January 2009
Vol. XX, No 1

Keystone MacCentral

printout

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

MacCentral Holiday Party

Join us on January 20th for the annual Keystone MacCentral holiday party that we missed in December

We will have our business meeting and Q & A period, followed by a program that will include plenty of time for eating and socializing. KeyMac will provide soda; we ask members to bring in something good to eat.

The evening's program will feature an exploration of Apple's web site and Jim Carey will show off his new Drobo. The safe, expandable Drobo storage solution protects your data against a hard drive crash, yet can expand dynamically at any time in just seconds. With nothing to configure or manage, Drobo is the ideal solution for primary storage as well as backup.

<http://www.drobo.com/Products/Index.html>

Meet us at

Gannett Fleming

Gannett West Building

209 Senate Ave ❖ Camp Hill

Tuesday, January 20, 2009, 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 © 2009, Keystone MacCentral, 305 Somerset Drive, Shiresmanstown, PA 17011.

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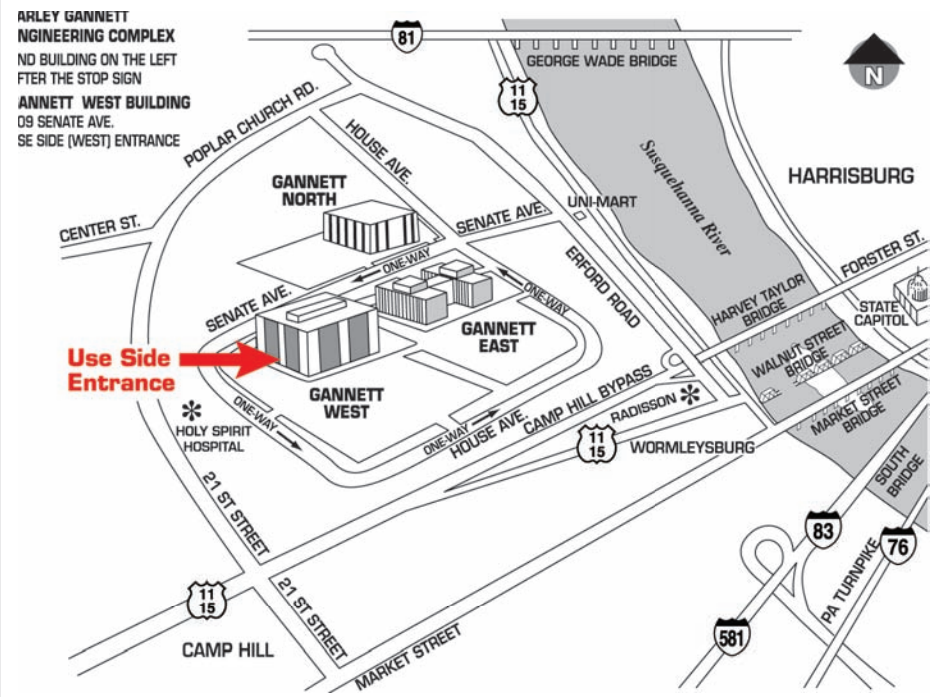

Keystone MacCentral Essentials

Meeting Place
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by Linda J. Cober

President's Corner

As you know, our annual December meeting/party was cancelled due to inclement weather, but we are trying again on January 20 with a New Year's party! And if the weather causes us to cancel again, February can be a Valentine's Party! We don't give up easily, so please join us and bring some goodies to share as KeyMac parties like it's 2009!

Speaking of parties, Apple and MacWorld got together for their last combined party in San Francisco during the week of January 5-9. Steve Jobs did not deliver the Keynote, however, stating that his cancer has not returned but that he is suffering from an easily treated hormone imbalance. I am sure that you, like me and millions of Mac enthusiasts, not to mention investors, hope that this is indeed the case. Instead, Philip Schiller, Senior Vice President of Worldwide Product Marketing gave the Keynote in Jobs' place. His point that the Apple stores worldwide host 3.6 million visitors weekly, the equivalent of many MacWorld's per week, helps explain Apple's reasoning in ending its participation in MacWorld. After all, why pay big bucks to exhibit in someone else's trade show when your own stores attract many more visitors at a much lower cost? We saw Apple abandon MacWorld here on the east coast several years ago, much to the dismay of those of us who enthusiastically looked forward to our KeyMac bus trips to the New York MacWorld; now the west coast has effectively lost its MacWorld as well. I know that the bottom line is important, but I am sorry that all the enthusiasm generated in Mac lovers by MacWorld has been a victim of Apple's new strategy.

As you have probably noticed, over the years Apple's announcements at MacWorld have gone back and forth between those focused on hardware and those focused on software. Most of us agree that the hardware MacWorlds are the most exciting (who can forget the new iMacs in their different guises from the first bondi blues to the flat panel "where's the CPU versions"?), but the software innovations are important too. This was a software focused MacWorld with a 17-inch MacBook Pro as the only new hardware. Mr. Schiller announced an '09 version of iLife with iPhoto '09 adding some cool new features called Faces and Places to the Events portion of the Library. Face Detection allows you to identify a face in a photo and then track that person across other photos while Places uses GPS Geotagging (included on new digital cameras) to identify where photos were taken. Users can use this feature with older photos as well once they specify where the photo was taken. All the photos in that event will then be tagged and can be shown on GoogleMaps, printed in Travel Books, or put into slide shows complete with animated maps. Maybe we Americans will improve our admittedly weak geographical awareness thanks to the animated maps feature! iPhoto '09 also adds support for Facebook and Flickr so one can upload photos easily. Slideshow Themes makes it easy to save the slideshow to iTunes and then show it on your iPod Touch or iPhone.

We all missed Steve Jobs and his masterful presentation, but when Randy Ubillos, the engineer who redesigned iMovie came out to put it through its paces, the audience reacted quite favorably to him. Dressed in a black shirt and jeans, he looked and acted like a younger Steve Jobs. If Steve is unable to present at any meetings in the future, Randy might be a good stand-in because of his resemblance and youthful energy. After his presentation, I am looking forward to trying iMovie'09, which seems to have many more advanced features than its simplified predecessor that took the place of the excellent iMovieHD. With its precision editor, advanced drag and drop, dynamic themes, animated travel maps, and video stabilization, iMovie '09 seems like a better product for most users. The third component of iLife, GarageBand '09, adds a Learn to Play component that includes 9 basic guitar lessons and 9 basic piano lessons with the option to download more from artists such as George Fogarty and Sting for $4.99 per lesson.

iWeb and iDVD are new also, and one can upgrade for $79 or buy a family version for $99 that can be installed on 5 computers in a house. All in all, iLife '09 looks like a winner to me!

iWork '09 is new as well, with Keynote '09, Pages '09, and Numbers '09 all adding new features. Leopard is required for these new applications, but if you have not yet upgraded to Leopard, you can buy a Mac Box Set for $169 and get Leopard, iLife and iWork '09. That's a good deal since iLife '09 and iWork '09 would be $79 each unless bought with a new Mac.

Another new product, iWork online, now free in the beta version, allows one to share documents online with others who can add comments and download copies without having to transfer large files by email. Eventually this will be a fee-based service.

"One last thing" talked about iTunes. Since its inception in 2003, 6 billion songs have been sold, 10,000,000 songs are available, and there are 75,000,000 iTunes accounts. The big change is that by the end of the quarter, all songs will be DRM free and the pricing structure will be .69 or .99 or 1.29 per song. iPhone users can now buy songs over either WiFi or 3G cellular networks for the same price and selection and sync back to the computer from the iPhone.

The last MacWorld Keynote ended with Tony Bennett singing, "The best is yet to come…" followed by "I Left My Heart in San Francisco." Very appropriate.

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

If schools, either day or evening, are cancelled, we will also cancel our meeting.

by Rich Mogull

Apple Confirms Antivirus Software Is (Usually) Unnecessary

On 21-Nov-08, a short support article appeared on Apple's Web site, likely placed there by someone with no idea of the chain of events he or she was about to initiate. The article summary was, "Learn about antivirus utilities available for the Mac OS." The bombshell statement in the article? "Apple encourages the widespread use of multiple antivirus utilities so that virus programmers have more than one application to circumvent, thus making the whole virus writing process more difficult." The article went on to list three of the major antivirus programs for the Mac.

At first, no one really noticed. Then, on 01-Dec-08, the note gained the attention of Brian Krebs at the Washington Post, who wondered if this statement signified a notable shift in Apple policy. Apple has never formally recommended third party security software for Mac OS X, so what was responsible for this seemingly major shift in policy? The rest of the industry press and blogs quickly picked up on the story, filling the Internet with a storm of conjecture and, based on the number of questions we received here at TidBITS, concern among Mac users wondering if they were suddenly less secure.

Early investigation indicated that the odds were high this was merely an overview article put out by a low-level employee in Apple's support organization, and never signified either any change in Apple's stance or the security of Mac users. The article was actually an update of an earlier note from 2007, changed to include the latest versions of the antivirus programs. Even the wording was awkward, allowing the interpretation that Apple was recommending users install all three programs. Within hours after the news hit, Apple removed the support article, thus creating a second round of coverage speculating that negative press pressured the company into reversing their new position on antivirus.

Based on the evidence I've been able to gather, I believe this updated technical note was never seen or approved by senior management. It was likely meant to highlight which antivirus programs supported Mac OS X for those users interested in installing the software. Although Apple hasn't detailed the exact chain of events, Apple spokesman Bill Evans told me:

"We have removed the KnowledgeBase article because it was old and inaccurate. The Mac is designed with built-in technologies that provide protection against malicious software and security threats right out of the box. However, since no system can be 100% immune from every threat, running anti-virus software may offer additional protection."

In short, Apple isn't telling users they all need to run out and buy antivirus software (much less multiple programs), but they also admit that antivirus software may offer some additional protection. This is consistent with my article, "Should Mac Users Run Antivirus Software?" (2008-03-18), in which I recommend that the average Mac user avoid antivirus software.

The reality remains that although Macs are far from immune to security issues, there is very little malicious software that targets them. Macs can be affected by malware on occasion; I've been contacted twice in the past year by people who downloaded and manually installed malicious software onto their systems. I also work extensively with security researchers who tell me that Mac OS X's built-in protection technologies can be circumvented by an experienced attacker. But neither I nor the security researchers with whom I work know of any widely deployed exploits for Macs. Unless you are either specifically targeted by a knowledgeable bad guy, or spend a lot of time downloading software from risky sites, the odds are extremely low you'll ever encounter malicious software. Macs aren't inherently more secure than PCs, but they are practically never targeted, dramatically reducing the risk a Mac user will be compromised.

Thus I'd like to reiterate our previous advice:

- Everyone should use an email service that filters spam, viruses, and other malicious software (such as MobileMe, Hotmail, Yahoo! Mail, or Google Mail).

- Enterprise users often need to install antivirus software to comply with corporate policies and avoid being a vector to infect their Windows-based coworkers. Any of the major antivirus solutions work well, and you should work with your corporate IT department to determine what to install.

- If you visit risky sites (adult, gambling, and file sharing sites are the major ones) and download software from them, you should consider installing antivirus software. Of the two major pieces of malicious software we've seen this year, one disguised itself as a plug-in to view adult videos, the other as a poker program.

• If you are running Windows on your Mac, via Boot Camp or a virtualization tool like VMware Fusion or Parallels Desktop, you still need to install Windows-based antivirus software to protect your Windows installation.

• Generally, other Mac users don't need to install antivirus software at this time, but I advise you to stay abreast of security news in TidBITS, just in case the situation does change. Email filtering will likely protect you if there is some sort of sudden outbreak, but it's entirely possible that Macs could become a more common target in the future.

Neither I nor the security researchers with whom I work run antivirus software on our Macs, but I'll be the first to change my position and recommend wide use of Mac antivirus tools should the situation change. Until then, there's simply no reason for non-enterprise users who avoid risky behavior to bog down their Macs with antivirus software.

by Rich Mogull

Are Safari's New Anti-Phishing Features Useful?

When Apple released the Safari 3.2 update (see "Safari 3.2 Fixes Security Flaws", 2008-11-13), they didn't just address the usual collection of security flaws; it added two new security features, common in other browsers, that Apple has been recently criticized for lacking. For the first time, Safari 3.2 includes two anti-phishing features designed to protect users from accidentally (or purposely) visiting fraudulent Web sites. In typical Apple fashion, these features were essentially undocumented, but with a little investigation we've been able to determine how they work, and how much protection they offer Safari users.

The term "phishing" initially referred to spam e-mail messages pretending to be from a known site, like your bank, designed to sucker you into visiting a fraudulent Web site that often emulated the legitimate site. The goal is to trick users into entering their login or account information, which the bad guys then use to drain the accounts. The first versions did little more than modify a Web link so it would display one address but really direct you to a different destination. While users and developers quickly figured out how to detect such a simple attack, the bad guys continually advanced their techniques to the point where they can fool even well-educated users. The definition of phishing also expanded to include essentially any fraudulent Web site that tries to collect your private information - from banks to online games.

One protection that's become common to most Web browsers, including Firefox and Internet Explorer, is a warning when visiting known malicious Web sites. Every time you visit a Web site, the browser checks the address to make sure it's not on a blacklist of known bad sites. If it's clean, you never know this check occurred, but if the site is on the list your browser pops up a warning page and requires you to click a button to proceed.

Another relatively new protection in most browsers is support for Extended Validation digital certificates. Whenever you visit a secure Web site that activates the lock icon in your browser, you are using that site's digital certificate to create an encrypted session. That certificate is unique for that site; if you don't see a warning, that means the certificate was issued by one of the trusted authorities built into your browser, and that the address of the site matches the signed digital certificate (for more information on SSL see Chris Pepper's "Securing Communications with SSL/TLS: A High-Level Overview" 2007-06-25). But it turns out it's extremely easy for any site to get a digital certificate, and some phishers take advantage of this as an additional way to trick you into thinking their fake sites are secure. An Extended Validation (EV) certificate is a bit different. These are very expensive certificates that require the business to go through an in-depth vetting process to ensure that the certificate doesn't just match a Web address, but matches the business behind it. In exchange, sites with EV certificates appear differently in Web browsers that support them.

Does It Help? Back in February 2008, Michael Barrett, the Chief Information Security Officer for PayPal, made waves by warning users to avoid Safari due to its lack of phishing filtering and support for EV certificates. Safari 3.2 addresses those criticisms by adding both features. Phishing filtering is provided by Google, and now when you attempt to visit a known bad site your browser displays a clear warning, and you have to click through manually to proceed. If you visit a site with an EV certificate, the name of the company now appears in green in the upper right corner of the browser, right next to the lock icon. Both features are active by default, although you can disable phishing filtering in Safari's security preferences.

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Are Safari's New Anti-Phishing Features Useful?

But, despite Barrett's emphasis on these features, do they really make you more secure? The answer is a resounding "maybe." A joint Harvard University and MIT study showed that users tend to ignore these visual warnings in their browsers. A second survey by an Internet service provider in the UK indicated that many users don't even know what these indicators mean. Speaking as a security professional, it has been my experience that these sorts of visual signals provide only limited security benefits. Even well-educated users often ignore or miss these visual cues, assuming the cues are accurate in the first place.

This was perfectly highlighted for me mere minutes after I updated to Safari 3.2. Despite three layers of spam filtering on my TidBITS mail account, I received an obvious spam message claiming to be from the Canada Revenue Agency. I checked the site for malicious software, then visited it with Safari, Firefox, and Internet Explorer. Despite the phishing filters, not a single browser blocked the site. I checked with a colleague in the anti-spam industry who found the site in his company's database (discovered 2 days previously), but it hadn't yet been picked up by Google or the services powering Firefox and Internet Explorer. Over the next couple hours he sent me a few additional sites to test, and none of them triggered the phishing filter in any of the browsers. Not that the filter was worthless - he also sent me some sites that effectively triggered the warnings.

The problem with blacklists is that they only protect us from the bad sites we know about. If you rely on this mechanism to ensure you never visit a malicious site, your risk of being fooled by an unknown bad site is increased. In security (and science), we call this a false negative, and they can be far more dangerous than a false positive (a good site labeled as bad, which is more annoying than a security risk).

As for EV certificate support, I checked by visiting my bank and the indicator appeared as expected. The bad news is that I never really bother to look for a green banner, border, or label, no matter what Web browser I'm using. The only way I'd likely notice the lack of an EV certificate would be if I visited a fraudulent site and a big warning appeared, but that's not how any browser currently works.

It's commendable that Apple added these features to bring Safari up to the level of its competitors, but users shouldn't rely on them as definitive protections from phishing. Just because a site isn't blocked doesn't mean it isn't dangerous, and just because a site uses an EV certificate doesn't mean you'll remember to look for the visual indicator in Safari - or any Web browser.

by Andrew Malek

Using Cheap Media?

Is it Ok to Use Cheaper Media in Your Digital Camera?

In today's troublesome economy, with the high prices of digital cameras, rechargeable batteries, tripods, filters, and other accessories, you might be tempted to save some money by purchasing cheaper, generic digital camera media. And why not? Photos taken with cheaper media should look just the same as those taken with more expensive media, as long as the files get written correctly. Your JPG images will not come out more pixilated, and uncompressed TIFF and RAW files will contain the same information.

However, "saving money" has a few potential downsides:

Brand name digital camera memory cards may be faster than their generic equivalents. If your digital camera supports the faster write speeds, you can take photos quicker by not waiting as long for your digital camera to store information onto the media. This is especially important if you wish to use drive mode and take multiple images in quick succession, useful for sporting events, wildlife photography, and other situations involving fast-moving subjects.

Brand name digital camera memory may prove to be more reliable. On some generic memory I have used, even though the media did not outright fail, if you shot multiple

photos quickly the memory card could 'hang', causing some photos to be lost. Since the photos were never successfully written to the media, they were unrecoverable.

Warranties

Brand name digital camera media may have limited warranties. If the media proves to be defective within a certain period of time after the purchase, it might be possible to get a replacement memory card. Some warranties may provide replacements at no charge; others might require modest shipping and handling charges.

Even with limited warranties, however, any lost photos on the defective media may remain lost. In some instances, media recovery applications may help. While I don't vouch for any particular software package, publishers include DataRescue, Jufsoft, and MediaRECOVER.

Extreme Conditions

Brand name digital camera memory may be rated to handle better in extreme conditions (hot and cold environments), useful if you plan on mountain climbing or shooting photos at a beach or desert. Of course, in such environments you may deal with other weather-related problems such as faster-draining batteries and condensation forming on the camera lens.

Beware counterfeit memory

Even if you want to purchase brand name digital camera memory, you may be tempted to purchase such media from lesser known stores, online outlets, or auction sites. After purchasing items at some establishments (though certainly not all), you might find yourself with counterfeit memory, generic memory repackaged as brand name! Such memory may increase the chances of data corruption, perform slower than advertised, and quite possibly damage the camera as you insert or remove the media. Plus, counterfeit memory lacks any true warranty, even if the fake packaging claims one is offered. As the adage goes, if a price is too good to be true, it just may be.

(Note that if this scam happens to you, you cannot always blame the store for the sale. It may have unknowingly purchased this memory from a fraudulent distributor.)

I am not recommending always buying the most expensive media at the most expensive retailer - the choice is yours. Some of the above potential downsides may not apply to your digital camera or your shooting conditions. You might not require faster shooting, and certainly not all generic memory will corrupt your data. However, for those truly concerned about their photos being written correctly and transferrable to backup media without incidents, paying a few extra bucks may prove to be money well spent.

Andrew Malek is the owner of the MalekTips computer and technology help site at http://www.malektips.com . Whether you're ready to buy a new digital camera and need buying advice, or need hints on taking advantage of the camera you already own, visit http://malektips.com/camera for hundreds of free digital photography tips.

by Tim Sullivan

Rumors and Reality

Around Apple

• MacWorld is undergoing significant, and probably devastating, changes.

A number of companies (Adobe, Seagate and Belkin among them) did not attend the Expo this year because of the economy. This will be the last Expo that Apple attends.

And Phil Schiller, Senior Vice President of Worldwide Product Marketing, gave the keynote address this year, not Steve Jobs.

Reed Exhibitions will not hold Apple Expo Paris in 2009.

• Letter from Apple CEO Steve Jobs:

Dear Apple Community,

For the first time in a decade, I'm getting to spend the holiday season with my family, rather than intensely preparing for a Macworld keynote.

Unfortunately, my decision to have Phil deliver the Macworld keynote set off another flurry of rumors about my health, with some even publishing stories of me on my deathbed.

I've decided to share something very personal with the Apple community so that we can all relax and enjoy the show tomorrow.

As many of you know, I have been losing weight throughout 2008. The reason has been a mystery to me and my doctors. A few weeks ago, I decided that getting to the root cause of this and reversing it needed to become my #1 priority.

Fortunately, after further testing, my doctors think they have found the cause—a hormone imbalance that has been "robbing" me of the proteins my body needs to be healthy. Sophisticated blood tests have confirmed this diagnosis.

The remedy for this nutritional problem is relatively simple and straightforward, and I've already begun treatment. But, just like I didn't lose this much weight and body mass in a week or a month, my doctors expect it will take me until late this Spring to regain it. I will continue as Apple's CEO during my recovery.

I have given more than my all to Apple for the past 11 years now. I will be the first one to step up and tell our Board of Directors if I can no longer continue to fulfill my duties as Apple's CEO. I hope the Apple community will support me in my recovery and know that I will always put what is best for Apple first.

So now I've said more than I wanted to say, and all that I am going to say, about this.

Steve

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Rumors and Reality

• Apple's top marketing executive, Philip Schiller, said that iTunes song prices will come in three tiers: 69 cents, 99 cents and $1.29 — older songs from the catalog, midline songs (newer songs that aren't big hits), and current hits.

Record companies will choose the prices. Apple gave the record labels that flexibility on pricing as it got them to agree to sell all songs free of "digital rights management," or DRM, technology that limits people's ability to copy songs or move them to multiple computers.

Over the last few years, Apple shares fall immediately after big shows. This year was no exception. Shares slipped $1.18, 1.3 percent, to $93.40 in afternoon trading.

As a side note, RIAA as abandoned its policy of suing people for sharing songs protected by copyright and will work with Internet service providers to cut abusers' access if they ignore repeated warnings.

Because of high legal costs for defenders, virtually all of those hit with lawsuits settled, on average for around $3,500. The association's legal costs, in the meantime, exceeded the settlement money it brought in.

• Based on the popular C programming language, Version 1.0 of OpenCL was ratified and published by standards body The Khronos Group last week. The OpenCL programming language, developed by Apple, lets applications offload much of the processing from the CPUs to a computer's graphics chip, or GPU.

As a rule of thumb currently GPU's are not used to anywhere near their capacity. Using the OpenCL encoding and rendering high-def video can be done between 40 to 100 times faster.

OpenCL will be supported in Mac OS X 10.6, Snow Leopard.

• Apple is offering the Mac Box Set. The package, which is made up of the newly-announced iLife '09 and iWork '09 packages, also includes Mac OS X 10.5 and will go on sale later this month for only $169. Purchased individually, this trio would cost you $287 at the current Apple Store pricing — that's a savings of $118

• Keynote 09 introduces advanced object transitions, which automatically animate objects with a choice of effects nd Magic Move, an innovative way to create sophisticated animations just by applying a simple transition. Pages 09 features a new Full Screen view that helps you focus on your writing and an outline mode to organize your thoughts. Numbers 09 introduces a quick way to group and summarize data and a dramatically simplified way to create complex formulas. Apple also announced iWork.com public beta, a new service Apple is developing to share iWork 09 documents online.

ProActive PDA: Would you like a program that could anticipate your needs and take appropriate action? Book a restaurant reservation? Bring important e-mail to your attention?

Imagine you are on a business trip and your computer discovers that your flight will be late. It automatically reschedules your dinner in New York, informs your three guests of the change and tells you they've been notified.

SRI International, a research group in Menlo Park, Calif., has been working on a project called CALO (cognitive assistant that learns and organizes.) CALO is financed by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency of the Pentagon and is one of the largest artificial-intelligence projects ever.

While CALO is military oriented, Siri Inc., based in San Jose, Calif., plans to introduce a personal assistance service in the first half of 2009. Siri has raised $8.5 million from two venture capital firms to fund their project.

The idea of the "intelligent agent," as well as the idea of a computer software "demon" — a simple software program that could monitor its environment and make appropriate responses when changes occur — have been the stuff of science fiction for years.

Siri Inc., based in San Jose, Calif., plans to introduce a personal assistance service in the first half of 2009. They are exploring concepts developed by the CALO project and applying them to the consumer.

Another technology team at Rearden Commerce has already begun to reach a business audience with an "intelligent" personal assistant oriented toward travel and entertainment. It will be available early next year for nonbusiness customers as well.

Econfont; Psst wanna save some ink? Well, I've got just the thing for you — a font that will cut usage by about 15%.

And how can it do that, you ask? Well, let me tell you. The font has holes in it, sort of like Swiss cheese. While not something you would want to use when mailing to your customers, it could certainly be used for personal use or internal use at a company.

Econo 18 pt

Econo 50 pt

Spranq, the Dutch marketing and communications company designed the font.

The font is free and available at http://www.ecofont.eu .

by Tim Sullivan

January Software Review

OpenOffice.org 3.0
http://www.openoffice.org/
Requires OS X 10.4 or greater, Intel processor, latest build of X11 (free but big) from Apple. Freeware. It is recommended that downloads of X11 and OpenOffice.org be done via Firefox.

OpenOffice.org 3 is the leading open-source office software suite for word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, graphics, databases and more. It is available in many languages and works on all common computers. It stores all your data in an international open standard format and can also read and write files from other common office software packages.

Version 3.0 is a much improved version over version 2.0. It is swift, smooth, and highly compatible with Office documents.

The 76MB download expands into five applications: the Writer word processor, Calc spreadsheet, Impress presentations program, Base database program, and Math equation editor.

Writer adds a PDF-export feature that Word doesn't offer, a find-and-replace feature that uses wildcards and regular expressions, and an impressive macro and scripting feature that organizes your macros in a tree-structured display. Advanced find-and-replace operations (such as those involving fonts and attributes like italics) are easier to manage in Writer than in Word's confusing Find dialog, although Word makes it easier to find special characters like dashes.

OpenOffice.org is easy to use. There is very little technical support, but there is available a large community-based support forum where you can usually get fast, detailed answers to any queries not covered under the FAQ section.

Other Software of Interest

Top 10 Screensavers for the 21st Century

by Doug McLean

Now that screen burn is pretty much a thing of the past, we don't really need screensavers anymore. And many people - quite reasonably - prefer to have their computers go into energy-saver mode when they're away for any significant amount of time. After all, what's the point of displaying power-wasting patterns when you aren't around to enjoy them? Fair enough, but there is still something to be said for enjoying some interesting displays during those times when you've just stepped back from the Mac for a short while. Today, screensavers can do more than just display repetitive animations (remember Flying Toasters from the After Dark screensaver?) and it's worth investigating what's out there.

When I went in search of new and interesting screensavers, I was looking for three things: screensavers that could change and develop over time, screensavers that made use of input devices or updating information, and screensavers that put a fun twist on age-old tricks like clocks or photo slideshows. Here's a look at ten of the most interesting and enjoyable screensavers I found kicking around the Web. Unless otherwise noted, all these screensavers are free.

1) Electric Sheep

Often cited as one of the best screensavers available, Electric Sheep is both visually stunning and conceptually engaging. Named in homage to the science fiction author Philip K. Dick's short story, "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?" this open-source screensaver connects 60,000 sleeping computers to generate morphing abstract animations. The process is mediated by a genetic algorithm

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January Software Review

- the animations (or "sheep") with high user ratings go on to reproduce with other popular sheep and produce offspring with shared characteristics. Unpopular sheep eventually die off and enter an archive. Users can also edit and upload their own sheep into the gene pool. The end result is a spectacular collaboration and competition between human design and computer algorithms. Scott Draves, creator of the software, discusses Electric Sheep in an online video (at 2:40 in). From a user perspective - and it's not often my art degree proves useful in writing technical articles - this screensaver really has the most impressive visual abstractions of any I've seen. But what really makes it stand out is the user's ability to collect new animations, and to affect the production of future ones through voting (via the Up and Down arrow keys). The endless number of new and different visualizations provides a major reason to keep turning it on.

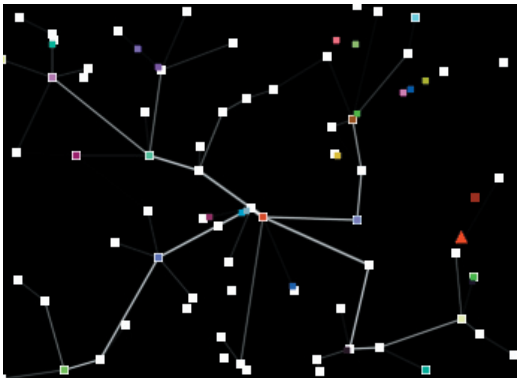
2) Surveillance Saver

For the security guard in each of us, Surveillance Saver pulls live feeds from over 1,000 different surveillance cameras all over the world. The screensaver shows live images of city streets, parking lots, Internet cafes, university libraries, highways, and more - from all over the planet. Each live feed remains on your screen for 2 minutes before changing to a new one - unfortunately at this time there's no option to adjust cycle times. My favorite detail of this screensaver is the information bar located at the bottom of each feed informing you of the feed's location, local time, and geographical coordinates. Despite the camera's typically mundane shots, the prospect of viewing an unfiltered slice of life from places like the Czech Republic or Iceland is enticing. The current alpha version is a little buggy at times - sometimes I would see only a black screen, or the live feed would freeze up into a still image. But this is a screensaver with enormous potential - and hopefully it will continue to develop in future versions with the addition of some controls. Nonetheless the current version is still worth checking out; it will certainly satisfy your inner spy. Though it's worth asking: What do I do if I actually witness a crime?

3) BreveCreatures

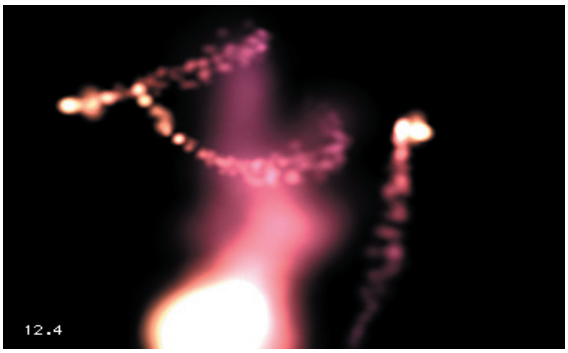
BreveCreatures is a screensaver that simulates the evolution of virtual creatures. Beginning with randomly generated block-creatures, the screensaver uses a genetic algorithm to help the organisms develop locomotive capabilities. Each creature is plopped down in a simulated 3D world and has a set amount of time to move as far as possible from the start point - denoted by a yellow star. Some creatures never budge an inch, and others speedily scramble off - it's fun to watch one plop down and wonder, based on its shape and parts, whether it will have any success. The screensaver progresses through successive generations, each generation utilizing the qualities of the most successful creatures from the previous group. The result is a slow evolution towards mobility. Because the process can take hours or even days for significant developments to occur, each time BreveCreatures is activated it picks up where it left off. This is all surprisingly enthralling to watch. I found myself unable to turn if off - saying, "just one more" - wanting to see if the new creature would be the new record setter. It was also amazing to leave the room for an hour and come back to see the progress that had been made. An interesting addition for future versions of this program would be a video highlight gallery that details the game-changing creatures that significantly pushed forward the evolution of your system.

4) Chemical Burn



Chemical Burn is a screensaver that displays a transportation network simulation. Packets of data are randomly generated with an assigned destination (or node); these packets then attempt to find the fastest way to get to their node. Frequently used routes become faster; in turn, becoming even more popular and also more visible. You can also select to have nodes collapse at random, and be sent "Packets of Death," which destroy the receiving node and the transportation routes connected to it. However, the destruction of nodes and routes results in newly formed ones, continuing the system's process. Another option is the capability to set the initial number of nodes (more nodes result in a more complex, but slower, system), as well as traffic and distance weighting options. While the animation is rather simplistic - you could be watching an old Atari game - it's fascinating and relaxing to watch. Just imagine the possibilities if this were redesigned with high-end 3D graphics.

5) Soundstream



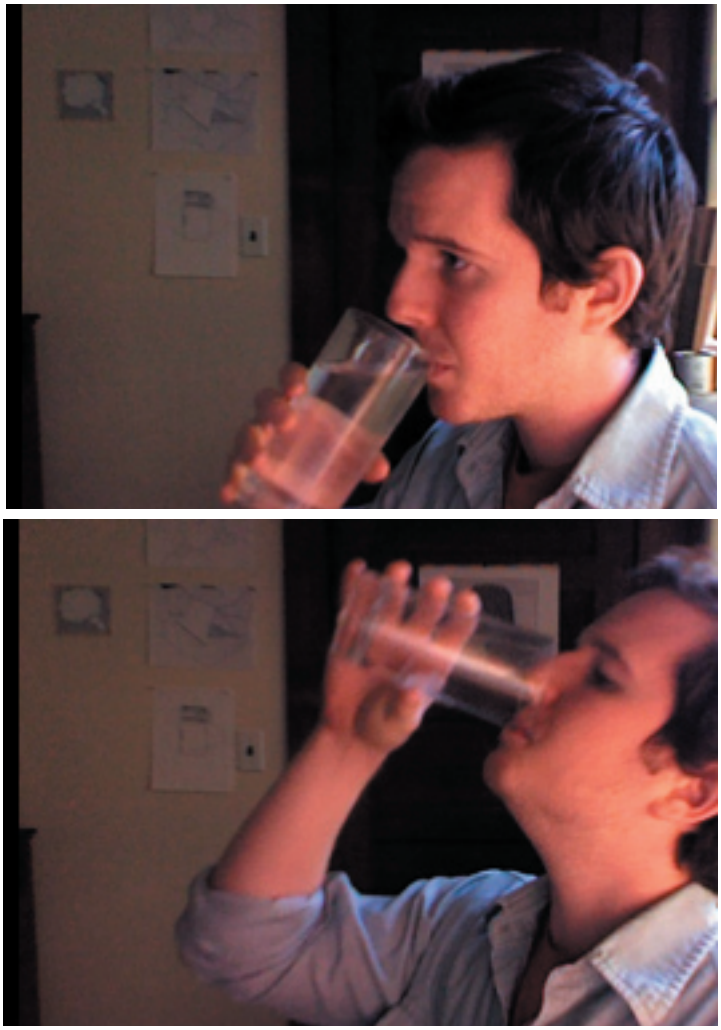
Soundstream is a screensaver that responds to sound input, whether it be ambient room noise, your voice, or your iTunes music. Flurry-like particles move about the darkened screen, shifting in color as they go. Any sounds registered by your microphone cause the particles to expand in size and brightness as they move. The degree to which the particles enlarge, brighten, or shift in color is related to the volume of the input. You can control the number of particles, whether they exist in 2D or 3D space, and the sensitivity of the sound responsiveness. If you like Apple's built-in Flurry screensaver, you'll love Soundstream. After the initial fun of yelling at my computer to watch the particles explode, I discovered the subtler pleasure of seeing the sounds of my house visualized onscreen.

6) iSight ScreenSavers

The iSight Screensavers collection ($4.99 shareware) is a group of six screensavers that utilize input from your iSight camera, or any other QuickTime-compatible camera, to morph through various effects (not unlike the effects within iChat or Photo Booth). The six effects include Fluid, Particles, Champagne, Fire, Water, and Flipping Grid. I found the most impressive of these to be Fluid and Water - though it's worth trying all of them out. Like Soundstream, the iSight Screensavers are cool because they constantly respond to the real time input rather than merely drawing from a finite set of options.

[Update: Majicjungle.com is currently experiencing some difficulties but hopefully will be up and running soon.]

7) TimeLapseScreensaver



TimeLapse is my favorite input-based screensaver. Like the iSight Screensavers, it requires either an iSight camera or another QuickTime-compatible camera. Once launched, TimeLapse begins taking photos at designated intervals. Slowly, with the addition of each new photo, it builds a time lapse animation. The screensaver shows the animation in a loop, each time adding the recently acquired photo or photos onto the end. Capture intervals, storage limits, and playback speed are all adjustable. It's wonderful to see yourself and your space captured in a time-lapse animation

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- and should you leave your computer for a while, it's a fun way to catch up on what happened while you were gone.

8) Harry Potter Photo Show

Many people enjoy using Apple's photo screensaver as a way to shuffle through their digital photo collections. The Harry Potter Photo Show screensaver offers a fun twist on that basic concept. When launched, Harry wanders around a Hogwarts library casting your photos as spells with his wand (above you can see Harry casting the TidBITS masthead). The photos hang in the air flittering and flickering as you would expect a good spell would do. You can adjust the music, lighting quality, source folder, and how the sparks that shoot out of Harry's wand act when casting. Despite the mediocre animation - Harry looks a bit like a claymation Muppet and moves around woodenly - it's surprisingly enjoyable to see him zap your pictures with his wand.

9) Pong Saver

If you often find yourself yearning for the video game aesthetics of yore, you might enjoy this simple but amusing adaptation of a clock screensaver. In Pong Saver, the score between the two sides reflects the time in either a 24 hour or 12 hour notation. For you gamblers out there, hint: Don't place any bets on the hour hand side - it almost always loses to the minute hand side.

10) LotsaEscher

Many people are familiar with the mind-bending illustrations of M.C. Escher. The LotsaEscher screensaver takes a dizzying journey into the heart of Escher's 1956 lithograph "Print Gallery." The screensaver is based on the work of Hendrik Lenstra and Bart de Smit, who, through an analysis of the mathematical structure of the image, were able to uncover the mystery of the blurry white hole in the center of the drawing, and were able to create a Droste image - an image that contains itself in miniature. The screensaver zooms infinitely into various versions of picture - you can select which one in the Options panel. It's a vertigo-inducing way to spend some time.

11) Flurry Spoof

There's no point in downloading this gag screensaver, which is an advertisement for the German jobsintown.de employment service; just watch the preview on the site. It's a great spoof of Apple's popular Flurry screensaver.

More Screensavers -- As you might imagine this list only begins to scratch the surface of the screensaver universe. If you're looking for more, I recommend checking out Pure Mac Screensavers and XScreenSaver as good

starting points. Pure Mac Screensavers has a wide variety of interesting programs - some of which made this list. It's easy to navigate and many on the site are worth playing around with. There's also MacScreensavers, though this site seems oriented toward promotional and pop-culture screensavers, most of which are unimpressive examples of the screensaver genre.

XScreenSaver was the standard screensaver collection on most Linux and Unix machines running the X11 Window System. The first version was released in 1992, and was ported to Mac OS X in 2006. Here you'll find a wide array of older screensavers with some old school graphics and some endearingly simple premises. (Thanks to reader Dan O'Donnell for the tip on XScreenSaver.)

Oh, and if in your explorations you come across any screensavers that seem interesting and weren't touched on here, I'd love to hear about them. Happy screensaver searching! Enjoy!

Apple Updates

Apple's latest update to its Leopard operating system, OS X 10.5.6, appears to be creating more problems than it's fixing on users' Macs.

A day after the software was released via Apple's download service, users flooded the company's online support forum with hundreds of complaints about the upgrade. Most centered around OS freezes and so-called "Blue Screens of Death."

Mail Update
December 22, 2008

System Requirements
– OS X 10.5.6

This update addresses stability issues with Mail.

After updating to Mac OS X 10.5.6, Mail may unexpectedly quit. This can be caused by using a copy of Mail that wasn't updated properly (you may need to install the Mail Update).

Digital Camera Raw Compatibility Update 2.4
December 18, 2008

System Requirements
– OS X 10.4.11
– OS X 10.5.3 or later

This update extends RAW file compatibility for Aperture 2 and iPhoto 08 for the following cameras:
Canon EOS 5D Mark II
Canon PowerShot G10
Pentax K2000/K-m
Leaf AFi-II 6
Leaf AFi-II 7
Leaf Aptus-II 6
Leaf Aptus-II 7
Leica M8.2

It also addresses issues related to specific cameras and overall stability.

Pro Apps Updates 2008-005
December 17, 2008

System Requirements
- OS X Tiger 10.4.11
– OS X 10.5.5

Pro Applications Update 2008-05 addresses general performance issues and improves overall stability.

Applications included in the update:
Color 1.0.4

Mac OS X 10.5.6 Combo Update
December 15, 2008

System Requirements
– OS X 10.5.0 - 10.5.5

The 10.5.6 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.

Mac OS X 10.5.6 Update
December 15, 2008

System Requirements
– OS X 10.5.5

The 10.5.6 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.

Security Update 2008-008 (Client Intel)
December 15, 2008
Security Update 2008-008 (Client PPC)
December 14, 2008

System Requirements
– OS X 10.4.11

Security Update 2008-008 is recommended for all users and improves the security of Mac OS X.

Previous security updates have been incorporated into this security update.

MacBook Pro EFI Firmware Update 1.6
December 10, 2008

System Requirements
– OS X 10.5.5

This update fixes several issues to improve the stability of MacBook Pro (Late 2008) computers.

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MacBook Pro 15-inch SMC Firmware Update 1.2
December 10, 2008
System Requirements
– OS X 10.5.5

This SMC Firmware Update improves the sensing and accuracy of the MagSafe Power Adapter indicator light, and the battery charge indicator lights on MacBook Pro (Late 2008) computers.

MacBook SMC Firmware Update 1.2
December 10, 2008
System Requirements
– OS X 10.5.5

This SMC Firmware Update improves the sensing and accuracy of the MagSafe Power Adapter indicator light, and the battery charge indicator lights on MacBook (Late 2008) computers.

MacBook EFI Firmware Update 1.3
December 10, 2008
System Requirements
– OS X 10.5.5

This update fixes several issues to improve the stability of MacBook (Late 2008) computers.

MacBook Air SMC Firmware Update 1.1
December 10, 2008
System Requirements
– OS X 10.5.5

This SMC Firmware Update improves the sensing and accuracy of the MagSafe Power Adapter indicator light on MacBook Air (Late 2008) computers.

MacBook Air EFI Firmware Update 1.1
December 10, 2008
System Requirements
– OS X 10.5.5

This update fixes several issues to improve the stability of MacBook Air (Late 2008) computers.

iPhone Configuration Utility 1.1 for Mac OS X
December 1, 2008
System Requirements
– OS X 10.5.3 and later

iPhone Configuration Utility lets you easily create, maintain, and sign configuration profiles, track and install provisioning profiles and authorized applications, and capture device information including console logs.

Configuration profiles are XML files that contain device security policies, VPN configuration information, Wi-Fi settings, APN settings, Exchange account settings, mail settings, and certificates that permit iPhone and iPod touch to work with your enterprise systems. For instructions on how to use iPhone Configuration Utility, see the iPhone and iPod touch Enterprise Deployment Guide, available for downloading at:

Enterprise Deployment Guide -

< http://www.apple.com/support/iphone/enterprise/>

by Christopher Breen

Mac 911

Removing Address Book images in Mail

Reader Helga Beuing would like to depersonalize the e-mail she sends. She writes:

I have discovered that there is a small picture of myself in the upper right corner of every e-mail I send. I have no clue how that started and would like to know how to eliminate that picture.

The source of that picture is Apple's Address Book application. When you open Address Book and choose your contact card (Card -> Go to My Card), in addition to your contact information you'll see any image you've assigned to your contact.

Note that your picture is not being sent across the great expanse that is the Internet as an attachment. Others who receive your mail won't see this image. Rather, you're seeing it because it's part of your Address Book card and Mail is displaying it because Mail displays pictures assigned to contacts in your copy of Address Book. Those you send messages to don't have that image in their copy of Address Book (unless you've given them the image and they've assigned it to your card) and so it doesn't display in their copy of Mail.

If you no longer wish to see the image when you look at your own messages, just open Address Book, select your card, and choose Card -> Clear Custom Image.

Mail's random and sequential signatures

Reader L.T. desires greater flexibility in the signatures appended to his e-mail messages. He writes:

I have over 75 signatures in my Signature file and am always adding and deleting from that file. I would prefer not to be locked into the same signature time after time, and find it a nuisance going into the Mail Preferences each time I want to insert a different signature in my e-mail. Is there a way to get, force, or program Apple Mail to automatically insert either sequential or randomized signatures from that Signature file each time an e-mail is generated?

Yes, and it's a feature built right into Mail. Just choose Mail -> Preferences and click the Signatures tab in the resulting window. As you're probably aware, this is where you create your signatures. (And for those who aren't aware, just click the Plus (+) button at the bottom of the window to create a new signature.) All your signatures are listed in the middle pane when you click the All Signatures entry in the left side of the window.

At the bottom of the window you'll see a Choose Signature pop-up menu. When this menu is active you'll see that you have the option to choose signatures At Random or In Sequential Order. These are the options you're looking for.

People sometimes get confused, however, when they discover that this pop- up menu is grayed out. This occurs when you select either the All Signatures entry or any account that doesn't have a signature attached to it.

And why wouldn't an account have a signature attached to it? Because you either haven't selected an account and clicked the Plus button to add a signature to it (which, by default, will be your name followed by that account's e-mail address) or dragged a signature from the All Signatures area to one of your accounts. Users new to Mail are routinely confounded by this.

Be confounded no more. Just be sure an account has at least two signatures attached to it and you can put the At Random and In Sequential Order options to good use.

Customizing the login screen

Trendy reader Paul Mauro would like to tattoo his Mac's login screen. He writes:

A couple years ago you published a tip on putting a personal note on the login screen. I implemented this on two machines as an SOS in case I lost my computer and a kind soul found it. It said the computer was mine and how to contact me. But I have upgraded to OS X 10.5 and I can't get it work now. Could you check it on 10.5 and tell me what I should do now?

I have and I will. Although you could use Terminal and a hunk of text to do the job, why bother when you can simply download Titanium Software's free OnyX?

OnyX performs any number of tricks, including checking the viability of your hard drive, sweeping out old log files and caches, and customizing the Mac's interface in ways not possible without some stern Terminal twiddling. One of these customization options allows you to place a personal message in the Mac's login window.

Just launch OnyX, let it do its startup things — checking the S.M.A.R.T status of your hard drive and verifying that drive — enter your Admin password when prompted, and then click the Parameters icon. Click the Login tab within the window that appears and enable the Show Message in the Login Window option. Now just type a custom message in the field below — Property of Paul Mauro, pmauro@example.com, 555-555-1212, for instance — quit OnyX, and log out of your account. When the login screen appears you'll find that custom message near the top of the login window.

[Macworld Senior Editor Christopher Breen is the author of "Secrets of the iPodand iTunes (6th edition)," and "The iPod and iTunes Pocket Guide (4th edition)" both from Peachpit Press

and

"Mac OS X 10.5 Leopard Essential Training (video)" from lynda.com

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