ATPM

About This Particular Macintosh: About the **personal** computing experience.™

Cover Art

The ATPM Staff

Publisher/Editor	Michael Tsai
Managing Editor	Christopher Turner
Reviews Editor	Paul Fatula
Web Editor	Lee Bennett
Copy Editors	Chris Lawson
	Linus Ly
	Ellyn Ritterskamp
	Brooke Smith
Webmaster	Michael Tsai
Beta Testers	The Staff
Contributing Editors	Eric Blair
	Ed Eubanks Jr.
	Matthew Glidden
	Andrew Kator
	Robert Paul Leitao
	Wes Meltzer
	David Ozab
	Sylvester Roque
	Mark Tennent
	Evan Trent
	Frank H. Wu

Artwork & Design

Layout and Design	Michael Tsai
Web Design	Simon Griffee
Cartoonists	Linus Ly, Grant Osborne
Blue Apple Icons	Mark Robinson
Other Art	RD Novo

Emeritus

RD Novo, Robert Madill, Belinda Wagner, Jamal Ghandour, Edward Goss, Tom Iovino, Daniel Chvatik, Mike Shields, Gregory Tetrault, Raena Armitage, Johann Campbell, Ted Goranson, Charles Ross.

Contributors

Tom Bridge, Mike Chamberlain, Ed Eubanks Jr., Paul Fatula, Edward Goss, Tom Iovino, Miraz Jordan, Chris Lawson, Linus Ly, Robert Paul Leitao, Wes Meltzer, Grant Osborne, David Ozab, Sylvester Roque, Mike Shields, Mark Tennent, Christopher Turner, Michael Tsai, Frank H. Wu, *Macintosh users like you*.

Where to Find ATPM

Online and downloadable issues are available at the ATPM Web Site. ATPM is a product of ATPM, Inc. © 1995–2012. All Rights Reserved. ISSN: 1093-2909.

Production Tools

Acorn, Apache, AppleScript, BBEdit, Docutils, DropDMG, FileMaker Pro, Git, Graphic-Converter, LaTeX, make, Mailman, MySQL, Name Mangler, optipng, PyMesh, PyObjC, Python, rsync, Snapz Pro X, ssh.

Reprints

Articles, original art, and desktop pictures may not be reproduced without the express permission of the author or artist, unless otherwise noted. You may, however, print or distribute copies of this issue of ATPM as a whole, provided that it is not modified in any way. Authors may be contacted through ATPM*'s* editorial staff, or at their e-mail addresses, when provided.

Legal Stuff

About This Particular Macintosh may be uploaded to any online area or included on a CD-ROM compilation, so long as the file remains intact and unaltered, but all other rights are reserved. All information contained in this issue is correct to the best of our knowledge. The opinions expressed in ATPM are not necessarily those of the entire ATPM staff. Product and company names and logos may be registered trademarks of their respective companies. Thank you for reading this far, and we hope that the rest of the magazine is more interesting than this.

• • •

Thanks for reading ATPM.

Sponsors

About This Particular Macintosh has been free since 1995, and we intend to keep it that way. Our editors and staff are volunteers with *real* jobs who believe in the Macintosh way of computing. We don't make a profit, nor do we plan to. Our aim is to produce a fiercely independent magazine, with multiple formats designed for easy reading rather than showing ads. The views expressed in these pages have always been our own, and to help prove it we do not accept direct sponsorships or advertising. We do, however, need to pay for our Web site and other expenses, so we rely on minimal advertising, sold indirectly via Google, as well as the support of ATPM readers who shop at Amazon.com using our link.

Welcome (and Goodbye)

by Robert Paul Leitao, rleitao@atpm.com

Welcome to the final issue of *About This Particular Macintosh!* We've enjoyed the splendid ride. In the digital pages of our final issue, the editors of ATPM bring together 17 years of work chronicling what we have called "the personal computing experience."

In 1996, Michael Tsai and I took over as co-publishers of ATPM. He was a high school student in New Hampshire, and I was an Apple product enthusiast living in the Hollywood Hills. Across this 3,000-mile divide, using old-fashioned phone lines and modems, we cobbled together a crew of editors and embarked on a digital adventure that has reached its destination today.

But this final issue of ATPM is not so much an end as it is the close of a chapter. This story lives on in the work of our contributing editors and continues to unfold at the many places across the Internet and around the world that each of us calls home.

When Michael announced the end of ATPM*'s* run, it was a statement of the inevitable and a statement the contributing editors knew was soon to come. In today's computing world, writers and contributors no longer have one publication address. Readers travel the Internet in search of informative content. Today, ATPM gives way to the devices we heralded and the avenues of communication that dawned during our publication's era.

During my long evening commute, I thought about what I'd like to say as the publication of ATPM comes to a ceremonial end. While driving the highways and byways of northern Los Angeles County with an iPhone 4S plugged into an auto adapter for evening calls, my old iPhone 3GS plugged into the car's auxiliary jack for music, and my primary personal productivity device, an iPad, in my carry bag, I realized that much has changed since the days ATPM was sent out over a 2,400 baud modem attached to a Macintosh PowerPC in my living room. Today we access, consume, and distribute content anywhere and everywhere and through a variety of devices.

I look forward to meeting you, our readers, in the many different places we frequent on the Web. For readers who would like to continue reading my ongoing analysis of Apple, please visit my primary blog at Posts At Eventide. In this issue, many of our contributing editors will talk about where around the Web their work can be found.

Thank you for many years of support and readership.

Sincerely,

Robert Paul Leitao

Our May issue includes:

Publisher's Letter

ATPM Publisher Michael Tsai writes about the difficult-but-inevitable decision to bring this chapter of the publication to a close.

Apple Cider: Look How Far We've Come

Tom Iovino shares his view of Macintosh computing, beginning with the summer of 1997 when the Apple faithful prayed their beloved computing platform would not be steamrolled by the Microsoft behemoth.

Bloggable: One Last Time, With Feeling

In one last *Bloggable,* Wes Meltzer offers a rumination about what a long, strange trip it's been. He takes a detailed look at the case of Mike Daisey and agony, ecstasy, and untruth; a cruise around the tablet and mobile spaces; and the time he offered to eat his hat if Apple ever produced an iPhone.

Hollywood: First and Last

Mike Shields recaps his history with ATPM and lets you know where he can be read in the future. Because he can predict it.

Mac About Town: What a Ride! And It Ain't Over Yet!

From Palm devices and AOL installation discs to iPhones and iPads, Mike Chamberlain reflects on the changes in his digital life since the time ATPM began publishing.

MacMuser: What Trick, What Device, What Starting-Hole...

Mark Tennent remains ever on the lookout for the next big thing to come along.

Next Actions: The Last Action

Ed Eubanks offers concluding thoughts about the practices of GTD on the Mac and iOS, as well as one last look at the "landscape" of GTD applications.

PEBKAC: Finales, Friendships, and the Future

Christopher Turner looks at what is, for him, the really important take-away from his time on staff at *About This Particular Macintosh.*

The Personal Computing Paradigm: How Cool Is Your Mac?

Michael Tsai finds out whether a 17-year-old test can still quantify how cool your Mac is.

Segments: About My Particular Macintoshes

David Ozab writes about the particular Macintoshes he owned during his time with *About This Particular Macintosh.*

Segments: From the Darkest Hour

Tom Bridge reminisces 15 years of Macintosh computing from his IT guy perspective.

Segments: Growing Up With Apple

Frank H. Wu describes the Apple computers he has experienced in the context of growing up in the late 1970s.

Segments: Recollections of ATPM by the Plucky Comic Relief

Although his path will likely lead him to a Windows PC as his primary computing platform, Edward Goss has fond memories of Macintosh days of old.

Segments: Shrinking Into an Expanding World

Miraz Jordan ponders the exciting world in which we live—a world where small is huge, carbon is king, graphene is queen, and atoms, anti-atoms, and photons are commonplace.

Desktop Pictures: Parting Shots

Mike Chamberlain contributes our final collection of desktop photos taken in Vietnam, Florida, Colorado, and Missouri. You can revisit our entire collection of archived desktop pictures.

Qaptain Qwerty

Gotta run!

The Spinning Beachball

Grant Osborne implies that rumors of liquid metal seem rather reminiscent. He also observes how issues of ATPM as well as a familiar multi-purpose device are all compatible with both a 90s-era Power Macintosh and a third-generation iPad.

Review: Camera I-O

Chris Turner's testing of a top-secret piece of gear can now be revealed as Tom Bihn releases the Camera I-O case to the world.

Review: Draw Something 1.5.14

Addictive social drawing game that makes you look forward to correct guesses.

Review: Privacy and Big Data: The Players, Regulators, and Stakeholders

Our final book review looks at just what is meant by privacy and who is looking out for our rights.

Review: TouchStream LP

Paul Fatula writes about his favorite keyboard, an early exemplar of multi-touch technology.

E-Mail

Easter Island Desktop Pictures
Lovely photos, bought happy memories of my visit to the Island in 2001 during my honeymoon.

—Francis Smith

OtterBox Commuter and Reflex
I have an Otterbox for the iPhone 4S. I was photographing a waterfall recently. I guess I got up against a rock enough to twist the phone out of the belt carrier. It went into about one foot of water and stayed there a couple of minutes or more before I realized it was there. The phone came on once I retrieved it, and after removing it from the case it wasn't wet.

Gotta love the Otterbox case.

—David Johnson

Making the Leap
I was at a friend's house the other day, marveling at how easily his two-year-old son navigated on his iPad 2, which he bought after I convinced him to buy a 24-inch iMac. That fact that your Mom took to the iPad like a fish to water simply reflects the genius behind the device.

—Grover Watson

> Thanks for the remarks. It is about the genius of making something so completely familiar that we don't even realize it.
> Touching something just makes sense. Using a stylus does not. And having a smooth response from the machine is terrific feedback for learning.
> *—Dave Trautman*

Leonardo Da Vinci CD-ROM
I have all four titles: Da Vinci, FDR, Volcanoes. Three unopened. Will they still run on modern Macs?

—Peter Ben Kussell, PhD

> No sir, I'm afraid they will not. Besides the fact that Macs dropped support for classic operation (that means before Mac OS X) quite a long time ago, the most recent Macs and the Lion operating system won't even run some of the original OS X applications for the PowerPC Macs. In other words, if you're running Lion (Mac OS X 10.7) the app has to be compiled for Intel CPUs. No apps that were written for OS 9 and earlier are Intel-compatible.
> *—Lee Bennett*

You can contact us at editor@atpm.com.

Publisher's Letter

Michael Tsai, mtsai@atpm.com

Some decisions are easy. When I downloaded ATPM 1.01 from eWorld in early 1995, I immediately knew that I wanted to read the e-zine regularly. When the founder, Danny Novo, asked for helpers in January 1996, the position of Very Critical Associate Editor in charge of reviews seemed tailor-made for me. I volunteered, and, to my surprise, he said "Yes" pretty much right away. When Danny stepped down as Editor in June 1996, it was an easy decision for Robert Paul Leitao and I to try to fill his shoes. Little did we know what we were getting ourselves into—how much work and how much fun it would be.

Now we come to a difficult decision: this is the final issue of ATPM. It is difficult because ATPM has meant so much to us for so long. Some staffers have remarked to me that it's been their longest relationship. I've been writing and editing here for nearly half my life. It's also difficult because we don't want to disappoint you, our readers.

You've probably noticed that recent issues have been getting thinner and thinner. The simple truth is that we've been having trouble getting as many articles and reviews to you as we'd like. Everyone on staff is busier than ever with jobs—and with life. Some staffers who began contributing as singles are now married with children. Work and personal responsibilities have been a factor from the beginning. Starting with Danny himself, many ATPM staffers have retired over the years. In the past, there were always new people coming in to offset those departing, but that hasn't been the case lately, despite our efforts at recruitment. Perhaps there are things we should have done differently, but there's no denying that the online world has changed. People are no longer starved for information about the Mac and Apple; they're deluged by it. And prospective writers no longer need to find a publication willing to carry their words; now anyone can have a site with a content management system with just a few clicks. The shift has been to instant publishing and ever shorter forms of communication.

All of us at ATPM are volunteers. We aspire to professional standards, with deadlines and multiple editors poring over each article. However, I've always made it clear to the staff that this is a hobby. Other things in their lives should be more important. This is for fun. I've learned to expect a lot from this team because they've proven that they can deliver. They're some of the finest people that I've ever worked with. At the same time, it's clear that circumstances have changed. My gut feeling is that continuing ATPM would have meant asking for more than they probably should give to the publication. Thus, we've decided to stop publishing ATPM. We had a good run, but it's time to retire.

This is not to say that we're going away entirely. The ATPM Web site contains every article that we've published. (The original issues in DOCMaker format, which requires the classic Mac OS, have been converted to PDF.) We'll continue to accept and respond to comments posted on the article pages. The front page has been redesigned to highlight the original cover art from each of our 205 issues, and we've organized indexes of the columns,

product reviews, and desktop pictures. We intend to keep the site running indefinitely, as a record of what our world was like from 1995 to 2012. Although we expect traffic, and thus ad revenue, to decline as the site is no longer updated, Web hosting costs are also declining so the site should remain self-supporting. Many staffers will continue to be involved in the Mac community through their jobs and personal blogs and Twitter feeds. Additionally, some staffers will be starting a successor site. We'll announce it to ATPM subscribers when it's ready, and if you aren't already a subscriber you can sign up for one of the our mailing lists.

It's been an honor and a pleasure to work with such great people. From the managing editors, reviews editors, copy editors, Web editors, cover artists, and designers, to the columnists, reviewers, cartoonists, photographers, and one-off contributors—many talented people have contributed to ATPM over the years. Thank you for your dedication and for teaching me so much. And, finally, to the all the readers of ATPM: thank you for making our publication a part of your life, and may you continue to enjoy your personal computing experience.

Copyright © 2012 Michael Tsai. Michael will continue developing Mac products at C-Command Software and blogging in his copious free time.

Look How Far We've Come

Pray. That's what we Apple faithful were asked to do back in the summer of 1997—at least on the cover of *Wired* magazine. Pray for the future of Apple Computer. Pray that the steamroller that is Microsoft doesn't just roll over the embattled company and grind it to dust. Pray that we hadn't embraced the BetaMax of our day.

Heck, I wish I could have gone back in time to those heady days and bought about a hundred shares of stock when it was down below $10 a share.

Incredible how time changes things, isn't it? Give a river a few million years, and it will create the Grand Canyon. Give an acorn some fertile soil, water and a sunny spot, and it will sprout into a majestic oak. Give a company the leader to seek new, innovative ways forward, and you get Apple.

As ATPM prepares to ride off into the sunset, I have to look back at the Apple Cider articles I have written. Those were crazy times back in those days. In the late 1990s, who could have envisioned how computers have changed the way we look at life here in 2012, and who would have guessed that Apple would have led the way? My last article came out as the iPod was just starting to debut. That device—something that took the world by storm the same way the Sony Walkman did in the 1980s—revolutionized how we listened to and interacted with music.

Follow that up with the iPhone, which took cell phones to a whole new level. While BlackBerry broke the ground, the iPhone's debut was like lighting the second stage on a Saturn V rocket. Now, your phone was no longer something to call and send e-mails on; it became a personal computer you can carry around on your hip. Heck, one day, I'm betting that desktop computers will simply be docking stations with a large screen and keyboard for our uber-capable smart phones.

Throw in the iPad, and now Apple has created a whole new style of computer. I can remember waxing poetically about the now-defunct Newton line of handheld computing devices, but seeing how its descendant has prospered has been encouraging.

While time has changed, one thing certainly hasn't—Apple has been at the forefront, leading the way. And, as always, it seems the competition has been running behind trying to catch up. But, isn't that what we really wanted?

Today, I write a pretty successful woodworking blog. Been at it for coming up on five years now. I do my writing and site maintenance on my MacBook Pro notebook, but I also write on several Windows machines. And, when I'm on the road, my HTC Sensation Android

phone keeps me up-to-date on what's happening with the site. What was some kind of pipe-dream back in the mid 1990s—a cross-platform transparency—has become the norm. The fact that we are able to do this is a testament to finding the better way to do things. Imagine if we were all trying to work on a DOS-type command-line to make our phones work or to use programs to record a podcast. How tough would it have been to get everyone on board to see the rich collection of work out there online?

But, that's what we lost, misguided Apple fans were asking for back in 1997. And through our efforts, our tireless advocacy for the system—and yes, even some of our prayers—we were able to arrive at where we are today.

While ATPM may be going away, never let that spirit of adventure, innovation, or can-do spirit leave you. That's how we make the world a great place.

One Last Time, With Feeling

Dear readers,

Before we dive right into the subject of the month, I'd like to take a moment and reflect on the really great eight years I've spent writing for ATPM. When the first *Bloggable* came out back in ATPM 10.01 (January 2004), I'd never written anything professionally—I was just a college student passionate about the subject—and the wonderful editors took a chance. At times, my writing has run the gamut from "boring" to "just stop already," and your engagement level has always far-exceeded my expectations.

When I offered to eat my hat back in 2006, you even sent me suggestions of hat-shaped cake so I didn't have to choke down any fabric. (By the way, although I did slice off a bite and attempt to eat it, it didn't work.)

I've been wrong more times than I can count. Actually, I stopped counting. I've probably only been right a handful of times, and I'm not going to list them off here because that's poor form.

We haven't had much contact, you and I, lately. Things get busy in people's lives, especially when you graduate from college and get a Real Job.

But I have to say that this has always been one of the best gigs in the tech industry. I had the catbird seat to some of the most exciting developments, like the iPhone, and some of the most sorrowful moments, like Steve Jobs's passing. And you were there all along.

You: But what about us?

Me: We'll always have the blogosphere.

The Agony and the Ecstasy of Mike Daisey

NPR Correspondent Discovers *Mike Daisey Fabricated His Story*

Mike Daisey has made a lot of money and a lot of noise with his one-man monologue show, "The Agony and Ecstasy of Steve Jobs," in which he describes a trip to Shenzhen to visit the Foxconn factories where products are built for Apple and a lot of other companies. In the show, he tells of the workers' rights (and human rights) abuses he observed, and says that Apple knew it. Rob Schmitz, the Shanghai correspondent for NPR's "Marketplace," dug into the story behind Daisey's show and the "This American Life" episode because he didn't think the details passed the smell test. Turns out Schmitz was right. He interviewed Daisey's interpreter in Shenzhen, Cathy Lee, and she flatly denied very nearly all of what

Daisey says happened during his six-day trip. When confronted with the facts by Schmitz and Ira Glass, he admits that he didn't actually observe the things he said he did, and said:

> Look. I'm not going to say that I didn't take a few shortcuts in my passion to be heard. But I stand behind the work...My mistake, the mistake I truly regret, is that I had it on your show as journalism. And it's not journalism. It's theater.

Schmitz says that part of the problem is that these are all things that *have* happened: the workers poisoned with n-hexane, the teenage factory workers, etc. So it's not that it's false, although Daisey's accusation that Apple has done nothing about it stands in contrast to the company's actual, reality-based actions. The issue for Schmitz, Glass, and a lot of other people, is that Daisey billed the show as things he, a "large American...in a Hawaiian shirt," actually observed firsthand. And that is untrue.

[Mike Daisey Responds](#) to Allegations That He Fabricated Evidence
The creator of the show responds to Ira Glass's allegations on "This American Life" that he fabricated evidence. He defends himself by saying that none of the evidence the intrepid *Wall Street Journal* reporter uncovered—that he, Mike Daisey, was not there and could not have witnessed most of the events he describes in the show—contradicts "the facts in my work about the nature of Chinese manufacturing." To a journalist's ear, that's called "fabrication." He describes the events in the show as though he witnessed them himself, firsthand, and describes it as a work of journalism. His defense seems to be that a less literal interpretation of what is "true" will prove him right. That's a fabulist's version of events. But you should read the piece for yourself.

["This American Life" Retracts](#) the Radio Version of Mike Daisey's Show
I can't recall if I've ever linked to coverage of Mike Daisey's one-man show, "The Agony and the Ecstasy of Steve Jobs," in previous columns. But after Steve's death, the show took on new resonance and seems to have attracted a lot of attention. Then, "This American Life" did a condensed, radio-friendly version of the show as an episode. Some of the details rung untrue to the China correspondent for NPR's "Marketplace," Rob Schmitz, and he dug into the story and discovered that much of it was untrue or impossible. In the journalism world—unlike showbiz—when portions of a story turn out to be untrue, it's not just part of the "plot," like when we discover that "Les Mis" is probably impossible or that "Newsies" isn't the happy story the theater tells us. So Ira Glass retracted the episode, fully and completely. This is the story of the retraction.

[Daisey, the Free Flow](#) of Information, and the Meaning of Truth
At my very favorite non-tech blog, *3quarksdaily,* Jen Paton writes a really interesting apologia on what the Mike Daisey story says about the nature of free-flowing information in the Internet age and the nature of truth. She makes a really interesting analogy to "Kony 2012" and to kids using Wikipedia to do their research papers. The Internet gives a voice to information from sources that are biased or potentially biased at the same volume level as neutral sources of information. Mike Daisey is just another example. Paton has an extremely eloquent defense of the truth:

What will ruin everything is if we succumb to the belief that the emotional resonance of a story always trumps its accuracy, and that the only way to encourage ourselves to "care" about politics/the rest of the world/our neighbor is to accept being lied to.

The New Yorker: Apple, China, and the Truth

Evan Osnos, the Beijing correspondent for *The New Yorker,* takes a look at Mike Daisey's story. Some of it is wistfulness that he didn't catch the fabulism, that it was left to Rob Schmitz, the China correspondent for NPR's "Marketplace," but a lot of it is a serious consideration of what constitutes the truth and stories about China in the West. Osnos writes:

> He thought that China was so exotic and far away that it was uncheckable; that it was okay to take "a few shortcuts in my passion to be heard," as he put it in his follow-up interview.

That's as eloquent a description of what went wrong here. China is not unknowable, not a Myanmar or North Korea, and to a seasoned China correspondent like Osnos or Schmitz, a lot of it smelled fishy. Daisey was so passionate about the headline-grabbing story that it's impossible to know where the essential kernel of truth at the center ends and the semi-fabricated bran begins.

Fleishman: Daisey Revelations Sad, But Not Surprising

Writing in *Macworld,* Glenn Fleishman provides some interesting historical context on the Daisey controversy. Fleishman points out that he knew from Daisey's earlier work, "21 Dog Years," that Daisey "doesn't speak literal truth in his performances…The Amazon story (both play and book) was full of elements that I either know for a fact, learned from friends and colleagues, or could intuit were not factually precise or were fabricated." This isn't new in the world of literature—Fleishman points to a piece I'd forgotten from 2007, fact-checking David Sedaris—but Daisey went to such great pains to point out that his work was a piece of literal, factual truth that it's all the more painful when it turns out that it wasn't.

Tao Jones: I Knew Mike Daisey, and Something Was Off

Writing in the *Wall Street Journal,* Jones says that he had crossed paths with Daisey many years before, during his show "21 Dog Years," back in 2001, and had kept up with him variously over the last decade. Because he knew that there were elements of untruths in the earlier shows, he writes, and because he has some familiarity with China, something smelled fishy about the Foxconn stories that Daisey told in "The Agony and the Ecstasy." Jones says, in wishing he had dug into the story more and told someone what he knew:

> People want to believe in Daisey's stories, because they want to have faith in the ability of individuals to change the path of history with their actions. They want

to believe they can think different, act different, and—as crazy as it sounds—make the world a better place. It is, again quite ironically, exactly the same enchantment Steve Jobs always depended on to sell his magical devices—you may not believe me, but you want to believe in me, and what I'm saying is that this is changing the game, changing the industry, changing the world.

When Jobs did it, they called it his "Reality Distortion Field."

[Felix Salmon](): *Daisey's Defense Is: The End Justifies the Means*

Reuters's financial journalist extraordinaire is also a terrific writer. He has what I think may be the most cutting indictment of Daisey's fabulism yet, and I'll let his words stand on their own:

> It's a lot easier to tell a great story if you don't also need to be factual about things. Romeo and Juliet and Hamlet are fiction; Richard III and Henry V are mostly fiction, albeit based on historical events. And it's precisely because they're fictional—because Shakespeare was always storyteller first and foremost—that they're still performed so regularly, all over the world, and that they have had such powerful emotional resonance with billions of people over the centuries since they were written.

> But here's the thing: Shakespeare never lied.

> […]

> Daisey's m.o., it's now clear, was to go to China, talk to some people, and then write a monologue in which he felt free to incorporate anything he'd read about the plight of workers anywhere in the country, presented as a direct piece of first-person reportage. And there's a good reason why that's an underhanded and unethical thing to do, which is that even if Apple did everything Daisey's asking of them, he could still go to China and return with the exact same monologue. With hindsight, Apple was absolutely right not to engage with Daisey directly, because he created a game they could never win. The only winning move, for them, was not to play.

Time to Clean the Windows 8

[Views on Windows 8](): *Too Many Steps Forward, Not Enough Back*

Christian Cantrell, a product manager for Adobe, is not a fan of Windows 8 and its two user interfaces. He identifies a few major problems:

- Nearly everything that is in Metro, the new, forward-looking is consumer-focused—too consumer-focused, Cantrell says. Microsoft's bread and butter isn't Billy sending photos to Grandma, it's major corporations and big, important software suites (Office, Adobe CS, enterprise suites). Metro leaves these behind, and they stay in their Windows 7 UI, it appears.

- It takes away too many familiar places and gestures and doesn't replace them effectively. Take the Taskbar: it's the ordinary user's primary way of switching applications. In Metro, Microsoft replaces it with a kind of OS X–style Dock, but with thumbnails. Imagine finding anything in that.

- Metro doesn't effectively take advantage of desktop size and available real estate. Most of us don't use 1024×768 like a tablet, not even Grandma anymore!

Charles Arthur Absolutely Hates Windows 8

The Guardian's Charles Arthur, one of my favorite tech writers and one who is totally unafraid to pull his punches, writes that he absolutely hated Windows 8. It seems that what a lot of writers and observers feared is true: you spend a lot of time getting dumped from Metro back into the old-fashioned Windows interface, and that the two interfaces are weirdly conjoined in ways that are really confusing. The more I read, the more I wonder why Microsoft didn't just make a clean break. But that's very un-Microsoftian: think of how long you could run DOS applications in Windows, or how long they supported 16-bit applications.

Tablet Fever Is Still With Us

Slate on Why the iPad's Position Is Basically Unassailable

Farhad Manjoo takes a very provocative stand, but one which seems to comport with the evidence: the iPad is not taking the path of the iPhone, in which it is just the most profitable and most visible of many devices. Instead, he argues, it's following the path of the iPod. Quick, name the last time you saw a standalone MP3 player that wasn't an iPod. He writes:

> Apple begins by releasing a novel, category-defining product. Then, as rivals scramble for some way to respond, Apple relentlessly puts out slightly better versions every year, each time remaining just out of reach of the competition. Meanwhile it lowers its prices and expands its product lineup, making its devices more accessible to a wider audience. Then, to finish the game, it finds a way to boost its position through network effects and customer lock-in. (In the iPod's case, it accomplished this through the iTunes software and built-in music store.) Put it all together and you have a device that's unbeatable. In 2011, 10 years after its release, the iPod still represented a whopping 78 percent of the market share in music players.

Because Apple has cornered the market on a lot of the components you need to make a tablet, you can't beat them on price. And even if you could, you can't even match them on the OS and overall ecosystem, to date. He says that Apple's rivals in the space should be very afraid. And, I would add, working very hard to come up with whatever the Next Big Thing is, to avoid being decimated by the current one.

Android Tablet vs. iPad: All the Android Apps Suck

To continue on the theme, *PC Mag's* Sascha Segan compares the iPad ecosystem as a whole to Android tablet apps and concludes that the reason that the iPad is better is because "Android tablet apps suck." His words, not mine. He continues:

> Most Android apps have always been resolution-independent [unlike iPhone-only apps] so developers and publishers could fool themselves into thinking their apps run Just Fine. They run, of course, in the sense that the code executes and they (mostly) fill the screen. So the developers stop there, able to check their "we have an Android tablet app" box. But the apps suck.

This is a problem, and one that Google can't solve on their own. As much fragmentation as there is among a small base of devices—different form factors, different software versions, etc.—it's hard to see your way to a solution.

Does the iPad's Retina Display Measure Up to E-ink?

Ars Technica puts E-ink and the new iPad's Retina display to the test and under the microscope to ask the question, does Retina measure up? One must consider the habits of the user, of course. I love my iPad, but if I'm going to be on an airplane or at the beach reading a book for hours on end, I want a non-light-emitting, glare-free screen like the Kindle. *Ars'* verdict is that the pixel density of the Retina display is far superior, leading to a display that is nearly as sharp as printed paper, long the promise of E-ink. And the contrast is higher on the iPad because a light-emitting display can produce a nearly pure white color and nearly pure black text. But they also quote plenty of experts saying that backlit displays just aren't always the right choice.

Mobile Odds and Ends

Jean-Louis Gassée: Carriers' Complaints About iPhone So Much Hot Air

The man who knows more than almost anyone else about Apple, JLG, digs into the claims in a WSJ article that somehow Apple has stolen the carriers' profits by free-riding on their networks. JLG makes a really interesting point. The carriers are basically in the same position that ISPs were a decade ago: as the AOL model faded away, ISPs became nothing but faceless owners of pipes that carry data from other people's applications. How do they break out of this? Among ISPs, the solution was mega-consolidation; the carriers appear to be trying the same. It's worth considering what other strategies might be out there (nationalization, either public or private; turning into content providers, like AOL did; or a standard-and-premium strategy). But JLG follows up with the numbers: the iPhone is propping up the carriers! Their non-iPhone numbers are horrible.

The Economics of Android

Horace Dediu digs into court filings to identify some financial trends in Google's Android OS. The picture isn't pretty: if his analysis is correct, Google is making about $1.70 per year per device on Android. If you throw in non-OS-related revenues like mobile advertising, you

can tease out what Google makes for Android versus iOS. And in that analysis, it becomes clear that Google is actually making a lot more money on iOS than on Android, to the tune of 4-to-1. When you take into account that Apple keeps the hardware part of iOS device revenue as well as the software, Apple is basically cleaning Google's clock. At the rate Dediu describes, the question becomes, is Google going to keep footing the bill? Or might they, say, hand over the code to the Apache Foundation or an OEM or carrier and move on?

Jason Perlow: I'm Sick To Death of Android

At *ZDNet,* Perlow explains why he's ready to leave Android and the whole ecosystem behind. It describes why I always thought the long-rumored Motorola-iTunes phone (which actually did come to pass!) was a bad idea. Basically, what Perlow describes—fragmentation and carrier and handset manufacturer unwillingness to update devices to the newest version of the OS—is basically my fears about the ol' MotoPhone back in 2004. Or what I remember from the Microsoft era. There are a lot of things that are a pain about dealing with Apple. I am not wild about hearing about good apps that are rejected because they don't meet arbitrary guidelines; and it can be frustrating when arbitrary changes break workflows we power users are familiar with. But you can run the latest version of OS X on a five-year-old polycarbonate MacBook, and the latest iOS on a three-year-old iPhone 3GS. Say what you will about Apple, but they would never allow the Android situation.

Why Do Developers Prefer iOS to Android?

Lex Friedman gives a really detailed analysis of why developers prefer iOS to Android, viewed through the prism of the very, very long wait for Instagram to release an Android app. There are a couple of basic reasons. One of the most obvious ones is that the iPhone is just one of three categories an iOS app reaches, and the only one where Android has decent market share. The other two (iPad and iPod touch) are also big sellers. All you get when you release an Android app is phone users. Another is money. If analysts are right, nearly all of the money spent on mobile devices is spent on Apple devices. Is it because Android users are misers—or, more simply, that more of them are people who upgraded from an old-fashioned phone to a smartphone just because it was there, and not because they wanted to buy apps (or music or movies)? Lastly, fragmentation is a real problem for devs. They have an array of devices, physical formats, and OS versions to worry about. With iOS, it's two form factors and at worst two versions of the OS. Food for thought.

Jason Snell Argues That the Behemoth iTunes *Needs to Be Broken Up*

Writing in *Macworld,* Jason Snell argues that iTunes is an unwieldy behemoth of an application with too many unrelated things glued together. The genesis of iTunes as the Grand High Synchronization Application for your i-devices is, for those of us who remember, the original iPod. When Apple launched the iTunes Music Store, it was logical enough to fit it into iTunes. And when they started selling apps, iTunes had all the right plumbing already in place. But—enough, already! I've been syncing devices with my computers for almost 15 years, and the best sync experience was always my Sony Ericsson T-series phones and iSync. Like Jason, I'm ready to have these components broken up. Are you?

You've been great! That's all, folks

Happy 20th Birthday to BBEdit!

If you're a Mac programmer or amateur hacker working in a certain subset of languages, it's possible that you've never written a line of code that wasn't in BBEdit. (Since I don't work in Xcode, that includes me, except for a six-month stint when I tried TextMate, when my ancient copy of BBEdit that I got for free with a Mac in 2002 stopped working in OS X 10.6.) So it's amazing to read Jason Snell's article celebrating that no-longer-even-adolescent Mac text editor. The company that it spawned, Bare Bones, has some other software (Yojimbo, the deceased Super Get Info, and Mailsmith, which they sold) but nothing has the longevity or cultural grip as BBEdit. Many of you, especially the non-technical, probably think that this is a complicated feedback loop where tech writers work in BBEdit and so therefore we naturally assume that it's The Best Editor Evar!!!! and write about it at every chance we get. And to a certain extent, that's true. But let me put it this way. The only other product so long-lived I can think of from a small firm is OmniWeb, for 18 years, albeit for the first six as a NEXTSTEP product. Next up on the list are DragThing (17 years), OmniOutliner (at least 10), NetNewsWire (9). These are the products that made the Mac more than just the sum of Apple, Adobe, and Microsoft. There's something to celebrate in that. Happy birthday, BBEdit. I'll bet you can't wait until you're old enough to drink!

Developers to Apple: We Want Paid Upgrades in the Mac App Store

Wil Shipley describes a common problem, and complaint, of the Mac App Store: the lack of paid upgrades between major versions. (Actually this is also a common complaint with the iOS App Store, but I digress.) Here's the problem, as Shipley encapsulates it. Without upgrade pricing, developers have a set of perverse, bad choices:

- Stop developing the app, except for bug fixes, and hope people keep buying it.

- Release the next version of the app as a new paid app, with a new or adjusted name. Bad experience for users, plus they have to pay the same amount of as existing users, or you undercharge new users.

- Give the app away for free. No matter which course of action you choose, everyone gets the wrong experience. This is one reason I almost never buy from the Mac App Store, unless an app is *only* available there.

Takeaways for Apple, IT in Flashback Response

We haven't mentioned the Flashback virus yet—if you haven't already downloaded the fix, run Software Update!—because it appeared to be running its course. But on the heels of news that it might not be, *Computerworld* is here with the takeaways for Apple and the IT industry in the aftermath.

Apple Pros Used Software Update so that nearly everyone got exposed to the update quickly.

Cons Didn't respond quickly enough, didn't communicate enough.

Security companies Pros Beat the drum loudly enough that Apple noticed.

Cons All of these companies who specialize in security barely beat out Apple in delivering fixes. Seriously? What are we paying you for?

IT Pros None.

Cons Not nearly enough Mac expertise in IT departments. All in all, this is a great reminder that we all need to be more vigilant about security. This may have been the first actual, non-proof-of-concept virus in forever (who remembers the so-called Hong Kong virus?) but that's no excuse.

First and Last

I'm sure you've read my Steve Jobs retrospective, therefore, I'll try not to repeat myself here, however, you've been warned. Having said that, I'll start the same story in a different place, and maybe give you some new information. Simply because this may be the first thing you ever read from me, and I'll want you to continue reading my missives in the future.

A Web search on my name may or may not come up with things that I've written or created, simply because there are other Mike Shieldses out there. I could say back before there was an Internet, however, we know that year to truly be 1966, and I didn't make my monumentous decision until 1975. To wit: to pursue a career in computers, and telling them what to do and how to do it. I was a chess player at the time, and I got interested in computer chess, and this was around the time David Levy was attempting to win some sort of Turing challenge. I even wrote a few programs myself, but could never figure out a good scoring algorithm. As chess is a game of perfect information, like checkers, and more simply tic-tac-toe, it is possible to solve. Who knew brute force was a good thing? I did. But I'll write about that elsewhere another time.

That's right, I'm older than I look. At least, in the caricature that was created for me in 1997 by an artist we had creating covers here at the time. I still use it as my Twitter avatar. It's all part of the hide-in-plain-sight theory. That goes something like this: most people know Bruce Wayne is Batman by now, but no one says anything because he's Batman. Or they're in deep denial, and have fallen for the ruse. Bruce has convinced himself that this works, and it will continue to work until it doesn't work.

On Facebook, I use my real picture, simply because my daughter said she wouldn't friend me otherwise; therefore, if you must know what I look like, you can find me there as well. I'm on LinkedIn, too, because my need to continue to find gainful employment on more than an occasional basis exists.

For some reason, I have the tune of The Long and Winding Road going through my head right now. That may be because I've buried the lead. I'll let you decide. Of course, this is an opinion column, and the rules of journalism are necessarily different than the rules of, There Are No Rules.

To get first time readers caught up, I started writing for ATPM with issue 2.02 and was also given an editor position, as that's what was done 16 years ago. I was a Mac tech at the once and former Hughes Aircraft at the time, so, I wrote about what I hoped were funny incidents that I came across while servicing the Macs there. The first columns were titled,

Did You Check the Plug? simply because that's what was decided by RD Novo, for those of you who remember him.

Shortly thereafter, I decided to don the superhero guise of MacMan, and we rebranded, I guess would be the right word, the column MacMan to the Rescue. This continued for awhile, until I realized that my true calling was reporting on advances in technology related to The Mac, and The Hollywood Industry. Which as you know, should not be confused with The Business.

The convergence of technology and Hollywood continues today, to the point of where my experience has given me a unique perspective. Just like everybody else. It was then I retitled the column, On A Clear Day, You Can See The Hollywood Sign. I'm going to have my graphic designer daughter create a new logo for me at some point, as I wish to continue in this vein elsewhere.

That's right, this will be the last issue of ATPM that you may read, even if it is your first issue. However, that doesn't mean that I've stopped writing. The various links provided above will lead you to various other sites that I write for on more than an occasional basis, as I did here over the last few years. Writing on an occasional basis, that is.

I'm not going to say that I'll miss the monthly deadlines, simply because when I was almost hitting them, I sort of ignored them entirely. Some would tell you that having a deadline is a good thing, simply because you can't do everything at once and get it done unless you've set a finite goal. This will make sense to some of you. Others will tell you that great artwork is never finished, it is only abandoned. My YouTube channel will prove this one out at some point.

Others will tell you that you should be writing everyday. (Or is it every day? I never got those two straight.) Still others tell you that you should write only when you have something to say. Well, I fall somewhere in between, simply because I have to carve out a living somehow, and the things I write about may or may not get me hired to shoot your next movie, TV show, or more likely, YouTube video.

A list would seem appropriate here. Most of my time is spent at the site at the top of it, as that's my ministry site (donations gladly accepted and encouraged). And I've already provided some of the links above, however, they'll appear here, too. Simply because I hear SEO exists.

- My 168 Project (Not to be confused with, The 168 Project)

- Who is the Watchmaker?

- This is a Job For. . .

- The Random Rant

- The Rant

- Follow me [on Twitter](#)

- Hire me [on LinkedIn](#)

- Watch me [on YouTube](#)

I also have a Posterous, Tumblr, and even a Typepad blog; however, I usually only use those to repost or retweet others' content. Fair warning, I've been known to tweet more than average, simply because I believe Twitter at its base to be a global chatroom. Others will tell you different, and they'd be wrong. Or right. Twitter is what it is, and that may be different for you. Follow me if you'd like. I may or may not follow you back, simply because that's my rule.

On [LinkedIn](#), I have over a thousand connections that have yet to get me anything resembling permanent employment, however, as an independent filmmaker who acts occasionally, that's not a goal. Unless of course one of you is willing to offer me a studio deal. It's more likely that you need a creative consultant, and my rates are reasonable. Unless you need an actor, at which point I work for scale plus ten, which is also somewhat affordable, depending on what your project is.

So, if you've read this far, and I hope that you have, I can finally admit I have more than three readers. It was a joke that I wrote a long time ago, that I liked and kept. I probably will continue to do so on most of the sites above. But not here, as you know, this is the last published issue of ATPM. Therefore, I'll sign off with a somewhat unusual disclaimer that you may or may not have seen before.

72 and sunny in Redondo Beach.

That's my story. Hope you enjoyed it.™

Mac About Town

by Mike Chamberlain, mike.chamberlain@mac.com

What a Ride! And It Ain't Over Yet!

When Michael Tsai asked if I wanted to reflect on how different my digital life was today than when ATPM began publishing, my first thought was of my basement. Down there, in a dark corner, is a stack of boxes containing all the things that were stored because I "might need them some day." The contents are the detritus left in the wake of the sometimes feeble, often foiled, but occasionally successful attempts to connect everything, to sync everything, to make the interface between me and my Mac more smooth (or, let's admit, more "cool"). They are the things that I explained to my spouse as things I "needed," but which she could never get to work.

Among the items are sync cradles for my Palm Tungsten (one for the office, one for home) along with the MarkSpace software that I used to sync to the Mac OS because Palm software wouldn't work. There is another kit of accessories for my Sprint Treo, which was intentionally crippled to keep everyone on the reservation. There's a power cord for the 500 (or was it 250?) MB drive that I used to carry files back and forth between work and home. There is even an old Bondi blue–colored trackball that I got because it seemed that swiping my fingers across something was a bit easier than moving a mouse around.

A box of CDs holds the programs that I "needed" along with the codes to run them. They are, of course, almost all stand-alone programs. There is little capability for networking. There is, strangely, also a small box of 3.5-inch floppies with my archived Quicken (remember when they used to like us?) financial files. You never know when someone might need that stuff. Hope they bring a drive and some fancy software!

There are some things that are not in the basement: my AOL account (I had mail!), back issues of much beefier *Macworld* magazines, the computers that I always sold to pay for the extra RAM on the new ones: a Motorola clone, a sexy black MacBook, G4 tower, swivel screen iMacs, etc.

So what has changed? Pretty much everything, actually. Syncing is something I don't think much about anymore. I know that the calendar, contacts, mail, and just about everything else I want is the same on my phone, tablet, and computer. I can control my music and my video from my phone and not because I was able to jury-rig a proto-solution but because "there's an app for that!" My photo files are an eclectic mixture of shots from my Nikon D90 and a very impressive iPhone 4S camera. Everything in my personal files and my work files is in the cloud, where I host or participate in numerous shared files that facilitate life and work. When I upgraded to an iPad 3 last month, all I needed to do was identify myself and then let the cloud repopulate all my preferences, settings, and programs. When I walk out the door tomorrow to head for Tampa, I'll be carrying an iPad and phone and

have access and practical use of everything in my digital life. It's beyond syncing. It's omnipresence.

What else has changed? I see a lot more Apple logos out there. When I arrived at my latest assignment and told them that I didn't do Windows, I was the odd duck. Today, half the people around our leadership table are using Apple products of one kind or another. Now I'm the Apple advisor. I have gotten to watch the adoption phenomena personally as my spouse has gone all-in for the mobile life. First it was watching me with my iPhone 3G and deciding that it might be something she would use. Later, it was saying that the Wi-Fi iPad just wasn't doing it for her and she needed 3G capability and, by the way, could we boost the RAM please? From no tech to tracking me on my travels using [Life360](#) she is living proof that when it "just works" things change. (The down side of that, by the way, is that the whole trickle-down tech strategy doesn't work so well anymore. Now she wants the new stuff too. No one said that change was easy!)

Is there still a way to go? Without question. Will it be fun getting there? Absolutely!

I just hope that there continues to be the kind of interested and energized base of Mac enthusiasts that have gathered in the conversation in the ATPM community.

Thanks all for the conversation and camaraderie everyone and thank you, Michael, for your leadership and care of our community.

What Trick, What Device, What Starting-Hole...

Last week saw us in the garden of the cottage we had rented on a farm in Suisse Normande. The weather was an unseasonable 28°C and the air full of the sights and sounds of a working cattle farm. To Philippe the farmer, the malodorous scent of his Limousins was money in the bank. To us, the be-horned girls in the field looked threatening and highly frisky. One in particular took off at an incredible speed if I stopped to look at her. But then, I was wearing a calf skin jacket.

For the first time on holiday, we both had iPhones and Pads with us. My 4S was easily able to pick up a signal and surf the Web, but neither of my partner's 3GS or Samsung Galaxy Tab could connect. Thus, my phone become the personal hotspot, and I paid the (now much lower) data roaming charge for us all.

Crossing borders in Europe can still mean that, on one side, data is part of your package, while across the invisible line it is charged for at an enormous price. Luckily, the European Parliament has decreed that this rip-off will end, and costs are sinking titanically.

Looking at our multi-function devices and how small and powerful they are, we would never have guessed what our 1980s cameras, music players, mobile phones, and personal computers were going to evolve into.

At that time, a mobile phone was barely that, some units needing a shoulder strap for the battery pack or having to be fitted into a car. The smallest still weighed about the same as a brick. Sony was the world leader in mobile music, with their Walkman series of cassette and CD players. Portable computers of the 1980s were the size of a briefcase, or incredibly expensive and the stuff of NASA and the military.

Apple showed the way with the Macintosh Portable in 1989. When it was released, Apple was working on the Newton MessagePad, followed by the first PowerBook. In each case, and like their operating systems, Apple's designs have defined the form that others emulate. After that first PowerBook, the shape of a laptop computer has changed little, which must be the only time Apple made a device that was considerably cheaper and more advanced than its competitors. Before the iPhone, most cellphones were clunkers and definitely not smart.

Apple's first device to beat all others into submission was the iPod. Instead of walking around with a selection of your music collection, you could have the entire library in your pocket. Then came the iTunes Store. The rest, as we know, is history.

But where next? The cellphone is pretty much defined. I don't want a smaller one because of the screen size, and the same for an iPad for the opposite reasons. iPods too are tiny, and it would be too difficult to watch movies if their screens were any smaller. Currently there is little Apple can do to improve on the existing hardware range except to make them faster with better screens and larger memories.

This is where Apple is ahead of the competition. Instead of trying to evolve the iPad into a new form factor, Apple is concentrating on the operating system and applications. There are manufacturers around the world who may improve on Apple's basic hardware design. If they do, Apple can incorporate new ideas into its products; but in the meantime, the competition has only nascent levels of an integrated suite of applications and online stores to sell through.

If a cheaper Pad comes out, Apple has the scope to cut the price of the iPad 2 to compete, without hemorrhaging iPad 3 sales. When the iPhone 5 arrives, Apple will probably keep the 4S and even the 3GS as possible price points to compete with other manufacturers. As Apple's products are already made abroad, it is unlikely that their competition will be on price alone.

In a recent interview, Samsung's vice president for design, Lee Minhyouk, admitted that he was trying to find "the next big thing" and that he admired Apple. Admired so much, perhaps, that he emulated their designs, too. When I saw the prototypes for what became Galaxy phones and Tabs, they appeared to be all but slavish copies, as many courts have agreed since then.

In the meantime, it's fun waiting for that next big thing to come along.

The Last Action

When Your Task List Is Empty

I think deep in my subconscious I saw it coming.

A few weeks ago, Michael Tsai, who has faithfully and relentlessly led the efforts to publish ATPM every month for, well, I think always, sent out an e-mail announcing that the leadership was agreed that the time had come to bring the publication to a close. Sad news for all; I've been writing for ATPM for about six years, and while regular readers will recognize that it has been a long time since my last installment, I still consider my column active. I've had several new articles in various stages of planning for months, and it is my time—not my interest or ideas—that are lacking for the new content. It seems I'm not the only one with the problem of having more ideas than time to write them; I had noticed the trends that Michael and the others cited leading up to the decision. Still, a lack of surprise on my part doesn't mean I'm happy about it!

So, with a certain amount of dazed grief, I've been thinking about what I might write for a final article for the last few weeks. Truth be told, I've considered writing a farewell piece for some time, and allowing the *Next Actions* column to go dormant or inviting someone else to take it over. There's some relief in this: that the items on my task list which have been "on hold" can now be cleared off, and after this submission that part of my writing tasks will be empty.

Continuing With GTD

As I consider the life of this column (and my interaction with this subject matter preceding my time with ATPM), it seems to me that the GTD principles and processes remain consistently useful and applicable in daily and weekly usage. It's been 10 years since I first picked up David Allen's book, and I continue to marvel at the simplicity and timelessness in its wisdom. While adaptations are needed for a culture of changing technology (and thus the rationale for this column in the first place), my sense is that Allen's GTD will appeal to my children's generation as it has our own.

Nevertheless, if you're like me, you find that your GTD practice can start to slip...slowly at first...then suddenly you realize that you haven't done a review in days, or even weeks. Or maybe you look down and see your physical tickler file is still on last month, even though you've done pretty well keeping up the digital tasks. And at times over the past several years, my week-by-week duties and tasks were so routine that I simply didn't need a task list; simply knowing what day of the week it was told me 95% of how I would ordinarily

spend the day—and the 5% variations were so impromptu and high-priority that they didn't need to be recorded on a list.

That's not the case anymore, though. I've re-entered the GTD fray in full force, and I've found the Web site RestartGTD to be a great help in re-entry. If you struggle (occasionally or perpetually) to stay on the GTD wagon, I recommend this blog to help you when you've fallen off.

My goal in this column has always been two-fold: first, to offer reflections on how computer users, and especially Mac/iOS users, might utilize the principles and practices of GTD in a digital context; and second, to consider (in an ongoing manner) the software tools that are available to do this more fully, and how those tools have evolved. I like to think that I've been able to do that, insofar as time and energy has allowed me to do it. I hope that, like David Allen's book, the few thoughts I have had here might have a usefulness that outlasts publication date. To that end, I am grateful that this body of work—and the many, many other helpful articles and reviews in the ATPM archives—will in some way continue to be available online.

A Last Look at the Landscape

When my first article in the *Next Actions* column appeared in February of 2007, it was a thrilling time for a geek like me to be watching and considering the technology innovations that made GTD more efficient. It seemed like a new application, Web-app, or scripted document appeared on the scene almost every week, and the diversity of these tools seemed to offer something for nearly every level of GTD user. At the same time, most of the software tools that are prominent today were not yet available. The Omni Group's OmniFocus, for example, wasn't even a twinkle in Ethan Schoonover's eye, though his elaborately scripted OmniOutliner document, entitled Kinkless GTD, was popular, mature, and an important precursor of what was to come.

Leaping forward five years, now many of those tools that along the way appeared (to me and others) to be the best options for GTD on the Mac have either faded into obscurity (witness Frictionless, Actiontastic, Ghost Action), absorbed into other projects (Kinkless GTD, iGTD), or somehow never quite delivered on their promises to continue innovation and updates (Midnight Inbox, Mori/mGTD). Others have seized opportunities to span across platforms and have surprised me with their emergence into prominence (like Remember The Milk and ToodleDo). And, of course, new tools have come onto the scene.

I could be wrong in my read on this—after all, my attention to the ongoing development of all of these apps has waned severely over the years—but it seems that today's useful GTD software ecosystem needs at least three things going for it: it must have a certain capacity to allow flexible, easy, and relatively streamlined use in daily/weekly practice; it needs a presence on one or more mobile platforms (iOS, Android, etc.), the more the better; and it has to be able to synchronize tasks, notes, completions, assignments, etc. across these different iterations. Important, also, is that development must be ongoing at all levels, at least as far as support for new OS releases and features go.

While the "master list" would still be quite long, the volatility and competition of the "early days" (maybe 2005–2007?) seems to me to be long-gone. In terms of stand-alone applications, I believe that most (80–90%) Mac users who are doing GTD are probably on one of three ecosystems: Hog Bay Software's TaskPaper (for the barebones, scaled-down approach), Cultured Code's Things (a highly "Mac-like" and more elaborate, but not more complicated approach), and The Omni Group's OmniFocus (for the all-out, high-powered and full-featured approach). All of these offer both Mac and iOS versions, and in each case synchronization among devices is pretty seamless. I could be wrong about my percentages, as this is based merely on anecdotal evidence; feel free to tell me how wrong I am in the comments!

As for me: I've tried to dodge discussing my personal preferences for software for the 5+ years I've written this column, as I wanted to avoid any appearance of, well, preference. It won't hurt anything to state them now, though. I've tried almost all of the applications and Web-services available, if only for an hour or two to get a feel for them and be able to summarize them adequately; some of them have impressed me enough to try them further. Very early on, I landed on EasyTask Manager and used it exclusively for a while, before switching to Kinkless GTD. At one point I tried to go all-in with Midnight Inbox, and later with iGTD. And for the sake of fairness, I have used both Things and TaskPaper as "my system" for a couple of weeks. Ever since it has been out, though, I've kept coming back to OmniFocus, and it is what I've committed to for now.

I love OmniFocus's cross-platform ecosystem: I do my weekly reviews and project planning in the desktop version, as well as task management when I'm using my Mac (probably about 65% of my workday, typically). I love having my lists with me on the go with my iPhone, and I use the quick-entry and task inbox fairly extensively there, in addition to checking off completed items when my MacBook Pro isn't in-hand. Then I use the iPad version for daily reviews and occasionally for more in-depth re-organization, and also when I'm in meetings. For me, OmniFocus (in all of these versions, and with the toolset that it offers) is everything I need, and it can be—and is—almost always with me.

Thanks

Finally, I want to offer my warmest and most sincere thanks to all of you readers, including my fellow ATPM staffers, and especially to Michael Tsai and Chris Turner as the Publisher and Editors. Thanks, also, to Paul Fatula for facilitating many review licenses and other delights. Chris L., Linus, Ellyn, Brooke, and Lee, your work in polishing and preparing my column and others' has been invaluable and deeply appreciated. All of you have made our time together as a writing staff always educational, always gracious, always hospitable, and always a true pleasure. Readers, thank you for your time, attention, and frequent input. Staff, I hope that all of your writing endeavors may be as rich and favorable as ours has been with ATPM, and I look forward to the hope of possible future collaborations together. Blessings to you all.

35

Finales, Friendships, and the Future

Thus, we arrive at the end of the road. Two constants in life are change and death, and this is a bit of both for the staff of *About This Particular Macintosh.* This is our final issue. As Michael stated in the publisher's letter, the site will remain, offering a glimpse to future Mac users into what our computing world was like from 1995–2012, at least from the perspective of this handful of real-world users.

It is because of this handful of real-world users that this has been a difficult column to write. To be honest, this has been a difficult issue to edit. As noted elsewhere, for many of us, working on ATPM has been a lengthy relationship. For me, this is the second-longest relationship I've had, behind my marriage, which is only six years older than my time here on staff. The people here at ATPM are my friends, and while that aspect will not change for us in the foreseeable future, there is still a sadness about the end of the thing which brought us together in the first place.

Looking back on the 14 years I've been on staff, my colleagues and I have shared in marriages, deaths in families, children born and adopted, new jobs, new ventures, entirely new careers, moves, and even an appearance on a nationally televised prime-time game show. Despite most of us having never met in person, it's been quite remarkable how much life we've done together.

Eric Blair holds the distinction as the first ATPM staffer I ever met in person. I was in New York for a Macworld Expo, and Eric took the train down from Boston for a day. Former managing editor Daniel Chvatik was the next staffer I met. I have long referred to Tom Iovino as my "birthday paisano." For myriad Web-related questions, I've got a scrappy Tasmanian to call upon in Raena Armitage, on the other side of the world. More than one of our online chats has begun with my asking, "So how's tomorrow going?" I've watched, virtually, of course, as Grant Osborne partnered with friends to launch a company and a Web site they were truly passionate about.

The first time I met our publisher and fearless leader, Michael was picking me up at the airport in Connecticut, so the two of us could attend Rob Leitao's wedding. So many of Rob and Sandy's families marveled at the two guys "Rob knew through the Internet" being at his wedding, but for us, it was a no-brainer. The three of us had grown close in the virtual world, and we wanted to celebrate this joyous occasion with our friend. I will never forget the arcade in Rob's mom's basement, or going through the Danbury Railway Museum with Michael. A couple of years later, when my family found itself vacationing in New England, Michael spent a day showing us around parts of New Hampshire and Vermont.

I'm sure if we pulled out 14-year-old e-mails and chat logs we could figure it out, but my own memory fails to reveal exactly how Lee Bennett and I began our road to friendship. But it's through 14 years of e-mails and chats that Lee became my best friend in the online world. So much so that when a work convention brought him to the Dallas area, he carved out an evening to come visit us at our home. And there was the day spent with us at Disney World a couple of years after that. And when it came time to try out FaceTime, Lee was the first person I called. So when, two years ago, he told me he was getting married, my wife, after being informed, only asked "So what day do you think you're going to fly out?"

And as if enough of the staff weren't becoming friends over time, we imported our non-ATPM friends to contribute. Daniel's friend Jens Grabenstein contributed reviews and desktop pictures in the early part of the 2000s, and "came back" last year with another desktop picture set. I once interviewed my font-creating friend Dan Bailey. I recruited my pal Tom Bridge to write for us, and local friend Kevin Rossen as well.

While I am proud of every issue I've worked on these past 14 years, what I take away from ATPM as we close the door on monthly publishing is so much greater than the sum of all of those. Five, ten years from now, I'm sure I won't remember most of what we published. But I know the friendships I have made through being part of this amazing publication will endure, and flourish. And as we close this door on part of our past, that's a future I look forward to.

Copyright © 2012 Christopher Turner.

How Cool Is Your Mac?

When I began this column, the word *paradigm* seemed to fit what I planned to write about. Now that word has become something of a cliché. The dictionary definition is the same, but its meaning feels different. So it is with personal computing. A Mac is still a Mac, but much has changed since ATPM began. Most obvious are the changing fortunes of Apple itself. In 1995, Steve Jobs was still alive, but Apple Computer (as it was then called) was headed by Michael Spindler. The company was routinely described as "beleaguered" and near bankruptcy or for sale to Sun Microsystems (which is now part of Oracle). Its products were beloved but relatively expensive and crash-prone. In 2012, Apple, led by Tim Cook, is riding a wave of success, and a *Macworld* columnist recently wondered whether the B-word might now apply to Microsoft.

The business changes have been well chronicled, but I'd like to focus on how the details of the personal computing experience have changed. The first issue of ATPM included a fun feature article by Danny Novo called "How Cool Is Your Mac?":

> Do you want to know if it's time to upgrade? Are you interested in how your computer stacks up to the competition? Use this handy scoring guide to determine how cool your computer is. First consider your current setup, the computer, what peripherals you have attached, and so on. Write down your coolness factor. If you have more than one computer, you can add their scores together to achieve a household coolness rating. Then do the same for any computer you might buy as a replacement.

Let's see how many of these questions are still relevant today and discover what they tell us about the advancements that have been made.

Out of the Box
1 point for being a computer. They are inherently cool.

Apple still makes computers, and it still calls them Macs, but computers no longer generate the majority of the company's revenue.

1 point if it has a colorful, rainbow-striped apple on the outside. After all, we pay for it.

The Apple logo is no longer rainbow-striped. Apple no longer sells low-end computers, and its premium products are reasonably price-competitive.

1 point if it runs the Macintosh operating system.

Mac OS X is certainly the Macintosh operating system in spirit, although most of the code is now different.

1 point if your computer is an all-in-one design.

All-in-one Macs had been mostly phased out by the mid-90s. Now the vast majority of Macs are again all-in-one.

1 point if both a keyboard and a monitor came with your computer. We want to encourage this kind of behavior on Apple's part. Selling incomplete machines is not cool.

The Mac mini is "bring your own keyboard, mouse, and screen" by design. All other Macs now come with a keyboard and mouse or trackpad. Notebook computers, once a small minority, are now the biggest sellers, and they, of course, have integrated keyboards and trackpads.

1 point if it has an internal hard drive. I learned my "Mac SE with two 800K floppies" lesson.

All Macs now have internal mass storage, but solid-state drives (SSDs) are supplanting hard drives.

1 point if it has a pre-installed CD-ROM drive.

For many years, all Macs included CD-ROM drives (or SuperDrives). Now the MacBook Air and Mac mini no longer include optical drives, and there's speculation that they'll soon be removed from some MacBook Pro models. Unlike with the floppy drive, I doubt most people will even complain.

1 point if it has a PowerPC inside.

All current Macs now include Intel processors. Apple's PowerPC emulator, Rosetta, became an optional install with Mac OS X 10.6, and it was removed entirely from Mac OS X 10.7.

1 point if you can turn your computer on from the keyboard. This is way cool.

This stopped being possible when I switched to a wireless Bluetooth keyboard.

Points for Your Stuff

1 point if you have a printer attached to your computer.

In 1996, my HP printer was connected via a PhoneNET adapter to a LocalTalk network. Today, I use a Brother printer connected via USB, although many people now connect to printers via Wi-Fi.

1 more point if your printer is a laser printer.

The resolution has improved from 600×600dpi to 2400×600dpi.

1 more point if your printer is a color printer.

I still have a black-and-white printer. I print color photos from my Mac over the Internet. A few days later, I receive an envelope of prints in the mail.

1 point for every other peripheral attached to your computer. This includes stereo speakers (not built-in speakers), external storage devices like hard drives or tape drives, modems, CD-ROMs, a coffee pot, whatever. Sorry, your mouse doesn't count.

Computer speakers are now connected via USB or wirelessly via Bluetooth. External storage devices and modems are no longer necessary for most Mac users. After many years of poor designs, Apple once again makes excellent keyboards. Third-party mice remain popular.

1 point for every 8 MB of RAM (or fraction thereof) installed in your computer.

My Mac now has 8 *gigabytes* of RAM installed. Software now runs with 64-bit addressing to take advantage of large amounts of RAM.

1 point for every accelerator card installed, making your Mac faster than others of its ilk.

Believe it or not, Apple once made Macs with upgradeable processors. Now it no longer considers *batteries* to be user-replaceable parts.

1 point for potential coolness if your computer has empty expansion slots.

The 17-inch MacBook Pro and the Mac Pro are the only remaining Macs with expansion slots. As of this writing, it has been more than 20 months since Apple updated the Mac Pro, and there are persistent rumors that the product will be discontinued.

1 point if your computer is part of a local area network (LAN).

All Macs now ship with built-in wireless networking. Some Macs no longer have built-in connectors for wired networks.

Points for Blatant Excess

1 point for every 100 MB of unused hard disk space.

My MacBook Pro currently has about 60 GB of free space.

1 point for every extra monitor attached to your Mac.

You used to need expansion slots to attach external displays. Many Macs now have an internal display as well as a port for attaching an external one. There's no longer a display penalty for using a portable computer, as even the lowest-end MacBook Air can now drive a 30-inch external display. It's also possible to use an iPad as an external display.

2 points if you've dispensed with a modem completely and use ISDN instead.

Apple recently discontinued its modem product. DSL, cable, and FiOS have supplanted ISDN.

1 point if your computer answers your telephone.

I no longer have a landline. However, my cell phone runs a variant of Mac OS X called iOS.

1 point for each additional processor in your computer. That includes the DOS on Mac card from Reply Corp. and PowerPC upgrades that keep your original processor in place.

All Macs now include at least one dual-core processor.

1 point if you have foot-actuated rudder pedals for that complete flight simulation experience.

Accelerometers are more common today than dedicated game controllers.

1 point if your Mac actually answers when you talk to it.

Speech control of Macs hasn't changed very much. The iPhone 4S includes Siri, which is far more advanced.

1 point if you have the Apple TV Tuner card and refuse to watch normal TV anymore.

TV tuners are no longer necessary, as Apple and many other companies make video available via the Internet.

1 point if your monitor tracks you as you walk around your room. Not that I've seen this, but it would be cool, no?

Most Macs have built-in iSight cameras, and there's an app called Witness that acts as a home alarm system and has motion detection for human faces.

Points for Trying

1 point if your computer is over five years old, and yet you still use it regularly. (Keeping important papers from blowing away in a stiff breeze does not constitute regular use.)

People used to upgrade their computers multiple times to extend their useful lives. Lately, processors have been improving at a slower rate so that an un-upgraded five-year-old computer is no longer hopelessly slow. On the other hand, Apple has been more aggressive about phasing out OS support for older hardware. Mac OS X 10.7 Lion did not work with top-of-the-line Power Mac G5s that were then five years old.

1 point if you still haven't upgraded to a color Macintosh.

The only non-color device that I now use is a Kindle.

1 point if you have resisted owning a Microsoft-compatible machine, too. It's okay if they force you to use one at the office; we can't punish you for the corporate nincompoops you work for.

Thanks to Intel processors and Boot Camp, all Macs can now run Windows.

1 point if you think your Newton is so good, you don't need a computer.

Long-time Mac writer Andy Ihnatko recently discussed how his mobile computer of choice is now an iPad. And, surprisingly, I recently read about someone who was still using a Newton.

5 points if you still don't own a computer (and you're using someone else's to read this). It's getting to the point where ignoring the information superhighway (and its attendant metaphors) is retro-chic, and that's sort of French for "cool."

At the D8 conference, Jobs said that computers were like trucks and that in the future, many people won't need one.

About My Particular Macintoshes

1999: the last year of the last century—or not, depending on where you start counting—was the year I bought my first Mac and wrote my first *Segments* piece for ATPM. Apple was still in transition in 1999. Steve Jobs had returned to the fold a mere three years earlier, and the iMac had put Apple back in the forefront of personal computing for the first time in a decade. The nadir of Apple had passed, and the once-beleaguered company was on its way back to financial success and cultural dominance. This path has been chronicled in many publications including this one, and now as the run of ATPM draws to a close, I offer my own look back: at three great computers and at one great publication.

Macintosh the First: Blue-and-White G3 (1999–2003)

The desktop that ended the reign of the "beige box." I remember the condescending remarks when the Blue-and-White G3 first came out: "Isn't it cute? It looks like an iMac!" I also remember wanting one as soon as I saw it. I'd worked for years on beige boxes—in studios and in computer labs—going all the way back to the Mac SE in 1987, and to be honest I was sick of beige. Such a bland color; unworthy of an operating system as innovative as the Mac OS and a company as innovative as Apple. But then again, beige might have been the perfect color for the Sculley-era Apple. Bland, boring, and passé. The future was Windows: every bit as boring, but a whole lot cheaper. Then came the iMac.

I loved the look of the iMac—think different, look different, be different—but I had no interest in buying one. I wanted to interface with external audio hardware, and in 1999 that required PCI slots. The G3 had three, and I was hooked. I also had money—a rarity for a grad student—and was looking to buy my first computer and spend less than 12 hours a day on campus. I bought it that summer through the University Bookstore, and saw a lot less of the Music School's computer lab after that. I can't say I missed it.

The Blue-and-White G3 was my computer through the rest of graduate school, and it was a great computer for its time: a 350 MHz PPC CPU, with a 6 GB HD, 1 GB RAM (maxed out), and an internal Zip drive. I added a MIDIMan multichannel PCI sound card and I was set. The G3 got me through school, gave me the means to create my first CD, and was a bridge to my involvement with ATPM.

I never would have joined the ATPM staff—or probably even become a regular reader—without a Mac of my own. Yet in the fall of 1999, I was given a platform to voice my opinion on what at the time seemed like a pressing issue: floppy disk authorization.

By the way, this is point at which anyone under the age of twenty asks: "What's a floppy disk?"

Following the success of the iMac, the Blue-and-White G3 was the first "professional" desktop computer to dispose of this formerly ubiquitous but outdated peripheral device. Looking back, it's a wonder why it took this long. 1.4 MB of storage? Really?

The good news—for those of us who owned boxes of 3-1/4-inch floppies—was that a market for external USB floppy drives quickly sprung up to meet the demand. They even came in color schemes designed to match the new iMacs and G3s. The bad news—for those of us who also owned software requiring key disks—was that key disks didn't work on external floppy drives. Of course, companies quickly solved the problem, as nothing motivates a business more than the possibility of lost sales.

The best news—for me—I got my first *Segments* piece published, which led to more segments and, after a few months, a regular column. For a musician who'd never written anything for public consumption beyond college term papers and program notes, it was a big opportunity. For the editors of ATPM, it was a big chance on someone they didn't really know, and I am grateful to them for giving me that chance.

Macintosh the Second: PowerMac G4 (2003–2009)

"A New Computer, a New Column, a New Life." That's how I described the transition I made in 2003. I left school, I got engaged, and I bought a new computer to replace my hard-working but outdated G3. A PowerMac G4: Dual 1 GHz CPU, 80 GB HD, 512 MB RAM (expanded to 2 GB within the year), and a fan that sounded like a jet at takeoff: "WOOSH!" It was nicknamed the "Windtunnel," but it was the one G4 that would dual boot into Mac OS 9 and Mac OS X—and I owned a lot of legacy software purchased at student pricing—so I traded quiet for convenience.

It was a transitional computer, and I was in a transitional phase myself. I was still writing music and still working in digital audio, but I was also designing Web pages and editing video. I was looking to teach with my degree, but I was also looking to create and make money at it if I could. The change of my column title most clearly reflected that. Beyond the Barline took an old computing paradigm—"beyond the box"—and placed in in the context of music: a "barline" separates measures of notated music. The Desktop Muse envisioned the computer as a creative tool regardless of the medium. From 2003 to 2005, I explored that concept both in life and in writing.

Then I became a father, and I had a whole new set of priorities. My time was far less my own, and I had to sacrifice some old commitments to make way for new ones. So I left ATPM at the end of 2005. I never expected to return.

Macintosh the Third: MacBook Intel Core Duo (2008—Present)

But I was still a Mac user, and when the time came to replace the G4 I looked in a whole new direction: portability. My daughter was two by this point, and I was out with her a lot more than when she was a baby. Having a laptop at hand was more than a convenience: it was a tether to the rest of the world and a means to maintain sanity. It also provided a platform for a new career direction.

In the last ten years, I had transitioned from graduate student to freelance composer, Web designer, and videographer to stay-at-home dad. Now I was beginning another transition: to writer. In 2009, I got the crazy idea to write a book, and I had the tool to do it: my MacBook.

2.4 GHz Intel Core Duo, 160 GB HD, and 2 GB of RAM (which I haven't needed to expand yet, though I'm thinking about it). It became my portable office—going wherever I needed to go—and my laptop muse. That would've made a great name for a column, but when I approached ATPM last year—looking for another outlet for my writing —I didn't ask for a column. I already had a blog where I could rant as much as I wanted. Instead, I asked to write reviews. I always enjoyed writing reviews for ATPM, and it seemed like a good opportunity to expand my clips.

And they gave me that opportunity once again. For the last year, I've written a review about every two or three months. I've wanted to do more, but I have so many writing commitments now that it's hard to fit them all in. I had hoped to do more, but neither I nor the publishers and editors at ATPM knew a year ago that this would be the last year of the publication.

The Future?

I'm not sure what it holds. I am hoping to get at least another year—possibly two—out of this laptop, which is why I'm considering doubling the RAM. Even after that, it might work well as a first Mac for my daughter. She currently has a rebuilt HP desktop at home, but uses both iMacs and iPads at school. By the time she's ready to move up—and old enough to be responsible for a laptop of her own—I may be looking to buy. Who knows?

As for ATPM, this is the right time and the right way to bring it to a close. It's been an amazing run: 17 years, of which I was present for a six-year stint at the turn of the last decade and then another year toward the beginning of this one. I'm glad I had a chance to make a contribution, however small, to this excellent publication.

I'm hoping for something new to take its place. The monthly e-zine format that was so cutting-edge in 1995 has reached the end of its days as a model for an online publication. I'd love to see a blog—and I know I'm not alone here—but it's up to the community as a whole—the publisher, editors, contributors, and readers—to decide together what if anything will come next.

No matter what, though, we'll always have the archives and the memories.

From the Darkest Hour

15 years ago, in the midst of Apple s darkest days, I became an IT guy. I went to work for Denison University's Help Desk as a front line tech. The iMac was still a gleam in an engineer's eye, Mac OS 9 was the law of the land, and things had never been more bleak. The cover of *Wired* magazine that summer was an Apple logo amid a crown of thorns. Pray, it exhorted the reader.

It's hard to believe that those days are foreign to so many users now. The days when to be a Mac user was to be among a small community hellbent on passionate use of their computers were a fine and interesting time when the hardware was beige, and the light gray of the Finder was a far cry from the polished brushed aluminum of Mac OS X. The Macs of 1997 were probably some of the worst that Apple ever produced. I know the all-in-one Performas that graced the labs at Denison were certainly fairly finicky, and they were very much awful to work on. My own Power Mac 8500/120 left a gash on my hand when I did some creative hardware disassembly hoping to replace the hard drive.

Steve Jobs would return to Apple in November of that year, and the turnaround was underway. Mac OS X was not far off, and the change to the Unix-backed platform was a period of adjustment for users, for programmers, for administrators, and for the marketplace.

It's amazing to think about the incredible evolution of the Mac in that lifespan, from beige to Bondi blue; from black plastic to titanium to aluminum and back to black plastic. More than that, Apple's focus toward the mobile environment has changed the appeal of Macs and how they have developed.

These days, I support more Macs than I ever knew I'd see in business 15 years ago. We've helped 40–50 businesses over the last few years integrate Macs into their daily lives, unboxing so many MacBooks, PowerBooks, iMacs, Power Macs and Mac Pros as part of the process. As Macs have grown in the corporate environment, the tools to weave them into the fabric of the business have grown, too. Tools like InstaDMG, Carbon Copy Cloner, Munki, and InterMapper make it easier to setup groups of Macs, keep them backed up on schedule, add updates and deploy applications, and keep the network straight.

A decade and a half has passed, whole new architectures exist for the Mac, and a whole new era of good mobile devices were crafted from thin air, but the Mac remains a stalwart of good computing. Here's to many more.

Growing Up With Apple

From time to time, I suppose no different from anyone else, I realize to my regret that I am no longer young. Indeed, the last I remember it was 1983. I belong to the last generation to come of age without computers—the so-called digital immigrants as distinguished from the digital natives. Thus my life can be defined by the evolution of technology.

I identify especially with Apple because the phases of my own experiences coincide with the phases of its corporate development. I was a rebel when Apple premiered its "Big Brother" Super Bowl advertisement, aired only once, and "Think Different" campaign, in black and white with images of great creative figures accompanied by actor Richard Dreyfuss voicing an alluring life philosophy. As Apple becomes accepted in the enterprise and achieves record stock prices, I find myself in management.

In junior high school circa 1978, technology meant a color-coded Mead Trapper Keeper folder system with its proprietary three-ring binder, college narrow-ruled paper, mechanical pencils with .5 mm lead, erasable ink pens, and Hubba Bubba gum (innovative because of its less sticky formula). It was the era when Sony introduced the original Walkman, Mattel and Coleco the handheld football game with LED blips representing players, and Atari and Intellivision the home videogame console. The best arcades in Ann Arbor offered as many as seven tokens for a dollar; the popular games were Space Invaders, Asteroids, Pac-Man, Millipede, and Joust. Cable television started to be installed in homes with the revolutionary MTV, enabling its "heavy rotation" of music videos to turn new artists into superstars. (I didn't have any of the toys, because my parents were as strict as they were frugal.)

When I was in high school, the Apple II was introduced. Geek chic began with a classroom featuring row upon row of the monitors displaying flickering green text, the beige machines with mechanical keyboards, and 5–1/4-inch floppy drives. The popular game titles included "Leisure Suit Larry," which was crude by multiple measures. The smartest hackers had pirated copies of "Donkey Kong" to share.

Almost nobody had an Apple II at home, though; we had the Texas Instruments TI-99-4 or the Commodore VIC-20 or 64; kids with more money might have an IBM PC Jr., the "Peanut." For a period, aficionados aspired to own an Amiga.

Back then, I programmed in BASIC on a Commodore bought on sale at K-Mart (it seemed half of the units that were sold were defective), saving a simple game with a bouncing ball that changed colors onto a cassette tape. A friend of mine, who grew up to became a technology entrepreneur, and I wanted to write a program to support hypertext. It proved beyond our capacity at the time and the display capacity of the time.

But the Apple II was the official computer for education. In my senior year, I was part of the team in an inaugural computer contest. Regrettably, that event marked the end of my programming career. I was unable to complete my assignment, which involved a mathematical calculation that contained a trap of a potential endless subroutine. As a consequence, the leading rival to our school won.

So I turned to other endeavors, primarily including writing. The advent of word processing programs, versus the dedicated Wang machines in the office where I worked as a temp, changed writing, too.

In my freshman year of college, the classic Macintosh debuted. Thanks to its mouse and other innovations, it signaled that science fiction had become practical reality. It boasted a 9-inch screen and 128K of memory, retailing for $2,495. It could not be upgraded, but if you opened up the case you could see the signatures of the original design team molded into it.

When I had my first paying internship at a newspaper, I saved all of my summer earnings to buy a Mac. By then, it was called the "classic Macintosh." Twelve weeks of writing was transformed into a new computer. That should have taught me the relative value of different professional pursuits.

In any event, all of my term papers, and the first draft of what would eventually become my book, were written on a Mac. I set it atop a stand-up desk. I felt as if I had arrived.

I wasn't as smart as I thought I was. I worked in an unheated backroom in the middle of the winter. The first time I left the Mac there overnight, it wouldn't boot the next morning until I had let it warm up several hours. That's when I realized the need to back up diligently.

Nonetheless, I left Apple when the late Steve Jobs left Apple. The portable line-up seemed overpriced, underpowered, and not suited for professionals.

So I digressed to a ThinkPad for a few years, until I had a bizarre accident that made it difficult to use the trademark keyboard pointing stick. My first laptop was a ThinkPad 701, the model with the butterfly keyboard that folded out to full-size atop a compact chassis. I carried it in a great ballistic nylon briefcase made by craftspeople in Vermont who had one of those charming advertisements in the back of *The New Yorker* magazine. When I was at work, my puppy slept in the open briefcase.

But one day, I saw a little piece of rice on the bathroom floor. When I went to pick it up, I found it was a very sharp piece of porcelain that must have been chipped off the toilet, and I suffered a tiny but deep puncture wound to my forefinger. Even after the injury healed, I suffered pain if I applied pressure to the tip of my forefinger.

As a consequence, I had to change to a different input device. I'd been skeptical of the precision of a touchpad. I was surprised when I tried it out.

As a Christmas present to myself, I bought a 15-inch Titanium PowerBook the week before they announced the new aluminum 13-inch and 17-inch models with basketball star Yao Ming and "Mini-Me" actor Verne Troyer. I was not savvy about the Apple product announcement cycle. Anyway, I spent the last week of the year transferring more than a decade of data.

The switch was great. The PowerBook was a beautiful machine. Its mid-century modern aesthetic made it iconic as well as iconoclastic. Mac OS X was a terrific new environment. The graphical user interface was perfected. I had suffered through the "I Love You" virus on the Windows, among other mishaps. I was able to stop calling tech support, except the one time a DVD was stuck in the optical drive (not an uncommon occurrence, it turns out).

The initial aluminum MacBook was more powerful than its predecessor, but not as elegant to my eye. The plastic edging on mine came detached from the top of the case. It was worse than a minor blemish, because my right hand rested where the edge was exposed—a sharp nuisance.

The unibody MacBook was my favorite—until the second generation of the MacBook Air. I use both now. Along the way, I have tried variations, including the all-in-one flat screen white iMac G5 (among the last of the PowerPC chip-based models) and the semi-authorized tablet-form Modbook.

I have signed up for Apple. There are few brands that are defining. And that is as it should be. Even as I have become less materialistic, understanding that the latest hardware will not improve my productivity as much as my own discipline, my loyalty to Cupertino has increased. No other logo promises as much or delivers as reliably, even taking into account the occasional flubs that are the price to pay for any early adopter.

Yet I have had to change my work style. In my current role, leading a major institution, I must be disciplined about maintaining meaningful human contact. In this job, I cannot be tapping away multi-tasking during meetings. That would be demoralizing to others and ineffective as a result. Instead, at the head of a conference table, I either write in an old-fashioned notebook with a fountain pen or memorize the few take-away points. Back in the office, I return to the computer that contains my life's work. It's all there, as intuitive as anyone could wish for.

We only become more like ourselves; we never change. My high school humanities teacher told me that. In three decades, I've changed, and I've seen such change. It's like replicant Roy Batty at the end of Blade Runner, describing what will be lost "like tears in rain" in that profound cinematic prediction of what was to come. With only a few interruptions, Apple has been a constant. As the last line of that Great American Novel, *The Great Gatsby,* declares, we are borne back ceaselessly into the past.

Recollections of ATPM by the Plucky Comic Relief

Back in the summer of 1997, I was browsing through my latest copy of The Info-Mac CD when I stumbled upon an e-zine, *About This Particular Macintosh* (ATPM). Dial-up download speeds were so slow at the time that the best way to get the latest copy of most shareware applications was to subscribe to some form of distributed media. My favorite was Info-Mac, a CD of the latest and greatest freeware and shareware distributed by Info-Mac and Pacific HiTech. They were attached to some of the Mac print magazines of the day, or you could buy them at your local Mac User Group meeting.

As I read through the ATPM articles, I thought I would like to print them, but when I tried, the pages didn't format properly. ATPM was published in a format developed by Green Mountain Software called DOCMaker. Written by Mark Wall, DOCMaker was a stand-alone document creator that was the perfect way to publish ATPM at the time and, along with Thorsten Lemke's GraphicConverter, is one of the most useful Mac programs ever written. Curious about how it worked, I bought a copy and attempted to learn its ins and outs. I e-mailed Michael Tsai, the publisher of ATPM, to see about a printer-friendly version of ATPM. It turns out that we were both learning DOCMaker at the same time and offered each other tips on getting the most out of it. That meeting prompted me to ask Michael if I might contribute somehow, and I ended up on the staff of ATPM for five years.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time working with people scattered all over the world who would come together virtually in the last week of every month to compile, edit, and publish ATPM, and many of the staff members became my friends. Mac OS 8 had just been released in the summer of 1997, and I was with ATPM through all the versions of Mac OS 8 and 9. There was much to discuss back then—from extension conflicts (remember those?) to the latest troubles of Apple Computer as it attempted to stave off bankruptcy. I published a number of reviews and opinion pieces for ATPM but was probably best known for my monthly ATPM Trivia Challenges where I tested readers' wits in a variety of subjects, both computer and real world. I also used the DOCMaker program to publish my own book, The On-Line Joke Book, from 1998 to 2001. I learned what Rob Mugele meant when he said, "Writing is nature's way of letting you know how sloppy your thinking is." I also found out that Michael knew his business, and he guided all of us to be better writers. Thanks, Michael.

But two things happened to shorten my time with ATPM. Mac OS X was released in the fall of 2000, my former Mac knowledge became less important to the news of the day, and I developed the feeling that technology was leaving me behind. Then, when September 11th occurred, I simply went into a funk for about six months. Realizing that the world would

never be the same for myself, my daughter, and her three children had a profound effect on me, and I couldn't justify writing a "fun" column any longer. So I resigned from ATPM. Of course, I eventually came to accept that we all must go on with our lives, and I decided to pursue other fields to satisfy my need to contribute and hopefully make the world a little better place.

And now we have the company Apple. No longer Apple Computer, it has gone on to be one of the richest companies in the world on the backs of trendsetting portable devices. I own none of them, since I only use a phone as, well, a phone. With the release of Mac OS X 10.7 Lion and the demise of Rosetta for using PowerPC applications, I am finished upgrading my Mac at OS X 10.6.8—and will stay there until I can no longer function, at which time I may have to convert to a Windows PC. The iOS-based Apple no longer fills my need as a platform, and I see no further reason to support it. Fortunately, I purchased a wonderful i7 iMac that runs Snow Leopard and Windows 7 with equal ease, so migrating won't be difficult.

I was saddened to hear of the end of ATPM. I have continued to download and peruse each issue since I left and can understand how hard it must be to remain relevant in today's microsecond attention-span world. I know how hard it was to put together and publish ATPM and am amazed that it lasted as long as it has at such a high standard of quality.

I would like to thank the tireless Michael for giving me the opportunity to discover that I could write a reasoned piece every once in awhile. And thanks as well to my good friends Evan, Daniel, Jamal, Robert Paul, Belinda, and others who helped me along the way. I miss all of you. And to the readers who took the time to read my articles, thanks for allowing me a chance to enter your life and for your e-mails of encouragement and offers to help.

Shrinking Into an Expanding World

It was probably around 1995 when I downloaded my first video clip from the Internet. On the dial-up modem of the time, it took forever—around an hour, from memory. Finally, though, the clip was on my computer, and I was able to play it in all its stuttering, jerky, postage-stamp-sized 30-second glory. I was thrilled.

But that was then, and this is now. And since I live in Wellington, New Zealand, my "now" is always the future for almost everyone else, thanks to a quirk of time zones. I'm living in tomorrow, today.

I love feeling as though I live in the future, and these days I spend a lot of time on the future's doorstep, thanks to a column called Tech Universe that I write for the *New Zealand Herald Online.* Every weekday I write up interesting tech that's being talked about online.

Sometimes those items are just reporting on the biggest, fastest, smallest doodads. Other times, they're things I suspect will change our universes as much in the next 20 years as the World Wide Web did back in the 90s. And the key seems to be our exploration of the tiniest elements of our world.

It's All So Small

We used to think micro stuff was small, but these days nano is in. 1 nanometre = 1 billionth of a meter. Nanoparticles are big these days.

- Scientists at Stanford University created spherical nanoparticles from gold coated with a metal called gadolinium and a layer of silica. The nanoparticles were shown to accumulate in cancer cells during tests on mice. Heated with laser pulses, the particles can be detected with a sonogram to produce real-time images of the tumour. That means surgeons should be able to accurately remove just cancerous brain cells, leaving the rest of the brain untouched.

- Researchers in Taiwan and the US found a way to use silicon dots only 3 nanometers in diameter for fast and efficient data storage that's stable and long-lived.

- Chinese chemical engineers created a self-cleaning fabric coated with nanoparticles that incorporate titanium dioxide, nitrogen ions, and silver iodide. The nanoparticles kill microbes when exposed to light.

- US scientists created a paint that generates power when exposed to light. The paint uses nanoparticles of titanium dioxide, coated with either cadmium sulfide or cadmium selenide.

What will be most exciting, though, is when clever people start combining disparate bits of technology. Can we imagine self-cleaning and self-powering clothes that store all the data from our day, for example?

Carbon Components

Nano stuff is happening everywhere, but of special interest in this realm are carbon nanotubes. These are cylindrical carbon molecules with all kinds of interesting properties such as thermal conductivity and strength. A carbon nanotube may be only 1 nanometer in diameter, though it may be very long.

Carbon nanotubes are being explored for diverse applications, including the following:

- as a source of incredibly strong cables for a space elevator;

- for converting body heat to electricity;

- for making artificial muscles for robot jellyfish; and

- for soaking up oil spills.

In fact, every other article about research and development in any field seems to mention carbon nanotubes or graphene (the new wonder substance and a component of carbon nanotubes).

Graphene Is Queen

Take a chunk of carbon. Peel off a layer that's only a single *atom* thick. Now you have graphene.

It sounds as if it's no more than just a thin chunk of carbon, but this stuff is powerful.

- Graphene paper from Australia is as thin as a sheet of paper, 6 times lighter and 6 times lower density than steel, but twice as hard and 10 times as tensile. What's more, it's eco-friendly. Graphene paper could be used for planes and other vehicles, with huge savings in weight, fuel use, and costs.

- Researchers at the University of Southampton created transistors from graphene by creating sharp bends and corners in bi-layer graphene nanowires. These transistors can switch very fast and open up the possibility of using graphene in computer chips.

- US scientists added graphene to lithium ion batteries so they charged quicker and held their charge longer.

- Graphene foam performs better than current sensors at detecting potentially dangerous and explosive chemicals, and it works at room temperature.

- The world's [thinnest sheet of glass](#) comes in at just 3 atoms thick. Scientists recently made it by accident while working with graphene. The ultra-thin glass, made of silicon and oxygen, could be used in semiconductor or graphene transistors.

Will we be seeing computers made of graphene paper, using chips made of the same stuff and with batteries that charge quickly and drain slowly because of the graphene? Will they be powered by our body heat, perhaps?

Atoms, Anti-atoms, and Photons

These days, scientists are working with individual atoms and even components of atoms, anti-matter, and individual photons. Graphene is only a single atom thick, for example, but other atom-sized work is also under way. Being able to detect and work with single photons opens up potential medical applications, enhanced sensors, and, it turns out, even the ability to see around corners. Working with components of atoms leads us into a new world of quantum computing too.

- Scientists at CERN managed to [trap and hold](#) 309 antihydrogen atoms for up to 16 minutes.

- The European [X-ray Free-electron Laser](#) will emit X-ray flashes a billion times brighter than those from conventional X-ray sources. That will mean 3D X-ray images of single molecules or the atomic details of viruses. 27,000 X-rays per second will be generated by a 3-km-long superconducting accelerator.

- A team at Columbia University has created [single-photon avalanche diodes](#) that detect individual photons. One application is specialised camera chips to measure fluorescence for medical purposes.

- When we look at the ocean, we see the sea, not the individual drops of water that make it up. In the same way, we see light all around us, but not photons. Researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) created a [camera that does see individual photons](#), as it captures 1 trillion exposures per second, but only in 1 dimension. It can see a burst of light travel the length of a soft drink bottle and back again.

- Take a very special camera that can fire pulses of laser light and then record with extreme accuracy how long the photons take to bounce back. By applying an algorithm to those time differences, the software can reconstruct items that are hidden by intervening objects from the camera's view. Scientists at MIT have used this technique to [see around corners](#). The camera fires 60 laser pulses, each to a slightly different position and each only 50 quadrillionths of a second long. The reconstruction algorithm then takes all the data and creates an image of what the camera can't see. The camera can record images every 2 picoseconds, the time it takes light to travel just 0.6 mm.

- [Silicon wires](#), just 4 atoms wide and 1 atom tall, can carry as much electrical current as copper wires, according to researchers from Australia and the US. The wires are made from chains of phosphorus atoms within a silicon crystal. This could be very useful for creating actual quantum computers.

- Random numbers are used for all sorts of purposes, such as air traffic control, electronic gaming, and encryption. But numbers generated electronically aren't usually truly random. Researchers at The Australian National University believe they've found a source of [truly random numbers](#) by using the noise in the vacuum of space. Vacuum is not completely empty, dark, and silent. Instead, sub-atomic particles spontaneously appear and disappear in it, creating random noise. The researchers are using that noise to generate their random numbers. Quantum theory apparently guarantees that such numbers will be unpredictable.

Quantum Weirdness

OK, I have to admit that quantum mechanics overheats my brain, but scientists are starting to use it to find new ways of doing things such as storing and moving information. [This video](#) may enlighten or further baffle you.

The thing is that quantum mechanics is starting to open up new worlds of possibility. At the level of the quantum tiny, physics is just different: things can be in two places at once, or "entangled," or in a state of potential, not settled until an observer gets involved.

This stuff is so new, so strange, so advanced that most of us can't even *begin* to imagine how it might be used in real life. One thing seems sure though: the silicon chip introduced a new era of computing; quantum mechanics and the work with photons will likewise utterly transform computing.

- The University of New South Wales is working on [quantum teleportation](#)—moving a complex set of quantum information from one point to another quickly and reliably. Researchers have now succeeded and maintained the integrity of transmission. This brings us another step closer to quantum computing.

- If you put a single molecule in a junction between a pair of gold electrodes to form a simple circuit and stretch it, conductance goes down. But if you stretch it enough, conductance rockets up, making it 10 times more conductive than if not stretched at all. It's all to do with quantum mechanics and reduced barriers to electrons tunneling through the molecule. This [finding](#) could allow new types of electronic devices.

- The Rainier processor in the [D-Wave One](#) computer system is designed to perform a single mathematical operation called discrete optimization. It does so alongside your normal computing platform running its usual operations. The superconducting 128-qubit processor chip is housed inside a cryogenics system within a 10-square-meter shielded room. To program the processor, you just need some basic quantum physics and machine learning skills.

- Quantum Locking is a new term to learn. It describes a phenomenon that will astonish you once you see its effects. Scientists at Tel Aviv University in Israel wrapped a thin superconductor around a crystal sapphire wafer and then froze it. Tiny imperfections allowed some magnetic forces through the superconductor in magnetic channels called flux tubes. The flux tubes lock the magnetic field in all three dimensions. That all sounds pretty dry, but what it means is that a disc that can levitate in a locked orientation. Tilt it and send it on a journey floating above a magnetic disc, and it will fly around without wobbling. Still sounds dull? Watch the video and you'll see why it's so amazing.

All Well and Good

The human body isn't really terribly large. When computers or sensors such as MRI machines fill whole rooms, we have to go inside the machine for diagnosis or treatment. But now everything's becoming so small that many devices can go inside us. Sensors to detect changes in body functions, targeted drug delivery devices, body-powered gadgets, and chips wired directly into our brains mean we can blend with the machine.

There are infinite exciting things happening in the world of medicine, but let's take a look at just a handful.

- A new technology takes stem cells from the healthy skin of burn victims, and, in the space of an hour or two, is able to spray the treated cells on the burned areas using a "skin gun." New skin grows in just a few days.

- US engineers are developing a tiny solar-powered sensor to be implanted inside the eye. It will monitor pressure to warn of glaucoma and wirelessly send data once a day to an external receiver.

- Researchers in the USA have created contact lenses—corrective or not—that a person can wear continuously for up to 30 days. The lenses release a controlled amount of a drug through a memory effect in the lens structure.

- Stanford University scientists can watch nerve cells and blood vessels inside the brains of living animals. They use a new endoscope—a needle only 500 to 1,000 microns in diameter at the tip and containing a carefully shaped lens. The needle can be inserted and removed as needed through a glass tube that stays embedded in the brain.

- The Implantable Neuro Sensing and Stimulation chip is a medical device about the size of the head of a match. Implanted in the spinal cord, it measures the properties of nerves carrying pain signals to the brain and can block pain signals with electric pulses.

- Surgeons sometimes like to take a look around inside your body before they cut you open. A new disposable camera is the size of a coarse grain of salt. The 1-mm-cubed microcamera fits on the tip of an endoscope. It has a resolution of 250×250 pixels and

transmits data through the endoscope via an electrical cable. Because the camera's disposable, it doesn't need careful and expensive cleaning after use, reducing costs.

And on the topic of health, how about those robots?

I Am the Robot

Robot drones are being used for law enforcement, military purposes, and exploration. But robots are also being used to more directly help people when it comes to health. From exoskeletons to chips in the brain, it's all happening in health care.

- The Ekso Bionics exoskeleton could help people with paraplegia to walk on their own. Exoskeletons are popular: there are half a dozen or more being developed and brought to market. This is just one of many.

- An Austrian man who lost the ability to move his right hand had it amputated. It will be replaced by a bionic hand controlled by signals from his brain. Sensors on his arm detect the signals and send them on to the hand. A similar operation last year helped a man who lost the use of one hand after being struck by lightning.

- The BioBolt is an implant that goes into a human brain. Unlike other such implants it doesn't penetrate the cortex and is covered over with skin. It's about the size of a coin and has a small film of microcircuits attached. The microcircuits detect patterns of firing neurons, amplify and filter the signals, then transmit them through the skin to a computer. Researchers hope to be able to send signals through the skin to a smaller device worn like jewellery, rather than a computer. Eventually they hope the BioBolt will be able to help paralysed people control their limbs through their thoughts.

- A proof of concept experiment at the Free University of Berlin had a driver control a car's travel simply by thinking of which direction to go. The driver first wore a special cap with sensors to detect brain patterns while training software to recognise specific thoughts. On a test-drive he was able to control the car's direction by thought alone.

- Back in 2005, a tetraplegic woman in the US had a tiny silicon electrode array implanted in her brain. It was part of a BrainGate system—hardware and software that senses signals from the brain connected with body movements. The system allows people to control computers, wheelchairs, or bionic limbs by thought alone. 1,000 days later, the electrode array was still working, though not perfectly. The woman and her electrode are still participating in trials even today.

- Researchers from Israel and the USA collaborated to create a robot that will be able to swim through the intestines and send back images. The microswimmer is the size of a large pill. This is different from current similar devices because its movements can be controlled so it can be directed to where it's most useful. Its copper and flexible polymer tail vibrates in response to the magnetic field created by an MRI scan and propels the device.

- Scientists at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, created a [sensor patch](#) filled with circuits. It can be applied like a temporary tattoo but doesn't need adhesives. Applied to the throat, it can detect spoken words and control a computer game. On other parts of the body it can record heartbeats, brain activity, or muscle contractions. The flexible and stretchy patch is powered by embedded solar cells or inductive coils; it is no thicker than a human hair. The patch falls off after a few days as the body naturally sheds skin cells.

- In Australia, the Monash Vision Group is working on a [bionic eye](#) to improve vision. A biologically inert chip is inserted into the brain but can be tuned up by doctors without further surgery. The chip receives wireless signals from a special pair of glasses that detect which way your eyes are looking and then turn a digital camera in that direction. The glasses process the camera signal and send it to the brain as electrical signals via the implanted chip. The chip directly stimulates the visual cortex and the wearer's brain eventually learns to interpret these signals as sight. Researchers hope to do their first patient tests by 2014.

A New Era

As I write my daily Tech Universe column, I see thousands of discrete items of information such as those listed above. Hundreds of thousands of people are working on tiny pieces of research. One finds a way to produce electricity by body heat. Another finds a way to make a camera small enough to fit in a grain of salt.

Others find that nanoparticles of gold will seek out a brain tumour, and others work out how to make it possible for a robot to walk up steps.

And from all those tiny discoveries—each in itself a huge piece of work, of course—creative folk will find ways to combine them to build devices that make our lives easier, better, or maybe just more fun.

Their discoveries will ease suffering, replace or augment our failing human abilities, allow us to explore new worlds—literally—or even just entertain us.

The silicon chip brought us computers. In the last 20 years, those computers have shrunk from filling a desk to falling out of our pockets. They've gone from standalone devices to connecting us full-time to those we do and don't know in person.

I believe the time of the now-familiar computer is almost gone. I can't imagine what will replace the Macs, iPhones, and iPads we now enjoy and how the new devices will change our lives.

But I can say that the new devices will be using nanoparticles and quantum effects to do their work. They'll rely on our new knowledge about how molecules, atoms, and photons work. They'll draw power from light, heat, and motion, and not just from a socket in the wall.

In times to come, the gadgets we use may move from our pockets to inside our bodies, perhaps even inside our brains, or perhaps just to a pair of glasses that tell us all we need to know.

We're on the threshold of a new computing age. What an exciting time to be alive!

Desktop Pictures

Parting Shots

This Month's Desktop Pictures

This month's desktop pictures were contributed by Mike Chamberlain.

These photos are from my collection over the past couple of years while traveling and always keeping an eye out for a good desktop. (Is that wrong?)

The first group is from a trip to Vietnam in the late summer of 2010. This was my second trip to Vietnam on the anniversary of my year-long tour during the Vietnam War. This trip was much more enjoyable and was a chance to spend time with the Vietnamese people who are unfailingly good-humored and gracious.

The second group are from travels in the US (these taken while in Florida and Colorado).

Last are two shots I took on Easter weekend while visiting an arboretum outside of Kansas City, Missouri.

All pictures were taken with a Nikon D90.

View Pictures

Ba Ca Market Heat A pile of Thai chilies mounded on a tarp at the Sunday open market in Ba Ca, Vietnam (NW Vietnam). For less than pennies, the woman tending the stand would sell a cup full of heat! The object was an image I could use on my computer, iPad, and iPhone. It has done all three.

Confucian Incense This picture was taken in a darkened temple in the middle of Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) during a driving thunderstorm. The incense and smoke wafted throughout the temple as petitioners came to present offerings and supplications to the gods.

Imperial Gate This imposing gate stands within the imperial city of Hue and has survived shelling by every military force that moved through the area. The entire imperial city is under renovation and offers a glimpse of the former dynasties of Vietnam.

Mekong River Greeting Traveling along the Mekong River, our boat moved past another carrying cargo and a family. This little girl ran the length of the boat and ducked under the blanket to say hello. One of the high points of a great trip.

Pearl Farm Ha Long Bay, east of Hanoi is a World Heritage Site housing breathtaking geology, floating villages, and industry. This is an active pearl farm. The pearl production area is to the right. The floating site at the center is the processing facility. The picture was taken in the late afternoon as we dropped anchor for a night's rest.

Sa Pa Mountains Sa Pa is a resort and retreat town in northwestern Vietnam. Access requires an overnight train trip from Hanoi. The area is known for its cool(er) temperatures and for the indigenous mountain tribes that inhabit its valleys. This is the valley of the Black Hmong though Red, Blue, and Flower tribes intermingle in the area. The colors are derived from their native clothing. This valley offers controlled access for hiking and visitation.

Rice Fields This picture was taken in the valley of the Black Hmong where every available parcel of land is cultivated for rice production. The man in the picture is tending his water buffalo (visible under the white banner) while it grazes the edge of the field. The rice can be seen to be getting heavy and is close to harvest.

Sponge Docks Tarpon Springs, Florida (NW of Tampa on the gulf coast) is home to a Greek community of sponge divers. Though the industry is not what it was in its heyday, there are still working boats like these and places where fresh sponges can be purchased. It's worth a trip and especially if good Greek food is something you appreciate.

Rocky Mountain Farmstead - 1 These old farm implements are at the entrance to a former working farm located in Rocky Mountain National Park. The picture was a chance to capture everything that is great about spending time in the mountains.

Rocky Mountain Farmstead - 2 The remainder of the perimeter fence of a farmstead in the valley on the western edge of Rocky Mountain National Park. On a clear day you *can* almost see forever!

Moss and Shadows On a walking tour of old mines near Frisco, Colorado, I came upon this rock outcropping nestled among the pines. The moss was bright against the shadows and, I confess, my first thought was of my desktop. Since then I have decided to print an enhanced version for my office.

Easter Orchid This orchid was part of a display in a hothouse I visited on Holy Saturday before Easter, 2012. The setting made it possible to achieve a blackened background

against which the naturally lighted flower could pop. The detail was possible by moving to the minimum focusing distance.

New Life A fitting springtime and Easter image that was taken on the Saturday before Easter, 2012 at Powell Gardens, Kingsville, Missouri.

Previous Months' Desktop Pictures

Pictures from previous months are listed in the desktop pictures [archives](#).

Downloading All the Pictures at Once

Some browsers can download an entire set of desktop pictures at once.

Safari Create a workflow in Automator with these three actions:

1. Get Current Webpage from Safari.
2. Get Image URLs from Webpage. Get URLs of images linked from these webpages.
3. Download URLs.

iCab Use the Download command to "Download all linked files in same folder" and configure the limits to download only the linked images.

OmniWeb Choose "Save Linked ▷ Images. . ." from the File menu.

Placing Desktop Pictures

Mac OS X 10.3.x Through 10.7.x

Choose "System Preferences. . ." from the Apple menu, click the "Desktop & Screen Saver" button, then choose the Desktop tab. In the left-side menu, select the desktop pictures folder you want to use.

You can also use the pictures with Mac OS X's built-in screen saver. Select the Screen Saver tab which is also in the "Desktop & Screen Saver" System Preferences pane. If you put the ATPM pictures in your Pictures folder, click on the Pictures Folder in the list of screen savers. Otherwise, click Choose Folder to tell the screen saver which pictures to use.

Mac OS X 10.1.x and 10.2.x

Choose "System Preferences. . ." from the Apple menu and click the Desktop button. With the pop-up menu, select the desktop pictures folder you want to use.

You can also use the pictures with Mac OS X's built-in screen saver. Choose "System Preferences. . ." from the Apple menu. Click the Screen Saver (10.1.x) or Screen Effects (10.2.x) button. Then click on Custom Slide Show in the list of screen savers. If you put

the ATPM pictures in your Pictures folder, you're all set. Otherwise, click Configure to tell the screen saver which pictures to use.

Mac OS X 10.0.x

Switch to the Finder. Choose "Preferences..." from the "Finder" menu. Click on the "Select Picture..." button on the right. In the Open Panel, select the desktop picture you want to use. The panel defaults to your `~/Library/Desktop Pictures` folder. Close the "Finder Preferences" window when you are done.

A common pattern I see in the farewell stories at ATPM is: young person with some free time got involved with ATPM, then advanced to the next stage in life and had to spend less time on volunteer works like ATPM. My case is not too different from that pattern. The only major difference is that I was not young when I got involved with ATPM.

It was some time in 2006 that I stumbled upon ATPM. It still amazes me how I did not know about ATPM all those years. I considered myself well-informed about the Mac scene. I followed many Mac news sites, like *MacCentral* and *MacMinute.* Granted ATPM is a monthly magazine and not a news site, but I usually follow links on the news sites to get more info. It was through some Google search that I came across ATPM.

For many years I helped run an Amiga users computer club and contributed greatly to the newsletter. After that stint I got involved with a local Mac user group's newsletter. Not too long after that Mac newsletter slowly disappeared I discovered ATPM. Perfect timing.

I started out being just a copy editor. I am far from a perfectionist in other areas of life, but with writing I enjoy weeding out the errors. One day I took on the ATPM challenge, that everyone is welcome to write reviews. It was not an easy undertaking, but over the years I learned much more about the Mac platform as I wrote the reviews. With my debut review, I also started out as a cartoonist. I suspect at some point I was a copy editor, reviewer, and cartoonist. Life was sweet.

Change is constant. Work gets more demanding, my son grew up and so I needed to share the computer, but the biggest change happened when I decided to have a more physically active life. No more staying up late into the night.

I think it fits well if my last review for ATPM also has a separate cartoon that is related to the reviewed product, like my first review. Cartoon ideas are hard to come by, but in the case of Draw Something I had plenty, but then decided on the cartoon shown here. Nothing side-splitting funny, just a fond reference to our beloved free online Mac magazine.

If you enjoyed my writing and drawing at ATPM, you may want to visit me occasionally at my blog, Qaptain Qwerty. Nowadays it is mostly about my experience as a long-distance runner or budding swimmer, but I do sprinkle it with a cartoon or two, maybe even a Mac-related post every now and then.

The Spinning Beachball

by Grant Osborne, http://grantosborne.com

THE SPINNING BEACHBALL

by grant osborne

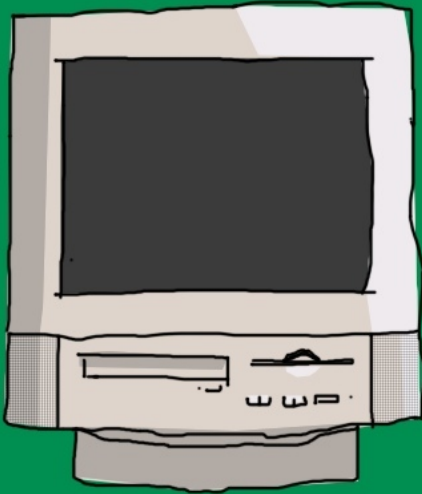Apple's R&D team's initial product prototypes using Liquid Metal didn't go to plan

THE SPINNING BEACHBALL

then and now...

1995
First Issue of ATPM published

Power Macintosh 5000
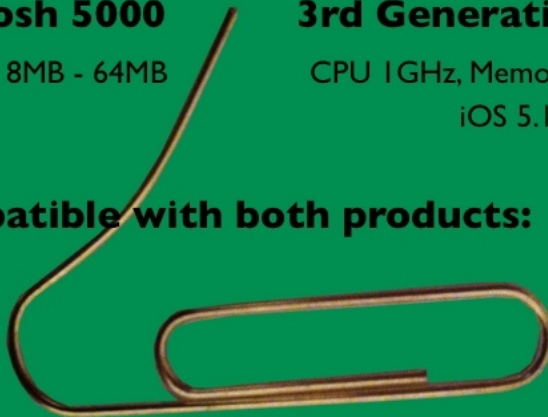
CPU 75MHz, Memory 8MB - 64MB
System 7.5

2012
Last Issue of ATPM published

3rd Generation iPad

CPU 1GHz, Memory 1024MB
iOS 5.1

Compatible with both products:

Camera I-O

Function: Padded camera case, designed for use by itself, or inside select Tom Bihn bags.
Developer: Tom Bihn.
Price: $110
Requirements: For internal use, Tom Bihn Brain Bag, Super Ego, Ego, Empire Builder, ID, or Aeronaut bags.
Trial: None.

In November 2011, I embarked upon a secret mission to east Africa. I used a legitimate trip to adopt our family's third child as my cover. The mission? To field test a classified piece of gear, suitable for secret agents and civilian travelers alike. The gear was an unannounced product from Tom Bihn, and last month, the good folks there decided to lift the veil of secrecy. The Camera I-O was revealed to the world, and the best part is that it won't cost you "one miiiiiiiillion dollars" to obtain it.

The Camera I-O

The Camera I-O was originally designated the "Camera Insert," and the vision was to have it ride in one of the two main compartments of the go-everywhere, do-everything Brain Bag backpack. As a fan of the Brain Bag, I contacted the company about testing the I-O. (While the case was unannounced, the company had teased it on their blog.) Not only were they happy to have me test the I-O, but they also sent me a new Brain Bag as well, because my old 2002 version did not have the proper hook-ups so the I-O could be secured in place. It doesn't simply slip down into the compartment, though that is an option should a user desire it. So off to Rwanda we went, new *and* old Brain Bags in service.

2002 Brain Bag on left, 2011 version on right, in Amsterdam's Schipol Airport.

As time and testing progressed, however, Tom Bihn realized they had more than just an insert for a single bag on their hands. They had developed a product that could fit a good number of their bags, as well as standing on its own. The Camera I-O is fully capable of being used by itself, independent of another bag. You can, of course, use it in any non-Tom Bihn bag that's big enough to accommodate it, though the company does offer a word of warning, which I endorse: while the Camera I-O is a padded case, you probably don't want to put your camera equipment in it, then put it in a bag you're going to check with an airline. It's intended for use in carry-on bags. The Camera I-O comes with two padded handles, but if you think you'd want to use it by itself, be sure to grab the optional Standard or Absolute Shoulder Straps for hands-free carrying.

The clips inside the back compartment of the 2011 Brain Bag, holding the Camera I-O secure.

The Camera I-O comes in any color you desire, so long as it's black. The front and back are made of closed-cell foam laminated to an exterior of Durastretch 520Q, itself a blend of nylon, Cordura, and Lycra. (Trust me, it looks way better than that sounds.) In contrast, the sides and bottom are 1000 denier Cordura. It comes with four padded dividers, so you can configure the interior to suit your needs. For myself, I hauled my Canon 400D (a.k.a. Digital Rebel XTi) with a Sigma 24–70mm lens attached, a 50mm Canon prime lens, a Canon Speedlite flash, Energizer battery charger for the NiMH batteries in the Speedlite, various extra batteries for the 400D, and there's still plenty of room in the case. This additional room came in handy for the travel days on either end of our trip, since I didn't

need to access the camera readily during that time, and the I-O was filled to the gills with whatever I could squeeze in there. As an amateur photographer, this comprised the bulk of my photography gear. The only thing I didn't bring was the kit lens that originally came with my dSLR.

I set up the dividers so that my camera with the zoom lens attached would fit in the middle. On one side went the Speedlite, with a divider on top of it so I could place the battery charger and extra batteries in that compartment. On the other side of the camera went the prime lens, again with a divider on top so other gear could fill the space. As I said, I don't bring a lot of gear to the table to begin with, and everything is quite cozy. Photographers with more items shouldn't have a problem arranging the dividers in a format that works for them.

My Canon dSLR rests in the middle of the above configuration.

The I-O's lid consists of two flaps of cell-foam padded, 500 denier Cordura. The flaps attach to the top of the interior via Velcro, so they are fully removable. The top of one flap and the bottom of the other have opposing sides of Velcro attached, to keep them closed when you want. The top flaps allowed easy access for when I wanted to get the camera out (if I didn't already have it out). My only complaint about the flaps would be to stiffen them up. The Brain Bag was a daily hauler in Rwanda, and the Camera I-O was not the only

thing in that compartment. Over time, the flaps have sunk in some, and what has been riding on top has not been heavy.

The bottom and top of the two flaps, showing the Velcro arrangement.

If you have a tripod or lighting gear, an optional accessory for the Camera I-O is Tom Bihn's Tripod-Lighting Kit Quivers. These can attach to the sides or bottom of the I-O if it's being used as a standalone case, or secured to the exterior of the Brain Bag if the I-O is in insert mode. The Quivers weren't ready for testing at the time I had the I-O, so I cannot speak to any experience with them. I mention them only so readers are fully informed of their options.

The Tom Bihn Brain Bag and Camera I-O: a great combination.

Like all Tom Bihn items, the Camera I-O is made in the US, and is of the same high quality we've come to expect from the company. Overall, I'm very happy with the Camera I-O. For hauling around a single camera with a couple of lenses and a flash, plus battery chargers and cables, it's a great piece of kit.

Draw Something 1.5.14

Function: Social drawing game for iOS.
Developer: OMGPOP.
Price: $2.
Requirements: iOS 3.0; Android version also available.
**Trial:** Feature-limited (ad-supported and smaller pool of words to draw for).

I came to the US in my early teens. The first few years were spent learning English and adjusting to the new culture, which was very different from Vietnam's. Along the way, I learned about charades, the party game, and Pictionary. I am good at drawing and would be a great Pictionary player—if I ever got to play it. Perhaps it was because of the friends I kept, or my quiet nature, but I do not party that much. And, of the few parties I attended, the partygoers did not play charades or Pictionary. I had to wait only about thirty years to play something similar, in the form of the popular game Draw Something for iOS.

Ready. . .Draw!

The goal of Draw Something is to draw a picture for your opponent to guess the word related to the picture. You have a choice of three words of varying difficulty. Some words are difficult to draw a picture for because they involve intricate details, such as celebrity names. Other words are adjectives or are vague and do not lend themselves easily to pictorial representation. Your opponent is told the number of letters in the word but can choose from a pool of more letters. You can play against Facebook friends, or the app can randomly pick a player for you. There is no time limit.

At your disposal is a pen with four tip sizes, and you have just four colors to work with. It is up to your artistic talent and creativity to make a drawing from the selected word. There is a pink eraser, also of four sizes, for corrections. If you want to erase everything, use the trash can icon.

Your opponent can play a movie of every stroke you make in creating your artwork. He can skip this if he wishes, but, for me, seeing the drawing taking shape is part of the fun. To better guess the word, your opponent can use a bomb to blow away some letters. If he guesses correctly, the game proceeds, each player earns some coins, and the number of turns played increases. If he passes, the counter goes back to one, and one of you may be deeply disappointed.
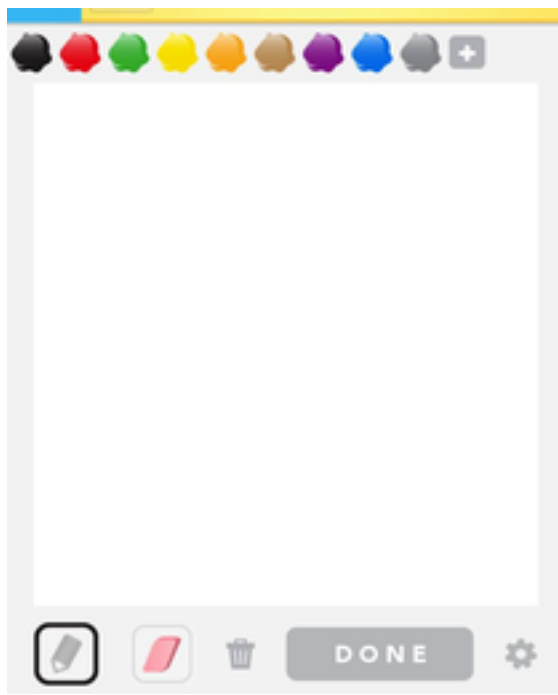
Some colors, a pencil, and an eraser—pretty much all you need. I bought a color set so you see more than four colors here.

Drawn to Fun

You do not have to be a cartoonist to play Draw Something. As a matter of fact, part of the fun is to see how badly people draw or how they improvise. In my experience of playing the game over the last few weeks, very few people can draw. But while most of the time I have to decipher stick figures shown with odd shapes and lines, it's always nice to see how people compensate for their bad drawing skills.

On the other hand, I am an occasional cartoonist for ATPM and draw pretty well. I usually draw detailed pictures, sometimes even using arrows to point out the object in question. I can only hope that my opponents enjoy seeing me draw, as there is no chat function in the game.

Some good techniques to help your drawing include making use of brand names, showing lyrics of a song identified with the performer, and drawing the opposite of the word. An even better technique is to separate a word, such as *Finland* or *eggroll,* then draw for the individual words. After all, the end result of the game is a word. Playing with words makes the game more interesting. It is a co-operative game—both players earn coins for correct guesses—so there is no need to mislead your opponent.

Still, the game loses its fun factor when someone, perhaps clueless about what the word means, simply writes out the word. Also disappointing is when a player, perhaps a young child, innocently draws something unhelpful (e.g., a black blob next to a white blob for the

word *checkered*). I used to get upset when presented with an unhelpful clue or when people did not try hard enough to interpret my meticulously drawn work of art. These days, I do not agonize over such trivial matters. After all, it's only a game.


Some of my decent drawings.

Anyone notice the iron in his hand?

In-app purchasing is all the rage these days, and Draw Something is a fine example of the practice. Chances are that you got into the game through Draw Free. You earned some coins and discovered that you do not have enough to buy anything. An extra set of colors will cost you 249 coins. Bombs—useful in blowing away extra letters or for changing

the words to choose from—are priced at 400 coins for a set of 10 bombs, 720 coins for 20 bombs, and 1,600 coins for 50 bombs. The typical player draws for easy words only, so he accumulates wealth ever so slowly. Out of patience, he would buy game coins with real money, at the rate of $2 for 400, $5 for 1,200, and so on. It's a great way for the publishers to milk the cow but can be costly for those who are addicted to the game and want more power out of it.
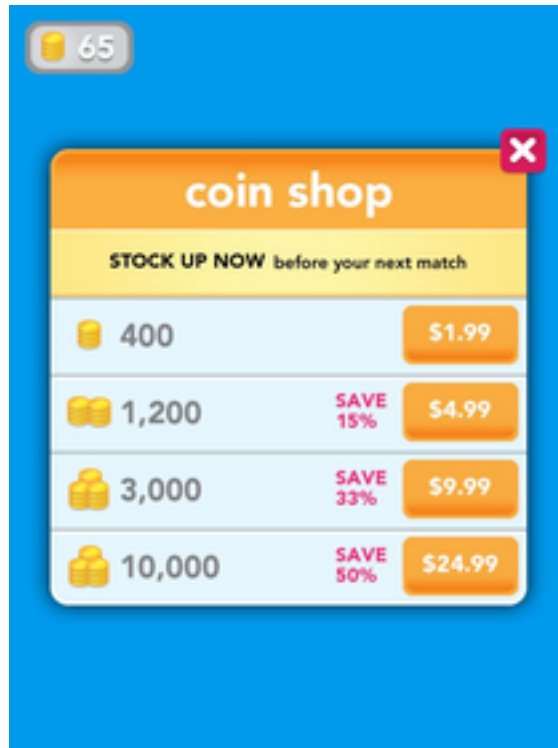
Exchange real money for game coins.

Room for Improvement

I like Draw Something's simple drawing tools and don't think much else needs to be added. There's no need to be able to zoom, make shapes, or draw over a grid. If I could ask for one additional tool, though, it would have to be a Fill function. Make some enclosed shape then fill it with paint.

For additional functions unrelated to drawing, I can think of a few. First and foremost, there should be a chat box. This is a social game; people like to talk, perhaps make new friends, too. Sure, there will be the occasional annoying person, but many social games these days already have a chat function.

The April 18, 2012, update added commenting, so that when you finish drawing, you can enter some text that then appears in a speech balloon. When you finish guessing, you have a few seconds to say something about the drawing. But it's not chatting. Perhaps

OMGPOP is worried that people will abuse the chat box and use it to easily give away the answer, thus cutting into the profit it would make from selling coins and bombs.
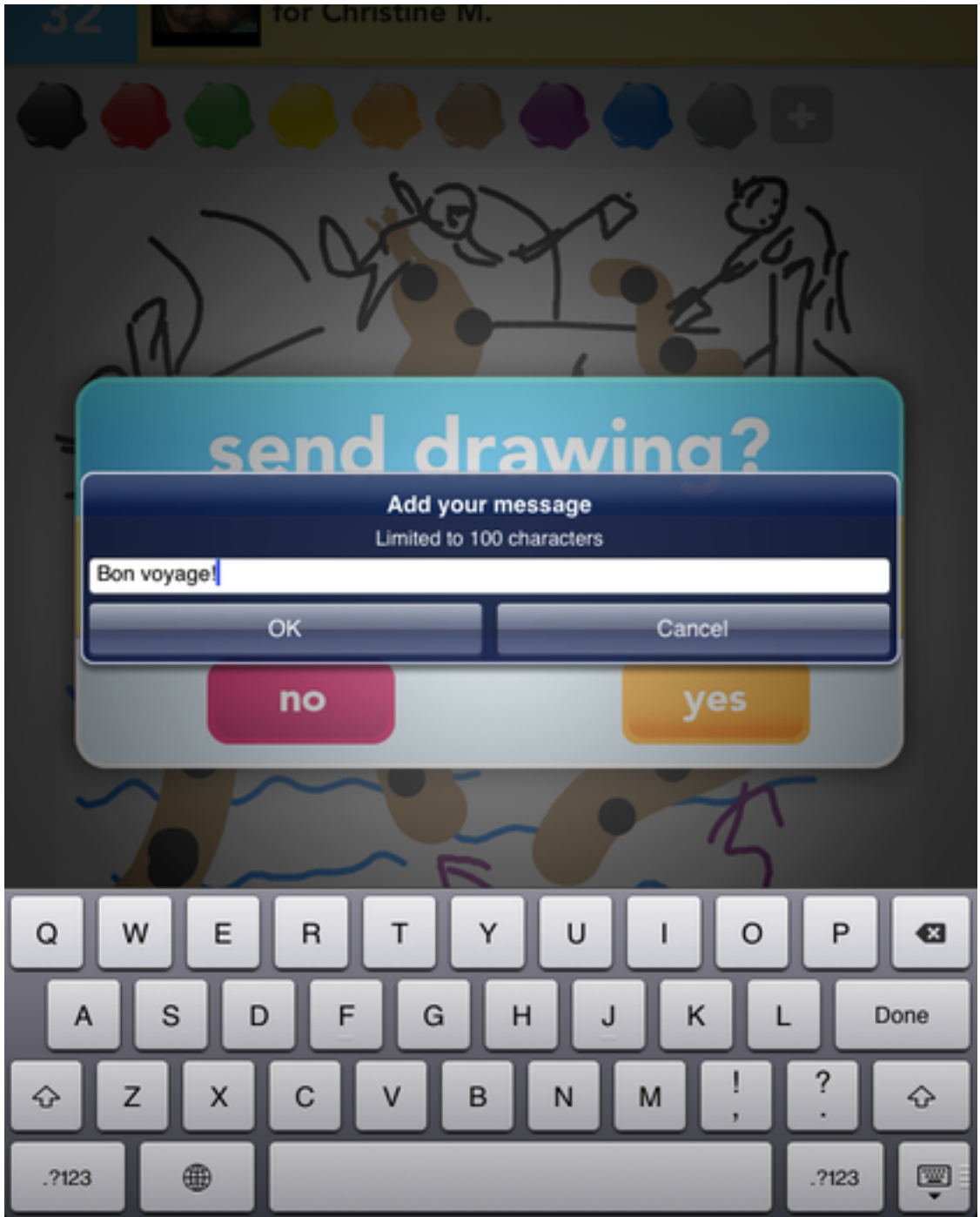

Add a message to your drawing before sending it to your opponent.
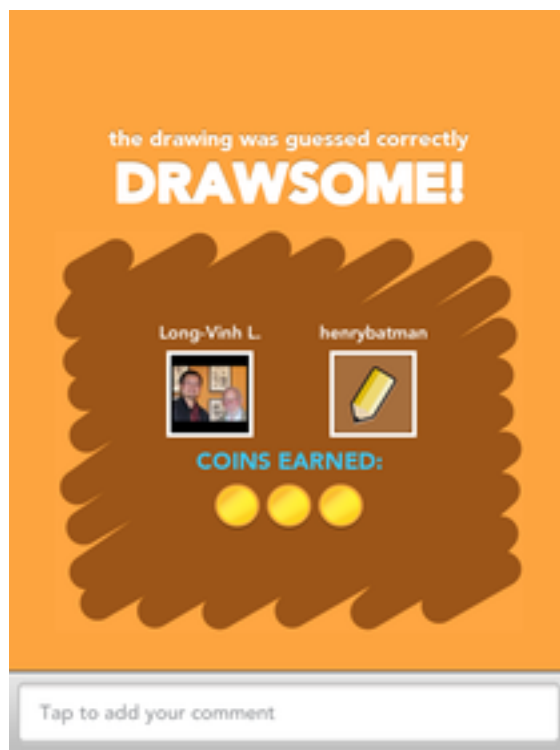
Use the box at the bottom to compliment your opponent's drawing skill, if applicable.

The update also added saving locally and sharing using Facebook or Twitter. Before, sharing with your friends in social networks involved taking a screenshot, then posting the picture from within Facebook or your social network of choice. That process is not straightforward, because not everyone knows the "Home + Power" button combo to take a screenshot. Likewise, users may not know that screenshots are saved in the Saved Photos album. With the update, you have a button to save and two other buttons to upload to Facebook or Twitter.
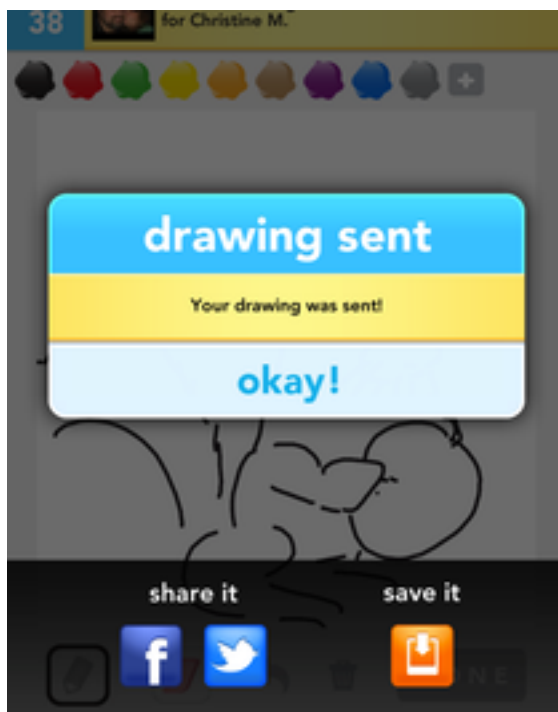
Saving your artwork and sharing on Facebook or Twitter is an easy affair.

On the topic of saving drawings, it would be really nice to have access to the old drawings you made while playing the game. I recently discovered that there are Web sites and Facebook groups out there for proud and wannabe artists to upload their works of art. It made me realize that I saved only a few of my drawings. Such an archiving function might eat up a lot of space if kept locally on the iDevice, so maybe users should have the option to keep the drawings or not.

Draw a Conclusion

The human factor makes social games such as Draw Something enjoyable. Players get the most out of the game when they try their best to depict words using pictures. You do not have to be able to draw well—something recognizable is good enough. While the drawing tools should stay simple, the app could use a real chat function. Though the recent update added commenting, it is not the same as chatting. The update also added the much-welcomed ability to save and to share drawings on Facebook or Twitter.

Privacy and Big Data: The Players, Regulators, and Stakeholders

Author: Terrance Craig & Mary E. Ludloff.
Developer: O'Reilly.
Price: $17 (Daisy, ePub, Mobi, PDF e-book); $20(print); $22 (print and Daisy, ePub, Mobi, PDF e-book).
Trial: Cover, description, and table of contents.

I've been surfing the Internet since the days of AOL. InfoSeek, AltaVista, and other search engines were in my digital toolbox long before Google became a household word, noun, and synonym for search all rolled up into one package. There was probably a time when I expected a certain degree of privacy in my digital travels. Looking back on it now, I'm not sure there ever was much anonymity. Can't find someone or something you need? Check the Internet; it's probably there. That's the big selling point right? Everything's connected to everything else.

If I ever expected digital anonymity, I know when that expectation changed a bit. Within a few months of writing my ATPM column I received an e-mail in my staff mailbox from someone I met while in graduate school. He wondered if I was the same Sylvester Roque he had met in school several years before. After a few e-mails back and forth, the topic turned to how he had located me since we hadn't been in contact for several years. He'd simply searched for my name, saw the byline on one of my articles, and concluded that given the unusual last name it had to be the same person.

That relatively benign incident was almost forgotten until a number of incidents occurred such as this one where the content of someone's social media page had become an issue in their firing. I'd even seen recent reports of potential employers asking potential hires for their Facebook credentials. Since I was already thinking about these issues, I jumped at the chance to review Craig and Ludloff's *Privacy and Big Data*.

What's It All About

As the authors note on the back cover of the book "[t]hrough our online activities, we leave an easy-to-follow trail of digital footprints that reveal who we are, what we buy, where we go, and much more."

Almost from the beginning, many Web sites tracked where users were going on a site. That level of data collection is positively prehistoric by modern standards. The authors endeavor

to provide an overview of who's collecting data, what data is being collected, and what's being done with all that information.

Interwoven throughout the discussion of modern data collection is the recurring theme of privacy. A battle of sorts is going on over "big data" and what's to be done with it. The "big data" in question is all the information collected about us, our travels, and our habits. Information is being gathered on almost every aspect of our lives. How much information are we willing to give away out of necessity or in exchange for a service? Just what should we be allowed to keep to ourselves?

The Stakeholders and What's at Stake

Early on, the authors introduce us to the players in this high-stakes game. These are the people with an interest in our "big data." Some of these groups are well-known to us, and others are maybe not so well-known. Their definitions of the stakeholders include:

Collectors include social network titans that collect, share, and *sell* (emphasis mine) user data. Collectors also include the information-gathering devices we interact with daily: security cameras, smartphones, RFID tags, etc.

Users include the marketing organizations, government agencies, and others who use the data that's generated.

Data markets are the companies and agencies that aggregate and sell data to anyone.

Regulators are the policymakers and trade associations charged with developing and enforcing privacy policies.

Some of our data is given to collectors in exchange for free or almost free use of some services. Some of the data is collected surreptitiously or in response to government requests. Everything from commerce to romance seems to involve some transaction of information. How many of us actually bother to read and understand those privacy agreements or have time to do so?

All this data collecting isn't just a fun exercise. It's aggregated and disaggregated in various ways and sold to those who want to market something to us. The authors point out that targeted marketing is not new. I remember being amazed a few years ago when I read about the US Postal Service selling change of address lists to marketers. It's just easier to do in the digital age. Craig and Ludloff frame this discussion as a debate about how our personal information is collected and used for commercial and political purposes. Although a little bit of time is devoted to the use of big data in highly targeted advertising campaigns (behavioral advertising), the focus of debate is on the less benign ways this data is aggregated and used.

Who's Minding the Store?

Just what's meant by "privacy"? Just as importantly: is someone guarding it or must we fend for ourselves? Chapters two and three attempt to provide some clarification about these

issues. Chapter two is an overview of past and current privacy laws. The focus is primarily on the US and European Union, but China and the Middle East are also mentioned briefly. Don't worry. You won't have to go to law school to understand this chapter. It's more an outline of the basic legal principles that have shaped privacy law.

Chapter three examines the regulators charged with enforcing privacy laws. Again, the US and EU approaches are compared. The authors suggest that surveillance, censorship, and the collection and monitoring of personal data is on the rise worldwide. A brief mention is made of the fact that some countries have restricted access to the Internet and social media in times of political stress.

Commodity or Basic Human Right

Chapter four is devoted to a bit more thorough discussion of issues surrounding digital advertising and attempts to enforce intellectual property rights. From the earliest AT&T banner ads in 1994 to the sophisticated Internet advertising of today, someone's been tracking our movements and transactions in the digital universe. Fortunately, this section does not get bogged down in the differences among cookies, flash beacons, super cookies, and history tweaking. If you want to delve that deeply into things, there are references throughout the book.

For the authors, the heart of the debate is whether privacy is treated as property or as a basic human right. If it is property, then you have the right to trade it for something of value to you, such as access to social networking sites. The catch is that once we have made the trade, we can probably no longer expect that the information will remain private. If privacy is a basic human right, then it can be argued that you have reasonable expectation that the information will not be misused.

One of the issues discussed at this point is whether digital privacy is in any way similar to our expectation of physical privacy. The example here is attempts to enforce intellectual property rights. When Amazon discovered, for example, that it did not have the proper rights to make two George Orwell books available to Kindle owners, did Amazon have the right to automatically delete those books if Kindle owners had already paid for them? Had these been physical books, getting them back would not have been so easy. It certainly would have involved notifying customers and may quite possibly have required legal action if a customer had refused to comply.

The final chapter is essentially a summation of the issues raised in the book. If you're looking for specific privacy recommendations, you won't really find them here. Craig and Ludloff remind us that in some ways we have come full circle. From our earliest history when man functioned in small groups where there was little privacy, we moved to a period of more isolation and privacy. In the digital age much of that privacy is being erased. The best we can do is remember that once data is out there it's hard to control.

Final Thoughts

Craig and Ludloff have given us an insider's view of sorts into the data collectors. As executives of a startup company in the big data industry, they have first-hand knowledge

of the data being gathered and the analytics being used. Who better to start a discussion of privacy in the information age?

If you are looking for specific recommendations about protecting your privacy online, you'll have to look elsewhere. On the other hand, if you haven't been thinking much about how much data is being collected about you, this book is a good overview. It doesn't get bogged down in the technicalities, though the references are there if you care to follow them. If you think that will be of interest to you, it might be easier to use one of the electronic versions to follow the links more easily. Some of them are rather long and would be difficult to type in from the paperback. This book is easy to read, and the information is well-presented. Overall it is a Very Nice addition to your library. I did find myself wishing that they had included specifics on protecting privacy, though.

TouchStream LP

Function: Keyboard/trackpad.
Developer: FingerWorks.
Price: $339 (in 2004).
Requirements: USB.
Trial: None.

The first keyboard I ever connected to a Macintosh was the Apple Adjustable Keyboard, back in 1993. Little did I suppose that it would prove to be one of the more conventional keyboards I would use over the years. In my time with ATPM, I've reviewed the Kinesis Advantage Pro and the even stranger Datahand Professional II, but oddly enough I never reviewed the keyboard that I have been using regularly for the last eight years: the FingerWorks TouchStream LP.

Let me be up front about this: the TouchStream is no longer being made. FingerWorks stopped selling it (along with all its other products) in 2005, when Apple bought the company. Occasionally a used one will come up on eBay or elsewhere; expect to pay at least double the retail price cited above. If you have a TouchStream that needs help, the fingerfans forum is the best place to find support.

Though the TouchStream was never more than a niche product (with, as is often the case, a small but enduring following), its descendants have risen to world-wide fame. So in this final issue of a great but never enormously popular publication, I'd like to pay tribute to a great piece of technology, one which is still very much in my present, and which in a way is in all of our presents and futures as well.

TouchBoard

Taking the term literally, keyboard is not the right word for the TouchStream: it hasn't any keys at all. Rather, the TouchStream is a pair of the largest trackpads you've ever seen, each with half a keyboard's worth of "keys" drawn on in straight columns (like the Kinesis Advantage Pro). The trackpads are connected with a very short, very wide cable, at a slight angle; the distance and angle of separation are not adjustable. They rest on a metal frame with comfortable wrist-rests and a slight tenting bend in the middle, allowing typing hands to be held in a more natural position than the traditional palms close, parallel, and flat down.

While the angles from which the typist's hands approach the TouchStream help make typing more comfortable, the touchboard's greatest ergonomic advantage comes from the absense of keys: typing is not merely low-impact but zero impact. However lightly I care to touch a letter, the touch activates it. Go ahead and try it: hold your hands at your keyboard in typing position, but merely touch the keys, without depressing them. Imagine typing like that all the time. It makes a real difference.

Well wait a minute, doesn't sensitivity like that kind of become a disadvantage? What if my hands get tired and I want to rest my fingers on the keyboard, I don't want a long steam of random gibberish invading my document. Not a problem; the TouchStream is smart. If you rest your fingers, it rests too.

Another common objection to the TouchStream's design is that it offers no tactile feedback. This isn't just important for knowing when a key is activated, but also for knowing where the keys are without looking, and for keeping fingers oriented during a long typing session. Indeed, when I type I look at the screen, so I have to rely entirely on muscle-memory to know where to tap for each letter. Even with years of practice, I make mistakes. But again, the TouchStream is smart: if I'm a little bit off, it can usually figure out what I mean. It uses an English-language dictionary to make educated guesses when I touch between one key and another, sometimes even backspacing to correct a bad guess as I continue typing a word. (Which looks strange, but I've gotten used to it.) Typing non-words is still possible, of course, but can require slightly more careful aim to avoid being corrected: the TouchStream has many times settled a draw between O and P by directing me to atom.com.) Overall it's fair to say I can't type as quickly on a TouchStream as I could on a good quality keyboard with tactile feedback, but I don't mind trading a little speed for comfort and other advantages.

Trackpad

If zero-impact and clever compensation for not having keys were the only magic in this cat's bag of tricks, the TouchStream would be an awfully hard sell (even if it were still on sale). But when I said it's made of two trackpads I wasn't merely making an analogy. One of the TouchStream's halves (the right by default) doubles as a mouse. Dragging two fingers together—right over the "keys"—moves the mouse pointer. Add a third finger to move the pointer with the mouse button down (to select a group of icons, for example). Drag four fingers to scroll. And of course tap two fingers to click (or three to double-click).

Yes, the other side of the TouchStream does something too: it moves the cursor. Two fingers work like very fast, precise arrow keys; just as with the mouse pointer, add a third finger to select as you go. I had to look up what four fingers do (yes, I still have all the original documentation): Home and End, Page Up and Down. Though there are dedicated arrow keys I almost never use them, much preferring their gestural equivalents.

In practice, I do keep yet another piece of long-outdated tech sitting on my desk: a Kensington Expert Mouse Pro, which I use for the majority of my mousing. But when I'm typing or editing a document I'll often use the TouchStream for navigation rather than reaching for the trackball. It just feels faster. The presence and convenient locations of both Backspace and Delete keys also help make the TouchStream an ideal keyboard for editing documents.

But navigation is just the tip of the iceberg. There are standard and intuitive gestures for Cut/Copy/Paste and Zoom In/Out, for example, and Forward/Back/Reload gestures for use when browsing the Web. Though these things can also be done with a mouse or with standard keyboard shortcuts, gestures are often the most comfortable and convenient way. Additional, more purpose-specific gesture sets can be enabled on demand, e.g. for gaming or word processing. I'd expect the latter to appeal to me but in practice they never took off: there is no such thing, for example, as an intuitive gesture for italicizing something, and that's not something that I do often enough for muscle memory to learn "swipe left thumb and first two fingers to the right."

Favorites

Ah, but now I'm going to tell you about my favourite two features. I use them frequently, every day, without even thinking about it; they are completely natural. When typing on any other keyboard, I miss them terribly.

First, there is a gesture for closing windows. Thumb plus three fingers of the right hand rotated clockwise a bit, pivoting roughly about the thumb. This gesture is beautiful because it feels exactly like a dismissal, like I am royalty waving away some trifling matter, like saying goodbye. Pfft, the window is closed. I've long since forgotten the Open, Save, and New gestures, which do not hold for me this graceful elegance.

Second, there is a chord for holding down Shift. What? Why? Look at the picture; the TouchStream has Shift keys. They're in the traditional spots, right where your fingers expect them. Why on earth do you want an alternative for that? But it is so fast and

convenient: drop four fingers anywhere on either side, type a letter. If I'm typing several capitals, some on each side, no problem: as long as I hold some fingers down, I can release one as needed to get a capital on that side. I never reach for the Shift keys.

What Endures

The winter before last, my TouchStream seemed to be showing the effects of age, sometimes losing responsiveness altogether. Unplugging and reconnecting it worked as a temporary fix, but I wished I had stocked up years ago when I had the chance. That was when I found the fingerfans forum, and there, a firmware update which I'd never known about or applied. I didn't think it was likely to help, but I gave it a try and it seemed to do some good (the problem may also have been the terribly dry air we had around that time). At any rate, I can say something about the TouchStream that usually can't be evaluated in reviews: it has impressive longevity.

Of course the best measure of the TouchStream's longevity is not the life of its body but that of its spirit. Its multi-touch technology, once available to the general public only in obscure, niche devices, is now in regular use by millions of iOS users, people to whom typing on a keyboard with no tactile feedback has become commonplace.

Similarly, I hope not only that the articles and reviews on ATPM will remain useful long after our site contains only back-issues, but also that our staff members will go on to aid and influence our small cadre of loyal subscribers and millions more who never heard of ATPM, as they begin or continue writing elsewhere. Best wishes to all; it's been a great ride.

FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions

What Is *ATPM*?

About This Particular Macintosh (ATPM) is, among other things, a monthly Internet magazine or "e-zine." ATPM was created to celebrate the personal computing experience. For us this means the most personal of all personal computers—the Apple Macintosh. About This Particular Macintosh is intended to be about your Macintosh, our Macintoshes, and the creative, personal ideas and experiences of everyone who uses a Mac. We hope that we will continue to be faithful to our mission.

Which Format Is Best for Me?

- The **Online Webzine** edition is for people who want to view ATPM in their Web browser, while connected to the Internet. It provides sharp text, lots of navigation options, and live links to ATPM back issues and other Web pages.

- The **Offline Webzine** is an HTML version of ATPM that is formatted for viewing offline and made available in a Mac OS X disk image. The graphics, content, and navigation elements are the same as with the Online Webzine, but you can view it without being connected to the Internet. It requires a Web browser.

- The **Print PDF** edition is saved in Adobe PDF format. It has a two-column layout with smaller text and higher-resolution graphics that are optimized for printing. It may be viewed online in a browser, or downloaded and viewed in Apple's Preview or Adobe Reader on Macintosh or Windows. PDFs may be magnified to any size and searched with ease.

- The **Screen PDF** edition is also saved in Adobe PDF format. It's a one-column layout with larger text that's optimized for reading on-screen.

Which Products Have You Reviewed?

Check our reviews index for the complete list.

What is Your Rating Scale?

ATPM uses the following ratings (in order from best to worst): Excellent, Very Nice, Good, Okay, Rotten. Products rated Good or better are ones that we recommend. Okay products get the job done. We recommend avoiding Rotten products.

Where Can I Find Back Issues of *ATPM*?

Back issues of ATPM, dating since April 1995, are available in DOCMaker stand-alone format and as PDF. In addition, all issues since ATPM 2.05 (May 1996) are available in HTML format.

What If My Question Isn't Answered Above?

We hope by now that you've found what you're looking for (We can't imagine there's something else about ATPM that you'd like to know.). But just in case you've read this far (We appreciate your tenacity.) and still haven't found that little piece of information about ATPM that you came here to find, please feel free to e-mail us at (You guessed it.) editor@atpm.com.