a maximum of 15 megs storage space. Friends send me pictures of the newest non-pneumatic tires or the latest Maxines, and I really enjoy them. Often, I forward these pictures and comics to my sister so she can be amazed or get a good laugh too. However, Sent Mail also adds up and counts toward my 15 megs of storage, so the System Administrator and I correspond more often than I would like if I forget to delete immediately not only the original e-mail and pictures as soon as I have seen them but also to delete the Sent Mail as well. Now, I have a solution to my problem that may help others as well. If you want to send large files for free, go to www.palshare.com which will let you send files of up to 250 megs. You register and then send the files. They will remain on PalShare for up to 10 days. Your recipient will get an e-mail containing the link, and he/she can then download the files onto the desktop, so his/her e-mail account will not be overloaded. I do not suggest downloading files from someone you do not know, but this should work well between family and friends. One additional piece of information to put in your e-mail is that the recipient should not click the Download button because reportedly this can cause problems (Weird, I know, but I believe the person who told me this) but instead should just click on the link to download the files without any glitches.

Our March 18 meeting will continue our Leopard training, so I hope to see you there! 🍷



Keystone MacCentral Minutes

February 19, 2008

Business Meeting

President Linda Cober welcomed members to KeyMac's February meeting. She asked board members for their reports. Webmaster Linda Smith's widget pick of the month was Meander 2.0.2, a route planning tool. She noted that links to past widget picks were available from our archives. President Cober reported that she had ordered a copy of Bento from Apple. Apple offers programs periodically to user groups for a nominal fee. We will post a review of Bento in our newsletter and try to schedule a demonstration at one of our upcoming meetings.

After Q & A, President Linda Cober asked for volunteers to serve on a nominating committee to get candidates for board elections that will be held at our May meeting. Current board members have all indicated their willingness to serve another two year term if they are reelected but we will still welcome other candidates for the election. With nobody volunteering to serve on the committee, Jim Carey made a motion to eliminate the nominating committee for the 2008 election. Glenn Gutshall seconded and the motion was passed by members. If you would like to serve as a board officer, you can contact a current board member to express your interest. Nominations can be made from the floor at the May meeting.

Q&A & Comments

Someone asked for the passwords for user group members to get discounts from the Apple MUG Store. Linda Cober gave us the codes and she also reviewed some of the offers she had received in an e-mail. The difference between a Leopard DVD bought off the shelf and the one that comes when you purchase a new Mac was explained. The Leopard DVD bought without a Mac will load onto any compatible Mac model. The Leopard DVD that comes with a purchased Mac is made to be used only with that model.

Jim Carey noted that a Leopard compatible version of Adobe Photoshop Elements was soon to be released. Adobe has a video podcast that covers the new features of Elements 6. Jim also passed along his recommendation for iPhoto '08 with its new features. He showed us the

adjustments palette. You can now edit RAW files and save changes as a TIFF image.

Jim mentioned Little Snitch, a program that informs you when an application tries to "phone home". You can use Little Snitch to prevent this from happening on an application by application basis.

Program Notes

We had a few audio problems before we could start viewing the Mac OS X 10.5 Essential Training tutorial DVD. The instructor on the DVD was Chris Breen. Once we began, we skipped a few preliminary sections covering Mac basics and began with the section on enabling Time Machine for automatic backups and running software updates.

If you are running Leopard and you plug in an external hard drive, a dialog box will appear. You will be asked if you want to use that drive for Time Machine. Chris showed how to set that up. He also stressed the importance of checking for software updates from Apple after a Leopard installation. There might be recent updates from Apple not included on your Leopard installation DVD.

We skipped to the section on customizing the Finder in Leopard. Chris demonstrated the usefulness of the Path Bar that can be set to appear at the bottom of Finder windows. Double-clicking on a location listed in the Path bar will open the window to that location. Using Help in Leopard is greatly improved. Help includes product support articles which are online and may be more up to date.

In the Seeking Stuff section, Chris reviewed the features of Spotlight, including performing calculations and getting word definitions from within Spotlight. Applications can be launched from Spotlight. New to Leopard are Smart Folders in the sidebar. There are several default folders and you can create your own. They are dynamically updated and can be useful for finding files that might be deeply nested on your Mac.

Chris demonstrated how to set up Spaces for different sets of applications. In the Printing section, he explained the different options in the PDF portion of the print dialog box.

We had a little time left so we skipped to the Keeping Your Mac Healthy section of the DVD. In the Time Machine system preference pane, Chris demonstrated how to adjust settings to exclude items from Time Machine backups to save disk space. You might want to exclude some system settings and applications from backup since you should still have the CDs/DVDs if you would have to restore those files. He noted that you cannot use Time Machine to back up to iPods or your iDisk. Chris demonstrated the restore process for items he had deleted from his hard drive. Time Machine uses a specific interface when working with certain Apple applications like iPhoto and Address Book.

Chris opened Disk Utility to demonstrate the verify/repair disk and disk permissions options. To repair a disk, you need to be booted from another disk. Disk Utility can also be used to erase a hard drive.

Raffle

Don Fortnum was the winner of a gift certificate for a free download from macProVideo.com's web site. Congratulations! 🍀

by TidBITS Staff

iTunes Movie Rentals and Apple TV

Furthering Apple's expansion into consumer electronics and entertainment, Steve Jobs announced at Macworld Expo a significant change to the iTunes Store business model - movie rentals. Interestingly, Jobs introduced the movie rentals by talking first about the iTunes Store successes - 4 billion songs and 125 million TV shows sold - before admitting that the company wasn't happy about selling only 7 million movies so far. By adding the movie rental business to the iTunes Store, Apple was able to sign up all the major movie studios along with a number of smaller ones, a feat that had previously eluded the company.

By the end of February 2008, Apple plans to have 1,000 movies available for rental in the United States (with an international release of the program slated for later this year), and new releases will appear in the iTunes Store for rental 30 days after the DVD availability. The movies will be available in DVD quality (at roughly 640 x 480 resolution, depending on the movie's aspect ratio). Older movies cost \$2.99; new releases are \$3.99. Once you've rented a movie, you have 30 days to watch it, and you must finish watching within 24 hours after you start. (This is comparable to the viewing restrictions on movies rented via Amazon Unbox, which only supports TiVo DVRs and Windows computers.) You can still purchase some movies, but many are available only for rent.

Movies can, of course, be watched on Macs and PCs in iTunes, on the current generation of iPods, and on the iPhone. But as Jobs noted, most people watch movies on large screen TVs, and in another burst of humility, he

admitted that the Apple TV has been disappointing, associating it with failed efforts from numerous other companies. That served as the springboard for the next announcement, of a significant software update to the Apple TV that enables users to rent movies directly from the iTunes Store without the need for any computer. The Apple TV update, which will be a free software update available for all owners two weeks following the announcement, features a redesigned user interface that also provides access to audio and video podcasts, can display photos from Flickr and .Mac, plays videos from YouTube, and lets users purchase music and TV shows from the iTunes Store for direct playback and syncing to computers.

The revised Apple TV is also capable of renting high-definition movies, with Dolby 5.1 surround sound, from the iTunes Store for \$1 more than the DVD-quality versions; older movies cost \$3.99 and new releases cost \$4.99. Other devices, even Macs running monitors capable of viewing high-def content, are excluded from HD rentals.

Jobs also announced that the price for the 40 GB Apple TV, previously \$299, would drop to \$229; the 160 GB model dropped from \$399 to \$329. It would have been more interesting had Apple seriously slashed the price, say to \$99, in an attempt to drive a vast number of purchases and associated movie rentals. 🍀



Views from the Ivory Tower - February 2008

On the RIAA

Let me begin this article by getting back on my soapbox concerning the RIAA and their seemingly endless battle to destroy their own business. Yes, once again, they have done something so stupid that if this doesn't convince you to permanently stop buying their CDs, nothing will.

Let me be blunt. They are working on a case that would make it illegal for a person who purchases an audio CD to rip it into MP3 for their own use...

Since the dawn of recorded music, the current popular method of enjoying music was one step behind how consumers wanted to use them. So people have been converting their music to the desired format. For personal use, this has never been a problem. Why should it be? If you bought it, you should be able to use it in any way you like. I agree, you cannot sell it or give it to a friend, but you should be able to convert and use it. In the olde days, we could make tapes, then CDs of our vinyl and today we make MP3s of our CDs. But if the RIAA has their way, doing this with a CD you purchased legally, will be against the law.

We know why they are doing this. As their business begins to fall apart, they are making every move they can to eek out that last bit of profit. Rather than embrace the digital age, these aging businessmen choose to hide behind the coattails of technophobic legislators, poking their greedy little hands out for whatever they can grab, caring little for who they hurt in the process (and making sure little goes to the actual artist).

Think about it. The RIAA is finding ways to fine and sue the very people who have provided them with all the money they have. How long will it be before absolutely no one will purchase any product they make? With the Internet, the members of the RIAA are no longer the only source of recorded music available in the US. We have many choices of digital downloads in the US. We can also buy CDs almost as easily from a non-US music company as we can from a US one. Why purchase a CD of a UK group from the RIAA, when one can easily buy it from some source in the UK, and get a CD formatted the way the artist actually wanted to? For years the RIAA has dictated how a non-US group's CD was set up, which made "import CDs" sought after and so valuable. With the "import CD" you got the music that the musician wanted to offer, not what the RIAA dictated.

So what is happening is this, a man in Arizona is being sued because there is music on his computer that he converted from the CD's he owns. Take a look at this article as presented by the Washington Post.

Here is a quote from that article that I find most interesting: "...the industry maintains that it is illegal for someone who has legally purchased a CD to transfer that music into his computer." Wow, this is scary. I doubt that anyone reading this article has not done this. So we are all criminals! Terrible, just terrible.

This article goes on to say: "The RIAA's legal crusade against its customers is a classic example of an old media company clinging to a business model that has collapsed. Four years of a failed strategy has only "created a whole market of people who specifically look to buy independent goods so as not to deal with the big record companies," Beckerman says. "Every problem they're trying to solve is worse now than when they started."

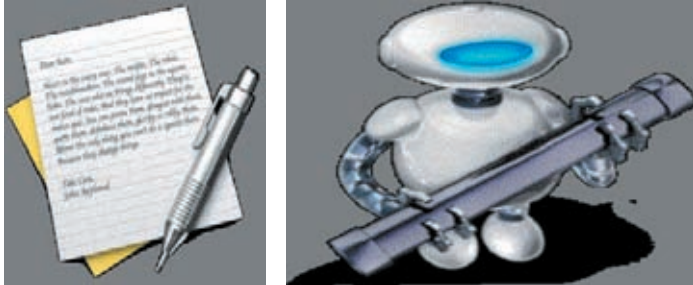
I couldn't agree more. Don't these business men read children stories? I think they missed the one about, "Don't bite the hand that feeds you"! Be sure to read the entire article, it has a lot of good information.

Do you know what I am considering doing? Cataloging all my RIAA CDs, and sending a certified letter to the RIAA business office and asking for a refund for these CDs. Since they apparently want to dictate how I use them, I no longer want them on my property. I also want to be refunded, in today's dollars, for every one of them! I would also send a copy of this letter to every artist that has a CD is in my library. I want them to know that I will no longer enjoy their music and to warn them that the RIAA will be probably asking them to pay back their royalty fees for those CDs I am being refunded on!

I am truly and fully sick of the RIAA and their tactics. I have said this before and will continue to say, I will never again buy any CD from any RIAA associated company. If I buy a CD it will be an import or from an independent label. I truly hope that all of my readers will make this same commitment. If you don't, the next headline you hear will be something like:

"RIAA sues man in New Jersey for listening to a CD at 9AM when they have labeled it specifically as a CD to be listened to at 5PM." Please, don't make this a reality. ☹

The Lonely Dynamic Duo



Automator is a very powerful application in the OS X arsenal and has been greatly enhanced in Leopard (1). Indeed, Automator has such a commanding presence that many Tiger and Leopard users have never explored its power. Perhaps, that old Jim Croce lyric, “You don’t tug on Superman’s cape” (2) scared them off. As a result, far too many Mac users are afraid to mess around with Jim, uh I mean Automator. Don’t be like Sylvester in the classic cartoon Scaredy Cat (3) ...



In spite of its awesome potential, Automator is gentle as a lamb. There is a great Mac 101 tutorial which will help to squelch all your fears (4).

On the other hand, TextEdit is viewed by most Mac users as the Caspar Milquetoast (5) application of OS X. Perhaps used only as a quick note pad. I recently picked up one of the Leopard “How-to” guides which used the term “barebones” to describe TextEdit. However, it is so much more than that. Check out Apple’s Mac 101 TextEdit tutorial (6).

Automator and TextEdit both have one thing in common. Both are underused by most Mac users, but for opposite reasons. They fear Automator’s strength and underestimate TextEdit’s abilities. However, together they constitute a true Dynamic Duo, albeit a lonely pair due to neglect. Why not consider exploring how together they can wow you and impress your friends?

Motivational Story

Let me tell you a story of the prowess of these implausible team mates. Once upon a time, on a bone-chilling January morning, our Digital Photo SIG was gathering around

steaming cups of caffè latte. A hush settled over the room when two of my photographs suddenly appeared from the warm glow of the liquid crystal display ... caught your attention didn’t I? I told you that everyone is enraptured by good story (7).



Any way a discussion arose about my two photos of the holiday lights in our town commons. I had taken a photo of the same scene with and without a flash.

Our discussion sparked my interest in digital night photography. I wanted to share two interesting web pages (8) & (9) with other members of the SIG. However, rather than just sending them the URLs in an e-mail ... so 90s dial-up, don’t you agree ... I wanted to send them a TextEdit document. However, not just a run-of-the-mill, Milquetoast document, mind you. I wanted my friends to open a magical, mystical document ... going a bit too far am I? ... how about a digital document in which the text of each article was read to them (10), sorta like one of those audio greeting cards.

TextEdit Capabilities Discovered

OK. How was this possible? I mean it is called “Text” Edit, is it not. Well, as Sherlock Holmes said in *The Boscombe Valley Mystery* (11), “There is nothing more deceptive than an obvious fact” (12). Therefore, it was time to experiment. After all, I do call my macCompanion column, *Under the Magnifying Glass*, or as dear old Sherlock would say, “Here is my lens. You know my methods” (12).

I discovered that TextEdit has a hidden talent which you might not expect or may not discover without experimenting. Remember my admonition a few months ago to investigate the trifles (13). Again, I encourage you to explore your Mac for the unmitigated joy of discovery. This is precisely what I did and, oh, the hairs on the back of my neck stood on end, dancing the jig.

Continued on page 8

The Lonely Dynamic Duo



TextEdit, similar to an e-mail document, allows you to embed audio files in documents, the same way you include photos and graphics. Just drag and drop the file into the document where you wish to hear the text read back to you. You can even include video clips in the document, if you wish.

When you drag the audio file into the TextEdit document, you will have the opportunity to either copy the file itself, or add an alias.

Now, you know. The secret is out. The mild mannered TextEdit can transform into a superhero ... OK, maybe I am taking the metaphor a bit too far, but how can I help but be amazed. After all, TextEdit can handle audio files!

Automator's Super Powers Tamed

The next trick is to convert the text of your document into an audio file.

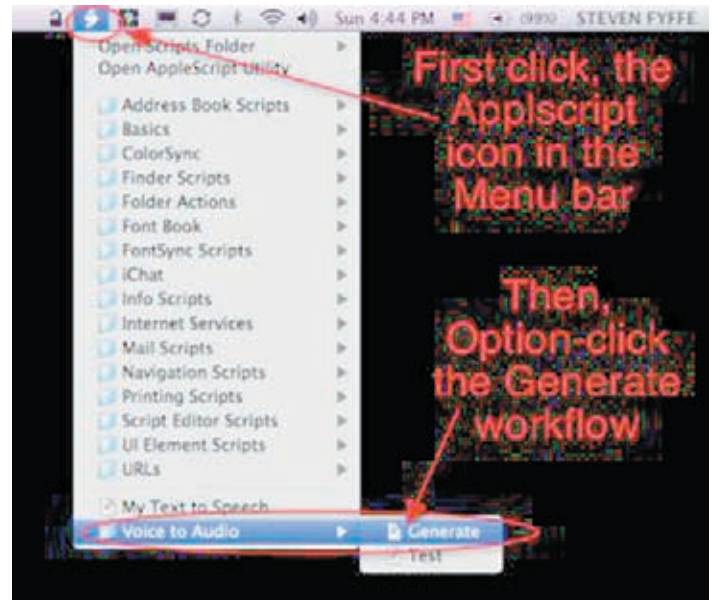
If you have not "tugged on Superman's cape", you are past due to give it a try. Automator is sitting in the applications folder waiting for you and if you are still afraid, I'll loan you my kryptonite ring. You can create a Text-to-Speech Automator workflow in about 10 minutes.

The details for building the workflow is clearly described in "Creating Podcast Narration Tracks" at Automator. US (14), Sal Soghoian's (15) personal web page. Sal is AppleScript

Project leader at Apple and often appears in Automator video tutorials (16) and podcasts (17).

I won't repeat the information you can read for yourself, but I'll share how I customized the workflow.

In the paragraph "Testing the Text", you are first instructed to download (18) and "run the installer containing the workflows used to generate the audio clip." Go ahead and do that, while I wait ... Back already? Great!

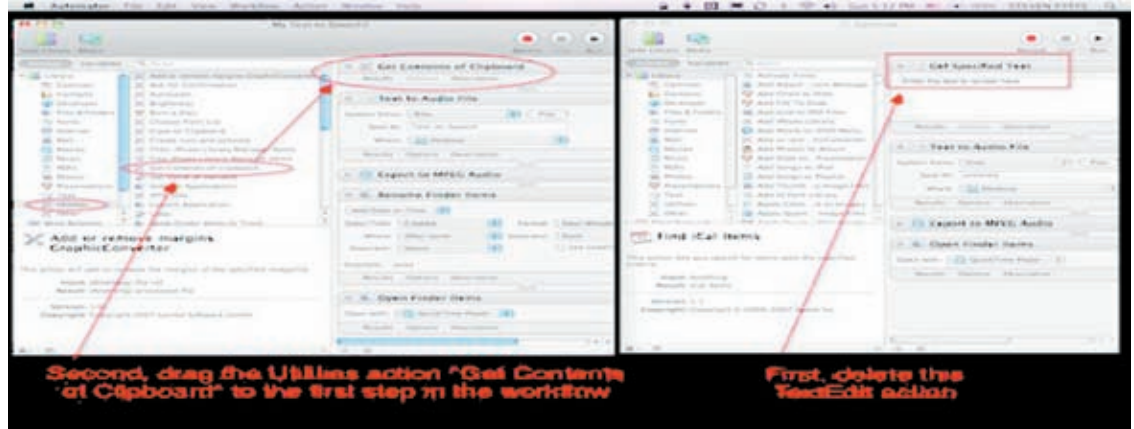


After doing this, I modified the "Generate" workflow. To do that, I made one change in Sal's instructions, "While holding down the Option key, select the GENERATE workflow from the Voice to Audio sub-menu in the system Script Menu located at the right of the menu bar." This allowed me to open and edit the "Generate" workflow.

I just saved it with a name of my own "My Text-to-Speech" ... how clever.

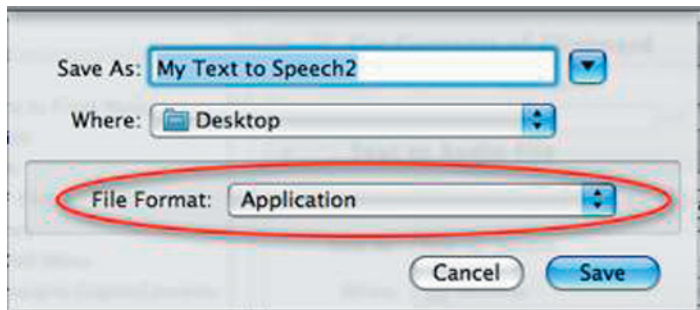
Instead of typing the text or cut & paste the text into the Automator action "Get Specified Text", I wanted to be able to simply copy the text in to the clipboard. Therefore, I needed to change the first action and replace it with a different one.

I replaced the TextEdit action "Get Specified Text" with the Utilities action "Get Contents of Clipboard".



Then, I changed the System Voice to “Alex” the new voice in Leopard.

In order to customize the name of the audio file, I needed to have the name changed automatically. This was easy to do. I just dragged the Files & Folders “Rename the Finder Items” action to the workflow. I placed it after the Quick Time action “Export to MPEG Audio” and above the “Open Finder Items” action.

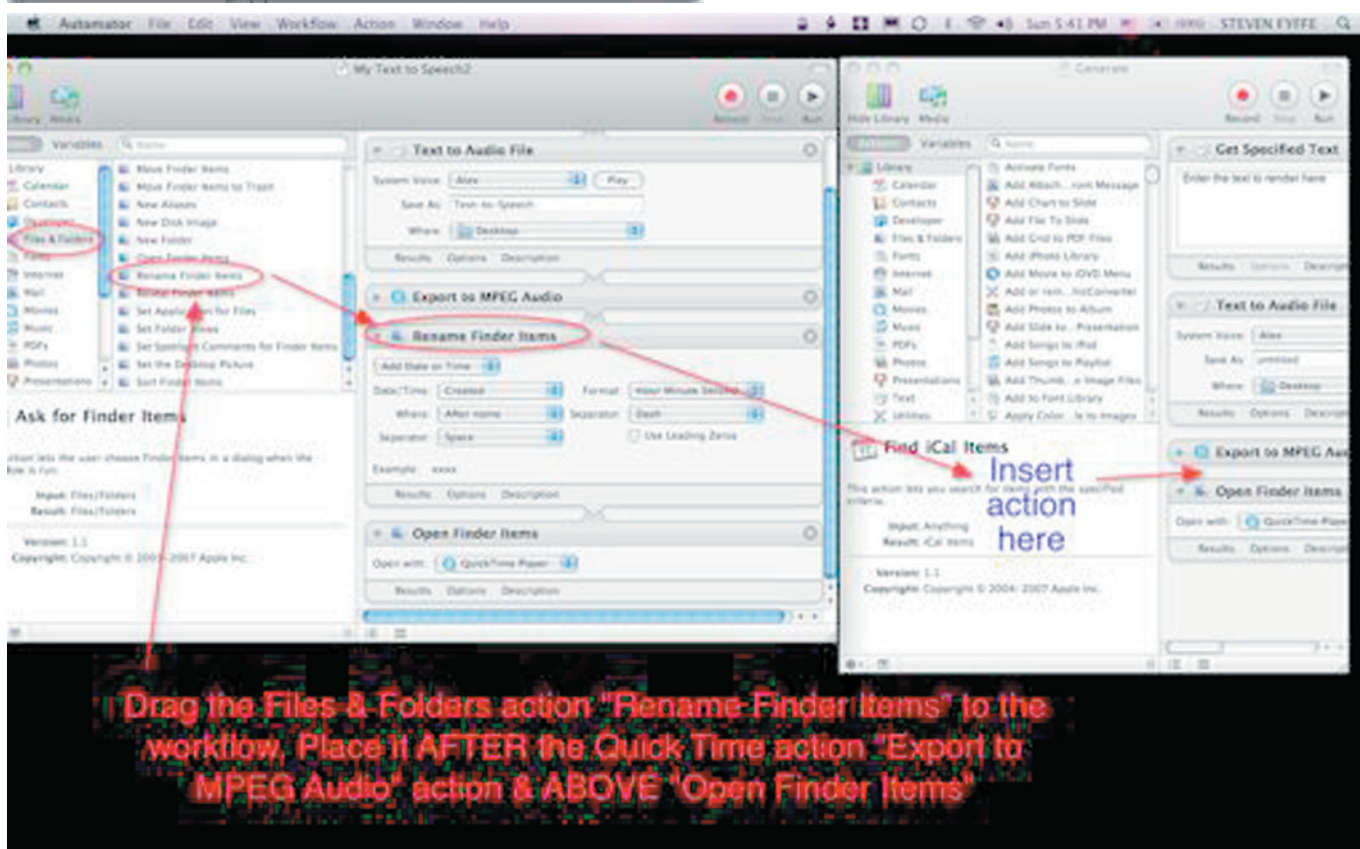


By the way, notice that Alex’s voice sounds deeper. I used Amadeus Pro (19) to lower the pitch and increase the reading speed.

I hope you enjoyed your “guided discovery” (20) of this dynamic duo. They should not be lonely applications on your Mac any more. Try them out for yourself! Investigate the power of Automator and familiarize yourself with the full range of TextEdit’s capabilities. I would like to encourage you to continue on our journey together, putting OS X and other Macintosh software Under the Magnifying Glass. Now, with Leopard our journey down the yellow brick road has more the 300 new discoveries (21) to add to our golden collection.

References

1. <http://automator.us/leopard/index.html>



The last step was to save the workflow. Under File, click Save As and change the File Format to Application.

All you now need to do is select the text you wish to listen to, copy it to the clipboard (Command-C), and click your new application “My Text to Speech”. Your text is now saved on the desktop as an audio file. Just drag it into your TextEdit document to give it the power of speech.

If you are interested in listening to my Night Photography TextEdit document read to you or wish to have my modified Automator workflow, I have placed them in my .Mac Public Folder (10).

2. http://www.lyricsfreak.com/j/jim+croce/you+don+mess+around+with+jim_10149470.html
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The Lonely Dynamic Duo

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8. http://www.picturecorrect.com/articles/night_photography_photos_tips.htm
9. <http://www.photoxels.com/tutorial-night-photography-print.html>
10. Download the archive files "Night Photography" & "Text-to-Speech Automator" in my Public Folder = <http://homepage.mac.com/clevelandnecks/MacFriends/FileSharing15.html>
11. <http://yoak.com/sherlock/stories/adventures/boscombe.txt>
12. <http://www.bcpl.net/~lmoskowi/Holmes-Quotes/q.detection.html>
13. Under the Magnifying Glass - Observation of Trifles = <http://www.macompanion.com/macc/archives/October2007/Columns/UMG.htm>
14. <http://automator.us/narration/>
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17. <http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewPodcast?i=11018636&id=119110543>
18. Automator.US narration download <http://automator.us/narration/narrationtools.zip>
19. <http://www.hairersoft.com/AmadeusPro/AmadeusPro.html>
20. <http://eltj.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/52/1/88.pdf>
21. <http://www.apple.com/macosx/features/300.html#ical> 

by Mark Boszko

Extend iTunes Movie Rentals Beyond 24 Hours

First, a quick summary of Apple's new movie rental option available on the iTunes Store (see "iTunes Movie Rentals and Apple TV, Take 2," 2008-01-15). The movie rental experience is good, even without an Apple TV. Of course the resolution isn't HD, though it is slightly above DVD standards by pixel size - 933 by 470 pixels for the particular film I watched, all picture and no black bars. Unfortunately, that's offset by the highly compressed low-data-rate H.264 codec, and the movie looked a bit soft for the resolution. (I'd still like to know just why we non-Apple TV owners are snubbed on the HD point, but I'm betting on it being a perceived piracy risk on the part of the studios.) However, the rental process itself is painless and your time remaining before the expiration is clearly laid out in the Rented Movies section of iTunes.

Transfer back and forth to portable devices (at least with the iPhone I tested) is also clearly laid out in the Movies tab of your media sync preferences for the portable device. The only pain experienced is waiting for a roughly 1 GB file to copy over USB, even when you're transferring back to your Mac from the portable device.

The one exception to ease of use would be that you can't get to your rentals from Front Row - you must play them from iTunes and swap into full screen mode by pressing

Command-F if you want a big screen experience from your Mac mini jukebox. Then, at the end of the movie, iTunes doesn't kick you out of full screen mode either - it just sits there on the post-credit black screen until you press Escape to switch back to a normal window, but that's a trivial complaint.

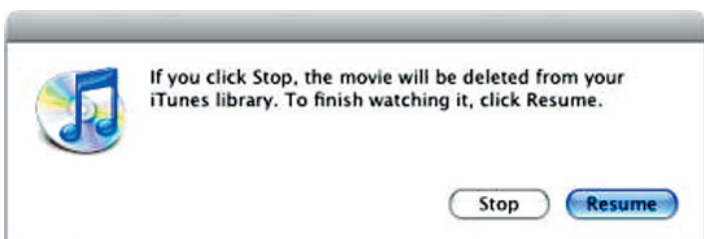
Looking through the Rental Window — I've heard several people complain that they need at least a 27-hour window to account for starting a rented movie at 9 PM one evening, then having to pause it to deal with some interruption (like kids or the need for sleep), only to come back at 9 PM the next night and be out of luck because the rental has expired. To test this concern, I started watching a rental movie for a second time with only about 30 minutes left in the 24-hour rental window. Glenn Fleishman moans more about this problem in "iTunes Fails the Parental Rental" (2008-02-04).

A good 70 minutes into the movie, and it's still playing. Does that mean you have 24 hours to start watching a movie, and once you've started, you get to keep watching it until it's done? Does it expire if you pause it in the middle or try to rewind? These are all good questions. But let's see if it lets me watch all the way to the end first...

Awesome. I was able to watch all the way to the end, credits and all, and then it stopped on the black screen as usual, with no alerts of any sort. Once I pressed Escape to leave full screen mode, I was greeted with this dialog, warning me that if I didn't resume watching, the movie would be deleted. In other words, I was easily able to finish watching the movie even though doing so put the total time beyond the 24-hour window.



With another movie, I tested the question of whether you could pause an in-progress movie and then resume watching after the 24-hour rental window had closed. It turns out that so long as you pause before the rental expiration, a paused movie remains accessible past the expiration time, so long as the movie window stays open. Keeping that window open requires that iTunes not be used to play back any other media until you choose to resume playback, after which you can continue playing at your leisure. When it's done, though, it's really done, and iTunes deletes the file.



If you attempt to pause again after the expiration time has passed, the movie continues playing while you are presented with a dialog where iTunes notifies you that your rental has expired, and your only choice is to resume or delete your rental. However, you can rewind the currently playing movie even after the expiration time has elapsed, which could allow you to extend your viewing time a little further (or catch up if you have to visit the bathroom in the middle of the post-expiration viewing).

Chris Breen of Macworld has also discovered that there is an identical viewing time extension available if you have transferred your rental to a 3G iPod nano with TV playback. One might assume this would also apply to other iPod/iPhone models, although I've heard that the reason movie rentals aren't supported on 5G iPods is that it's possible to reset their clocks in such a way as to prolong rentals (something that reportedly doesn't work in iTunes).

The upshot of all this would seem to be that Apple is trying hard to provide a reasonable user experience, even while meeting the desire to limit the time in which a rental can be watched, presumably something that was necessary to get the studios to license their content for viewing in iTunes. Why Apple doesn't document this behavior, at least in a Knowledge Base article, is left as an exercise for the reader to ponder.

[Mark Boszko is a broadcast TV editor, film buff, and Mac addict living in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, DC. In his "copious spare time," he produces HowTube, a fun tech how-to podcast, and BeerMediaTech, a spirited fortnightly discussion of tech and media news.] 🗑️

by Glenn Fleishman

Leopard Emerges from Beta as 10.5.2 Ships

I don't mean to be cruel with my headline, but Apple's release of Mac OS X 10.5.2 marks the real beginning of Leopard for me, although testing will be required to bear this out. While I'm using Leopard full-time at home on an old PowerBook G4, I haven't been ecstatic about it due to rough edges.

I beta tested Leopard, and while much was fixed at the last minute to work properly for the 10.5.0 release, using 10.5.0 and 10.5.1 was at times feeling like an extension of that beta program. Most egregiously, I had to re-install Leopard due to a known problem that resulted in an inescapable Setup Assistant at startup (see "For Want of a File, an Operating System Was Lost," 2008-02-01). With 10.5.2, I may be ready to upgrade my primary work computer.

The 10.5.2 release is available through Software Update as a universal incremental release, updating 10.5.1 to 10.5.2,

and weighs in at 180 MB on my PowerPC-based PowerBook, but Apple notes size will vary from machine to machine. No incremental updater was available from Apple's site as I write this. The universal Combo updater, which combines 10.5.1 and 10.5.2, is 343 MB for the desktop version, and 382 MB for Leopard Server. There's also a 49 MB Leopard Graphics Update 1.0 to install, but only after 10.5.2 is installed and the computer restarted. The graphics update has a generic note that it improves stability and compatibility.

With the release of 10.5.2, Apple has fixed a number of things that I, other reviewers, and legions of actual users have complained about. Plus, 10.5.2 makes it possible to stop using utilities and hacks created by developers and Terminal-level clever folk to work around problems in earlier releases.

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Leopard Emerges from Beta as 10.5.2 Ships

The update takes an inordinate amount of time to install — it took nearly 30 minutes on my PowerBook G4, and, for some reason, powered the laptop down even though it was fully charged and plugged in. The startup took another good 10 minutes to complete.

Let's walk through the big stuff first from the extensive release notes.

Setup Assistant and Login Problems Fixed – While Apple's notes are rather brief, they speak volumes. "Addresses an issue in which Setup Assistant could unexpectedly appear each time Mac OS X 10.5 starts up" is one; the other, "Improves stability and performance during log in."

The first resolves the problem I experienced, in which a particular setup file failing to be updated correctly would lead to Setup Assistant launching repeatedly at startup. Apple had posted a technical note on fixing the problem using Safe Boot, but this didn't work for me, nor for several readers who wrote in to me with similar problems; for many others, Apple's technique did fix the error.

What's clear from this note is that the login routine is now checking more extensively as to the state of the computer, especially if an upgrade fails — the root of the infinite Setup Assistant bug.

AirPort Landing Gear Finally Retracted – Apple's and other forums are full of people finding that their Wi-Fi networks mysteriously work ever more slowly the longer they use Leopard. I haven't been able to find or determine the cause of this, but Apple promises 10.5.2 "Improves connection reliability and stability" and "Resolves certain kernel panics." Let's hope that does the trick.

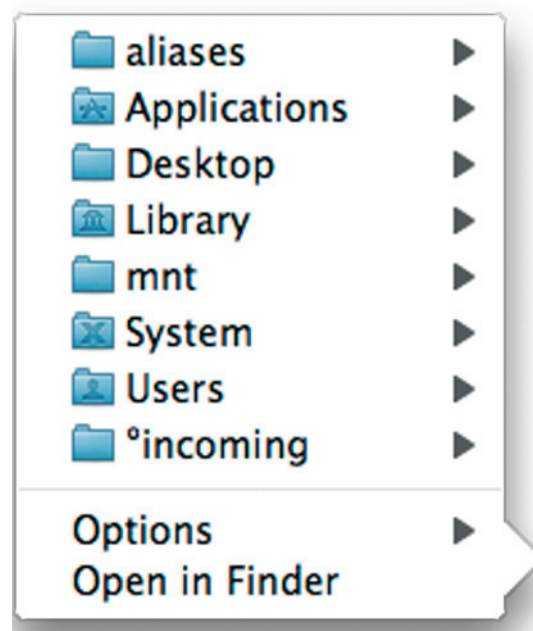
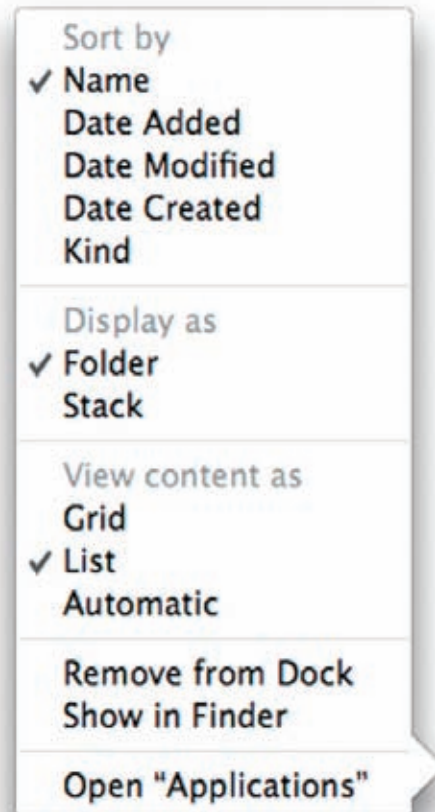
Applying Lipstick – Two cosmetic choices by Apple irked a lot of folks, TidBITS editors included. Perhaps the title "Transparent Menu Bar, Die Die Die!" (2007-11-16) in an article by Matt Neuburg wasn't quite direct enough about his feelings. Tell us what you really think, Matt.

The translucent menu bar was a misguided effort at showing off alpha transparency — or something. We're still not sure what. But it sure made the menu bar less useful. In 10.5.2, there's a checkbox to disable this feature: System Preferences, Desktop & Screen Saver, Desktop tab, uncheck Translucent Menu Bar. Ah, that's better!

The other irksome change involved disabling a simple list of items when clicking on a docked folder. The Stacks feature was supposed to show us everything at a glance. But it also showed folders as a pile of documents, and wasn't an efficient way in any of its modes to scan through

a lot of stuff. (Matt explained his displeasure with that, with less mortality involved, in "Six Things I Hate about Leopard," 2007-10-26.)

The 10.5.2 release restores Tiger goodness by adding the option to display a folder as, you know, a folder (instead of a stack), and to view items as a list. Even in the Tiger-familiar mode, you can still sort items by kind, or date added, modified, or created.



No, Really, Get Back to My Mac – My particular focus in Leopard is Back to My Mac, which has worked erratically or not at all for some people, due to the necessity of having particular router and Internet service provider configurations. (I wrote about this in “Punching a Hole for Back to My Mac,” 2007-11-17.)

Version 10.5.2 ostensibly adds more compatibility through support for more routers, but it’s not clear how that will translate into actual use. I’m hoping for more reader reports, please.

Bits and Pieces – Time Machine now offers a menu in the system menu bar to show the status of backups, note the date and time of the last backup, start a backup immediately, and open the preference pane. Hold down the Option key and a menu item changes so you can browse to find other Time Machine backup disks, too. If your last backup was several days ago, an exclamation point appears within the menu’s icon to emphasize the point.

There are also a number of security-related fixes in 10.5.2 that are sufficiently important that Apple also made them available to users of Mac OS X 10.4 Tiger as Security Update 2008-001. It’s available via Software Update and as standalone downloads for PowerPC- (16.7 MB) and Intel-based (28.8 MB) Macs.

Numerous other small bug fixes — Apple lists over 100 changes in the release notes — should improve a lot of the little stuff in each program and service that was causing crashes or that didn’t work quite right. It’s worth reading the release notes to see if something bugging you is now corrected.

But, Apple, please, can’t you give us more detail than “Improves general stability when running third-party applications”? Thanks loads! I’ll look for General Stability and salute him the next time I see him walking down the street with General Protection Fault.

What’s Not Fixed – Matt runs through what items were fixed out of his list of six things he hated in a companion article, “Leopard 10.5.2: TidBITS Complains, Apple Listens, Sort Of,” 2008-02-12.

An item he didn’t mention originally is something that both Jeff Carlson and I were incredulous about when Apple told us: the fact that you have to double-click a calendar event in iCal to see and modify its details via a pop-up menu. In Tiger, iCal offers the Info panel, which contextually displays details — that you can modify if it’s a local calendar — about whatever you currently select, whether an entire calendar or an individual appointment. This “bug” is still in place. ☹

by Glenn Fleishman

Blu-ray Wins High-Definition Disc Format Battle

After less than two years of head-to-head competition in the marketplace, HD DVD developer Toshiba has resigned the side, choosing to drop further development of their format. The Sony-backed Blu-ray high-definition (HD) disc specification has won. This must be an especially sweet victory for Sony, which lost decades ago in the VHS versus Betamax battle, despite some superior technical characteristics of Betamax.

The two HD formats both provided a digital-rights-managed (DRM) approach for playing movies and other video from a high capacity disc to an HD television set at substantially higher resolutions than was possible from an ordinary DVD. Both formats support resolutions up to 1080p, which is 1920 by 1080 pixels, and most movies released are in this format. (Not all HDTV sets display 1080p; some display 1080i, in which lines of pixels are painted in alternating passes; and many show 720p, typically 1280 by 720 pixels.)

Both Blu-ray and HD DVD employ lasers that use blue light for reading and writing. Blue has a shorter wavelength than the red and infrared used in standard CDs and DVDs, and a blue-light laser can read and write information at a much higher density. Blu-ray has some storage and throughput advantages over HD DVD, but I never saw any side-by-side testing that indicated Blu-ray was better in other ways.

While both formats were introduced in prototype form in 2002, players didn’t reach the market until 2006, with HD DVD appearing first. The HD players became associated with gaming systems: Sony included a Blu-ray player in every Playstation 3 they shipped; Microsoft offered an inexpensive HD DVD upgrade kit for its Xbox 360. Apple never signaled its interest in the higher-capacity formats, except for HD DVD burning support in DVD Studio Pro; the company sometimes moves slowly with regard to optical disc formats. After betting on the never-popular DVD-RAM technology for writing DVDs, Macs were late to market with CD burners. With the format war over, it’s possible Apple will now make its move with a built-to-order option on Mac Pros; Blu-ray drives so far have been seen as too expensive, bulky, and power-intensive to be an option for most laptops.

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Blu-ray Wins High-Definition Disc Format Battle

Warner Brothers, in early 2007, showed a prototype HD DVD/Blu-ray hybrid disc that could have made the studios agnostic as to format, and LG, an electronics firm, introduced several models of Blu-ray/HD DVD players — that cost more than separately purchasing a PlayStation and an HD DVD player. But these hybrid and dual-format efforts were for naught because Sony and partners shipped enormously more Blu-ray players than the HD DVD alliance, and Blu-ray wound up with more studios on board releasing titles than its competitor.

Toshiba and other news sources report that about 1 million HD DVD systems of all kinds were sold worldwide, with roughly 300,000 in the form of Xbox 360 upgrades, and 300,000 as drives used in PCs. But Sony has shipped 10.5 million PlayStation 3 systems worldwide with Blu-ray drives since the gaming system went on the market, according to the BBC and other sources. At least another 1 to 1.5 million Blu-Ray players and drives are estimated to have sold as well.

The real market decision comes from what media consumers purchase — Sony could have sold Blu-ray players until they were, uh, blue in the face, but if consumers didn't buy movies in Blu-ray format, we'd have seen a different outcome. From the time discs were sold using both formats through November 2007, over 4 million Blu-ray titles were reportedly sold around the globe, and over 2.5 million HD DVD titles. That difference doesn't seem huge, but the worldwide numbers understate the support for Blu-ray in Europe and Japan, and the upward curve of higher Blu-ray player and disc sales in recent months.

Blu-ray was behind in the count for some time in terms of studio support, but it gradually won over most of the large studios. Universal was firmly in the HD DVD camp, Warner Brothers was developing discs for both formats, and Paramount and DreamWorks said that they'd support only HD DVD instead of both formats back in August 2007. (That last deal reportedly involved large payments to those studios to cover costs and pay for potential loss of revenue.)

Warner Brothers dropped its support of HD DVD in late 2007, which gave Blu-ray five of the seven largest movie studios, and apparently kicked the legs out from under HD DVD. Netflix then said it would support only Blu-ray rentals. And, finally, Best Buy and Walmart announced they would stop selling HD DVD movies and hardware, which nailed the lid on HD DVD's coffin. Today, on the heels of Toshiba's announcement, Universal said it would, of course, switch to Blu-ray as well. On 24-Feb-08, Microsoft

confirmed it would stop selling HD DVD players for the Xbox 360.

Each standard had a variety of technical differences in its approach to interactivity (Blu-ray supports Java, HD DVD uses a Microsoft standard), security, and storage density. Blu-ray can store 25 GB on a single-layer disc, and 50 GB on a dual-layer disc; HD DVD offered just 15 GB and 30 GB for single- and dual-layer discs. Blu-ray can also pull audio and video data off a disc at an effective playback rate more than 50 percent higher than HD DVD (48 Mbps for Blu-ray versus 30 Mbps for HD DVD). Both playback rates are far higher than necessary for full 1080p content, however.

Disc burners were available for both formats, but HD DVD is now a dead end, and was never a preferred choice due to its lower capacity. Philips updated a popular model for PC systems with new firmware this month that allows burning double-layer Blu-ray discs at their full 50 GB capacity (minus overhead). Amazon offers this burner for \$400. LaCie has a Mac-compatible FireWire/USB 2.0 Blu-ray drive that handles dual-layer 50 GB discs (\$740), and includes Toast 7.1.1 Platinum with Blu-ray support; Toast 8 Titanium can be purchased separately with built-in Blu-ray support, too (\$80 with \$20 mail-in rebate). Single-layer recordable discs cost about \$12 to \$15 each; dual-layer recordable discs, about \$35. As far as I understand it, Blu-ray discs can't be mastered with desktop burning software for video and audio playback, only for data storage.

For the average consumer, this may all come as news. The format war affected mostly early adopters, and, as the numbers show, the majority of them opted for Blu-ray. ☑



Rumors and Reality

Around Apple

• Finder may not start with external drive connected. Apple has published a Knowledge Base article <<http://docs.info.apple.com/article.html?artnum=307502>> stating that the Finder may not load in Mac OS X 10.5.2 after connecting a third-party external storage drive: "The menu bar may appear to 'flicker,' or desktop icons may repeatedly disappear and reappear."

The document offers a number of solutions, including making sure the computer name in Sharing preferences is not blank and that the computer name only includes only certain ASCII characters and changing Time Machine settings.

Brave New Worlds: Adults have been able to escape reality and to wander through virtual worlds such as Second Life. Now it's time for kids. The kids get to role-play and to be part of a social community. Corporate sponsors expect to promote their movies and to instill brand loyalty.

Online worlds, which typically have low overhead and fat profit margins once they are up and running, charge a monthly fee of \$5 to \$15 and require the adoption of an avatar. Some sites are free and rely on advertising to make money; others are advertising and subscription hybrids. Webkinz relies on the sale of stuffed animals, which come with tags that unlock digital content.

Walt Disney Company offers a variety of worlds. Club Penguin members pay \$5.95 a month to dress and groom penguin characters and play games with them. It attracts seven times more traffic than Second Life. Disney last month introduced a "Pirates of the Caribbean" world aimed at children 10 and older, and it has worlds on the way for "Cars" and Tinker Bell, among others. Tinker Bell's world, called Pixie Hollow, will be introduced this summer to help build buzz for "Tinker Bell," a big-budget feature film set for a fall 2008 release. Visitors to a rudimentary version of Pixie Hollow, reachable through Disney.com, have already created four million fairy avatars, or online alter egos, according to Disney. The site will ultimately allow users to play games ("help create the seasons") and interact with other "fairies." When avatars move across the screen, they leave a sparkling trail of pixie dust, a carefully designed part of the experience.

Webkinz allows children to care for stuffed animals that come to life.

Nickelodeon, already home to Neopets, is spending \$100 million to develop a string of worlds.

Warner Brothers Entertainment will soon offer worlds based on its Looney Tunes, Hanna-Barbera and D. C. comics properties.

Mind Candy, a British company last month introduced a world called Moshi Monsters

Stardoll, a site from Sweden, signs up thousands of members in the United States each day.

Self updating CDs: Rogue Amoeba Software, a software developer, exhibits at Macworld Expo. Expos are a stressful time for them. In order to distribute sample CDs they need to plan way ahead. Blank pre-printed CDs need to be ordered. They need to be burned. Sleeves must be ordered. Given the lead time required, you just know some of the software will be out of date by the time of the Expo.



They developed an in-house solution called Live Disc. It's a small application that launches and displays the icons of the demos in a window. Accessing one of the icons by double-clicking or dragging causes the program to check Rogue Amoeba's website for updates. Then it launches or downloads the latest version. The CD itself does not become obsolete nearly as quickly as it might. Currently Live Disc is an in-house solution that could be licensed.

The End of CDs: The Fraunhofer Society is a German research organization. The MP3 compression algorithm was invented and patented by Fraunhofer IIS. Its license revenues generated about €100,000,000 in revenue to the society in 2005.

They have devised a new digital music encoding format named HD-AAC, which is based on the MPEG-4 SLS

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Rumors and Reality

(Scalable to Lossless) standard, an extension to the MPEG-4 audio standard jointly developed by Fraunhofer and Info-comm Research. The HD-AAC encoding process preserves every bit of information in the uncompressed original music track, providing lossless compression of 24-bit music content. That's compared to the 16-bit, 44.1 kHz quality found on CDs.

The HD-AAC encoding process embeds a core layer that can be played on existing music players and mobile phones that support the standard AAC format, such as Apple's iPod and the iPhone. The fully lossless signal will be available for playback in future devices that feature an HD-AAC decoder.

Secure passwords: When Sebastien Boucher returned to the U.S.A. from Canada, agents wanted to inspect his laptop. At that time, Boucher cooperated with agents, telling them he downloads pornography from news groups and sometimes unknowingly acquires images that contain child pornography. The agents did find some pretty inflammatory stuff.

Boucher was accused of transporting child pornography in interstate or foreign commerce, which carries up to 20 years in prison. He is free on his own recognizance. The laptop was seized, but when an investigator later tried to access a particular drive, he was thwarted by encryption software from a company called Pretty Good Privacy, or PGP.

The federal judge in charge of the case ruled that Boucher cannot be forced to reveal the password. In a separate case involving child pornography in L.A., that federal judge ruled that electronic storage devices are extensions of the human memory and should not be opened to inspection without cause.

Presumably, if the Feds can get to the data by more devious methods, such as using a keyboard program to obtain records, that's legal.

Toothpaste to the rescue: A scratched CD can be recovered by polishing its plastic surface. If, after carrying out the cleansing, the CD persists in giving read errors, just polish the CD with toothpaste. That's right, toothpaste. It works wonders (but not miracles), and you won't spend a fortune buying professional cleaning kits.

One Mac user accidentally stained his white MacBook with a gel pen and, having just replaced his case, was not eager to see it discolored again. So he reached for some toothpaste (Arm & Hammer Dental Care Advance Cleaning, in his case), rubbed a dab into the stain, then cleaned away the dried toothpaste with a barely-damp towel. The results suggest that the little tube of white goo might also help

fight the dark palm stains that are the bane of a Mac owner's existence.

Glossy screen vs mat screen: One suggestion: Glossy screen look pretty, and they are fine for general computer use. However, they are not appropriate for professional photographic and printing work, in which seeing color and tones accurately on screen are critical. You only will be able to see colors and tonal values correctly on computers with matte finish displays.

For playing games, watching movies and surfing the Web, go for the glossy display if you want.

Where did all the movies go? If you are having trouble finding movies to rent in iTunes, try these solutions:

- Open the iTunes Store, click the Movies link in the iTunes Store area on the left side of the page, and then click the All Movies link in the page's Categories area on the left side of the page. This takes you to the All Movies page where you'll see the first of 36 pages devoted to movies (each page includes 21 titles – except maybe the last).

- Another solution is to select iTunes Store and choose View > Show Browser. In the browser view that appears, select Movies in the iTunes Store pane. To the right the Genre pane appears and in it you'll see a list of all the movie genres available from The Store. Select a genre and all the movies that belong to that genre appear at the bottom of the window. To locate movies that are for rent, click the Price column heading. Those movies that bear a View button are for rent (some are also for sale). Movies that say Buy Movie are for sale only.

Cholesterol for the Internet: Videos are beginning to clog the Internet. As Internet use climbs and videos eat up more and more bandwidth, providers are feeling the pinch.

Consider a cable company provider: in the basic configuration, each cable serves about 500 households, which share about 40 megabits per second of download capacity. If each household gets Internet service with a maximum download speed of 10 mbps, that means four of them downloading at full speed can saturate the connection. A few greedy people on that network knocks the whole neighborhood offline.

Internet service providers are starting to limit the availability of servers that are use huge amounts of bandwidth. They're also considering limiting monthly downloads.

The consumer ISPs with the biggest problem are cable providers. Comcast is limiting some file sharing, and Time Warner Cable Inc, is testing monthly bandwidth caps.

It is estimated that cable providers need to spend \$24 billion through 2012 to upgrade their networks.

Phone companies like AT&T Inc. and Verizon Communications Inc., are subject to a different kind of congestion. Since phone lines aren't shared, bottlenecks for DSL service are

deeper in the system, on routers and fiber-optic links that are easier to upgrade.

Much like airlines that overbook flights, cable and phone companies sell more bandwidth than they can provide to everyone at the same time. The practice of "oversubscription" is as old as telecommunications, and it's the only way to build a network consumers can afford. The phone network, after all, has never been able to handle everyone trying to call at once.

Blu-ray won, sort of...

Blu-ray disc was first shown off at a 2002 trade show in Japan. Blu-ray aims to deliver a theater-like experience of crystal-clear video and surround-sound audio on a home TV. The discs hold the massive amounts of uncompressed content needed to display video in the full HD resolution, known as 1080 progressive, or 1080p, now offered on high-end LCD and plasma TV sets.

But already Blu-ray is competing against other technologies, such as \$79 DVD players that "upconvert" low-resolution video recordings for giant-screen sets, as well as video downloads from the Internet that may one day obviate the need for physical discs and players. Apple, TiVo, Sling Media, VUDU, and cable and satellite TV providers are all rolling out equipment that lets home users download high-definition movies directly to their set-top boxes. The video is not as high-quality as a Blu-ray recording, but it may be good enough to put a crimp in the format's growth.

Another issue is that Blu-ray players have not been standardized. Features vary among the various players. The defunct HD DVD specification required every player to include all the same features that Blu-ray is only now beginning to add. It may take over a year before the Blu-ray format reaches the maturity and value of that offered by HD DVD.

Of course, now the winner has been declared, laptops manufacturers will be introducing machines incorporating Blu-ray. But the down-side of current Blu-ray technology is its power requirement.

The laser that in Blu-ray players is a very high-power laser. It is one of the main things that conspire to raise power consumption. Another factor is that the process of decoding data from a Blu-ray disc and turning it into moving images on your screen is all done in software. This is very taxing on the CPU, eating up processing cycles and power. It's expected that with current technology, you should be able to watch half of a movie before your laptops batteries say "no more." The decoding is being moved to a chip which will help a lot.

Ultimately, we should see a scenario similar to what happened with the first DVD drives. Substantial power drain will be an issue at first, but the technology will be refined in the desktop and then ported to the notebook, eventually eliminating power-consumption problems.

Tale of a mouse: Recently the mouse on my desktop lost its shoes. Several of those little plastic thingies came off. I was able to purchase some new plastic thingies, but they didn't work well since they weren't really for my specific model mouse.

I have a bluetooth mouse for my laptop. It works well for me, so I decided to purchase a wireless mouse for my desktop. That would eliminate one wire cluttering up my desk. I purchased one from Logitech. As it turned out, the mouse communicated with the desktop via a small dongle plugged into a USB port.

I do like the new mouse when it finally kicks in. But after booting up or waking from sleep, it takes at least a minute and a half before I can move the cursor. During this time the driver is doing something — it's using a significant portion of the CPU time. The time lag is so annoying I have plugged an older Apple mouse into the computer so I can get some work done during that minute and a half. So much for eliminating the one wire.

This sounds like a good idea: After storing a gazzilion photos on your computer, you want to see the ones where Rover is romping at the beach on a bright summer day.

You load the search program (Photology), type in "dog," "beach," and "summer day," and, voila, there's the 15 photos of Rover enjoying the sun, sand and surf.

Photology analyzes your photos so you can search for them as if you were telling a story, using intuitive search filters that reflect the way people think and remember. For those of us who do not identify each and every photo with keywords, this approach to finding picture would be extremely helpful.

It sounds like a great idea to me. Unfortunately, at this time it's only available for Windows machines. ☹



March Software Review



Pacifist 2.5.2

<http://www.charlessoft.com/>

Requires OS 10.3.9 or higher. Universal Binary.

\$20.

This is one of the programs that I hope I never have to use, but it's invaluable (well, it's certainly worth the \$20) when I need it.

Pacifist is an application that opens up .pkg installer packages and lets you install or extract individual files out of them.

It is also able to open a variety of other formats, including .mpkg metapackages, .zip archives, .dmg disk images, and .tar, .tar.gz, .tar.bz2, .cpio, .cpio.gz, .cpio.bz2, and .xar archives.

Pacifist can come in handy if you need to install just one file out of a package instead of the entire package. For example, if your copy of Mail or iChat gets damaged and you need to reinstall it, but don't want to go to the trouble of reinstalling the entire operating system, you can use Pacifist to extract only what you need from the install packages. Pacifist can also be used instead of the normal Installer, which can be helpful if you experience bugs in the Installer that mess up your symbolic links, or if you just like a little more control over the installation process.

Pacifist also includes the ability to verify existing installations, comparing the files on your hard disk with the files listed in the package, and notifying you of missing files as well as files that have different permissions or checksums than those listed in the package*. Pacifist is also able to scan through your receipts for kernel extensions, and compare them against the kernel extensions you have installed, so that you can see what kernel extensions in your System folder have been installed by third-party applications. Pacifist also includes the ability to update prebinding information, either for the entire hard disk, or for an individual folder (although updating the prebinding information is not necessary in Mac OS X 10.4 "Tiger" and higher, and is not as necessary in Mac OS X 10.2 "Jaguar" and higher as it was in earlier versions of Mac OS X).

By the way, in general terms, prebinding – also referred to as optimizing – is a process that enables applications to launch quickly and incorporate newly-installed fixes and changes, primarily at the system level.

Apple Updates

Apple currently uses two versions of updates:

- The Update version contains the complete versions of all files/packages to be updated. It is used only for updating the immediately previous version of Mac OS X. It is a smaller download and will thus download more quickly. For example, this month Mac OS X Update 10.4.9 should be just used to update Mac OS X 10.4.8
- The Combo Update version update contains the complete versions of all files/packages to be updated, as well as all updated files/packages from all preceding updates to your version. For example, this month Mac OS X Combo Update 10.4.9 will update any version of OS X 10.4.

We recommend the following procedure when applying a System Update:

1. Consider backing up your current system with Carbon Copy Cloner or SuperDuper. OS X cannot be backed up using drag and drop — there are many important, but invisible, files that will not get backed up.
2. Make sure your hard drive is in good shape: Boot from the OS X Install CD (your original OS 10.5.whatever CD) and run Disk Utility's Repair Disk function (or use a third-party drive utility such as DiskWarrior or TechTool Pro).
3. If you have any FireWire devices connected, turn them off and disconnect them before installing the update. This includes iPods, as the iPod is a FireWire hard drive.
4. Install the update.
5. Do not interrupt the update process. The installation of incremental Mac OS X updates (or any significant system updates for that matter) should never be interrupted by putting the system to sleep, quitting the installation application, or even performing other system operations that could potentially interfere with the process.
5. After rebooting, again run Repair Disk Permissions.

6. If you have significant problems with the new updated OS, remembered the often repeated last resort advice from MacFixIt: Re-apply Combo!

Using this update procedure avoids many of the common problems incurred after each update to OS X.

iPhoto 7.1.3

02/28/2008

System Requirements

- OS X 10.4.9 or later
- iPhoto 7.1.2

This update addresses issues with wire-bound books and card

MacBook, MacBook Pro Keyboard Firmware Update 1.0

02/19/2008

System Requirements

- OS X 10.5.2 or later

This MacBook and MacBook Pro firmware update addresses an issue where the first key press may be ignored if the computer has been sitting idle. It also addresses some other issues.

iLife Support 8.2

02/12/2008

System Requirements

- OS X 10.4.9 or later

This update supports system software components shared by all iLife '08 applications to improve their stability and performance.

Security Update 2008-001 (PPC)

02/11/2008

System Requirements

- OS X 10.4.11 Client and Server

Security Update 2008-001 (PPC) is recommended for all users.

Security Update 2008-001 (Universal)

02/11/2008

System Requirements

- OS X 10.4.11 Intel Client and Server or later

Security Update 2008-001 (Universal) is recommended for all users.

Leopard Graphics Update 1.0

02/11/2008

System Requirements

- OS X 10.5.2

Leopard Graphics Update is recommended for all users and improves the stability and compatibility of your Mac. This update requires Mac OS X 10.5.2.

Mac OS X 10.5.2 Combo Update

02/11/2008

System Requirements

- OS X 10.5 or later

The 10.5.2 Update is recommended for all users running Mac OS X Leopard and includes general operating system fixes that enhance the stability, compatibility and security of your Mac.

QuickTime 7.4.1 for Leopard

02/06/2008

System Requirements

- OS X 10.5 or later

QuickTime 7.4.1 addresses security issues and improves compatibility with third-party applications.

QuickTime 7.4.1 for Tiger

02/06/2008

System Requirements

- OS X 10.4.9 or later

QuickTime 7.4.1 addresses security issues and improves compatibility with third-party applications.

This release is recommended for all QuickTime 7 users.

QuickTime 7.4.1 for Panther

02/06/2008

System Requirements

- OS X 10.3.9

QuickTime 7.4.1 addresses security issues and improves compatibility with third-party applications.

This release is recommended for all QuickTime 7 users.

iPhoto 7.1.2

02/05/2008

System Requirements

- OS X 10.4.9 or later
- Requires iPhoto 7.1 or iPhoto 7.1.1

This update addresses issues when publishing photos to a .Mac Web Gallery, improves overall stability, and fixes a number of other minor issues.

ProKit 4.5

02/05/2008

System Requirements

- OS X 10.4 or later

This update improves reliability for Apple's professional applications and is recommended for all users of Final Cut Studio, Final Cut Express, Aperture, Logic Studio and Logic Express. ☑

Mac 911

Leaving the past behind

Reader J.T. is having a hard time letting go of the past. He writes:

I have a Microtek ScanMaker X6EL flatbed scanner, which I want to connect and use with my iMac PowerPC G4, 800 MHz computer. Since this scanner is no longer supported by Microtek, their Tech Support advised that I should try the software program VueScan.

He then goes on to list a pile of adapters he'd use to allow the scanner's SCSI interface to connect to the iMac's FireWire port. He concludes:

The estimated total cost of this hardware/software bundle is \$200+. Is there a simpler, less costly, way to connect and operate the Microtek ScanMaker X6 EL scanner with the iMac computer under Mac OS X, v. 10.4.11? Will the listed hardware/software above work? Any other suggestions, other than purchase a "new, modern" scanner and start over?

J.T., the danger of asking for help from others is that they'll occasionally offer advice that you don't want to hear. Example: When you ask, "My girlfriend has threatened to poison my chowder the next time I sneeze and I believe she's quite serious about it. Other than dumping her, what can I do?" a person who truly cares about your welfare will suggest that you back up a step and reconsider your commitment to this modern-day Borgia.

This is one of those cases. Although you don't want to hear it, it's time to let go of that old scanner and get a new one. Here's why:

Those connectivity and driver issues are a biggish deal. Once upon a time I tested some FireWire to SCSI adapters and I have to say I found them problematic. (But things may have improved since then — commenters, feel free to offer your experiences). And while VueScan is an impressive piece of engineering, wouldn't it be nicer if your scanner just worked with your Mac — and continued to work with the next major Mac OS update?

Also, your scanner offers 1200 dpi resolution. You can get that same resolution from a scanner today for \$50. For that \$200 you'd spend cobbling together a solution for your current scanner you can have a new scanner that offers 4800 x 9600 resolution. It's likely that this new scanner will also handle slides (though not to the extent of a dedicated slide scanner) and include a modern copy of Photoshop Elements.

To sum up: Honestly, unless your old scanner is the reincarnation of a beloved ancestor, I see no reason to hang onto it.

I understand the pain of discarding a perfectly good scanner. It's not broken, it's simply outdated for your current setup. You can help alleviate some of that pain by donating the scanner to a group that can still use it — a school, Macintosh users group, church, or senior center. Someone will surely find a use for it. This way you get a scanner that works, someone else gets a scanner that works, and you've kept another hunk of plastic, metal, and glass out of the local landfill.

iCal and the 24-hour clock

Reader Graham Hibbard feels hemmed in by iCal's 12-hour nature. He writes:

I am using 10.5 with iCal, and everywhere else on my MacBook seems to be able to handle the 24-hour clock except iCal. I notice that any iCal events will only give me an AM/PM option. Any fix for this?

There is. Within System Preferences open the International system preference and click the Formats tab. In the Times portion of the window click the Customize button.

In the sheet that appears you'll see the time in 12-hour format. Click on the hour and from the pop-up menu choose 1-24 to select the 24-hour format. To prevent AM and PM from showing you can either delete the contents of the Before Noon and After Noon fields or, in the field where the time is displayed, select AM or PM and press the Mac's Delete key.

When you have things configured to your satisfaction, click OK to dismiss the sheet. If iCal is running, quit the application. When you next launch it you'll see your events displayed in the 24-hour format. Should you wish to return to the U.S. default 12-hour format, just open the International system preference again, click the Formats tab, and from the Region pop-up menu choose United States.

Reinstalling OS X applications

In what some might term throwing the infant out with the water in which it was steeping, reader J.S. did something that he now regrets. He writes:

Last year I had significant problems with my iCal application. I was so dissatisfied, I deleted the application entirely and installed Sunbird. I'm wondering if it's possible to download a new, hopefully improved, version of iCal?

Before we start, I should mention that tossing out applications — particularly those that are bundled with the Mac OS — is not a good idea. If you don't like a particular application, simply ignore it and, chances are, it won't bother you. Now, to your particular problem.

iCal is an application bundled with Mac OS X and the only way to obtain a new version is to upgrade your version of the Mac OS — move from Tiger to Leopard, for example. However, you can reinstall the version of iCal you once had. Why do so when you were unhappy with it in the past? It's possible that something else running on your Mac was causing iCal to misbehave and a subsequent OS update — a point update such as 10.5.2, for example — addressed that issue, allowing iCal to run as Jobs intended.

Fortunately, you needn't reinstall the entire operating system to get a single application back. Both the Tiger and Leopard Installer discs include an Optional Installs installer. Launch this installer (found in the Optional Installs folder on the Leopard disc) and at the root level the Tiger Installer disc.

Just launch the installer and click the Continue buttons until you reach the Custom Install screen. Click the triangle next to Applications, tick the box next to iCal, and click the Install button to install iCal. With both the Tiger and Leopard Installer discs the Applications area of the Custom Install screen includes options for installing Address Book, iCal, iChat, iTunes, Mail, Oxford Dictionaries, Safari, and X11. Other options include Additional Fonts, Language Translations, and Printer Drivers.

If you'd like to reinstall applications that aren't offered in the Custom Install screen — applications in the Utilities folder, for example — you can use Charles Srstka's \$20 Pacifist. It works this way:

Insert your Mac OS X Installer disc. Download Pacifist and launch it. In the window that appears click the Open Apple Install Discs button. A window will appear offering you the single choice to look at the OSInstall package. Click OK.

Pacifist will churn away for a bit and then you'll see a window titled OSInstall.mpkg. In this window you can dig down through the hierarchy of folders to find what you seek or you can enter the name of what you're after in the Find field and press Return. A drawer appears that lists the names of matching files.

To install an item click the Install button in the upper-left corner of the window. You'll be prompted for your administrator's password. Enter it, click OK, and the item will be installed into its proper location on your Mac's hard drive.

[Macworld Senior Editor Christopher Breen is the author of Secrets of the iPod and iTunes, fifth edition, and The iPod and iTunes Pocket Guide (both Peachpit Press, 2005).

Find Chris' books at www.amazon.com and www.peachpit.com. Get special user group pricing on Macworld Magazine! Subscribe today at <http://www.macworld.com/useroffer>.] 

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