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About This Particular Macintosh: About the personal computing experience™

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Welcome

by Robert Paul Leitao, rleitao@atpm.com

Yowza! The editors this month agree. The November issue of ATPM has been declared an official Yowza! issue of our monthly Macintosh Internet magazine. What's a Yowza! issue? It's our designation for an issue that provides comprehensive coverage of extraordinary happenings in the world of Macintosh computing. So hold on to your hats, buckle up in your easy chair and get ready for the ride. Welcome to the November issue of ATPM!

OS X Loses Its Spots

On October 24th, Mac OS X lost its Jaguar spots. Panther (Mac OS X 10.3) was released to the world. Panther debuted to cheering throngs of Mac users at Apple retail stores nationwide. Apple closed the stores for a half-hour before the choreographed 8 PM product introduction. Mac fans attending the Apple retail store special event in Santa Monica, CA might have cheered Panther's release anyway, but the reopening allowed us to come back inside from the cool bayside air.

The latest iteration of Apple's Unix-based operating system sports more than 150 new features and again raises the bar for the Windows competition. Realizing they were developing a superior OS and head-to-head competition would really be unfair, years ago Apple Computer spotted its Windows rival 95% market share as a momentary lead. Now that Mac OS X has lost its own spots, we expect the Windows market share advantage to disappear sometime last next year. Really, we do.

iTunes for Windows, Too

Apple hosted one more special event in October. This time attendees weren't locked outside, but the doors were only open to the press and other invitees. Apparently music stars Bono, Mick Jagger, and Dr. Dre couldn't get a seat. They attended the event briefly via iChat AV. But music artist Sarah McLachlan was able to maneuver a piano onstage to perform live for the invited guests.

Aside from the star power of the music industry luminaries mentioned above, Apple's CEO introduced one more standout performer—the new iTunes Music Store for Windows. In the first three days or after release, Windows users downloaded more than one million copies of the digital jukebox software and the service sold more than one million songs.

During the event held at San Francisco's Moscone West auditorium, Mr. Jobs announced that through the end of September Apple had sold more than 1.4 million iPod digital music players since the first iPod was introduced. During the months of July and August, iPods represented 31% of all digital music players sold. Not only did iPods represent almost a third of all players purchased by consumers during the two-month period, but the sales also represented 56% of the revenue from all digital music player sales. The iTunes Music Store also handled 70% of all legal sales of downloaded music.

As if the temporary 95% market share in operating systems isn't enough, representatives from Microsoft have complained Apple's use of the AAC open standard for the iTunes Music Store is unfair. The software behemoth would prefer Apple use Microsoft's proprietary WMA music file format instead.

Virginia Tech Takes the Top Spot (Almost)

Virginia Tech, until now best known for its Division 1A football team, has received world attention recently for another group of world-class competitors—the university's computer science instructors and students.

Soon after the release of Apple's G5 computers, student volunteers at Virginia Tech began building one of the world's fastest supercomputers comprised of 1,100 dual 2 GHz Macs. At press time the Virginia Tech Mac-based supercomputer cluster has been rated at 9.55 teraflops or 9.55 trillion calculations per second, making it the world's third-fastest super computer. The Virginia Tech super computer, now dubbed the "Big Mac," has been built with a three-year budget of $5.2 million. By contrast, the world's fastest super computer, Japan's Earth Simulator, was constructed for $250 million. No, that amount is not a typo.

The "Big Mac" is the world's faster supercomputer made from consumer available computers. The only modification made by Virginia Tech students to the G5 otherwise available at the Apple Store was the addition of an Inifiniband card in a PCI-X slot to speed communication between the G5s. The student volunteers were treated to free pizza for their time. Official results of the world's supercomputer performance competition will be released on November 15th. If you would like an in-depth personal tutorial on the test methods for determining teraflops, please contact Chris Turner, our managing editor. He'll call you back. Really, he will! Chris is just sorry he missed out on the free pizza.

Apple Beats The Street

For the three months ended September 27, 2003, Apple Computer reported a 19% gain in revenue over the prior year period and a total of 787,000 Mac CPUs shipped in the quarter along with 336,000 iPod digital music players.

Excluding extraordinary items Apple reported net earnings of $.08 per share. Wall Street was expecting earnings of $.07. Extraordinary items included, Apple earned $44 million after taxes or $.12 per share. At the end of the September quarter Apple had cash and equivalents of about $4.566 billion. For the fiscal year Apple reported revenue of $6.21 billion. Only $3 million of Apple's revenue for the quarter and fiscal year came from the sale of supercomputer cluster components (otherwise known as the dual 2 GHz G5) to Virginia Tech.

The Yowza! Issue Continues…

In this month's special Yowza! issue of ATPM our writers and editors review several Mac-related products and continue our look at today's state-of-the-Mac. While we don't offer free pizza, we do offer our thanks. We appreciate your support. We really, really do!

The ATPM Staff

Our November issue includes:

The Candy Apple: What's in a Name?

How would your life be different if you changed your legal name to match your online name?

Machine Language: Advertising and Apple

Apple's advertising for the iPod and the Apple Music Store is fine, but what about the rest of the lineup? *Machine Language* columnist Matt Coates says Apple could learn a thing or two from the new Microsoft and HP ads and mentions products and services that should be getting more attention from the marketing department.

The Desktop Muse: A New Computer, a New Column, a New Life

David Ozab returns from hiatus with a semi-regular column about the Mac, music, and multimedia.

Quick Tips in Design: Part 5—Shape

Andrew Kator continues his series of graphics tutorials. This month, he examines shape and compares the simple, complex, geometric, natural, and the abstract.

About This Particular Outliner: Outliner Features—Part 2

In this month's outlining column, Ted Goranson finishes his survey of outlining features.

Cartoon: Cortland

Cortland and Todd encounter all variety of irony as they search for new jobs—and NeoCort makes another appearance.

Cartoon: iTrolls

The iTrolls encounter delusional Bill, Appleman, lawyers, Ballmeratronics, and .Mac's blogging software.

Desktop Pictures: Thailand

Reader Grover Watson contributes photos from Bangkok, Thailand.

Reviews: Huevos 1.1 and iSeek 1.0

Preferring keyboard use before mouse use, ATPM Editor Michael Tsai examines two search tools to see how well they cater to this preference.

Reviews: ID Bag and Brain Cell

Continuing our spurt of reviews of bags and cases for various portable devices, Chris Lawson takes a look at two options from Tom Bihn.

Review: iPod: The Missing Manual (book)

One may think using an iPod is very straightforward. Gregory Tetrault reviews a book with 344 pages that say otherwise.

Review: iTrip

In spite of very small annoyances and challenges, Eric Blair still finds the iTrip to be the perfect solution for road trips with car radios that lack cassette players and auxiliary inputs.

E-Mail

iPod Generations

I read your review[1] of the Marware Sportsuit convertible for iPod. I am unsure if this fits my iPod which I purchased in July—it is iPod 10GB M8976LL/A. Is it considered 3G?

—Gail Armstrong

Your 10 GB iPod is indeed a 3G (third-generation) iPod. The two main identifying features of the 3G iPods are the Dock Connector on the bottom of the iPod (instead of the FireWire port that the first two generation of iPods had) and the four buttons lined up beneath the screen (instead of around the scroll-wheel). *—Eric Blair*

TypePad Review[2]

I did a lot of research into blogging software for my company. We needed an easy way for certain teams to communicate via their own Web sites to the rest of the company. These users were, by no means, technically inclined.

When TypePad is compared to *any* of the for-pay, outside-hosted sites, it wins. It is a very well-written piece of software and there is the option of going to Movable Type is you outgrow it and need to host yourself.

That being said, with Blogger being free now, I'm not sure it provides enough bang for the buck.

Two other products I would mention are Bloki and Bloxsom.

Bloki bills itself as a combination of BlogTool and Wiki. While it's really not much of a Wiki, it does have some really cool features like WYSIWYG editing from anywhere through the browser (no other software needed). Built-in forums are another neat item. Bloki is free and it uses the outside hosting model so you do not even need a permanent connection to use it.

On the host-it-yourself side, there is Bloxsom. I am really thrilled with this. It's a tiny Perl script that provides an incredible array of features. It's really perfect for Mac OS X. Users of Windows and others platforms will have a harder time due to some Perl issues and some IIS issues (although you could avoid those by running Apache). If you are thinking of hosting your own blog, I highly recommend Bloxsom.

—John David Felt

Good Morning America, How Are You?[3]

This is a beautiful story! I live in LA and pass Union Station all the time. The next time I go by, I think I will stop in to see the trains. There is a restaurant in Union Station. Perhaps it's a good place for lunch.

—Ellen Hendrick

So well-written, Robert. Greetings from Oz. We, too, had a great train journey (the rather expensive Sydney to Perth trip) spanning the continent, but I've yet to read such a beautifully composed account as yours. You clearly love your kids and your country, too. I hope to read more from you, too!

—Chris Birch

Outliner Features[4]

This is an excellent series on outliners so far! I love your in-depth, thoughtful treatment of the whole subject. This goes way beyond typical reviews that barely scratch the surface. Bravo, and please keep it up!

Just to add to your very long list of outliners, including some programs with outlining functionality that I hadn't thought of using as an outliner like Keynote, there are a few others I hope you'll include in your roundup. These are all OS X outliners and you may have not included them in your list for various reasons, but here they are for your consideration: PocketNotes, Life Balance, Sh-Out! My Brain (that's not a typo!), Snap Notes, MA Memo, PMX, Project Desktop, and the new OS X version of Panorama, the only Mac relational database I'm aware of that sports a built-in outliner (I wish they all did). I don't have any experience with them. I just ran across them in my shopping around for a good, robust outliner.

I'm looking for something that probably doesn't yet exist—a program for organizing information that has the structure/relationship functionality you identified in your first article: 1) outlining for hierarchy, 2) table/spreadsheet for matrices, 3) database functionality for multiple relationships and TOC/indexing/searching, and 4) links/hypertext for non-linear association and interactive navigation. Are you or any other readers aware of an application that has all four of these functions? Some of the programs you mention have most of the functionality, but are missing one or two elements.

1. http://www.atpm.com/9.09/sportsuit.shtml
2. http://www.atpm.com/9.10/typepad.shtml
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Anyway, I look forward to the next installments in the series, but wish I didn't have to wait a month between them!
—*Jeff Nailen*

Quick Tips in Design: Line[1]

I'm impressed with the potential usefulness of this site as I peruse it for the first time. Keep at it.
—*Anonymous*

1. http://www.atpm.com/9.10/design.shtml

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The Candy Apple

by Ellyn Ritterskamp, eritterskamp@atpm.com

What's in a Name?

I just read about some folks who are changing their legal names to match their online handles. At first I was amused, but after a moment I realized this reveals all sorts of interesting things about us as individuals.

Note: Every name I have used in this column is completely made-up, so if you see a name that sounds cool, it's not anyone I know or have read about. It is completely made-up.

The people in the story said that their friends knew them by their online handles anyway, so when they changed their legal names, they felt as if they were now "more" themselves than they had been before. One person, having been through a divorce, planned to do a name change anyway, to shed a surname that had negative feelings attached to it. He realized he might as well change his name to something that reflected his personality more than Joe, so he changed it to TankCommander. His friends called him Tank anyway, and that's how he thought of himself.

I absolutely love the idea that we can change our names at any time and for any reason; all we have to do is pay a court a few bucks. I suppose this may not be the case in other countries—readers, please comment at the end of the column if you have any information about non–United States policies. I am curious how much the liberty to change one's name reflects the liberties of a society.

One of my online handles is a combination of a nickname I had in high school, plus part of a surname that I like. We'll call it CarterSkip. In the online community where I spend the most time, we are too lazy to write out entire handles for some folks, preferring to use abbreviations. If we had that TankCommander guy in our group, he'd be referred to as either Tank or TC. So my CarterSkip handle goes as either Carter, Skip, or CS. Since we already have someone else with the initials CS, I go by CK instead. I *love* the idea that I could go to a court and pay $40 or thereabouts, to change my legal name to CK.

I can see that a problem arises when you use different handles in different groups. We do that in real life, too, playing various roles in different social settings. The trick, for the name-change scenario, would be selecting the one that best reflects your personality.

In my favorite group, we have people named after actors, Roman demigods, comic strip characters, all sorts of stuff. Just like in your online groups. I can imagine how it would be fulfilling to take on some of the characteristics of those characters, by legally taking on their names. I toyed for a moment with trying out the name of one of my favorite TV characters (Zbornak), but it is no more unwieldy than my own surname. Unless I dropped down to just the one name, it lacks the element of cool I'm looking for.

Maybe I could just persuade people to call me Z…

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Advertising and Apple

The warriors pile on, a jumble of bodies celebrating victory, exulting. Fists pump the air. Shouts of glee echo across the battlefield. The enemy vanquished, victory is theirs.

The World Series? The Super Bowl? Highlights from *Braveheart*? Nah—these warriors wear ties and sensible shoes. It's a Microsoft ad for the new Windows version of Office, and it is the opposite of cool. It is the revenge of the Office nerds, the triumph of hard working cubicle dwellers over the Dilbertians. Forget design firm creatives with their 23-inch CinemaScope monitors and those über-attractive Generation-Y young professionals working wirelessly at Starbucks. Never mind that happy family gathered around their digital hub. Ignore the high-powered road warriors juggling Blackberries and cell phones as they sprint through the airport en route to closing the big deal. In other words, forget the images of most computer and high-tech advertising. These ads are about productivity and corporate worker bees.

This Microsoft print ad and others like it use humor—in one TV spot, a rollicking dance party breaks out after a successful sales meeting—to lighten up the image of the company's workhorse Office suite. That's a good idea when you're trying to win the hearts and minds of people who schedule their workdays with Outlook, churn out reports in Word and hustle PowerPoint presentations for tomorrow's sales meeting. Office isn't fun software, but if using it leads to a conga line down the hallway, let's upgrade!

Are the Microsoft Office ads successful? I think so, because they identify a market and go after it. From what I read, this is a skippable upgrade for small businesses and home users. The suite's new features, which emphasize collaboration and rely heavily on server technology, are designed for corporations, and that's how Microsoft is selling it: it makes life easier for the people who do the nuts and bolts work. Will they clamor for the upgrade? I don't know, but either way I can't fault the pragmatic concept behind the advertising or its playful execution.

Hewlett Packard, meanwhile, is promoting digital imaging and printing in a series of nifty TV commercials that play with images, movement, and spatial relationships as they show people using digital cameras. Visually, the HP spots couldn't be less like the Office ads, but they do share an important trait with Microsoft's commercials: they emphasize a human element in the digital realm. They are about *people using technology successfully*, albeit in very different ways.

Best Isn't Good Enough

And that brings us to Apple. It's time for a new focus in marketing. Having the best designed, best looking computers is great, but it's not enough. It's time to show Windows users (and those who don't use any computer) that there's major muscle underneath the Mac's good looks and plenty of software for just about anything they might want to do at home or in business. Sure, Apple makes that case on its Web site, but that presumes that potential customers are visiting. Apple needs to take its case to potential customers, not just hope they'll stop by.

Apple clearly is on an upswing; I don't have any survey results to share, but it's my impression that not only are Windows users more aware of the Mac than ever before, they're a lot less likely to dismiss the Mac as a toy or a tool only for creative types. Rampant PC viruses and gaping holes in Windows' security probably have a lot to do with that, but so do the iMacs, the PowerBooks and iBooks, the iPod, the Apple Music Store, the G5, and OS X. Even the mainstream press and the usually hysterical analysts have stopped issuing Apple death notices with every little bump in the road.

Still, it seems that far too many potential Mac users are unsure of what Macs are about. Over the past few months, I've had at least a half-dozen longtime PC users ask me about Macs. They're clearly intrigued by the Mac OS—especially if they have experience with Unix—but they seem to think it was delivered by alien spacecraft. Just the other day, I overheard a CompUSA shopper tell his friend: "I hear that Macs are great, but I just can't learn to use a whole new computer." And that's the problem in a nutshell—the hard to dispel notion that using a Mac requires relearning everything a person knows about personal computers. It shouldn't be such a big secret that if you can use Windows, you can pick up the Mac OS in no time. But don't take it just from me—I once heard a CompUSA salesman tell a customer that it would be easy to make a PC-to-Mac switch because Apple "stole" the Mac's user interface from Microsoft.

The iPod dancers are fine, but it's time for Apple to break new ground in its marketing and advertising. With the arrival of Panther, the success of the iPod and the Apple Music Store, the recent upgrades of the iBook and PowerBook lines, and the arrival of the Mac G5 desktop, the company should have plenty to talk about.

Here's my two-cents worth:

Promote Panther

Show users of Mac OS 9 and OS X and Windows users (especially those who have not upgraded to Windows XP) what a modern operating system is all about. Show how easy it is to learn OS X and how much fun it is to use. Take advantage of the good reviews Panther has received—quote them liberally. Advertise OS X's out-of-box networking abilities and its compatibility with Windows.

Viruses?

We don't need no stinkin' viruses! How many Mac OS X machines have suffered from viruses? The answer: apparently, none. Sure, some will say (dubiously) that only the Mac's "minuscule" market share protects it. But even if that is true, I say, "who cares?" Take advantage of it! If virus-free is not a selling point, I don't know what is.

Go on a Surfin' Safari

Internet Explorer for the Mac belongs to the ages now, Netscape is near death. Safari is better, faster, cleaner. It eliminates pop-ups. It has tabs. Promote it!

Call the Office

Apple should relentlessly promote Office for the Mac, even if Microsoft doesn't. Office should come with every Mac, but if Apple isn't willing to go that far, at least leave no doubt in any Windows user's mind that a great version of Office that works nearly seamlessly with the Windows version is available. I'm still surprised by how many Windows users I encounter who don't know that.

Advertise the Retail Stores

Apple stores are in many of the largest markets now, and to anyone who has suffered the Mac section at CompUSA, an Apple store is a dream come true. There's no better way to see Macs in action.

Market to Small and Entrepreneurial Businesses

Macs may never carve a big chunk out of the corporate world, but they are great for small business. Show small businesses that using PCs will likely cost them more than using Macs, and then prove it.

Year of the Laptop?

With new and upgraded PowerBooks and new G4 iBooks, Apple has a very impressive line of portables which competes very well with PC laptops on both price and features. So why don't we see more advertising of them?

As long as we're talking portable, wouldn't it be nice to see Apple promote WiFi? After all, AirPort kick-started the boom in wireless access. Especially important: make the point that while AirPort has the coolest name in the wireless realm, it's not some exotic Apple-only thing. It's also time for Apple to put AirPort cards in every new Mac; wireless connectivity should be an integral component of the Mac experience the way AppleTalk networking used to be and Ethernet still is.

Find a Partner in the Digital Camera Business

Use the relationship to promote digital photography and video on the Mac. Of course, iPhoto, iMovie, and iDVD would be a big part of it, too. Apple needs to push the digital hub idea harder than anyone else. And while it's likely that Apple has new digital doodads waiting in the wings, there's no reason to let competitors grab the spotlight in the meantime.

Unwrap Some Bundles of Joy

Apple mostly sells à la carte, and has used rebates, but it should try selling an occasional bundled system at an attractive on-the-spot cash discount. Perhaps a G5, a monitor, and a quality photo printer for a few hundred bucks off?

Do Something Better with .Mac

I like this bundle of services and software and I use it all the time, but Apple needs to better articulate the .Mac features and really make something of this good idea. I'd begin by cutting the price and including a full year of .Mac with every new Mac. Apple bungled the transition from the free iTools service, annoying many Mac users who still refuse on somewhat misguided principle to have anything to do with .Mac. Enough already on both sides. Cut the price, swallow pride as necessary, and make .Mac a must-have for every Mac user.

Finally

I'd like to see Apple bring a little color back to the lineup, especially to the consumer-oriented iBook and iMac lines. And as much as I like brushed aluminum, wouldn't it be just too cool to have a jet-black PowerBook G5?

What do you think?

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The Desktop Muse

by David Ozab, dozab@atpm.com

A New Computer, a New Column, a New Life

This issue marks my return, after a one-year hiatus[1], to the pages of ATPM. A lot has transpired in the last year: I received my doctorate, got engaged, moved, bought a new computer, and finally made the leap to OS X. With all of these changes, I decided it was time for a new column too. So this issue also marks the debut of *The Desktop Muse*, a semi-regular column about the Mac, music, and multimedia.

Is There a Doctor in the House?

Well, yes…but…I am a doctor now, but not that kind of doctor. I have a Ph.D., which, for the uninitiated, stands for "piled higher and deeper." In other words, I have "a license to bulls**t." All joking aside, I take my newfound place in the community of scholars very seriously. I have to. It's a really hard club to get into, though I don't think anyone can kick me out. It's sort of like tenure, which I hope to have one day as well.

The Bachelor's Life is Behind Me

No more sedimentary layers of laundry, no more alternating ramen noodles, mac and cheese, and pizza for dinner, and no more staying up until 2 AM. OK, scratch that last one, but the bachelor's life is behind me for good. I'm engaged and I couldn't be happier. The date is set (next June) and we've gotten a head start on wedding arrangements so we can save as much money as possible.

Welcome to the XXIst Century

My G3 350 had a good run, but I was tired of running a twentieth century computer and a twentieth century operating system. So I bought a dual-boot 1.25 GHz G4 with a SuperDrive. Of course, once you have a new computer, how can you keep using same old monitor? So I picked up a 17" LCD monitor. It's not an Apple display, but it was $200 less, and the color matches my G4 perfectly.

Now I'm running OS X, and I'm quickly learning to love it. Music and audio software is far more plentiful now as well. I've already upgraded Max/MSP[2] and Reaktor[3] (both free), purchased Bias Deck[4] (which ships with Peak LE[5] included), and have pre-ordered the Finale 2004[6] upgrade (with a $20 discount). In the meantime, I still have OS 9 available (as a boot OS) for my older versions of Cuebase VST, Vision, and Metasynth[7].

Future upgrades? At some point I'll want to own the entire Bias[8] line. Soundsoap. SuperFreq, and Vbox are fairly reasonable, but a Peak upgrade will set me back $400. I may wait until I get an academic position and the pricing perks that come with it. I'm looking for a good affordable sequencer that I can sync with Deck. I'm also waiting on an overdue upgrade for Metasynth. In addition, I want to explore my interest in multimedia. I plan to pick up Final Cut Express by the end of the year. I also hope to pick up DVD Studio Pro at some point in after the new year, and, once Metasynth is updated, I may purchase both Artmatic[9] and VTrack[10] as well. By next spring, my fiancé and I plan to own both a digital still camera and a DV Camcorder, so I will have the tools to indulge my imagination.

And So…

I inaugurate a new column, *The Desktop Muse*. Future entries will be longer and will feature more music and multimedia, less me, and definitely no bulls**t. See you again soon.

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9. http://www.artmatic.com
10. ://www.uisoftware.com/PAGES/index.html?contentFrame=http://uisoftware.com/VTrack/index.html

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Quick Tips in Design

by Andrew Kator, akator@atpm.com

Part 5: Shape

In visual art, shape can be defined as simple or complex, geometric or natural, and abstract. A shape may combine different qualities, for example one shape can be both simple and natural, and another shape can be simple, geometric, and abstract.

Simple

The simple shapes are the square, rectangle, circle, ellipse, and triangle. These are the basic forms that are used as the foundation for all other shapes.

Squares and rectangles are the most common shapes in man-made objects. From architecture to the arrangement of text on a page to the shape of the page itself, most of what people encounter on a daily basis is composed of squares and rectangles. Because so much of the man-made world is composed of these shapes, squares and rectangles are familiar, safe, and comfortable, but their uniformity can also create a conservative or rigid effect. They can be used to suggest stability and truth. Squares are considered to be one of the most honest shapes, even more than other types of rectangles, because of their mathematical and visual simplicity.

Triangles suggest action because of movement from the corners "pointing" in a direction. Equilateral triangles are the most stable of the triangle shapes because all sides and angles are the same. Triangles can suggest growth or "reaching the top."

Circles suggest infinity, completion, softness, and security. Many ancient cultures considered the circle to be a perfect and even a sacred form. Circles are useful for focusing attention because of the closure of the shape, and because they are less common in man-made objects than shapes with straight lines. Ellipses share the psychology of circles, but to a lesser extent depending on the how close they are to a true circle.

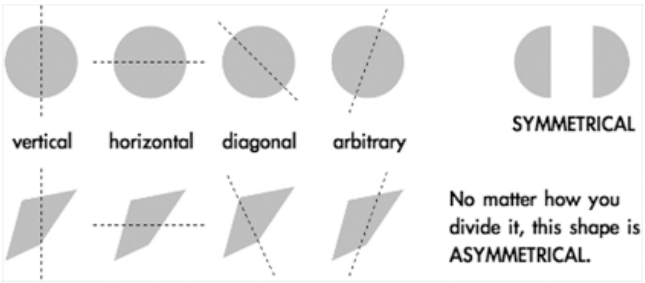
Complex

Complex shapes combine parts or all of the simple shapes. These include polygons or less "definable" shapes that may include parts of circles, squares, triangles, ellipses, and rectangles.

The effects of complex shapes can be predicted by how many overall similarities they have to the basic shapes. An easy way to visually simplify a complex shape is to squint and/or get some distance. As the complex shape becomes more blurred, the details "disappear" and the overall effect will be easier to see.

Symmetry

The easiest way to explain symmetry is by cutting an object in half through the middle. If the two pieces are the same, an object is symmetrical. Asymmetry is when the two halves are not the same.



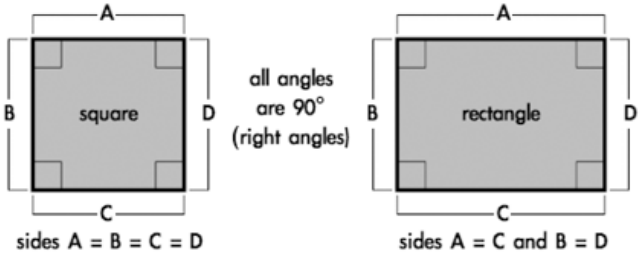
The direction of the cut is the axis of symmetry, and it can be horizontal, vertical, diagonal, or arbitrary. A circle is the most symmetrical of all objects, meaning no matter how you cut it in half the two pieces will always be exactly the same. Squares are also highly symmetrical, exhibiting vertical, horizontal, and diagonal symmetry. Ellipses and rectangles are horizontally and vertically symmetrical, but lack diagonal symmetry.

Another method used to view symmetry is reflection. Imagine holding a mirror down the middle of an object. If the reflection in the mirror completes the shape, the object is symmetrical along the axis with which the mirror is aligned.

Shapes like circles and squares gain some of their positive visual emotional reactions, like completion and honesty, from their symmetry.

Geometry

Geometry, in mathematics, is the study of shapes and their relationships, but the definition of geometric shape in visual art is more flexible. Geometric shapes are structured, often symmetrical, and often contain straight lines. The simple shapes squares, rectangles, circles, ellipses, triangles, are all geometric. While knowing all of geometry isn't necessary to create visual art, understanding some of the principles helps to explain human responses.

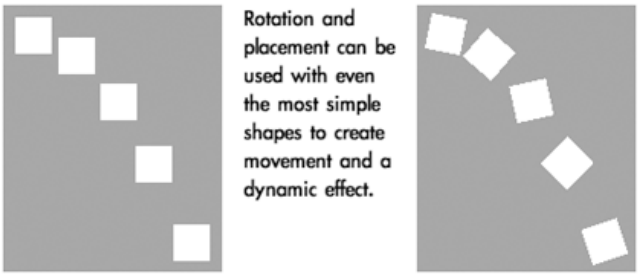


People naturally tend to align objects to the horizontal and vertical. This is based upon instinctive interpretations of the world around us, where gravity holds objects "flat" to the earth's surface. The horizon, where the earth meets the sky, is a long horizontal line when seen from a standing position with a clear view into the distance. These instinctive visual interpretations make horizontal alignment the strongest method of visually arranging objects. Vertical alignment (90° from horizontal) is also a strong method, but not as strong as horizontal.

Alignment of a shape's side to the vertical or horizontal is a strong tool for changing the shape's visual effect.

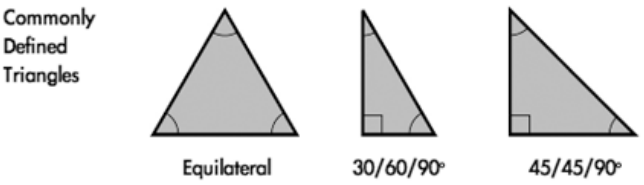
Because of their straight lines, symmetry, and comfort, rotating squares and rectangles from horizontal/vertical alignment can create dynamic effects. The visual reaction to the object changes based on the amount of rotation and whether the angle is arbitrary or more rigid 30° and 45° increments. Shapes of all kinds with right angles (90°) share visual stability, but that can be changed with rotation.

Being simple or geometric doesn't mean a shape isn't a powerful tool. Placement, scale, and rotation of simple and geometric shapes can alter the stability and predictability of the original shapes and thus increase their complexity. Even the circular effects of ellipses can change when rotated.



Triangles can be of any shape or size, but there are three three specific types of triangles that are geometrically defined and used most often. Equilateral triangles are visually the most "complete" triangle, because all sides are the same length and all angles are 60°. This gives equilateral triangles some of the same simplicity and "honesty" that is interpreted from squares.

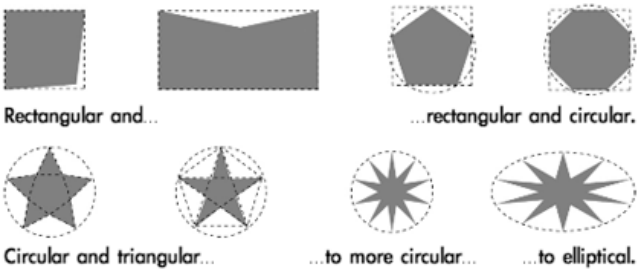
The two other commonly used triangles are a 30/60/90° and a 45/45/90°, both named from the angles used to construct the shape. The 30/60/90° is one-half of an equilateral triangle, and the 45/45/90° is one-half of a square, cut diagonally.



Parallelograms combine some of the psychological stability of squares and rectangles with the same dynamic effects and movement seen in triangles. Increasing the "slant" or "shear" of the parallelogram makes the dynamic effects more triangular, while lowering distance of the "shift" can create effects similar to rotating squares and rectangles.

The effects of all other geometric shapes, including other polygons, can be predicted by how they resemble the basic shapes. Use the same techniques for predicting reactions to

complex shapes for interpreting polygons. For example, an octagon shares many elements with rectangles but also creates a circular effect.



Notice the "painful" feel to the two right stars. As the multiple "triangles" in the polygon become thinner, they suggest a pointy or cutting edge. It is important to be aware of the emotional reactions evoked by shape.

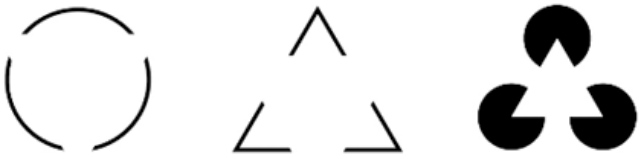
Gestalt: Similarity

Similar elements will be perceived as part of the same form. These similaries may include shape, size, and rotation.

Even the Gestalt principles of continuity and proximity are affected by similarity.

Gestalt: Closure

Humans tend to visually close a space by completing a contour and ignoring gaps in the figure. When something is left to the imagination, people tend to find visual images more interesting than when the entire image is "complete." People naturally fill in the missing information.

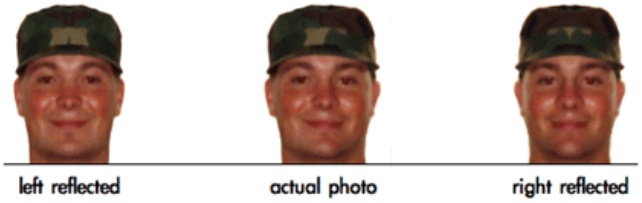


Natural

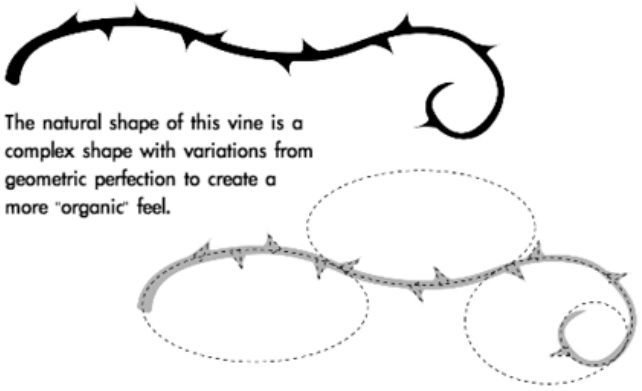
Natural shapes are usually complex and most often represent real world objects. Because the real world is rarely perfect, natural shapes are more irregular, asymmetrical, or random than geometric shapes.

Nature likes balance and symmetry, but perfect symmetry in natural objects is rarely seen.

Perfect symmetry can create an unnatural, conservative or even stagnant appearance. Even slightly asymmetrical shapes can create more visual interest by allowing the viewer to subconsciously discover symmetry instead of having it perfectly defined. This can make natural asymmetrical shapes feel more dynamic and spontaneous.



A good example of natural variation of symmetry can be found in the human face. Even with many facial features balanced in pairs, there is variation between the placement and shape of the features. In some cases, one half of a person's face reflected to create a symmetrical whole will become an entirely different and unrecognizable person.



The natural shape of this vine is a complex shape with variations from geometric perfection to create a more "organic" feel.

Tearing a piece of paper instead of cutting it results in an irregular edge with many variations, even if the overall rip is straight. Simple and geometric shapes can be made more natural, visually complex, and less monotonous by changing the outline of the shape. The same techniques used with line

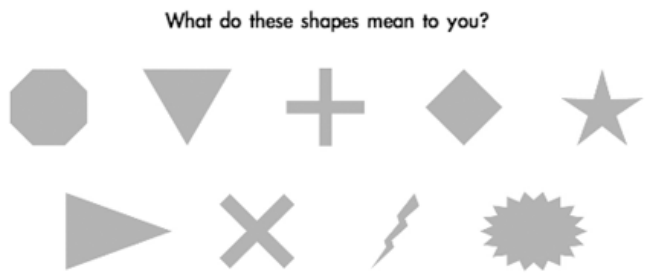
for a more natural effect can be used with shape. Adding breaks in the shape, randomness and variations, or "notches" to their outlines can all make shapes more natural and "organic."

Abstract

Abstract shapes are images used to convey concise meaning or identity without the use of written language. Abstract shapes may be universal to all people or culturally based, and are often stylized natural shapes. Many signs, icons, and logos use abstract shapes.

Abstract shapes are often silhouetted and exaggerated to focus on recognizable shape rather than being realistic. The silhouettes and lack of detail make them easily understood from a distance and by people with different cultural backgrounds. Because most abstract shapes are used to communicate, they must command attention, convey a clear and simple meaning, and command respect. When abstract shapes are used for signs, they must also give adequate time for proper response.

The interpretation of many shapes is cultural. Octagons mean stop, especially when combined with the color red, but that same meaning doesn't apply in countries where stop signs are not shaped as octagons. Stars and star-bursts are used to emphasize and identify "new and improved," but this is another cultural meaning through repeated use in mass communication and advertising.



The most universal symbols are based upon nature and easily recognizable human shapes and tools. Most people, regardless of background, can recognize a stick figure as a person or the silhouette of a wave or a bird because these are abstractions of natural shapes they have experienced in the world around them.

One of the most basic abstract shapes that is taken for granted is the arrow. Combining the effects of triangles and line, arrows are used to illustrate and indicate movement. Because of this universal visual interpretation, arrows are used worldwide to control movement of people and their vehicles.

Cultural symbols can evolve to become universal symbols once their use saturates a majority of societies through the world. One hundred years ago the shape of a car or bicycle might not be recognized by most people, but since these forms of technology have influenced people across the world they are now more universal.

Because of their widespread use in electronics, triangles can mean play, action, and next. Triangles are also used to represent stability, a cultural reference to the pyramids. They are also used for beacons, arrows, and pendants, and can symbolize the Christian principles of the Holy Trinity and the unifying concept of three.

As technological symbols become more mainstream they also become more universal.

The "power/on/off" symbol is a combination of the 0 and 1 logic expressions of true of false. This symbol is not yet universal, but it is possible to watch it change from something only recognized by the computer-literate to mainstream use. This icon is now used on many computers and electronics, and many people are already unaware of the logic expressions in the symbol and accept it as an abstract shape representing the power switch.

Abstract shapes are often used in logos by marketing and advertising to create brand identity. People in every country recognize certain shapes with products, the best examples being the logos for Coca-Cola and Pepsi. Regardless of the language, almost anyone can pick out one of these products.

Effective logo design often uses abstract shape to create a universal product identity that transcends language and other cultural barriers.

Studying traffic symbols and other signs is an excellent way to develop a better understanding of how create and use abstract shapes.

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About This Particular Outliner

by Ted Goranson, tgoranson@atpm.com

Outliner Features—Part 2

This month, we finish our survey of outliner features that we began last month[1]. You'll recall our goal is to list all the major features found in all outliners so that you can write your own definition of outliner needs. After all, this *is* your particular Macintosh.

Last month, we noted these features:

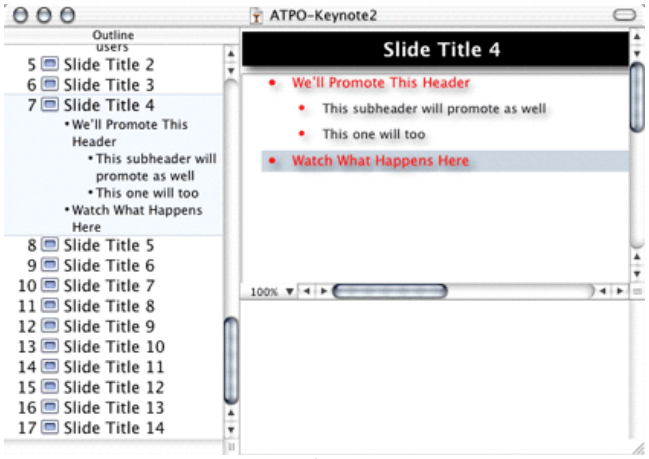
- *Ordinary Nesting, Promote/Demote, Collapsing:* the basic necessity of outliners.
- *Styles:* both "paragraph" styles for headers and text, and named "character" styles (as in Word).
- *Headers and Non-headers:* differentiation between headers and paragraphs.
- *Multilevels:* outlines of outlines.
- *Multilevel Finder Integration:* the "outline" of outlines corresponds to the Finder outline.
- *Distinct Meta Levels:* outlines about outlines.
- *Folding:* collapsing independent of the outline; alternatively collapsing any header or paragraph to the first line.
- *Other Graphical Layouts:* the ability to view the outline using a two-dimensional drawing.
- *Snipping Input and Drag and Drop:* the ability to easily input items from other applications (or the Web).

Now we complete the list of features.

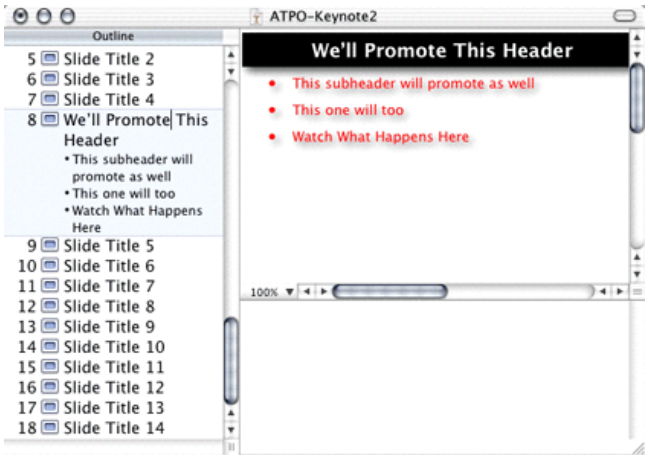
Integrated Multilevels

Regarding multilevel outliners, the very best functionality is when the multiple levels of outline *of* notes and outline *within* notes are seamlessly integrated. Promoting a top-level header from the lower outline should move to a low-level header in the upper outline.

Keynote has something like this ability in its "outline" mode. On the left you can see the organization of the entire document, and on the right the organization in outline form of a specific slide or note. You can promote a slide bullet to a slide title. It is as if you were able to take a large complex outline in a note and seamlessly break it into smaller notes by just promoting headers. This is such a tremendously useful capability one wonders why it is not widely implemented.



Keynote, Before Promoting



Keynote, After Promoting

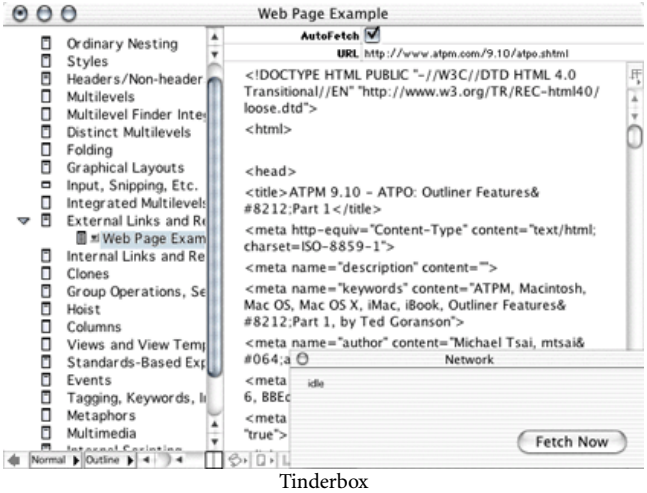
I wrote an outliner (NisusOutliner, now defunct) that did just this. It had headers that behaved as outlines just as in Word, and it had paragraphs. But the paragraphs could be organized using bullets and sub-bullets as a mini-outline. A bullet could be promoted to body text and then to a next-level header (depending on what level header the text was under) and then on up using the same keystroke (Shift-Tab).

1. http://www.atpm.com/9.10/atpo.shtml

External Links and References

Simple outliners only contain content that is explicitly entered or imported into the document. More advanced outliners can link to external sources. Simple links are usually URL-like text or badges that when clicked open a file or Web page. More advanced implementations import or display the contents of the referenced source.

By far, the most amazing of our applications in this regard is Tinderbox, shown in the screenshot. A note can be fetched, displayed and filtered from a Web page, or a dynamic RSS feed. (Real Simple Syndication is a common Web news and blog publishing standard.) Or the note can find anything that can be AppleScripted because opening a note can trigger a script. Tinderbox also supports the weaker version of link references to files or URLs. Inspiration and NoteBook do this too. Hog Bay Notebook is limited to URLs. Radio can only import other Radio outlines.



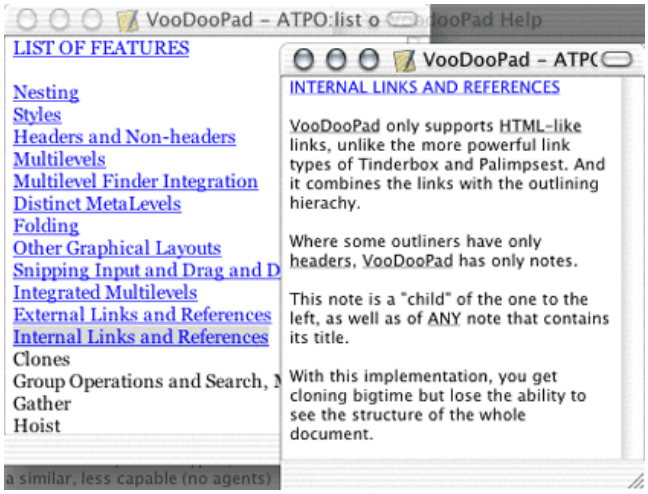
Tinderbox

Internal Links and References

Quite apart from external links, many outliners support internal links as well. A simple implementation uses Web-like hypertext to take you to another place in the outline, or even in another outline reachable by your machine. A more complete implementation doesn't have the limitations of the Web, and might allow two-way linking, named and typed links, and links among text bocks and headers.

Tinderbox is the champ in this department too. Links can be from or to blocks or text. They can be typed, overlap, and have agents and tags attached. The now defunct Palimpsest had a similar, less capable (no agents) set of links, but they could be two-way.

The example screenshot for this feature is VooDooPad, which is in effect a two-pane outliner without the first pane, and which implements the hierarchy as links. Better is a similar capability in Hog Bay Notebook which supports both this "wiki"-type hyperlink and the traditional hierarchy.



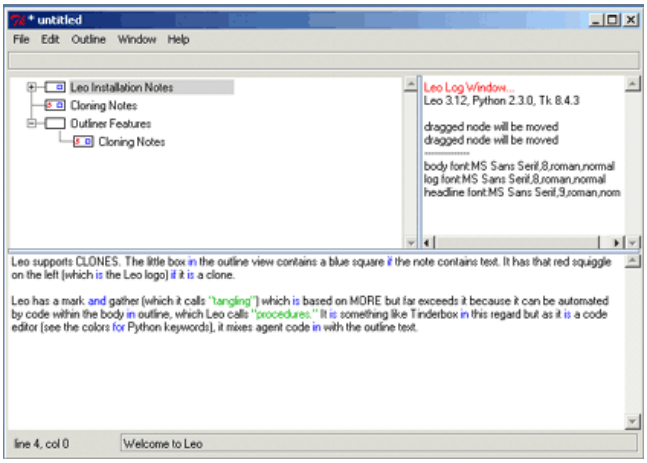
VooDooPad

Clones

Tree structures are powerful, but inherently inflexible. What happens when you want to put something in more than one place? The Finder's outliner implements this though "aliases." Such a capability greatly extends the power of the outlining paradigm. In the outlining world, it is usually called "cloning." Simple cloning is like the Finder, where any change is reflected in the source; there is only one source and the clone is a pointer to that source. More advanced implementations allow branching, where multiple copies are kept and can be changed independently. An even more advanced notion syncs the changes.

Tinderbox supports cloning in spades. Clones can be simple aliases or copies, and in either case can be filtered or processed by agents. We have tried to spread our screenshots among different applications, so here we show a different example: Leo. Leo supports clones in an elegant, integrated way. DEVONthink supports something like this in what it calls "replicants."

The screenshot is of Leo on Windows. People do run Leo on Aqua, but this poor columnist was unable to do so in time (the author is enthusiastically helping and we expect to report how to install it on OS X in a later column).

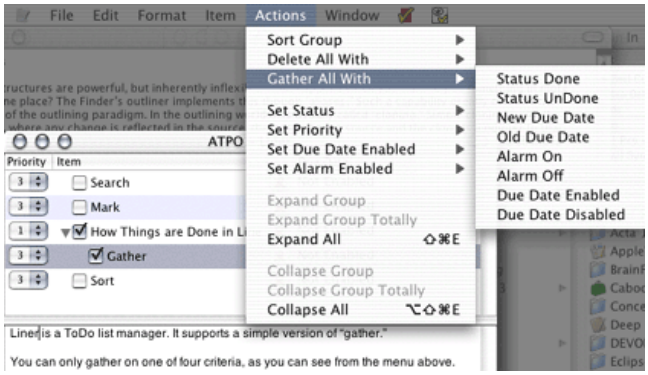


Leo

Group Operations, Sort and Search, Mark and Gather

Working with outlines is often a matter of locating ideas and restructuring them. The simple operation is to select a single header and move it in some way. But novice outline users quickly outgrow that limitation and want to move many headers. Some outliners allow you to select a header and promote not just it, but it and all its children as well. A much more powerful selection method is the "search" command. For instance: "select all headers containing the word 'example' and created or modified in the last 10 days, together with their children." You can then drag that discontinuous assembly to a new header location and it will create a new branch of all those parts based on certain rules.

Tinderbox is the only outliner that fully supports this, and can gather to a clone. MORE developed it in that powerful context. Tinderbox's implementation is automated, where MORE's involved a manual search. No other outliner seems to have anything close. Some outliners can gather by sorting on pretagged characteristics. The screenshot shows one of these: Liner.



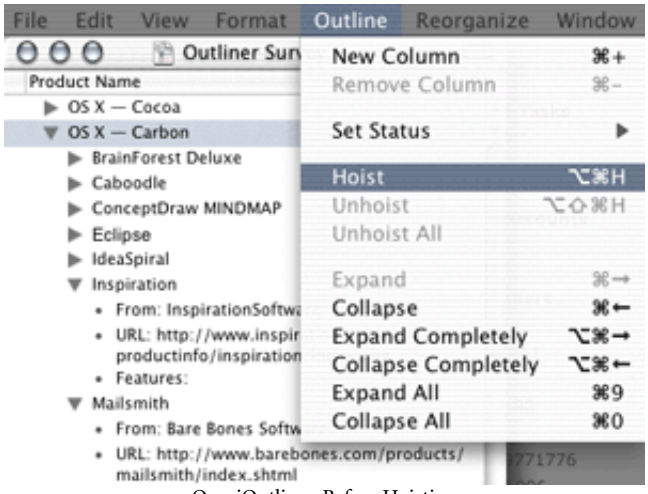
Liner

NoteBook takes a different tack. It automatically gathers by the tags you apply and can do custom "gathers" of multiple tags. These are collected on index pages from whence you can copy and collect on regular pages.

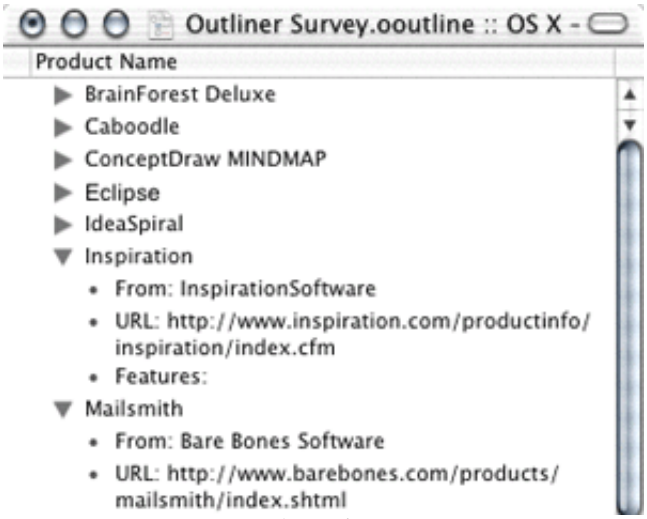
Hoist

A key utility of outlines is that you can see the structure of very large documents, yet zoom in on any one part. "Hoisting" allows you to do something in between. If you select a header in some outliners and hoist that header, what you get is a view of the outline as if only the structure under that one header existed. You could, for example, have a whole book in one outline, but work on outlines of chapters in isolation by hoisting.

OmniOutliner supports this effortlessly as shown in the screenshot. Radio and NoteBook do as well, but only NoteBook has clear visual feedback in the outline that you are hoisted; you will note that the screenshot shows that OmniOutliner's feedback is in the window title.



OmniOutliner, Before Hoisting

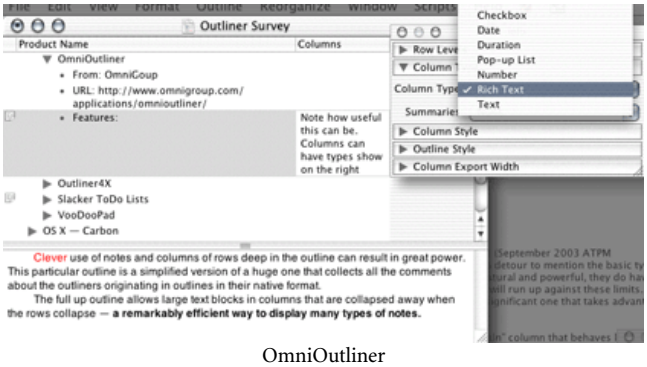


OmniOutliner, After Hoisting

Columns

You may have been wondering why in the first column (ATPM 9.09[1]) we took a detour to mention the basic types of structuring methods. It is because although tree structures are natural and powerful, they do have significant limitations. And anybody as creative as your typical ATPM reader will run up against these limits. We've already mentioned a couple tricks: links and clones. Here's another really significant one that takes advantage of the two dimensions of your screen.

Columns are a simple idea; outline headers have a "main" column that behaves like an outline and additional columns to the right that behave like a table, or in some cases like a spreadsheet. More advanced implementations allow columns to have assignable data types (numbers, text, dates, events, and so on) and styles.



OmniOutliner

Sometimes they can have computed results. Often, they are sortable, which temporarily (or permanently) changes the order of headers, acting as row titles. Clever use of attributes in columns and sort criteria can emulate a search and gather function. InfoDepot, now defunct, seems to have developed this idea, followed by the similarly defunct INcontrol. They had masterful implementations of columns. OmniOutliner is the only OS X outliner that supports this type of column, and its implementation is pretty robust. The screenshot shows OmniOutliner.

Schedule is multi-platform but originated on the Mac. It also has a column feature from its Mac-only days, which is much more mature but not as general purpose.

Views and View Templates

Most outliners allow some control over how the information is displayed, but that control is per document and set once, rather like a word processing document. Some now-defunct Mac outliners (InfoDepot and INcontrol) took more of a FileMaker-like approach to cells as fields. The data existed within the file, and how it displayed could be toggled into many custom layouts. Some data might be hidden in certain presentations.

Alas, no OS X mainline outliner currently has this capability. In a future column, we will describe how to use Keynote as an outliner. If you do, you'll get this great feature so far as display by shifting themes. But the changes will only cover text display.

You could emulate such a capability in FileMaker, and someone probably has.

If you run Adobe FrameMaker, you can have something like this. You can use SGML (the grandaddy of HTML and XML) to structure your document and get an outline of that structure. (We'll note that type of outline as the very last feature in this list.) And you can use its amazing invisible mode and conditional text, plus its several scripting languages to make your own outliner. But FrameMaker only runs under Classic, may never be improved for the Mac, and the nifty outlining plug-in[2] only works under Windows. Even then, we are talking nearly $1,000.

So since there is no viable candidate for this, we omit a screenshot. But in an upcoming column we will recall some older outliners that *can*, and that still run under Classic. The screenshots in that column will prompt a flurry of feature requests to your favorite outliner developer, we're sure.

Standards-Based Export

Many users of outlines do not consider the outliner as a dead end, but as part of a workflow that spans several applications. That means at a certain point the outliner needs to export structured information. There are a few standards that are emerging (like OPML, an outline format in XML) and some product-specific formats like Keynote's. A good outliner will have an open specification of its output, presumably in XML to allow "playing well with others."

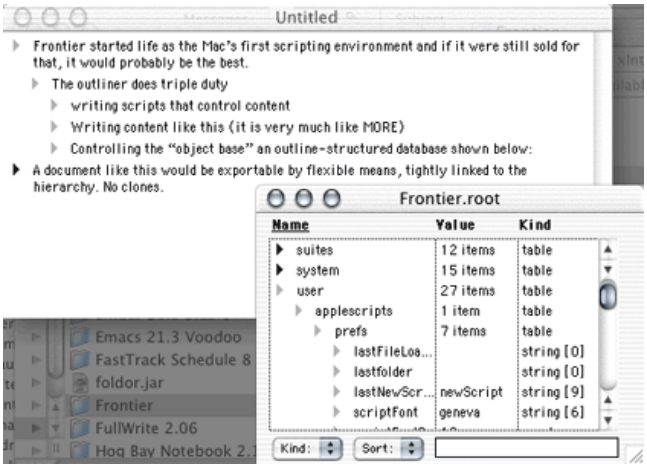
1. http://www.atpm.com/9.09/atpo.shtml

2. http://www.sandybrook.com

So far as Web publishing, this task is called "rendering." UserLand Frontier is probably the king of HTML rendering, largely because that is the main purpose of the product. It is scriptable by its own very powerful language, UserTalk, which also runs on the server side. The outliner is used to edit both scripts and outline content. But Frontier is $900 a year.

At less than a sixth of that price, Tinderbox has the most flexible and capable rendering overall, in part because it allows so many sophisticated internal relationships and links. That, plus its agents, can be used—if planned well—for very sophisticated publishing. Tinderbox's internal representation is XML, and you can build any sort of XSL stylesheet for export, typically to a Web site. But this, and writing export scripts, is pretty hairy business.

Some outliners have built-in export to popular formats: OmniOutliner to KeyNote (and Word via AppleScript), and Inspiration to Word and AppleWorks. NoteBook and OmniOutliner export to OPML.

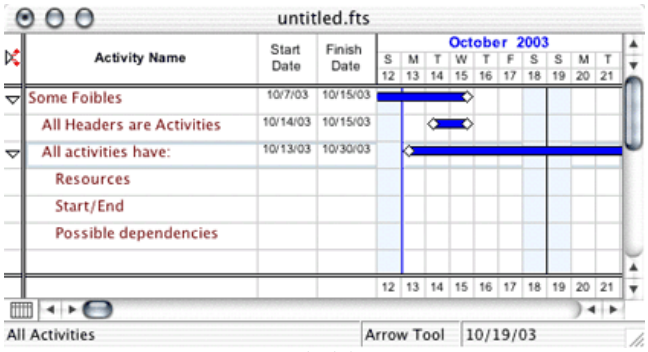


Frontier

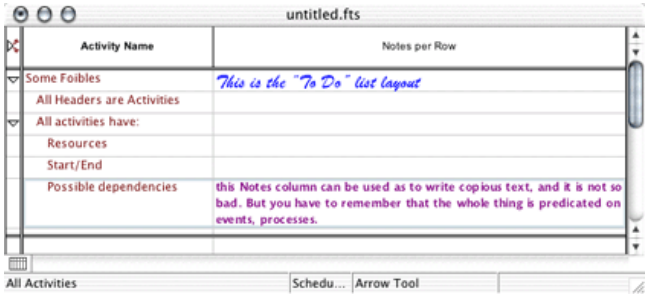
Events

Some outliners are used for to-do lists, calendar editing, or project management. They need to incorporate the notion of events and dates. Sometimes, this includes event dependencies: event A or B must occur before event C does, for instance. Occasionally, an awareness of events is deeply integrated into the fabric of the outliners with alarms, priorities, event displays, and such.

Far and away, the master of this crowd is Schedule. It is an outliner with columns, and some of those columns can represent time periods and be linked according to event dependency rules—like Gantt charts. The screenshot doesn't do justice to the bewildering modeling and presentation options.



Schedule



Schedule

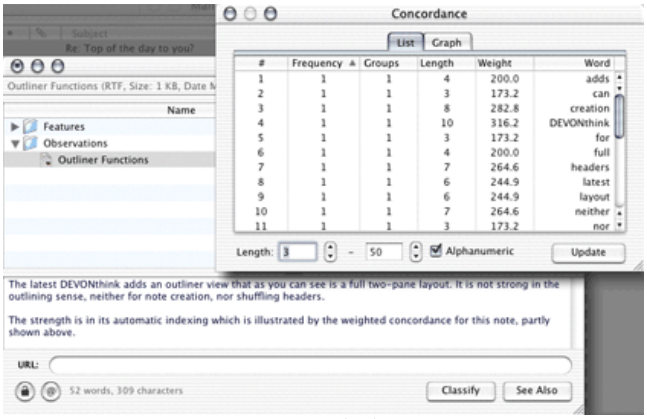
Tagging, Keywords, and Indexing

One way of moving outliners closer to databases is by adding columns as already noted. Often those columns can support pop-up lists of user-defined variables. These usually serve as a way of tagging the header, for instance you may note whether a paragraph is in draft or finished—or whether the priority of an item is high or low. But there are more robust, database-like ways of assigning or extracting keywords and developing indices to help you find an entry. Many users deem this important because files often get huge, especially if content is imported from elsewhere.

NoteBook has a relatively simple tagging capability, and a large number of automatically generated, handy indexes on those tags. Hog Bay Notebook uses a strong open source search engine (but can't tag).

The example screenshot for this feature is of DEVONthink. Other outliners allow you to assign keywords and categories to notes and sometimes text within notes. DEVONthink

assumes that most of your notes will be imported, that there will be huge masses of them, and that the organization of these notes will be mostly extracted rather than applied.

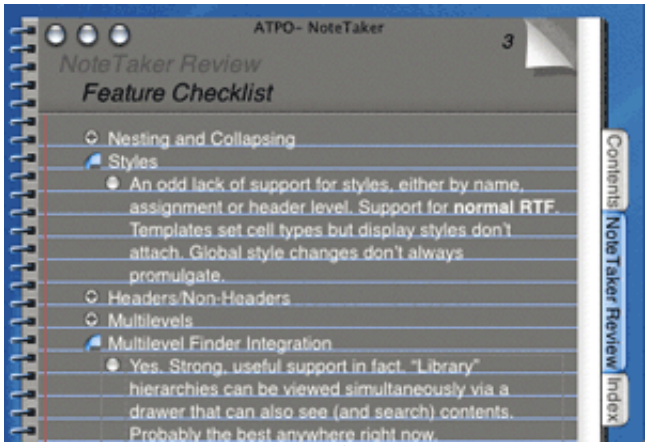


DEVONthink

Metaphors

Everything we have described so far is based on a pure sort of interaction between the data and the user. For example, a "pure" outliner like OmniOutliner (other than user interface elements like the toolbar) consists of text, panes, and columns in a very clean presentation. There is nothing there other than the view of the information. Other outliners leverage various metaphors intended to improve the user experience. The most common metaphors are borrowed from the Finder, with some headers being "folders." Another common metaphor is the notebook metaphor. Tinderbox's chart view uses a cross between a whiteboard and sticky notes.

NoteBook and NoteTaker take this notebook metaphor to extremes, complete with lined pages that turn, tabbed sections, contents, indexes, and spiral "bindings." Others use the Post-It metaphor. The value to a user is a matter of personal preference, remembering that the whole Mac experience is predicated on the value of user interface metaphor. We'll did deeper into this is a future column, I promise. Additionally, we'll compare NoteTaker and NoteBook; the similarities are fairly superficial.



NoteTaker

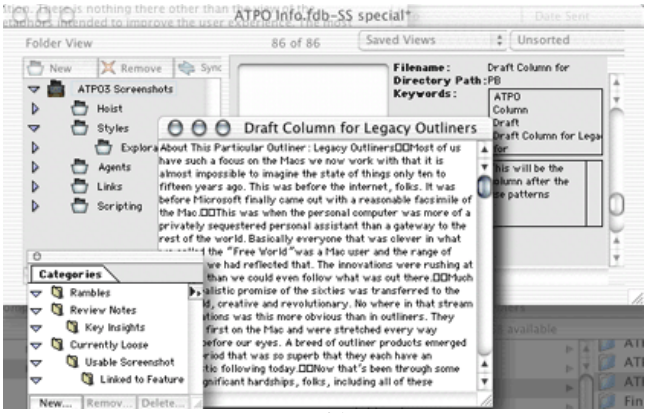
Multimedia

Some outliners can only deal with text. Many can deal with graphics as a "leaf" (a note) or in the contents of a note that includes text and multimedia. Most that support graphics also support sound and movies. But these applications vary widely on significant details: can items be dynamically imported or referenced; can they be tagged, indexed, sorted, and linked like text blocks; and can they exported with some control like layout.

Hog Bay NoteBook, Skinkhunt Notes, NoteBook, and NoteTaker handle media within the outline proper. Word can insert graphic media, but not display it in the outline view. DEVONthink has the ability to display PDFs like graphics but extract the text for indexing.

The screenshot shows a quirky outliner with superb multimedia support, Portfolio. We've chosen to show a text document to emphasize that it could be brought into service as a rudimentary two-pane outliner. Its primary purpose is as a database for media with an emphasis on tagging, keywords, search, and display. But look at the window on the left. That is an outline of "categories" (keywords). These folders are virtual folders that you can make up to suit yourself as headers. It forms a clone-friendly parallel outline to the

Finder outline which is indicated underneath. This an example of the "Distinct Meta Levels" feature we noted last month[1].



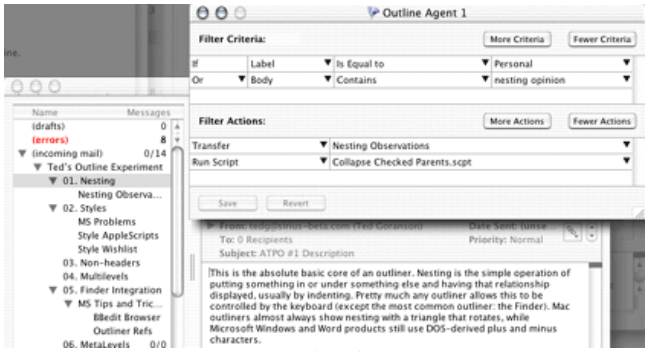
Portfolio

Actions and Action Hierarchies (Internal Scripting)

Some outliners are designed so that every operation that occurs must be performed by the user. But others have a variety of automatic operations, the most common of which is word/phrase recognition for indexing, tagging, and some layout. An example of layout may be the automatic identification of an address and formatting the note as an address book entry. But there are cooler, fancier, and more useful actions that can be applied. And it is so much better if the actions are scriptable by the user. An example script: "Take all the notes having to do with things I said I would do, and make a clone and put under a header 'Things-To-Do' according to priority, and when one of those things to do was 'finish this note,' color those headers red and place all contributing notes as children."

Of outliners, Tinderbox has the strongest capabilities of this type. Radio is in a sense scriptable as well but lacks the triggers of Tinderbox, as the filtering is presumed to be done at a server by Frontier. Leo has an interesting scripting language that is embedded in notes. IdeaKnot is the most peculiar: it is an outliner in the same odd sense that VooDooPad is, except a step more radical: its entries can also be scripts that (using a glossary-like rewriting) direct from one "knot" (collection of notes) to another in a dynamic hierarchy.

Novel outliners will be the subject of a future column, including unexpected use of some programs as outliners. The screenshot shows Mailsmith, for example, which can be seen as a typical three-pane outliner with the notes pane having an e-mail message usually attached. You can actually use it as a pretty competent outliner. Why would you want to do such a thing? Because in addition to having access to the best search and editing engines on the Mac and a clipping service, you can attach scripts to mailboxes that can call AppleScripts. These can pass notes around in remarkable ways. It's not as handy or easy as with Tinderbox, but in some ways it can be more powerful because through AppleScript you can do almost anything.



Mailsmith

Scripting

We've already noted the ability to script the output, and to write internal actions that collect and manage notes. Here we look at the application as a whole. Is the application itself scriptable? If it is, then you might be able to do those internal things. But you are also more likely to be able to integrate the application into a workflow that involves several applications. And of all application types, you are most likely to want to do this with outliners.

The most scriptable application—by far—of the straight outliners we consider, is OmniOutliner. You can readily write AppleScripts, and there are lots of user-contributed scripts that do all sorts of neat things including custom integration with other applications (Word, iPod, Palm, and so on). Radio is also supremely scriptable; in fact, the predecessor of Radio (Frontier) started life as the first Mac scripting environment and grew into AppleScript compliance when Apple introduced it. Schedule and Word are AppleScriptable as well.

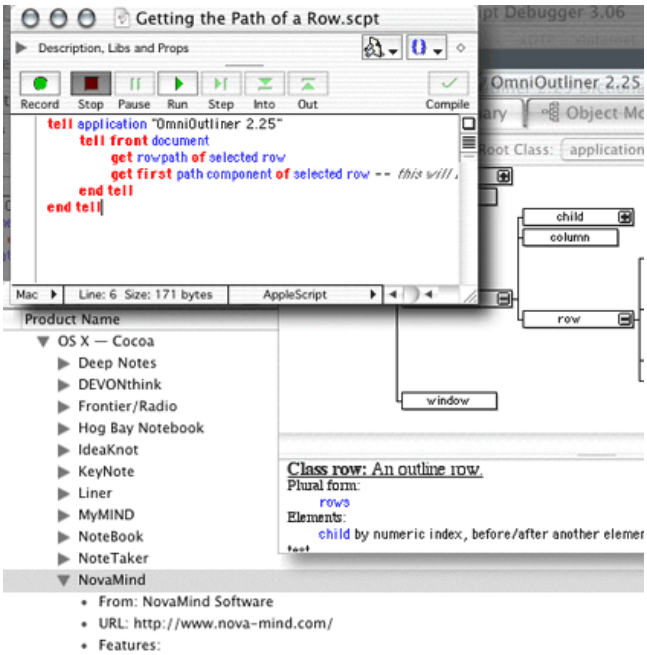
JEdit is scriptable via the Java in which it is written, Leo similarly in Python, Emacs in Lisp, and Vim by any Unix scripting language (Perl, Python, Ruby, and its own language), but you'd have to be a pretty sophisticated user to do so. As with Radio, you'd be writing the scripts in the editor you are scripting, which is a very elegant notion.

NoteTaker and Hog Bay Notebook have rudimentary AppleScript support, but in both cases it is immature and currently not much use. But both products have aggressive developers committed to scriptability so this is likely to become useful soon.

If you take the plunge with us in a later column and explore Mailsmith as one of your outliners, you'll be pleased to know that it (and to a lesser extent Eudora) is friendlier to AppleScript (both externally and internally as noted above) than just about any application of any kind.

1. http://www.atpm.com/9.10/atpo.shtml

The screenshot shows an OmniOutliner outline behind two Script Debugger windows showing an example script and an object model of a document—which also happens to be (a tree view of) an outline.



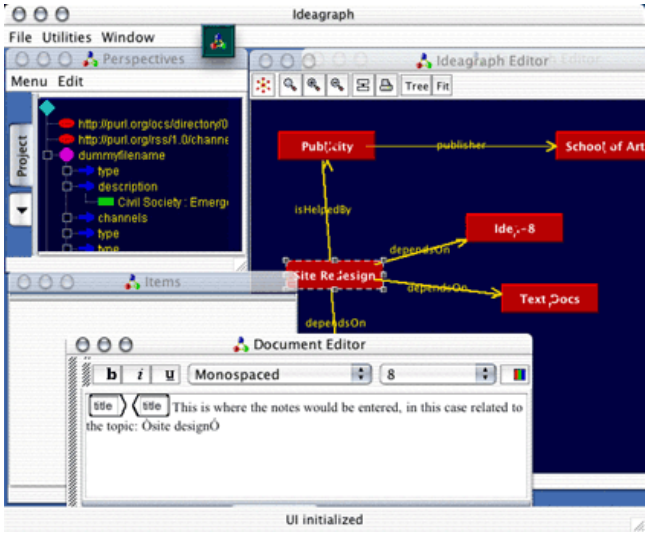
OmniOutliner and Script Debugger

Header Relationships

Thanks for sticking with us through that rather long list. Our final feature is pretty cool. Ordinary outlines capture a rather simple relationship: something is at a level under, over, or the same as something else. By named and typed links, Tinderbox allows us to relate two notes according to an arbitrary relationship independent of the outline. But what if the outline structure itself captured several types of relationships?

IdeaGraph is an early work in progress that attempts just that. The kinds of relationships it has in mind are derived from the standard developed by the Semantic Web folks (RDF, the Resource Description Framework). The idea is that in the near future, we are going to want to structure documents so that the structure reflects their internal semantics. Right now, you can import a Web page into an outliner, but all you get is a collection of words. In the future, you should also be able to import (or create from scratch and display) the actual *meaning* of the site by semantics encoded in, or referenced by, that RDF.

The screenshot depicts this. The window on the right is like a cross between Tinderbox's and Inspiration's graphical views. Each note has a box. Each box can be linked to another by various relationships. But those relationships can be captured in an expanded notion of a tree structure. The left shows an outline that has this structure coded in symbols that in a regular Mac outliner would be triangles.



Onward

Thanks for sticking with us for the rather lengthy survey of features. It must be frustrating to see so many applications mentioned in a way that is too brief to be useful. But never fear, in months ahead we will dive into just about every one of them. With the basic foundation of features as a basis, we are now ready to explore various use patterns and application comparisons. Stick with us as we go on an adventure, and send us feedback on where you'd like to go. For instance, should we look at little known outliners and use of unexpected applications (like Mailsmith) as outliners? Or would you rather see more traditional comparative reviews?

Department of Corrections, Apologies, and Additions

Our survey is so ambitious that I expect to make lots of mistakes and omissions. Two omissions from last month's list of legacy outliners were both amazing applications, possibly written by some of the same people. Arrange, by Common Knowledge was a pretty advanced outliner along the lines of today's Tinderbox. FullWrite Pro was an equally advanced word processor with an outline mode that even now compares well to Word's. We'll dig into both of these when we do a column on all of the fine legacy Mac outliners.

In the meantime, we have a big scoop: FullWrite Pro was free at one time, but ceased working well somewhere around Mac OS 8. Whatever was broken is now fixed in Classic. It works well and is worth a poke. More news: although the defunct developers (Akimbo) were giving it away, their site disappeared. But you can now (drum roll) download and use it for free from Dave Trautman[1]—just as with MORE[2] and Acta[3]. You heard it here first, folks.

We may soon have a similar announcement on free availability for another way-cool legacy outliner. Watch this space.

Some more outliners to add to the list of last month's column:

- ConceptDraw MINDmap[1]
- IdeaSpiral[2]

1. http://www.ejca.org/fwp/
2. http://www.outliners.com/more31
3. http://a-sharp.com/acta/
1. http://www.conceptdraw.com/en/products/mindmap/overview.php
2. http://www.midnite-liteman.com/ideaSpiral.php

- Caboodle[3]
- NovaMind[4]
- PocketNotes[5]
- Sh-Out ! My Brain[6]

We'll be sure to include these in the feature summaries and reviews.

Any other omissions?

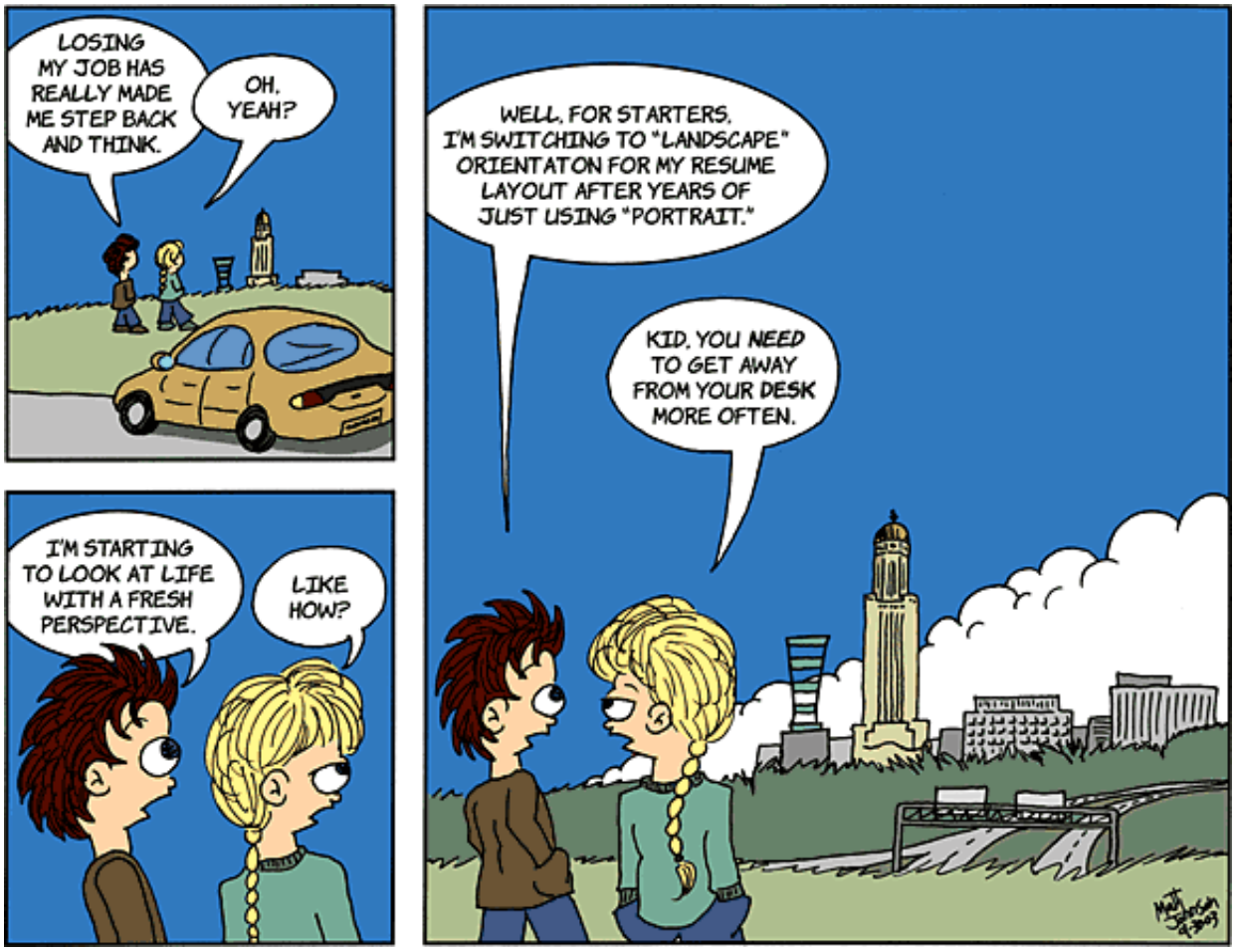
3. http://www.dejal.com/caboodle/
4. http://www.nova-mind.com
5. http://www.pocketsw.com/PocketSoftware/pocket_notes.php
6. http://www.strawberryheads.com/shoutmybrain/index.html

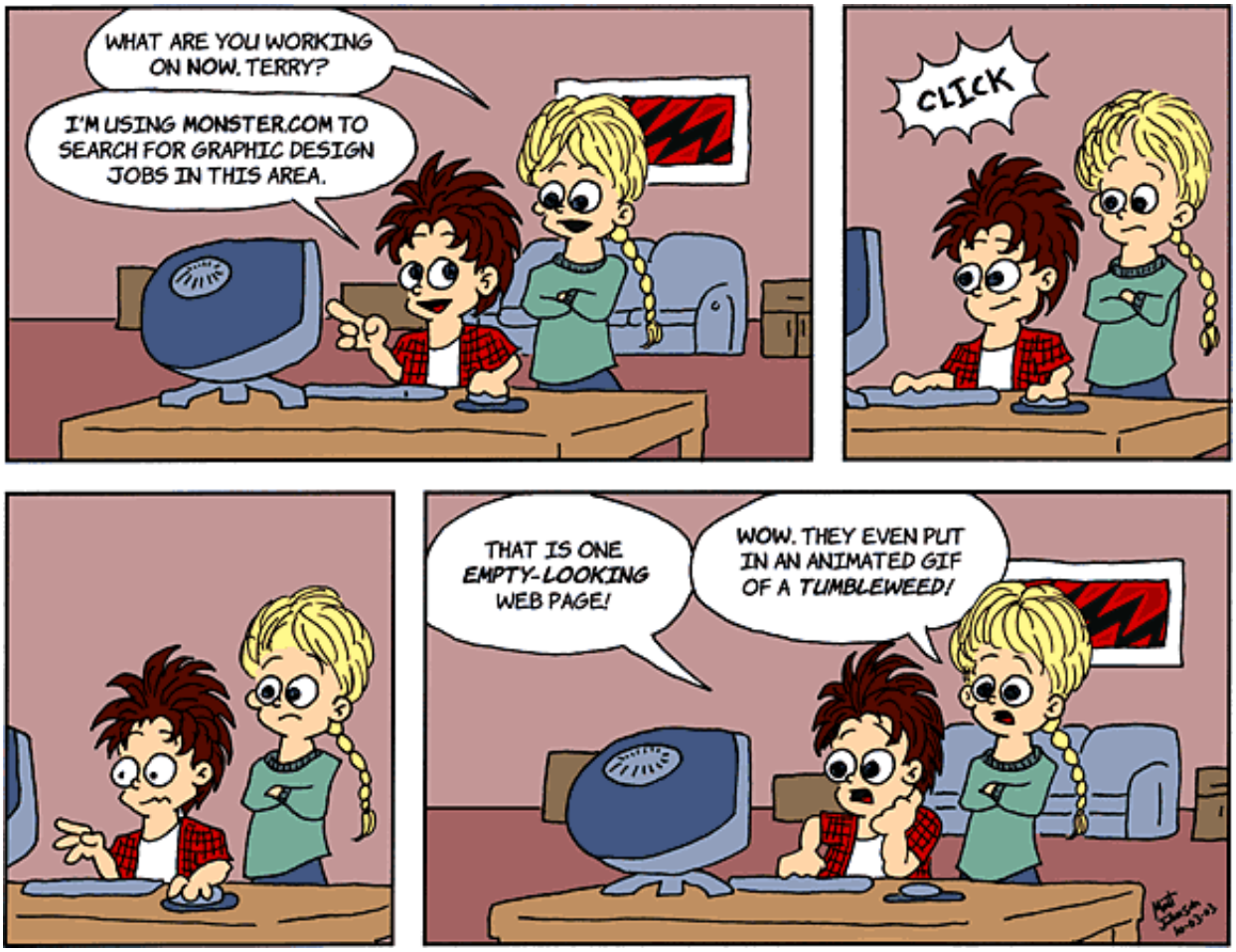
Copyright © 2003 Ted Goranson, tgoranson@atpm.com. *Ted Goranson has been thirty years in the visualization and model abstraction field, and has had careers in defense and intelligence spooky labs. He is now beginning a* new user interface project[7].

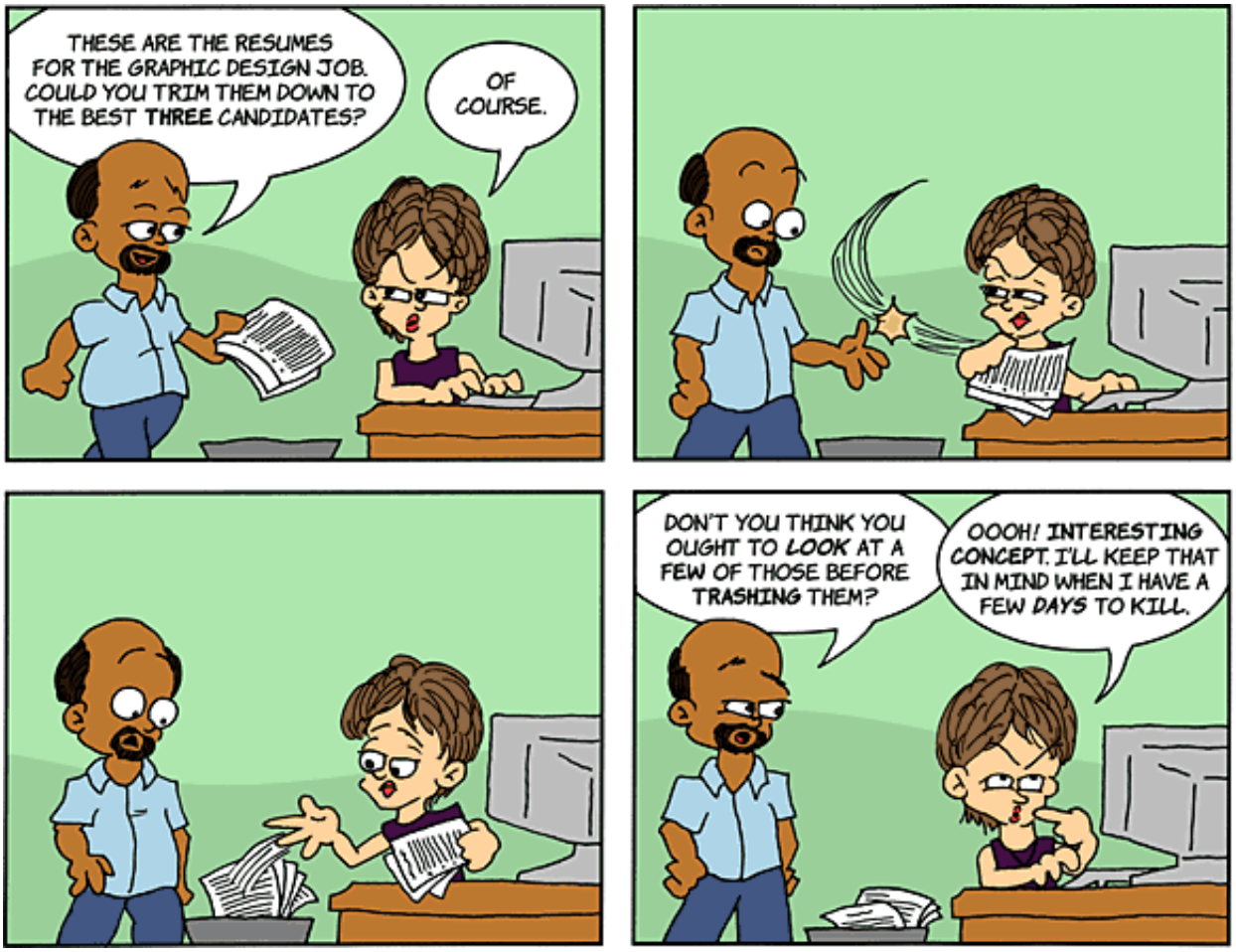
7. http://www.Sirius-Beta.com/ALICE/

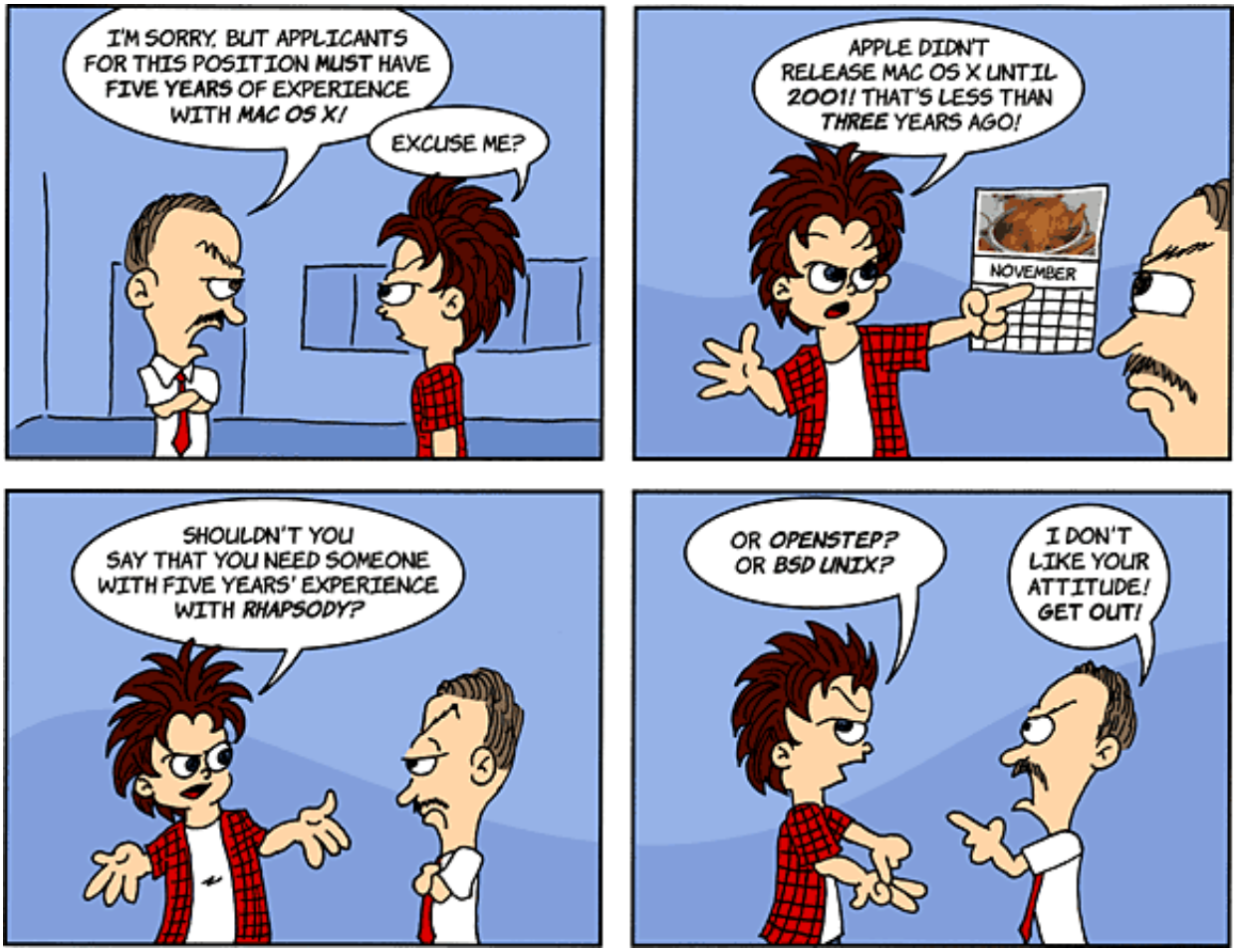
Cartoon: Cortland

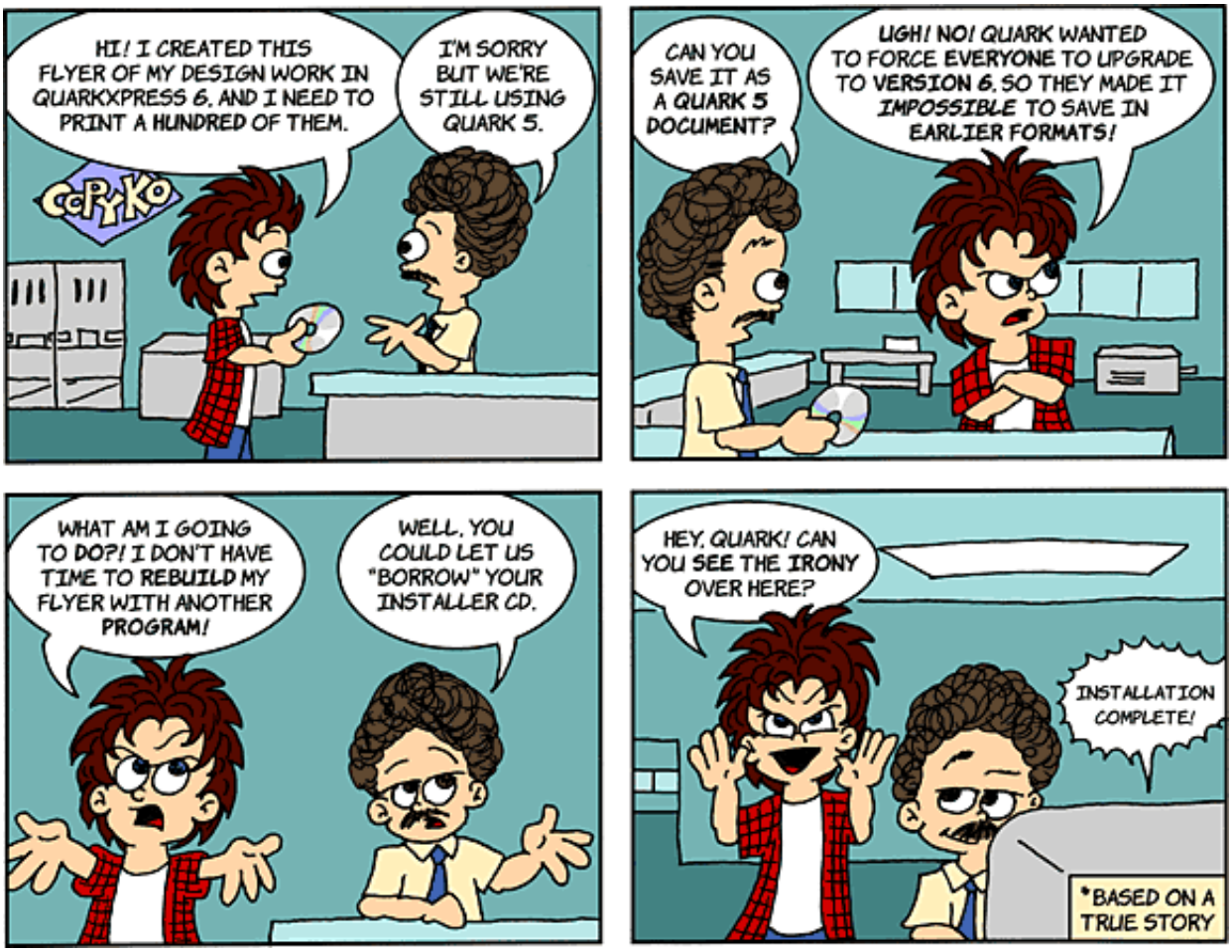
by Matt Johnson, mjohnson@atpm.com

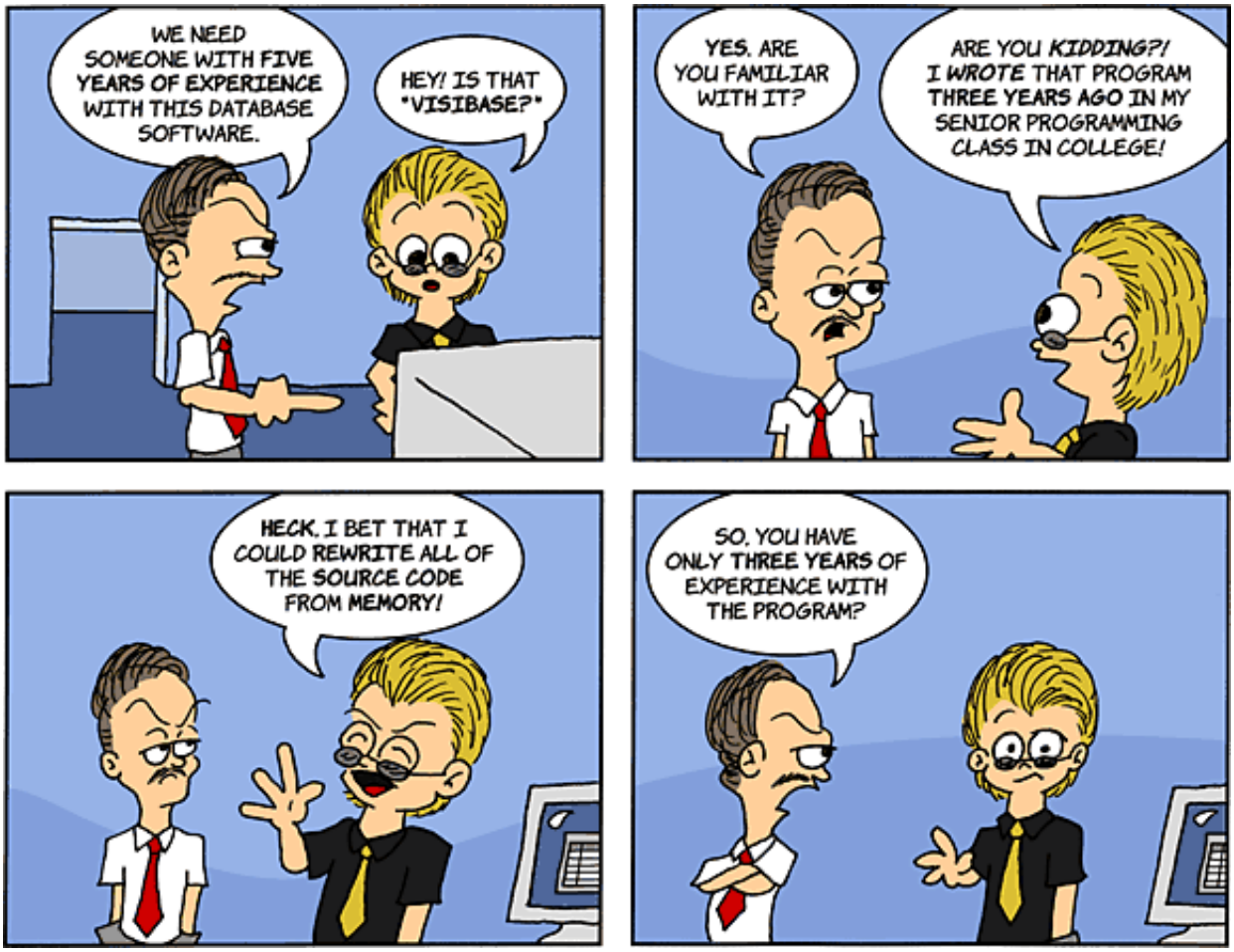


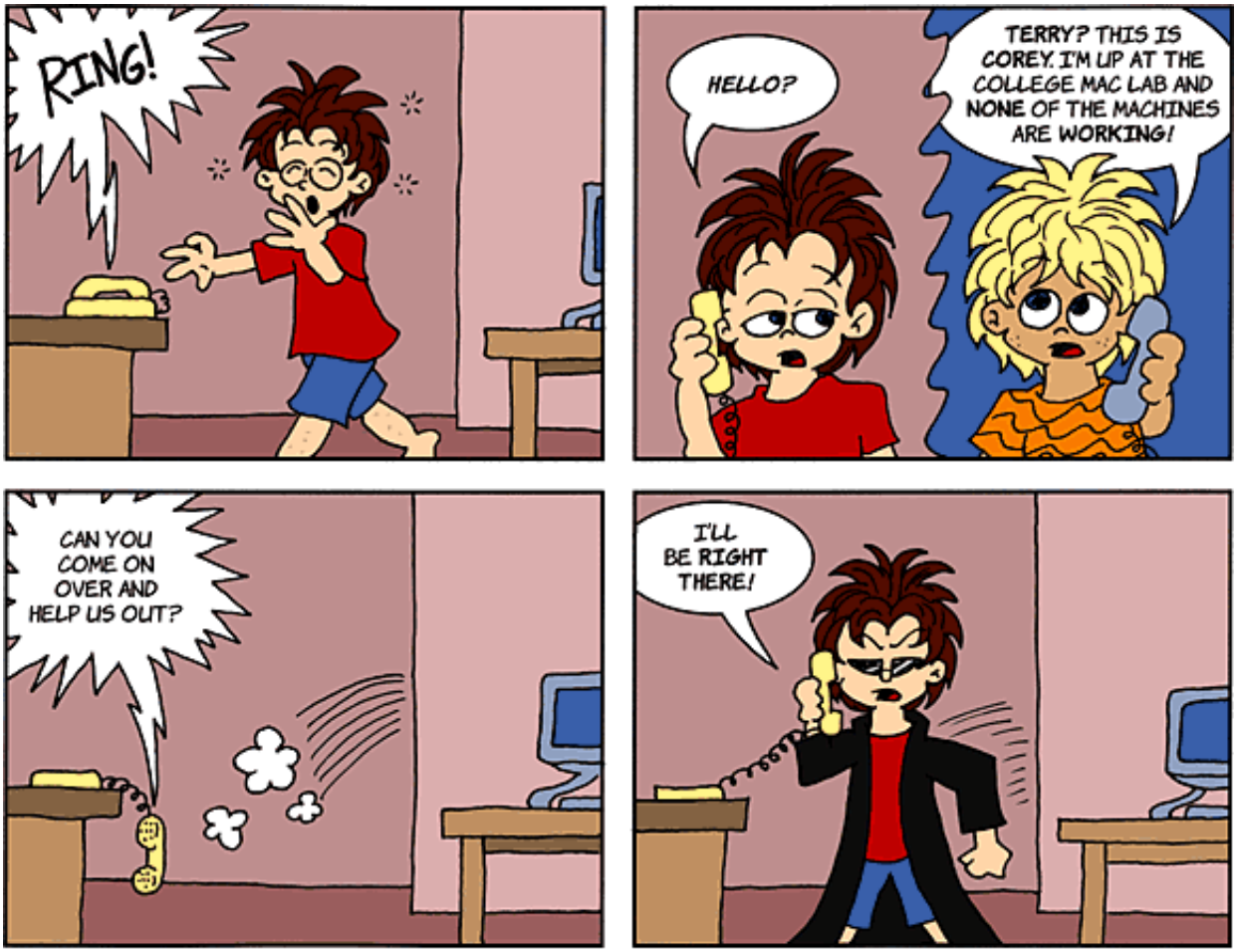

WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON NOW, TERRY?
I'M USING MONSTER.COM TO SEARCH FOR GRAPHIC DESIGN JOBS IN THIS AREA.
CLICK
THAT IS ONE EMPTY-LOOKING WEB PAGE!
WOW. THEY EVEN PUT IN AN ANIMATED GIF OF A TUMBLEWEED!


THESE ARE THE RESUMES FOR THE GRAPHIC DESIGN JOB. COULD YOU TRIM THEM DOWN TO THE BEST THREE CANDIDATES?
OF COURSE.
DON'T YOU THINK YOU OUGHT TO LOOK AT A FEW OF THOSE BEFORE TRASHING THEM?
OOOH! INTERESTING CONCEPT. I'LL KEEP THAT IN MIND WHEN I HAVE A FEW DAYS TO KILL.


I'M SORRY. BUT APPLICANTS FOR THIS POSITION MUST HAVE FIVE YEARS OF EXPERIENCE WITH MAC OS X!
EXCUSE ME?
APPLE DIDN'T RELEASE MAC OS X UNTIL 2001! THAT'S LESS THAN THREE YEARS AGO!
NOVEMBER
SHOULDN'T YOU SAY THAT YOU NEED SOMEONE WITH FIVE YEARS' EXPERIENCE WITH RHAPSODY?
OR OPENSTEP? OR BSD UNIX?
I DON'T LIKE YOUR ATTITUDE! GET OUT!


HI! I CREATED THIS FLYER OF MY DESIGN WORK IN QUARKXPRESS 6, AND I NEED TO PRINT A HUNDRED OF THEM.
I'M SORRY BUT WE'RE STILL USING QUARK 5.
CAN YOU SAVE IT AS A QUARK 5 DOCUMENT?
UGH! NO! QUARK WANTED TO FORCE EVERYONE TO UPGRADE TO VERSION 6, SO THEY MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO SAVE IN EARLIER FORMATS!
WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?! I DON'T HAVE TIME TO REBUILD MY FLYER WITH ANOTHER PROGRAM!
WELL, YOU COULD LET US "BORROW" YOUR INSTALLER CD.
HEY, QUARK! CAN YOU SEE THE IRONY OVER HERE?
INSTALLATION COMPLETE!
*BASED ON A TRUE STORY


WE NEED SOMEONE WITH FIVE YEARS OF EXPERIENCE WITH THIS DATABASE SOFTWARE.
HEY! IS THAT "VISIBASE?"
YES. ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH IT?
ARE YOU KIDDING?! I WROTE THAT PROGRAM THREE YEARS AGO IN MY SENIOR PROGRAMMING CLASS IN COLLEGE!
HECK. I BET THAT I COULD REWRITE ALL OF THE SOURCE CODE FROM MEMORY!
SO, YOU HAVE ONLY THREE YEARS OF EXPERIENCE WITH THE PROGRAM?



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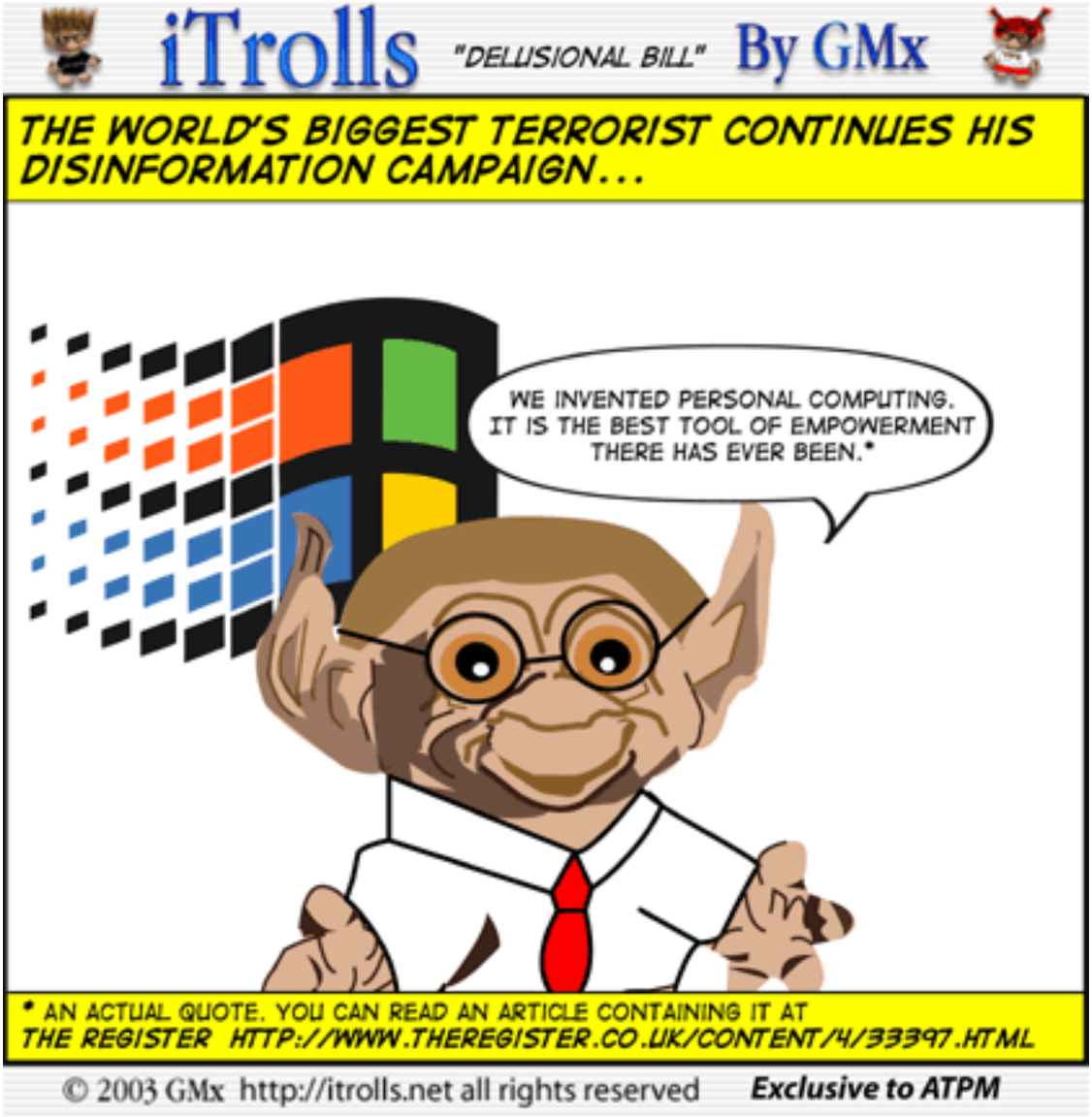
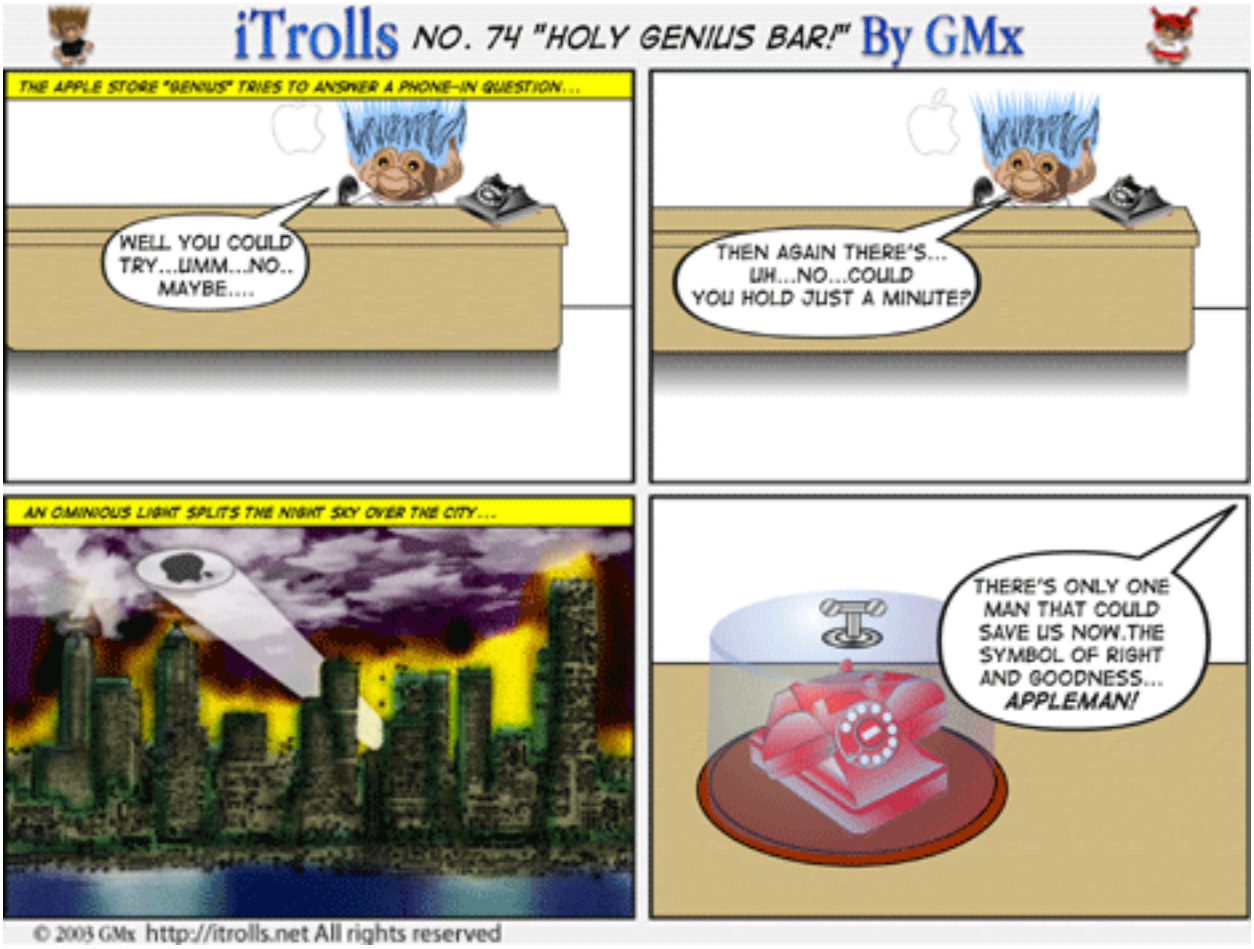
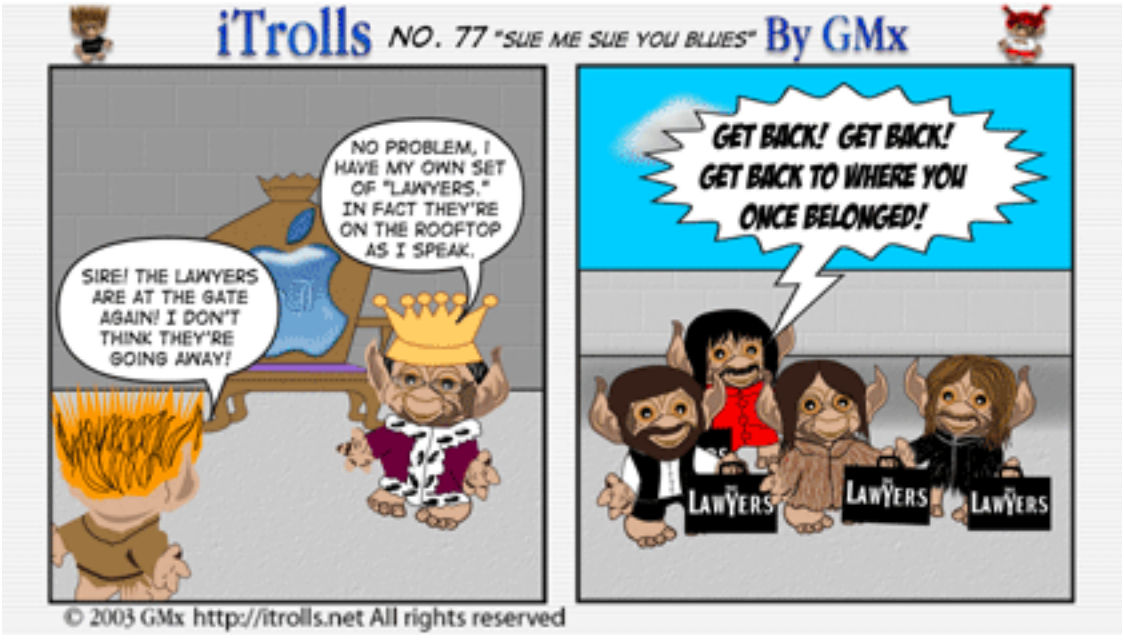
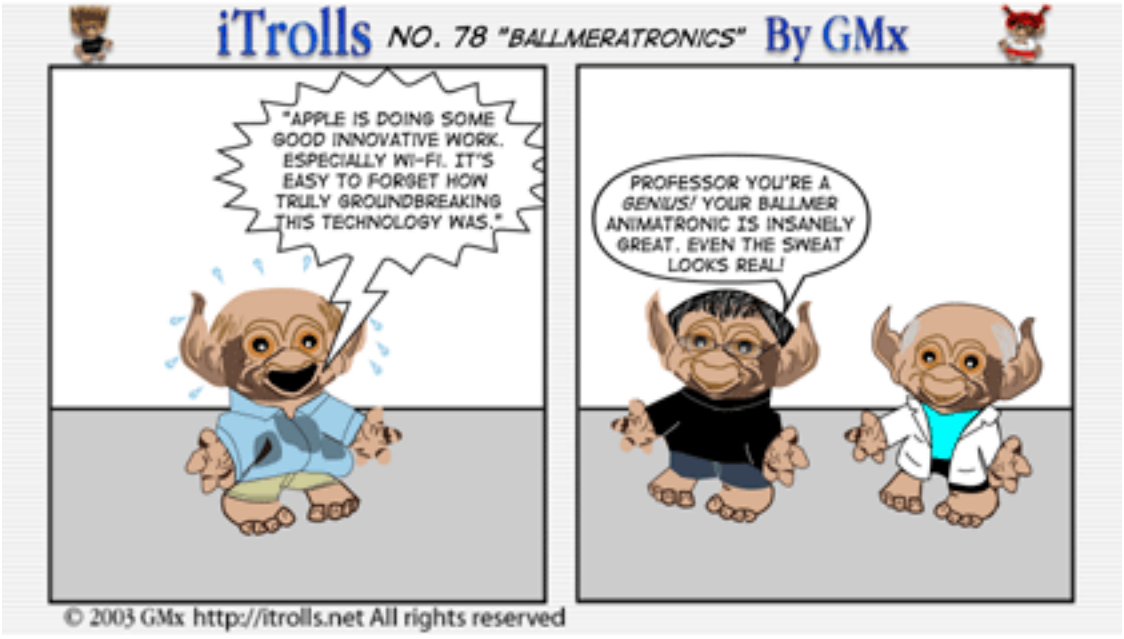
Cartoon: iTrolls

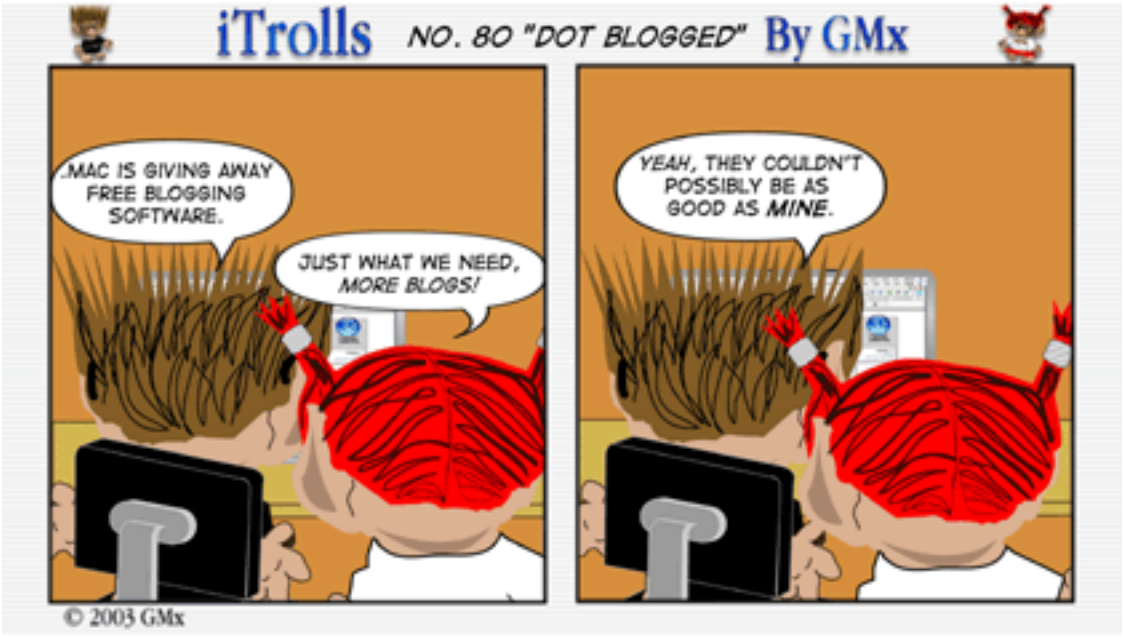
by GMx, http://homepage.mac.com/gregmx




iTrolls NO. 74 "HOLY GENIUS BAR!" By GMx
THE APPLE STORE "GENIUS" TRIES TO ANSWER A PHONE-IN QUESTION...
WELL YOU COULD TRY...UMM...NO.. MAYBE....
THEN AGAIN THERE'S... UH...NO...COULD YOU HOLD JUST A MINUTE?
AN OMINIOUS LIGHT SPLITS THE NIGHT SKY OVER THE CITY...
THERE'S ONLY ONE MAN THAT COULD SAVE US NOW.THE SYMBOL OF RIGHT AND GOODNESS... APPLEMAN!
© 2003 GMx http://itrolls.net All rights reserved


iTrolls NO. 77 "SUE ME SUE YOU BLUES" By GMx
NO PROBLEM, I HAVE MY OWN SET OF "LAWYERS." IN FACT THEY'RE ON THE ROOFTOP AS I SPEAK.
SIRE! THE LAWYERS ARE AT THE GATE AGAIN! I DON'T THINK THEY'RE GOING AWAY!
GET BACK! GET BACK! GET BACK TO WHERE YOU ONCE BELONGED!
LAWYERS
LAWYERS
LAWYERS
© 2003 GMx http://itrolls.net All rights reserved





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Thailand

Thailand[1]

This month's desktop pictures were submitted by ATPM reader Grover Watson[2], from his trip to Bangkok, Thailand.

Previous Months' Desktop Pictures

Pictures from previous months are listed in the desktop pictures archives[3].

Downloading all the Pictures at Once

iCab and Interarchy (formerly Anarchie) can download an entire set of desktop pictures at once. In iCab, use the Download command to download "Get all files in same path." In Interarchy, use HTTP Mirror feature.

Contributing Your Own Desktop Pictures

If you have a picture, whether a small series or just one fabulous or funny shot, feel free to send it to editor@atpm.com and we'll consider publishing it in next month's issue. Have a regular print but no scanner? Don't worry. E-mail us, and we tell you where to send it so we can scan it for you. Note that we cannot return the original print, so send us a copy.

Placing Desktop Pictures

Mac OS X 10.1.x and 10.2.x

Choose "System Preferences…" from the Apple menu and click the Desktop button. With the popup 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.

Mac OS 8.5–9.x

Go to the Appearance control panel. Click on the "Desktop" tab at the top of the window. Press the "Place Picture..." button in the bottom right corner, then select the desired image. By default, it will show you the images in the "Desktop Pictures" subfolder of your "Appearance" folder in the System Folder, however you can select images from anywhere on your hard disk.

After you select the desired image file and press "Choose," a preview will appear in the Appearance window. The "Position Automatically" selection is usually fine. You can play with the settings to see if you like the others better. You will see the result in the little preview screen.

Once you are satisfied with the selection, click on "Set Desktop" in the lower right corner of the window. That's it! Should you ever want to get rid of it, just go to the desktop settings again and press "Remove Picture."

Mac OS 8.0 and 8.1

Go to the "Desktop Patterns" control panel. Click on "Desktop Pictures" in the list on the left of the window, and follow steps similar to the ones above.

Random Desktop Pictures

If you drag a folder of pictures onto the miniature desktop in the Appearance or Desktop Pictures control panel, your Mac will choose one from the folder at random when it starts up.

DeskPicture

An alternative to Mac OS's Appearance control panel is Pierce Software's DeskPicture, reviewed[4] in issue 5.10 and available for download[5].

1. http://www.atpm.com/9.11/thailand/
2. mailto:gwats1957@attbi.com
3. http://www.atpm.com/Back/desktop-pictures.shtml
4. http://www.atpm.com/5.10/roundup.shtml
5. http://www.peircesw.com/DeskPicture.html

Review: Huevos and iSeek

by Michael Tsai, mtsai@atpm.com

Huevos 1.1

Developer: Ranchero Software[1]
Price: free (open source, BSD)
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.1

iSeek 1.0

Developer: Ambrosia Software[2]
Price: $15
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.1
Trial: Fully-featured (30 days)

Introduction

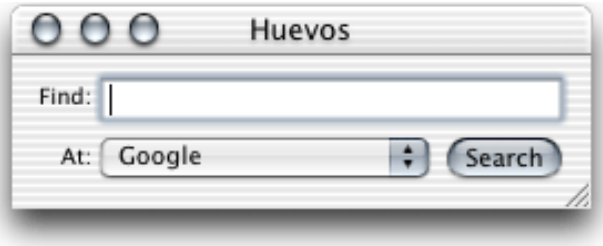
Apple's Sherlock, which was included with Mac OS 8.5, was a landmark utility that let you search multiple Web sites simultaneously. Sherlock would then collect the results into a single tidy list. Today, this doesn't seem so useful because search engines like Google and Teoma produce high-quality results on their own. It's rarely necessary to use more than one engine to find what you're looking for.

Watson[3], though inspired by the original Sherlock, takes almost the opposite approach. Instead of searching many general sites at once, it lets you search particular sites, one at a time, in a specialized way. For instance, the Movies tool will give you showtimes, the Reference tool will give you definitions and synonyms, and the PriceGrabber tool lets you compare prices from different vendors. In Mac OS X 10.2, Apple introduced Sherlock 3, which combines the original Sherlock approach with Watson-like features.

When I need a general search, I use Google. When I need a specialized results display, e.g., movie showtimes, I use Watson. But there are many searches that don't fall into either of these categories. Often, I want to search a particular site and view the results in a Web browser. Watson tools do not exist for many of the sites I search, and even if they did I'm not sure they would save me time. There's not much difference between selecting a tool from Watson's menu and selecting a bookmark from my browser's menu. In either case, I'd have to wait for the tool or search page to load, locate the search box where I can type, and then enter my query. I'm not sure that this actually takes very long, but it certainly *feels* like it does, and that's why I'm intrigued by search helpers like Huevos and iSeek.

Huevos

When you launch Huevos, it opens a compact window containing a text field, a pop-up menu, and a Search button. You type your query in the field, pick a site from the menu, and click Search. Huevos opens the search results in your browser. It couldn't be simpler. Huevos ships with support for 15 search engines, including Dictionary.com, Google, MacUpdate, PHP, and Yahoo.



Huevos's Window

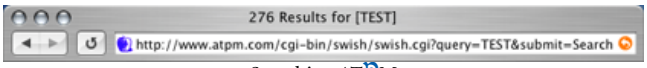
Efficiency is the name of the game with these utilities. To keep your hands on the keyboard, you can cycle through the engines in the pop-up menu using the arrow keys. You can also assign each engine a keyboard shortcut to let you jump directly to it. Huevos happily lets you assign the same shortcut to more than one engine, in which case it only works for one of them. The keyboard shortcuts only apply within

3. http://www.karelia.com/watson

1. http://ranchero.com/huevos/
2. http://www.ambrosiasw.com/utilities/iseek/

Huevos, so you need to first bring Huevos's window to the front by clicking the Dock icon or pressing Control-Esc (or another hot key you assign in Huevos's preferences).

Adding search engines to Huevos is easy. Suppose you want to add ATPM's search engine to Huevos. Go to atpm.com, enter "TEST" as your query, and click Search. The following URL will show up in your browser.



Searching ATPM

Replace the query with %@ to get the URL that you enter into Huevos's preferences:

Adding ATPM to Huevos

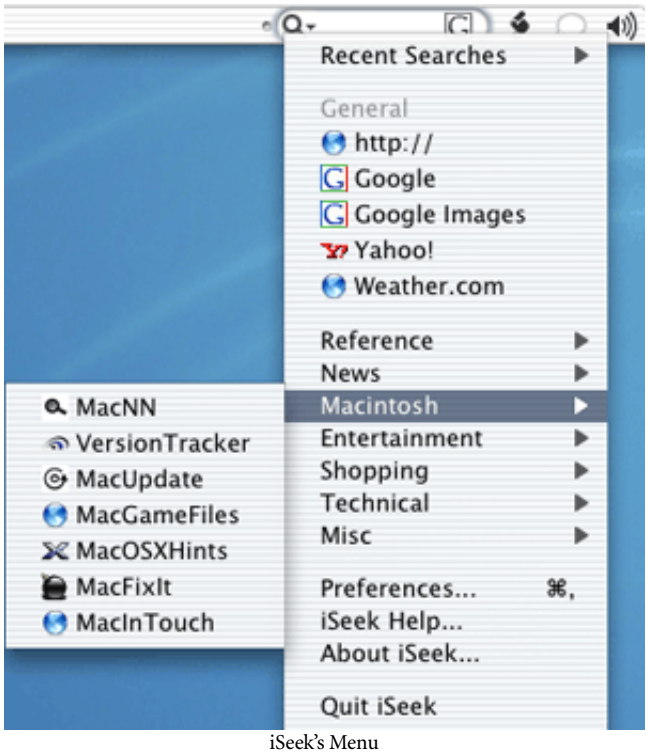
However, you need to watch out for other percent signs in the URL. %7E is equivalent to ~ in a URL, but entering the former can cause Huevos to crash when you click Search.

iSeek

iSeek is like Huevos taken to the next level. Where Huevos has a compact window, iSeek adds an even more compact widget to your menu bar. (However, if you have a narrow screen this is potentially *not* a plus, because there might not be enough room in the menu bar.) iSeek remembers your recent queries. Where Huevos lets you choose from a list of search engines, iSeek shows icons for the different engines and also lets you organize them into categories (submenus). This is fortunate, since otherwise iSeek's stock list of search engines would be overwhelming (it comes with about three times as many as Huevos).

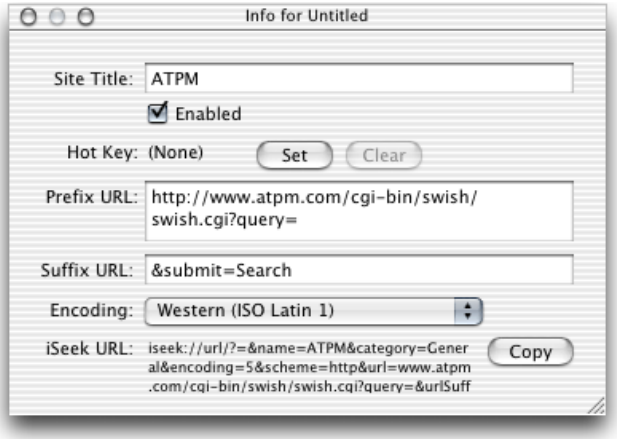
iSeek's Search Box in the Menu Bar

As with Huevos, you can use the arrow keys to cycle through iSeek's list of engines. You can also use the Tab key to cycle through the categories. Thus, if Google is selected, I can Tab three times to get to the Macintosh category and then down-arrow five times to get to Mac OS X Hints. You probably don't want to remember that sequence of keys, so iSeek lets you assign a hot key for each engine. Unlike Huevos, the iSeek hot keys work in any application. This sounds good at first because iSeek needn't be active to use the hot key, but it ends up being a disaster. You can't assign Command-G to Google because that means Find Again in many applications. How about Command-Shift-G? That means Go To Folder in the Finder. Control-G has special meaning in some Terminal programs. The other letters on the keyboard are also heavily used. Thus, using iSeek's hot keys means either letting it override application-specific keyboard shortcuts, or choosing obscure shortcuts that no other application is using (probably for good reason). Thus, I find that it's not worth using hot keys with iSeek.



iSeek's Menu

Adding search engines to iSeek is easier. Ambrosia maintains a list of links[1] that begin with iseek://. Amazingly, you can simply click one of these links to add an engine to iSeek. If there's no pre-made iseek:// link for the site you want, you can add custom sites in the manner of Huevos. The difference is that instead of replacing your query with %@, you divide the URL into two pieces and enter them into separate text fields. Our ATPM example would be:



Adding ATPM to iSeek

1. http://www.ambrosiasw.com/utilities/iseek/weblinks.html

Alternatives

As someone who likes to use the keyboard as much as possible, I found that both utilities make it too hard to quickly choose a search engine. Huevos makes you choose single-letter shortcuts, which can be difficult to remember. Does "A" mean ADC, Apple, Amazon, or ATPM? iSeek is worse, because you have to choose more obscure shortcuts. Also, it doesn't show them in the menu, so you have to open the preferences window to jog your memory.

OmniWeb[2] and some other browsers solve this problem neatly. OmniWeb supports "shortcuts" at the beginning of each URL. For instance, you could type "google@apple" to search for "apple" on Google, or "imdb@apple" to search for movie and actor names containing "apple." Not only can each engine have a multi-letter mneumonic, but you can also search without leaving your browser. Adding new shortcuts is similar to adding search engines to Huevos.

This feature is not available in Safari, although there are server-side solutions in Python[3] and PHP[4], and a hack[5] for accessing them from Safari's Google search box.

Conclusion

Huevos and iSeek are both solid, easy-to-use utilities, and I recommend them for most users. People who use many search engines and want to select them using the keyboard may prefer other utilities.

2. http://www.omnigroup.com/applications/omniweb/
3. http://www.aaronsw.com/2002/dtrt
4. http://www.macosxhints.com/article.php?story=20030519070642235
5. http://www.macosxhints.com/article.php?story=20030514035516436

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Review: ID Bag and Brain Cell

by Chris Lawson, clawson@atpm.com

ID Messenger Bag

Developer: Tom Bihn[1]
Price: $85

Brain Cell

Developer: Tom Bihn[2]
Price: $50

I have to offer a disclaimer: I'm an avid motorcyclist[3] and bicyclist, and I often find it necessary to tote my 15" TiBook along with me. I feel most comfortable with a hard case protecting my 'Book, and until someone hands me $2,000 or a spare PowerBook to do some impact/crash testing on, I'm not going to trust soft-sided cases a whole lot. Right now, my hard-sided Bob-L-Bee Megalopolis bag is providing me with peace of mind in case of a crash, and as good as the ID/Brain Cell combination is, I can't see it replacing the Megalopolis any time soon.

ID Messenger Bag

ID Messenger Bag

That being said, the ID bag is easily the best messenger bag I've ever seen or used. The $85 bag by itself is a bit pricey—I've seen similar quality backpacks of much greater functionality and capacity, if not style, for as much as $30 less—but when the $50 Brain Cell insert is added on, the combination becomes a good value and a very stylish laptop bag to boot. Perhaps the most appealing feature of the ID bag is that it doesn't scream "I'm carrying a laptop" like many such bags do. If you're a student or commute through less-than-savory neighborhoods, you'll likely enjoy this aspect of

3. http://www.atpm.com/4.03/page7.shtml

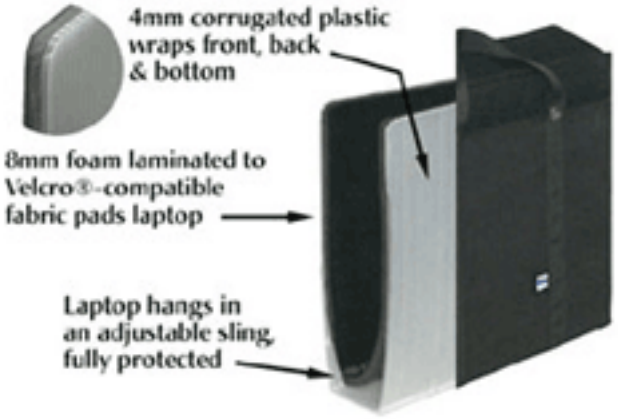
1. http://www.tombihn.com/Merchant2/merchant.mvc?Screen=PROD&Product_Code=TB0805&Category_Code=200&Product_Count=0
2. http://www.tombihn.com/Merchant2/merchant.mvc?Screen=PROD&Store_Code=001&Product_Code=TB0300

the bag's design. If you're upper management, this bag is probably too "hip" for you, with its range of stylish colors and suit-wrinkling one-shoulder design. Besides, you wanted black leather, right? :-)

Its waist/hip belt is the only one I've ever seen on a messenger bag, and it makes this bag nearly as comfortable as a backpack for long-term wear. (I must admit I don't prefer its off-balance weight distribution and occasional shifting when riding my motorcycle, however.) Its biggest drawback, in my eyes, is in the adjusters on the shoulder strap. There are two of them, which is good—a single mid-strap adjuster is typical on cheaper bags. Unfortunately, they're extremely difficult to adjust without removing the bag, though the upside to this is that they are virtually guaranteed never to slip once adjusted to your liking. The strap is fully replaceable, though the downside to this is that it can also be removed entirely from one side of the bag by accident during adjustment.

Pockets and storage compartments are in abundance on most laptop bags, and the ID is no exception. A zippered external pocket on the main flap provides storage for a portable CD player or something similar, while an open pocket on the back side provides a convenient place for a few file folders or papers to ride. Opening the substantial clip and flipping back the flap reveals another 8" by 8" zippered pocket; an open-top half-pocket; ample storage for writing utensils, a PDA, iPod, and/or a cell phone; a key clip; and the double zipper leading to the main compartment.

The main compartment can be used to carry a laptop on its own, but I highly recommend the purchase of a Brain Cell, a padded, hard-sided case that clips into the main compartment. Sized for specific laptops (see the Fit List for specifics[1]; the ID will swallow a size 4 or 5 Brain Cell but nothing larger), it provides a soft interior to avoid scratching and an added measure of protection against bumps. Removing the Brain Cell (a worthwhile purchase in its own right, even without a Tom Bihn bag to carry it) from the ID is a simple matter of undoing two plastic clips and lifting the inner bag out via its handles.



Brain Cell

The Brain Cell deserves further comment. While Tom Bihn's larger bags are designed to integrate perfectly with it, the Brain Cell can stand on its own as a sort of "laptop purse." A Brain Cell can also be combined with nearly any other bag or pack to provide an additional measure of protection for the laptop inside. The Bob-L-Bee Megalopolis that I use for most laptop transportation tasks lacks good internal protection for my TiBook, but the Brain Cell picks up where the Megalopolis leaves off and provides excellent (if somewhat snug) protection inside the pack itself. If I'm merely walking across campus, I can toss the Brain Cell in my

1. http://www.tombihn.com/FIT/TB0300.html

day pack and presto!—my backpack instantly becomes a padded laptop bag. The Brain Cell also works well inside briefcases, so you executive types can still use it. :-)

Brain Cell

When my Wall Street was my main laptop, I carried—or, rather, lugged—around a bag so full of accessories I once joked that my bag was worth more than my car. The ID bag is not such a beast, and I no longer need my laptop bag to be suitcase-like in its storage capability. There's plenty of room here for an extra battery or two, but PowerBook G3 owners with multiple expansion bay devices would be better served by a larger, more pocket-laden bag. Even with a TiBook and minimal extras, the ID bag gets a bit tight with an AC adapter as bulky as the infamous Yo-Yo. If you're the type who carries a laptop with its associated pile of accessories, a couple binders of notes for class, and maybe an iPod or portable CD player every day, you might want to consider a bigger bag. Once loaded with a laptop and accessories, a 2" binder or a couple three-subject notebooks are probably all that you'll manage to cram in.

The bottom line? Techno-junkies with scores of accessories or folks who prefer the more traditional backpack style should consider something other than the ID as their main case. Those of you looking for a well-padded, stylish laptop carrier with plenty of room for the essentials have found the perfect bag. No matter which category you're in, though, you'll find a use for the top-notch Brain Cell sleeve.

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Review: iPod: The Missing Manual (book)

by Gregory Tetrault, gtetrault@atpm.com

Author: J. D. Biersdorfer
Publisher: Pogue Press/O'Reilly and Associates, Inc.[1]
Price: $25 (list); $17 (street)
Trial: Sample Chapter[2]

Overview

This book covers every aspect of the iPod except for repairs. The book can be read cover to cover or used as a reference book for answering iPod-related questions.

Book Design and Organization

The soft cover book measures 6" wide by 9" tall and has 344 pages. The book is divided into five parts containing a total of 16 chapters and two appendices. You can view the table of contents[3], the index[4], and a sample chapter[5]. The book's organization works well and makes it easy to find chapters or sections of interest. The 11-page index is comprehensive and identifies iTunes or MusicMatch Jukebox page references when appropriate.

Book Contents

"Part One: iPod: The Hardware" describes the iPod models and their FireWire or USB 2 connections. It describes all the iPods to date and provides thorough operating instructions. The contents are more detailed and thorough than the minimal documentation provided by Apple.

"Part Two: iPod: The Software" describes digital audio formats, iTunes, MusicMatch Jukebox, and the iTunes Music Store. These chapters are thorough and easy to follow. My only complaint is that iTunes 2 (the last version usable by Mac OS 9 users) was not covered. Notes or sidebars about differences between iTunes 2 and 4 would help OS 9 users.

"Part Three: Beyond the Music" describes other uses for the iPod such as PDA, game playing, e-books, and portable hard drive. I have no desire to use my iPod as a PDA, video game, or book reader, so I just skimmed those chapters. The chapter on using the iPod as a portable hard drive is excellent.

"Part Four: Extreme iPodding" describes how to connect iPods to car and home stereos, how to be a power iPod user via AppleScript, shareware tools, and Linux. It also describes iPod accessories such as cases, stands, chargers, and adapters. The last two chapters cover troubleshooting, software updates, and informative Web sites. I felt that the "Hot Hacks and Cool Tools" chapter was too short. So was the iStuff chapter, which covered only a small proportion of the available third party accessories for iPods. The connection chapter did cover almost all aspects of playing iPod music files on something other than earphones. The troubleshooting chapter gets good grades as well.

"Part Five: Appendices" contains detailed descriptions of all iTunes and MatchMaker Jukebox Plus menus and options. Putting these into appendices was a sensible decision that made the earlier iTunes and MusicMatch chapters more readable.

3. http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/ipodtmm/TOC.pdf
4. http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/ipodtmm/inx.pdf
5. http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/ipodtmm/chapter/index.html

1. http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/ipodtmm/
2. http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/ipodtmm/chapter/index.html

Errors or Omissions

I noted one minor omission: Chapter 1 mentions that 4-pin FireWire ports are unpowered and cannot charge your iPod. However, the Chapter 2 section about installing a FireWire card fails to mention the differences between cards with 4- or 6-pin ports.

The Missing Manuals Web site contains a page of confirmed errors[1]. Only one page reference error has been reported.

Strengths

- The book includes information on the new dock connector iPods.
- Thorough coverage of how to use the iPod and associated software.
- Easy to read with good design and numerous screen shots and photos.
- Good index.

Weaknesses

- A few chapters seemed skimpy.

1. http://www.oreilly.com/catalog/ipodtmm/errata/ipodtmm.confirmed

Alternatives

The planned publication of five iPod books this year attests to the popularity of the iPod. The other four books are listed below. You can go to online bookstores to read professional and customer reviews for *iPod: The Missing Manual* and for the first two books listed below.

Secrets of the iPod ($19 list, $14 street), Third Edition by Christopher Breen was published in August by Peachpit Press[2].

How to Do Everything with Your iPod ($24 list, $17 street) by Guy Hart-Davis was published in March by Osborne/McGraw-Hill[3].

The iPod Companion by Tony Bove was scheduled for publication in September by Premier Press[4], but it has not yet been released.

iPod for Dummies by Tony Bove and Cheryl Rhodes is scheduled for publication in November by For Dummies[5].

Conclusion

At a street price of $17, *iPod: The Missing Manual* is a great bargain and great resource for people who want to get the most out of their iPods.

2. http://www.peachpit.com
3. http://shop.osborne.com/cgi-bin/osborne/
4. http://www.premierpressbooks.com
5. http://www.dummies.com/WileyCDA/

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Review: iTrip

by Eric Blair, eblair@atpm.com

Developer: Griffin Technology[1]
Price: $35
Requirements: Third-generation iPod
Trial: None

Now that my entire music collection fits into my shirt pocket, it gets more and more annoying when I need to lug a bulky binder of CDs out to my car when I want to go out for a drive. I'd like to use my iPod in my car, but it doesn't have a tape deck, so a cassette adapter is out of the question. Short of shelling out a large amount of cash for a customized mounting system or doing some serious surgery on my center console, that leaves the old standby—the FM transmitter.

I played with one such device a number of years ago and came away quite unimpressed. While most car stereos featured digital tuning, the FM transmitters were limited to analog tuning. The transmitter I used had three or four small ranges of stations and a dial for fine-tuning. If you couldn't find a working signal within these few ranges, then you were out of luck.

The iTrip is one of very few digital FM transmitters I have seen for sale. Unlike any other device on the market, though, the new iTrip is specially designed to work only with Apple's third-generation iPods.

The iTrip is basically a 2.4" long tube with a diameter of .84". It sits on top of the iPod, connects to both the headphone and remote control jacks, and requires no batteries, as it draws power from the iPod. Since the iTrip lacks wires and batteries, it is smaller and less unwieldy than other FM transmitters available.

By itself, the iTrip is far too small to contain a display for digital tuning. However, since it only operates while connected to an iPod, it has access to a 3"x2" screen to use for tuning purposes. This is accomplished with a series of MP3 files corresponding to the different FM frequencies. When you install the iTrip software on your Macintosh, these MP3 are added to your music library and are put in a playlist called "iTrip Stations."

To change the channel on the iTrip, you start playing the desired station, and when the red LED on the iTrip begins to flash rapidly, you pause the track. If you have your radio tuned to the desired station while you're doing this, you'll hear a definite change as the static is replaced by dead air.

At first, I was concerned that playing my entire library would cause the iTrip to change channels when it one of the station files was played. This turned out not to be the case—the LED begins to flash rapidly for a time, but that station does not change unless you pause the iPod during this period. Of course, it's still annoying at times to hear a series of beeps and blips pouring out of your car stereo or your headphones.

The big test for the iTrip was a weekend with friends earlier this month that featured a 4-hour drive. I hit a few different radio markets during my drive, so I really got to put the iTrip through its paces. Also, I did this the same day I installed the iPod 2.1 software, so there were plenty of potential gotchas to throw the iTrip for a loop.

When I first started out, I had some difficulty getting the iTrip to accept a new station assignment. It seemed like the iTrip just did not want to wake up. After removing and replacing the tuner, everything seemed to be in order.

Over the course of the drive, I needed to change channels a handful of times as I drove through different radio markets. Once I got the hang of finding the really weak signals, the iTrip preformed beautifully, even though it was sitting in the front seat and my FM antenna is mounted in the rear windshield of my car. The one thing that concerned me was that the 4-hour drive almost completely chewed through what I thought was a fully charged battery. At first, I thought the iTrip was using more power than Griffin originally

1. http://griffintechnology.com/products/itrip/

implied, but now I'm not so sure—the battery charging process for my iPod has been a little flaky since I installed the latest iPod update.

Out of the box, the iPod can go pretty much anywhere short of the freeway. If you want to bridge this final gap and don't have an accessible auxiliary jack for your car stereo, I encourage you to check out Griffin Technology's iTrip. It works exactly as advertised and does so without littering your car with extraneous wiring.

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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.

Are You Looking for New Staff Members?

We currently need several Contributing Editors. Please contact us[1] if you're interested.

How Can I Subscribe to ATPM?

Visit the subscriptions page[2].

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. You can use Sherlock to search[3] all of the online issues at once.

The Offline Webzine is a HTML version of ATPM that is formatted for viewing offline and made available in a StuffIt archive to reduce file size. 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 Acrobat 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 Adobe's free Acrobat 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 Acrobat format. It's a one-column layout with larger text that's optimized for reading on-screen. It may be viewed online in a browser, or downloaded and viewed in Adobe's free Acrobat Reader on Macintosh or Windows. PDFs may be magnified to any size and searched with ease.

What Are Some Tips for Viewing PDFs?

- You can download[4] Adobe Acrobat Reader for free. If you have a Power Macintosh, Acrobat Reader 5 has better quality and performance. ATPM is also compatible with Acrobat Reader 3, for those with 680x0 Macs.
- You can zoom the PDF to full window width and scroll through articles simply by single-clicking anywhere in the article text (except underlined links).
- You can quickly navigate between articles using the bookmarks pane at the left of the main viewing window.
- For best results on small screens, be sure to hide the bookmarks pane; that way you'll be able to see the entire page width at 100%.
- Try turning Font Smoothing on and off in Acrobat Reader's preferences to see which setting you prefer.
- All blue-underlined links are clickable. Links to external Web sites are reproduced in footnotes at the bottoms of pages, in case you are reading from a printed copy.
- You can hold down option while hovering over a link to see where it will lead.
- For best results, turn off Acrobat's "Fit to Page" option before printing.

Why Are Some Links Double-Underlined?

In the PDF editions of ATPM, links that are double-underlined lead to other pages in the same PDF. Links that are single-underlined will open in your Web browser.

What If I Get Errors Decoding ATPM?

ATPM and MacFixIt readers have reported problems decoding MacBinary files using early versions of StuffIt Expander 5.x. If you encounter problems decoding ATPM, we recommend upgrading to StuffIt Expander 5.1.4 or later[5].

How Can I Submit Cover Art?

We enjoy the opportunity to display new, original cover art every month. We're also very proud of the people who have come forward to offer us cover art for each issue. If you're a Macintosh artist and interested in preparing a cover for ATPM, please e-mail us. The way the process works is pretty simple. As soon as we have a topic or theme for the upcoming

1. editor@atpm.com
2. http://www.atpm.com/subscribe
3. http://www.atpm.com/search
4. http://www.adobe.com/prodindex/acrobat/readstep.html
5. http://www.aladdinsys.com/expander/index.html

issue we let you know about it. Then, it's up to you. We do not pay for cover art but we are an international publication with a broad readership and we give appropriate credit alongside your work. There's space for an e-mail address and a Web page URL, too. Write to editor@atpm.com for more information.

How Can I Send a Letter to the Editor?

Got a comment about an article that you read in ATPM? Is there something you'd like us to write about in a future issue? We'd love to hear from you. Send your e-mail to editor@atpm.com. We often publish the e-mail that comes our way.

Do You Answer Technical Support Questions?

Of course. E-mail our Help Department at help@atpm.com.

How Can I Contribute to ATPM?

There are several sections of ATPM to which readers frequently contribute:

Segments: Slices from the Macintosh Life

This is one of our most successful spaces and one of our favorite places. We think of it as kind of the ATPM "guest room." This is where we will publish that sentimental Macintosh story that you promised yourself you would one day write. It's that special place in ATPM that's specifically designated for your stories. We'd really like to hear from you. Several Segments contributors have gone on to become ATPM columnists. Send your stuff to editor@atpm.com.

Hardware and Software Reviews

ATPM publishes hardware and software reviews. However, we do things in a rather unique way. Techno-jargon can be useful to engineers but is not always a help to most Mac users. We like reviews that inform our readers about how a particular piece of hardware or software will help their Macintosh lives. We want them to know what works, how it may help them in their work, and how enthusiastic they are about recommending it to others. If you have a new piece of hardware or software that you'd like to review, contact our reviews editor at reviews@atpm.com for more information.

Shareware Reviews

Most of us have been there; we find that special piece of shareware that significantly improves the quality our Macintosh life and we wonder why the entire world hasn't heard about it. Now here's the chance to tell them! Simply let us know by writing up a short review for our shareware section. Send your reviews to reviews@atpm.com.

Which Products Have You Reviewed?

Check our reviews index[1] 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.

Will You Review My Product?

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