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

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[1] http://www.atpm.com/about/support.shtml

Welcome

by Robert Paul Leitao, rleitao@atpm.com

Welcome to the January issue of *About This Particular Macintosh!* We begin a new year as our economy begins to see better times. For users of Apple's hardware products, the times have never been better, and perhaps the best days are yet to come. We begin this issue with a look at the beginnings of a much-rumored product. We'll begin before this product has its official beginning and begin before that beginning has even begun. Let's begin by looking at the beginnings before the beginnings began.

Painting a Picture

By the way, we don't have pictures. We'll use words to paint a picture because the picture we'll paint with words is bigger than the picture being painted by those who see only a product and not a paradigm. If a picture is worth one thousand words, we'll use one thousand five hundred words (or so) to paint an even bigger picture.

A Decade Ago

It was 10 years ago (or so) that Apple released the Public Beta of Mac OS X. Built on Unix and the creative work of the folks from NeXT (acquired by Apple in the trade that brought Steve Jobs back to the company and sent the existing Mac operating system to the minors), Mac OS X took center stage in Apple's efforts to create a new and more modern user experience for Mac owners and spawned development of better, more stable and efficient software products to broaden the Mac's consumer and enterprise appeal.

A Decade Later

In late 2009, Apple released Snow Leopard, a.k.a. Mac OS X 10.6. This was the seventh major release of OS X. By the way, counting Mac OS X 10.0 as the first release is how confusion enters the picture when counting the number of commercial releases of OS X. It's the same issue that messes up the count when trying to determine decades, contrary to the method used in popular parlance.

Sharing common code with Snow Leopard is a derivative OS product now called iPhone OS and in its third commercial release (it was called OS X iPhone at one point in its development). By some estimates, up to 80 million iPhone OS–equipped devices (iPhone and iPod touch) have been sold since release through the end of December 2009.

While it's impossible to determine how many Mac OS X–equipped computers are currently in use, Apple sold almost 10.4 million Macs in its last fiscal year and may have sold another 3 million Macs in the December quarter. In that same fiscal year, Apple sold over 20.7 million iPhones alone.

Paint by Numbers

We're not talking about the kits for art hobbyists but about the picture being painted of Apple device sales. iPhone OS–equipped products have taken the world by storm. Ambitious estimates for current fiscal year iPhone shipments top 40 million units, while the iPod touch will increase its share of the 60 million (or so) iPod units that will be sold.

At the end of September, more than two billion iPhone OS apps had been downloaded from the iTunes Store. By the end of December, perhaps one billion more apps will have been downloaded. With well over 100,000 apps available for iPhone OS–equipped devices, developers continue to swarm to the iTunes Store, offering up new products and deals on terms that aren't and won't be matched elsewhere.

Consider for a moment the size of the iTunes gift card economy. The cards have become a popular holiday gift to be given and received. The cards lock recipients into the iTunes Store and help drive device sales, as well as assist in reducing Apple's costs to sell everything from music to movies to apps, and quite soon (it's rumored) electronic books and magazines.

Picture Puzzles

We've all sat around a table at one time or another to put puzzle pieces together. Usually we have an image on the box to guide in finding and placing pieces. For now, not all of the puzzle pieces are on the board, and an image of the completed puzzle is not yet available. Yet we can start at the edges and work our way inside.

Back to the Beginning

Apple, so the company claims:

> Ignited the personal computer revolution in the 1970s with the Apple II and

> reinvented the personal computer in the 1980s with the Macintosh. Today, Apple continues to lead the industry in innovation with its award-winning computers, OS X operating system and iLife and professional applications. Apple is also spearheading the digital media revolution with its iPod portable music and video players and iTunes online store, and has entered the mobile phone market with its revolutionary iPhone.

The above quote is taken from Apple's press releases.

From the Beginning to the End

The fastest-growing segment of the PC market is netbooks. They are inexpensive, small in size, and limited in usability and functionality. The ascent of the netbook signals the decline of the PC.

Apple started the personal computer revolution and will soon end the era of the PC-centric paradigm. Apple was there at the beginning, and the company's newest products will bring about its end. The PC as we know is quickly being replaced by personal computing devices designed specifically with the end-user in mind. Apple will not release a netbook due to the limitations of that product category. The company will release a product that does more with more and does more with less.

When Apple brought Mac OS X into development, the company had more than the Macintosh in mind. At its core, Mac OS X is designed to be versatile, scalable, and adaptable for a variety of products and uses.

We are about to witness a new revolution, not in personal computers, but in personal computing. A paradigm shift away from the PC and a shift to multiple personal computing devices built around the same OS (OS X) that work well independently and work even better when integrated with one another, all sharing access to the iTunes Store and services, such as MobileMe, provided by Apple.

From the End to the Beginning

It's the end of the PC as we know it. It's the beginning of the era of Apple's personal computing devices. Later this month, Apple may release its latest offering in the new Apple product paradigm. It's a tablet-shaped device. But less important than one new device is the extension of the iPhone OS to yet another device. These devices had their beginnings when Mac OS X was first spawned by the engineers from NeXT who took up shop at Apple.

Get the Picture?

There's more to this story than can be captured in a photo or illustration of one more new device. It's a picture of an expansive collection of digital devices that will change the way we work and live in ways far beyond what was imagined in the days of the first PCs. Device sales will dwarf the sales of PCs, and these devices will be found in almost every pocket of every person on the planet.

The Pretty Profit Picture

Obscuring the view of Apple's profit picture is something called deferred revenue accounting. Because Apple defers revenue on the iPhone due to the company's commitment to provide users with iPhone OS updates for free, not all revenue is reported when earned due to accounting rules. Those rules have now changed. Apple will soon begin reporting all revenue and earnings from iPhone sales in the periods in which the sales are realized and will no longer be deferred over the economic life of the phone. In Apple's last fiscal year, removing the impact of deferred revenue accounting, Apple had revenue of over $40 billion and earnings of about $8.75 billion dollars. It's possible, based on the pace of sales of Apple's iPhone OS–equipped devices, that revenue could reach close to $60 billion this fiscal year.

I will be commenting regularly on Apple's continuing success on my blog[1]. I look forward to seeing you there as Apple's profit picture becomes much more clear. I paint by numbers of a different kind and in colors not often seen in digital print.

The Personal Computing Experience

From its beginnings, ATPM has been less about computers and much more about how we use them. We begin this new decade (depending on how one counts the years) in much the same way we originally began publication—celebrating the ways in which we use computing devices to enhance our quality of life and communicate with those in the world around us. Join us this month and every month as we explore this new decade of personal computing devices and leave the PC behind.

Our January issue includes:

[1] http://twilightjunction.blogspot.com

MacMuser: CoPilot Live[2]

Mark Tennent tells a tale of the £27 CoPilot navigation application for iPhone in comparison to a £100+ dedicated GPS navigation device.

MacMuser: It Just Sits There Dribbling[3]

Mark Tennent tries to send a large attachment—from a Dell computer running Windows XP.

How To: Additions to the Services Menu[4]

Find out how to take advantage of your own additions to the Services Menu with help from this month's How To from Sylvester Roque.

Desktop Pictures: Water in Motion[5]

Delwin Finch, who loves macro photography, offers this month's desktop wallpaper images which came from experimentation of water drops under low light conditions.

Out at Five[6]

At Wieser Graphics, they're feeling the economic crunch. Todd runs headlong into the digital vs. analog wall, but proves adept at translating marketing speak for his boss. His greatest achievement, however, may be. . .well. You'll see.

Qaptain Qwerty[7]

Lose twenty pounds, quit smoking, organize iPhoto with geotags and face recognition. . .are they not all Impossible Resolutions?

Review: Harmony 510 Universal Remote[8]

While there are some minor nuisances and bumps in the setup and usage of the Harmony 510 remote, a little perseverance in setup and attentiveness is use renders the Harmony a great addition to my living room.

Review: Marketplace 1.2.2[9]

Matthew Glidden looks into a lightweight, Mail-like interface to the classified ad bonanza that is Craigslist. Marketplace expands its bare-bones usability with a clean look, saved searches, and multi-region access.

Review: Ortelius 1.0.5[10]

With Ortelius, making maps is an educational snap.

Review: U-Motion[11]

A useful but flawed iPhone case for gym rats.

Review: U-Suit Folio Premium[12]

A flip-style leather case comes to the iPhone but, like many iPod flip cases before it, the U-Suit Folio Premium is not without its flaws.

[2] http://www.atpm.com/16.01/macmuser-copilot.shtml
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E-Mail

My First Mac[1]

In 1984 I got my first computer, the first 128K Macintosh. It came with two applications—MacWrite and MacPaint. Within an hour I was busily pounding out a chapter in a book I was writing. Learning MacWrite was fast, using the tutorial in the manual. MacPaint, for those who remember, came with a pamphlet of a manual, mostly pictures. Essentially it was so much fun to use, one learned it by doing. There was a synergy between the two apps. MacPaint encouraged exploration and a learning by doing that carried over into using the more heavy-duty-appearing MacWrite and made learning that faster.

There was a single 128K floppy drive, no hard drive. An application plus the files of work done with the application all fit on the single 128K disk. Attaching a second floppy drive upped the ante considerably. Every few years since then I've upgraded when the improvements became compelling enough. Typing this on a PowerBook G4, heavily customized. Maybe a new Mac next year.

—*Henry Korman*

The first time I worked on an Apple Computer was in 1982 on an Apple II Plus bought by my high school. It was wonderful to use a computer with 48K of RAM and a screen with 40 by 24 characters or 280 by 192 pixels.

I found a PowerBook G3 Wall Street just before its last journey in the garbage can. It works fine except it doesn't have a battery, so it works only wired to the sector. As I don't have the wifi card, I use the Ethernet connector or my MacBook Pro with a crossover cable, so the G3 can also access its DVD drive.

—*Jean-Jacques Cortes*

PDFClerk Pro 3.9.3[2]

I should have pointed out that even though Mac OS X's built-in Print dialog can do basic imposition, it only works when the pages are not printed on both sides of the paper, i.e. not duplex printed. The Print dialog simply shrinks the pages onto one page without re-ordering them, so when duplex-printed the pages come out in the wrong order. PDFClerk's imposition feature is much more capable.

—*Linus Ly*

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Useful review. Thanks.

It would be interesting to see a head-to-head comparison of PDFClerk, and PDFPen[3] and PDFPen Pro[4] (from SmileOnMyMac Software). PDFPen Pro costs more—€70 (I am a licensed user) but adds functionality like OCR for scans, PDF form creation, etc.

—*Alun J. Carr*

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There is also Christoph Vogelbusch's truly excellent Create PDF booklet[5], which is totally free.

—*Paul*

Qaptain Qwerty: When I Was Your Age[6]

Oh that's funny. I often threaten to bellow the same thing at the young varmints:

Why, when I was your age, I had to walk through cyberspace on 300bps snowshoes!

—*Avery Ray Colter*

> I like your version, Avery.
>
> —*Linus Ly*

MacMuser: Relevant Eloquent Pleading[7]

I'm the sole Mac user (some say McUser) in my office. Support is provided by me. I bought my Mac (a MacBook Pro) so I'd have access to the tools (mostly writing tools) that I can't bear to be without.

I catch grief because problems must be a "Mac Thing." I still can't get Mail working with Exchange (not that I really want to, but the support person doesn't want IMAP enabled)...

You catch my drift...

—*Dave Thompson*

> I thought Snow Leopard was 100% compatible with Exchange.
>
> > In my office they use Lotus Notes for just about everything.
> >
> > —*Mark Tennent*

[1] http://www.atpm.com/15.12/my-first-mac.shtml
[2] http://www.atpm.com/15.12/pdfclerk.shtml
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[6] http://www.atpm.com/15.12/qaptain-qwerty.shtml
[7] http://www.atpm.com/15.12/macmuser-pleading.shtml

Apple Keyboard[8]

I just converted to this keyboard from the original one on my Power Mac G5 (hard disk recording setup), and my fingers are still rejoicing two days later. The only thing I can think of that would improve this keyboard would be possibly a cupholder, or a GPS unit, or something like that. By the way, I brought this thing to work with me today, and it works flawlessly with the Dell OptiPlex PC that I use here.

—*Wayne Turner*

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After saying that I'd never trade my Apple Pro keyboard, I find myself now with a Macally Bluetooth keyboard. What sold me on it is the fact that it has the exact same keyboard layout as the Apple Pro keyboard. It's such a shame that Apple is forcing that tiny keyboard on people that want Bluetooth. If the full-size keyboard had been available as a Bluetooth model I would've bought it. As it is, my money went to Macally instead.

—*Kevin Bradley*

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[8] `http://www.atpm.com/14.05/apple-keyboard.shtml`

CoPilot Lets Me Do It My Way

"Ha! You won't need to take your Garmin with you," said Claudia, the CoPilot Live[1] expert. Hmm. Since when can a £27 smartphone application take the place of a £100+ dedicated GPS navigation device?

First, I gave it something really hard to do: drive me to work. The trip is all of eight miles, but my local knowledge knows that the most economical, fastest, and shortest route is not the one sat-navs choose. Google Maps gets it right, but not TomToms, Garmins. . .or CoPilot Live.

Instead, CoPilot wants me to motor inland from my home on the seafront to get to the A27, then drive back toward the coast and my office, which is adjacent to the harbour. Without exception, I'll ignore the A259, which wiggles along the coast and, according to Google Maps, is three miles shorter and three minutes quicker. In rush hour, quadruple that time.

No Arguing

CoPilot Live accepted my alternative route as soon as I set off and quietly switched to it with no arguing. Which is completely unlike the nice lady in my Garmin, who repeatedly tells me she is "recalculating" and stubbornly tries to get me back on her chosen route. I can hear her sigh when there is no alternative but to accept my route. Blimey! Who is steering, her or me? TomToms are worse: they tell you to make a U-turn "when it is convenient to do so." That's very funny when you're driving along the M1.

CoPilot Live is also refreshingly reticent. Its audible alerts are not as intrusive as Garmin's or TomTom's, both far too chatty sometimes. Equally, the silence can be off-putting and perhaps a little too speechless when it comes to choosing which lane to be in. A good choice of voices is included with more available for download.

Off to My Mother-in-Law's

The next test was to get CoPilot to take me to my mother-in-law, who lives deep in the wilds of the countryside. The starting point was miles from any cellphone transmission towers, so CoPilot had to rely solely on the iPhone's GPS. CoPilot coped without a glitch, easily keeping up with switchback lanes through deep cuttings in the sandstone, overshadowed by ancient oaks.

In France a couple of weeks ago, on the plains of the Languedoc, our TomTom decided we were in Paris and Boulogne rather than Carcassonne and Narbonne. A pal in Phoenix tells me that his TomTom thinks his house is 20 miles from its actual location in the middle of a desert. At least our Garmin knows where it is.

Live Services

As for other features, CoPilot Live has the full range via Live Services through the cellphone. These include traffic updates, cheapest petrol, local search, and so on. Unfortunately, they haven't been implemented yet in the iPhone version and await Steve Jobs' blessing. It also looks as though they will be added at an extra cost. Speed camera updates are free.

The interface for setting journeys and waypoints is intuitive, as is activating all the various optional settings. CoPilot Live can be used by hikers, sailors, and mountain bikers. It can also be used for walking or driving around cities. Displaying all the points of interest can be intrusive onscreen, taking up a lot of space and obscuring the route. Their display can be turned off, and they do not show until the vehicle is stationary.

Landscape View

When turned landscape, the iPhone has a better screen display than many sat-navs, and the battery life is good, too. CoPilot Live is not a power-hungry application. My new in-car iPhone charging cradle was a bad choice, getting in the way of the gearstick. For much of the testing, it was navigation by audio alerts rather than seeing the road ahead on the sat-nav screen, while my iPhone was slipped out of sight into my car's center console. This was easy: CoPilot giving enough warning before the next turn.

After using CoPilot Live for a week, I have decided Claudia was correct: CoPilot Live on a smartphone

[1] http://www.alk.eu.com/copilotlive/iphone/

can take the place of a dedicated sat-nav. It also means that your sat-nav is a pocket-sized package rather than a bulky dedicated sat-nav. The limitations of your particular smartphone, whatever they may be, may have a bearing on CoPilot Live. On the iPhone, though, CoPilot Live is excellent.

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[2] http://www.tennent.co.uk

MacMuser

by Mark Tennent, http://www.tennent.co.uk

It Just Sits There Dribbling

My boss was using my work computer to demonstrate to a new employee how to send files from Lotus Notes. She gathered the files together, a mix of Word documents and a couple of PDFs, then clicked on Send. Several tens of minutes later, the computer became operational again. For some strange reason, Windows XP, or the Dell Optiplex, cannot multi-task in the same way a Mac can. Data dribbled out, meanwhile locking out Notes.

It felt like going back to the early days of System 7 or even System 6 MultiFinder, when Macs were running on Motorola 680x0 chips. In those days the network was at modem speed or 10Base-T if you were lucky. We weren't sending as much data, but even so, e-mailing a file wouldn't hang the mail package, and data would depart as a background task.

Move forward ten years, even a lowly PowerBook G3 under Mac OS 8 was able to send large attachments as a background task while acting as a PostScript RIP for our large-format inkjet.

Onwards another five years to the era of my work Optiplex and G5 Power Macs. The Dell runs XP like treacle off a spoon, while the Mac is busy with huge pieces of software working concurrently. Photoshop might be applying a filter to a 500 MB image at the same time as VisualHub is compressing a video. The Mac user is busy designing in QuarkXPress while Mail is sending a 20 MB attachment and still collecting new messages every five minutes. Just to add to the fun, SETI is in the background utilising spare capacity.

Back to nowadays, and the Dell is long in the tooth but its equivalent Mac is still cracking away as a graphics workstation. I opened up the Dell, and inside its guts are neatly set out. It still took removal of the CD and floppy drive to be able to swap a 256 MB SIMM for a 1 GB DIMM, but it all clicked backed together again easily. There are only two RAM slots instead of the four or more a Mac Pro has, no graphics card, and amazingly, even a brand new Optiplex still has a floppy drive. Do they make floppy disks any more? It has been over 15 years since I last used one.

Of course, the message my boss had sent bounced back. It was barely 11 MB but too large for someone's server. I spent the rest of the afternoon sending the files one by one. Each time, I was locked out of my work as the files hogged the application.

Bosses, eh?

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[1] `http://www.tennent.co.uk`

How To

by Sylvester Roque, sroque@atpm.com

Building Your Own Additions to the Services Menu

One of the things that I have enjoyed about writing this column[1] is that it provides opportunities to learn new things about the Mac. After a few years of trying to think of new How To projects every month, I'm still finding aspects of Mac OS X that I was either unaware of or had largely ignored. This was the case with the Services menu. Until I heard my friend Rick Prather talking about the usefulness of the Services menu on Mac OSG podcast episode 107[2], I had pretty much ignored its existence. Shame on me. The Services menu can indeed be a handy thing to have around. If you have already upgraded to Snow Leopard, you can easily increase its utility even further. Let's take a look at what the Services menu does and how to make it more useful.

When Did We Get a Services Menu?

I've been using OS X since version 10.0 and had never paid much attention to the Services menu. Rick's comments about its usefulness started me wondering when it had been introduced. Surely this was something new that I had just missed?

Well, I hate to admit it, but services aren't new. Clint Bagwell of *MacTech* magazine reminds us that this feature has been around since the beginning of OS X. It's one of many innovations that had its genesis in NeXT[3]. and made the transition to the first versions of OS X.

What Are Services?

Once I learned what services were, I remembered reading about them shortly before OS X was introduced. The whole purpose of services is to allow programs to share among themselves. That doesn't sound newsworthy. That ability has been around since the inception of the Mac in the form of the Cut, Copy, and Paste commands. However, services take that level of sharing one step further. As Mr. Bagwell notes, "The Services menu extends an application's functionality by providing some of its own capabilities to other programs. When an application signs up for services, it takes advantage of another application's abilities as well." That's the critical difference between sharing through services and the normal data sharing that exists through the clipboard. Services provide a means for programs to share capabilities in addition to data.

Perhaps an example will illustrate the capabilities of items in the Services menu. Select several paragraphs from this article then go to the Services menu and select Summarize. A small box appears with the text that you have selected inside the box. Move the "Summary Size" slider between 1 and 100 percent. Notice that at 100 percent the text is left unaltered—just as it is in this article. As the slider moves left toward 1 percent, some of the information is removed in an effort to summarize the text. The closer you come to 1 percent the more text is removed to shrink the summary. Don't be alarmed. The original text of the article is unharmed. Only the text in the Summary window is being changed.

This demonstrates quite well how the Summary service differs from using the clipboard. In a traditional copy and paste operation, the selected text would be pasted from one application to another with no alteration in length or content—other than the occasional loss of formatting. Copy the text from the Summary window to another application and it is this *summary* that gets pasted to the new location—not a copy of the original text.

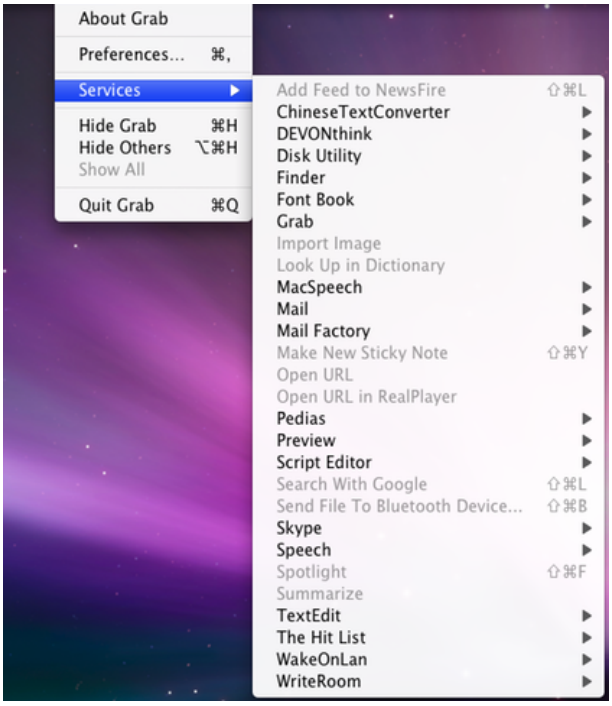
Putting Services in Context

One of the most important things to remember about services is that they are contextual. Context dictates which options are available, and to some extent, where the services appear. Let's begin with what options appear, then we'll briefly examine where the items appear.

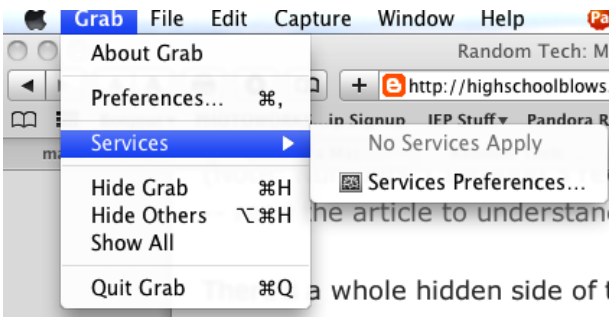
Since you probably have no text selected, go to the Services menu and try to choose Summarize. Right away you'll notice that with no text selected, Summarize is no longer available. Without text to act

[1] http://www.atpm.com/Back/how-to.shtml
[2] http://podcast.macosg.com/podcast.xml
[3] http://www.mactech.com/articles/mactech/Vol.20/20.12/OSXServices/index.html

upon that service is useless, so OS X excludes it from the list of choices. This is one area where Snow Leopard deviates from previous versions of OS X. In the past, services that didn't apply to the type of information selected merely appeared grayed-out in the menu. Under Snow Leopard, services that don't apply to the selected information simply don't appear in the list. Compare the mess from my 10.5.8 Services menu to its current Snow Leopard counterpart:



The Leopard Services Menu



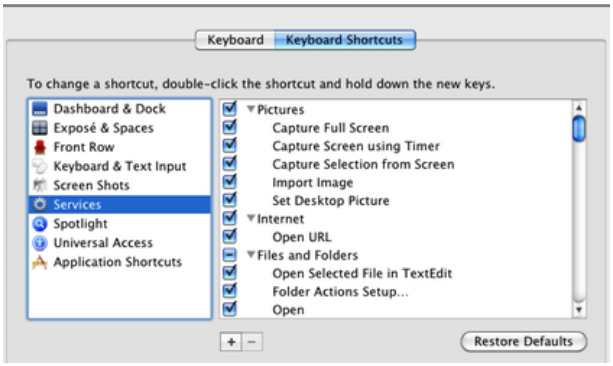
The Snow Leopard Services Menu

Services can also appear as contextual menu items in the Finder as well as in other applications.

Customizable Services?

The Snow Leopard upgrade tweaked several aspects of OS X. One of these changes has come to services. Under Leopard, all services installed by any programs appear in the Services menu. If they are not applicable to the task at hand they appear grayed-out. Cleaning up the menu generally required third-party software[4].

Under Snow Leopard, users have a means of controlling the Services menu. A quick trip to the Keyboard Shortcuts section of the Keyboard preferences pane yields a gem. Clicking the Services option in the left pane brings up a list of available services in the right pane. For convenience, the services are grouped according to the type of data they act upon. If you want access to a particular service, make sure its box is checked; otherwise the service doesn't appear in any context. Stopping those services that convert Chinese, for example, is as simple as clearing the checkboxes from those services.



Managing Services from the Keyboard Preferences Pane

This is also the first place to go if you have a problem with services. Want to assign a keyboard shortcut to a service? Follow the same procedure that you would in assigning any other keyboard shortcut. Select the name of the service and double-click in the column of shortcuts at the right. If you have recently updated your system software and lost a service or two, this is also the place to check. Make sure that the boxes for your missing services are checked.

If you read this far, you've probably investigated the services on your system by now. Each user's list will be a little different depending on the applications installed on that specific system. That's wonderful, but what if you don't have a service that would be

[4] `http://www.manytricks.com/servicescrubber/`

really useful? You should know by now that if I didn't have an answer I wouldn't be wasting your time.

Adding New Services

Under Snow Leopard, users can modify the Services menu, or even create their own services without the use of third-party software. Leopard users will need some assistance from additional software. Not being a programmer I'll leave that to others. Philippe Mougin's thoughts on becoming an OS X Services Ninja[5] should be a good starting point.

Snow Leopard users have other options available to them. It's possible to download free OS X services[6] that can be easily installed. Most installations are as simple as downloading the desired collection of services, unzipping the file, and double-clicking the installer. Installation requires entering an administrator password to complete. Still can't find what you need? Snow Leopard users can create their own services without resorting to third-party software.

Creating Your Own Services

Along with all the other changes that came with a Snow Leopard upgrade came the ability to create your own services using Automator. Building your own service isn't as difficult as you might think, and Automator tries to help as much as possible. If we put together all that's been learned thus far, building our first useful service probably won't require any help at all—if we put in a little thought first.

Because services are so context-driven, it's important to think carefully about what exactly you want the service to do and under what circumstances you want the service to be available. Is this something you need to operate on text files, PDF files, or images? Should it work in the Finder, in specific applications, or globally in all applications? Even if the service involves several steps, these questions have to be answered.

For my new service, I would like to build upon a function in the Finder that pre-dates OS X. Select a file in the Finder and choose Print. Your Mac will dutifully print one copy of the selected file immediately without even opening the Print dialog or the host application. This is a great idea that I often neglect to use. The problem is, if you have access to multiple printers, the Finder does not allow a choice of which printer will be used. In my case, I decided to create a service that duplicates the Finder's print functionality but allows me to choose the target printer. It's pretty easy, so let's get started.

Before launching Automator, a bit of preparation is needed to make this service function properly. The Automator action which provides you with the list of printer choices gets its information from the list of printers installed on your system. Make sure that you have gone to the Printer and Fax preference pane and installed the printers you want to use. If you already have these printers installed you don't need to repeat this process. While we are here, though, write down the full names of the printers you want to use. We may need that information later. For now, it's time to launch Automator and get to work.

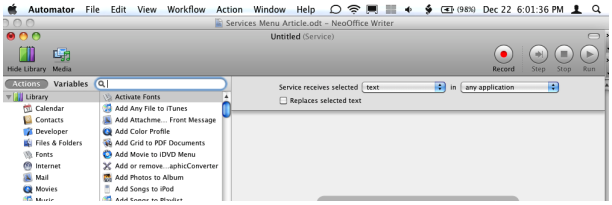
With the advent of Snow Leopard, Automator's main screen has changed. When the first screen appears asking you to choose a template for your workflow, choose Service and click Choose.

Choosing an Automator Template

The screen will shift to the Services template. The pop-up menus at the very top will be used to set the contexts in which we want this service to function. Take a moment to look at the various options.

[5] http://pmougin.wordpress.com/2008/01/28/become-a-mac-os-x-services-ninja/

[6] http://www.macosxautomation.com/services/download/index.html



Automator's Services Template

Set the first menu to Documents and the second to Finder. This option tells our service to work on documents in the Finder. It won't be available anywhere else.

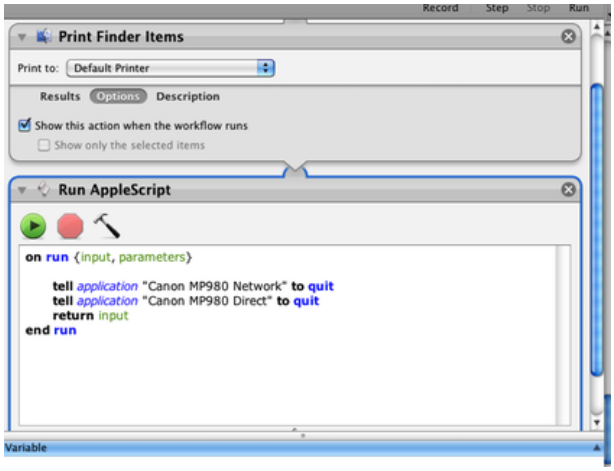
Now we need to finish the building process. In Automator's search window, start typing "Print Finder Items" without the quotation marks. When that object appears in the list, drag it to the right side of the window as the first step in our service. If you click the "Print To" portion of this step, you should see a list of the printers installed on your computer even if they are not all currently available.

Before we leave this step, click on the word "Options." The Automator action step will expand and reveal a checkbox. Click the box that says "Show this action when the workflow runs." Selecting this option is the heart of this service: without this box checked, the Finder will not show us the list of available printers.

We could stop at this point, and the service would work fine. The problem is that once run it would leave the print queue for the selected printer open in the Dock until you manually close it. That's not too bad, but let's fix things so the print queue closes itself. Remember earlier when we saved the names of your printers? We need those names now. Go to Automator's search window and type "Run AppleScript" without the quotes. Drop the Run Applescript command into the window on the right. You will need to insert the following code into the Run AppleScript window:

```
on run {input, parameters}
    tell application "Canon MP980 Network" t
o quit
    tell application "Canon MP980 Direct" to
 quit
    return input
end run
```

Before we leave the AppleScript window and save our work we need to make one change. Where my code has the words "Canon MP980 Network" and "Canon MP980 Direct" insert the names of your printers. You need a line like that for each of your printers, and the name must be in quotes. Now you know why we need the names. It should be possible to close the print queue for the specific printer that was chosen rather than each printer sequentially, but I haven't figured that out yet. Click the hammer in the AppleScript pane, and it will check your work for obvious errors.



The Completed Service

If you try to test the service by running it within Automator you will be warned about the workflow needing an extra step to run within Automator during testing. If you want to test things, find that action and insert it as the first action the Automator window. You'll need to click add to specify a test file. This action can be removed once you are sure everything is working properly.

Once any testing is completed and mistakes corrected, choose Save As from Automator's File Menu. Since we chose to use the Service template, Automator knows that it is saving a service and puts the file in `~/Library/Services`. Congratulations! You've just created your fist service! What will you think of next?

Final Thoughts

The impetus for this service came from this thread[7] at *Mac OS X Hints*. There are a few changes I would like to make when I have more time to experiment. As it is currently, this service doesn't open an application to print. That's a good thing, but I would like to be able to bring up the Print dialog to make adjust-

[7] `http://www.macosxhints.com/article.php?story=20091001140158326`

ments without opening an application. It would also be nice to be able to read which printer the user has chosen and have the service only close that printer without the user having to list each printer in the closing AppleScript.

Over the next few months, I hope to have a few more ideas about some of the underused features of Mac OS X. If you have any suggestions feel free to pass them on.

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Desktop Pictures

by Delwin Finch

Water in Motion

We need new desktop pictures each month. Write[1] to us!

This Month's Desktop Pictures[2]

Delwin Finch, who loves macro photography, offers this month's desktop wallpaper images which came from experimentation of water drops under low light conditions.

View Pictures[a]

[a] http://www.atpm.com/16.01/water-in-motion/

Previous Months' Desktop Pictures

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

Downloading All the Pictures at Once

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

Safari Use this Automator workflow[4].

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

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

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.

[1] mailto:editor@atpm.com
[2] http://www.atpm.com/16.01/water-in-motion
[3] http://www.atpm.com/Back/desktop-pictures.shtml
[4] http://automator.us/examples-02.html

Placing Desktop Pictures

Mac OS X 10.3.x Through 10.6.x

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

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

Mac OS X 10.1.x and 10.2.x

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

You can also use the pictures with Mac OS X's built-in screen saver. Choose "System Preferences..." from the Apple menu. Click the Screen Saver (10.1.x) or Screen Effects (10.2.x) button. Then click on Custom Slide Show in the list of screen savers. If you put the ATPM pictures in your Pictures folder, you're all set. Otherwise, click Configure to tell the screen saver which pictures to use.

Mac OS X 10.0.x

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

Out at Five

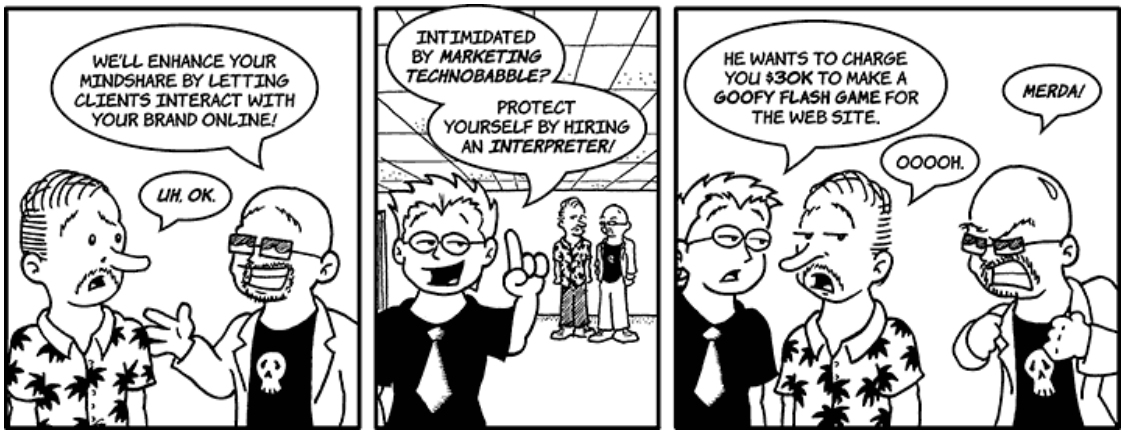
by Matt Johnson, mjohnson@atpm.com

Scene from a Hat

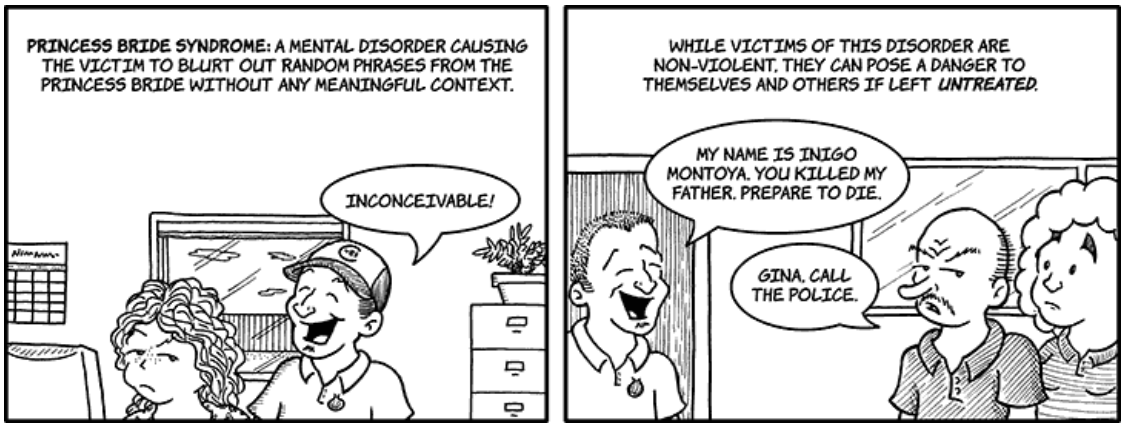
The Single Rule Diet

Digital Egg Timer

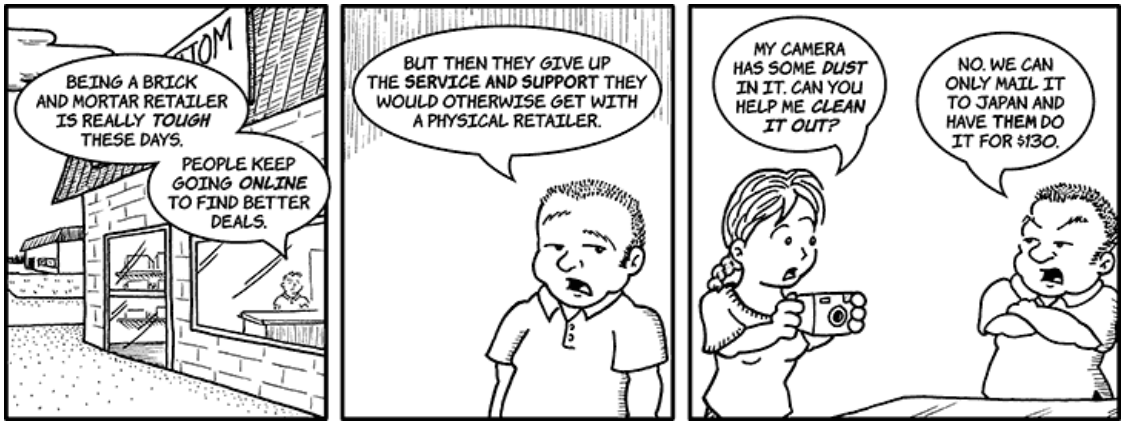
Todd the Interpreter



Princess Bride Syndrome

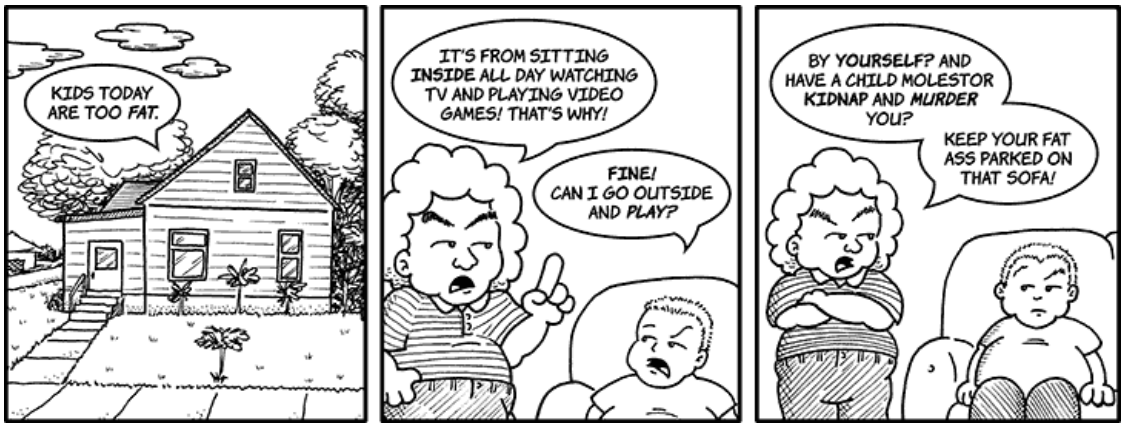


Brick and Mortar Store

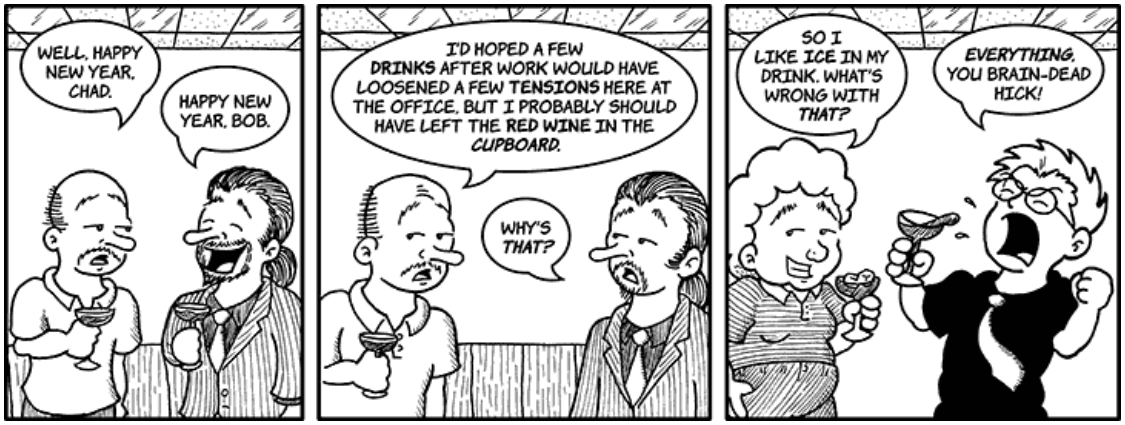


Public Domain

Kids These Days



Happy New Year!



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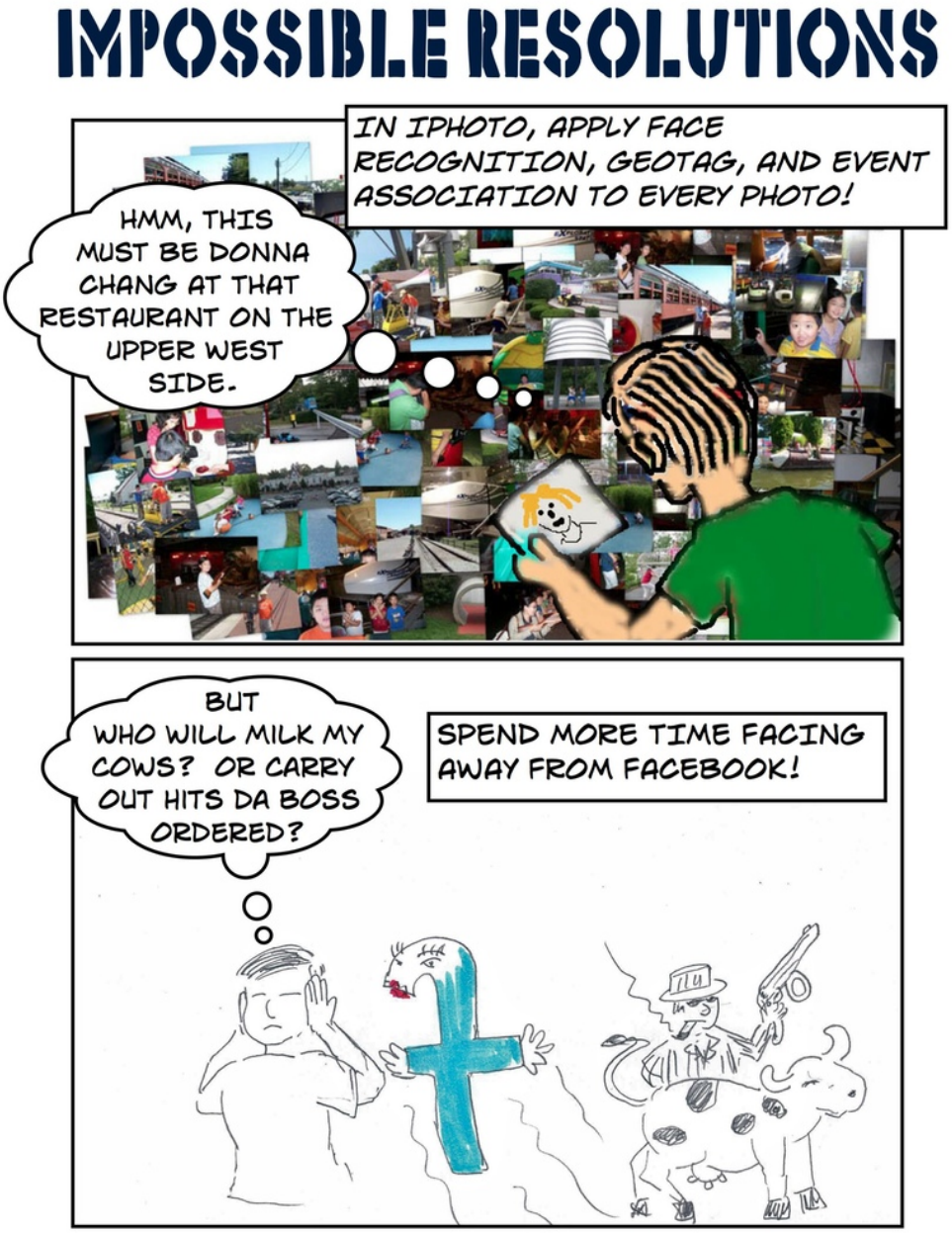
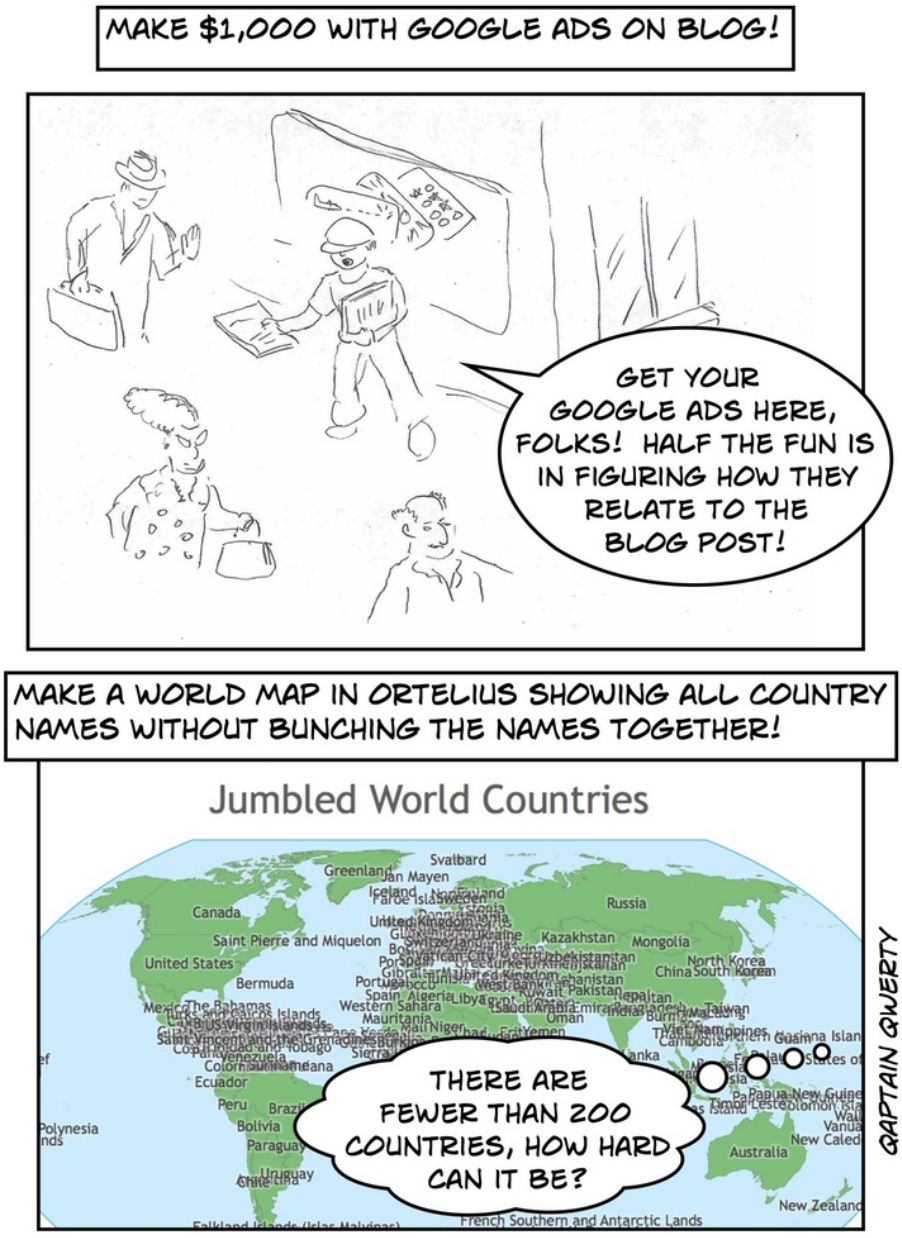
Qaptain Qwerty

by Linus Ly, http://qaptainqwerty.blogspot.com





Copyright © 2010 Linus Ly[1].

[1] http://qaptainqwerty.blogspot.com/

Hardware Review

by Ed Eubanks Jr.

Harmony 510 Universal Remote

Developer: Logitech[1]
Price: $100 (list; see note below)
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.3. Universal[2].
Trial: None

I remember when the first TV remote controls were available. Then came cable boxes, and suddenly the notion of keeping up with a collection of remotes scattered across the living room was a reality in many households. The "cable-ready" TV offered a (temporary) solution to this, but things like stereo signals and the possibility of surround-sound quickly multiplied the collection of remotes in many households.

These days, the cable box (or the dish box, if you prefer) is back, and many homes have more remotes than ever. If you're like me, you either can't or don't want/need to afford the higher-end equipment that allows most devices to work cooperatively, and you inevitably have an anomalous device (like an Apple TV) that even the higher-end gear has difficulty with. In my system, I have five separate components in my living room alone (each with their own remote):

- A Dynex LCD HDTV
- An Onkyo 5.1 A/V Receiver
- A Dish Network DVR/Signal Converter
- A Sony DVD Player
- An Apple TV

While some of these play nicely together, I have longed for a unified system to control them all. Of course I've tried some of the $20 "universal" remotes from Walmart, but these are extremely complicated to set up, never work as well as promised, and they are far from intuitive in their operation. Is it possible to put a truly universal remote in place that is straightforward to set up and which works as promised?

[1] http://www.logitech.com/index.cfm/remotes/universal_remotes/devices/4738&cl=us,en

[2] http://www.apple.com/universal/

The short answer is: absolutely, yes.

The Harmony Family

Logitech has an extensive family of universal remotes—the Harmony remote family—that cover the most "basic" needs up to complex tasks. Currently, they offer five models, from one for (barely) less than $100 up to one that is fully touch-screen controlled (for nearly $400).

The whole Harmony family is Mac-compatible and is very easy to set up (see below). Some are compatible with more devices than others; fortunately, Logitech has provided an easy-to-use compatibility checker[3] to determine which remotes are suitable for a given system.

I bought the 510. The main reason, I confess, was the price—I was limited in my budget and wanted to spend as little as I could; the 510 is the lowest-priced model. I was pleased also to find that the 510 was fully compatible with all of my devices, even though some are not new models and others are off-brands.

[3] http://myremotesetup.com/EasyZapper/New/Main.asp?WebProcessAction=Start&ReturnUrl=%2FEasyZapper%2F%2E%2FNew%2FProcSpice%2Flanding%2Easp&ClassId=PrSpice%2EProcSpice&RelativePath=ProcSpice%2F

Setup

One of the great aspects of the Harmony remote family is that it is very straightforward to set up. Most universal remotes are set up by use of multiple pages of codes, and a lot of trial and error. The Harmony remotes use a setup that is more straightforward: all of them connect via USB to a Mac or a Windows PC.

A setup utility (a free download) controls the whole process. The user indicates the devices, according to brand and model, that he wishes to control with the remote. Then "activities" are set up. From "Watch a DVD" to "Listen to Music," activities gives you quick access to functions, making usage cleaner and easier (more on this in a moment).

I love the concept of setup with the Harmony remotes, and I found general setup to be as easy as promised. Setting up some activities was easy, as well. But in my system, my A/V receiver controls both audio and video sources—important, since I have three separate video sources feeding into the one TV. Activities setup didn't give me the option to do this in the initial setup, and it took some poking around to figure out how to get things set up properly. (But it can be done.)

The setup utility *does* follow up after setup, offering some troubleshooting help if everything isn't working as planned. But the troubleshooting help didn't solve my multiple-video-sources problem; I had to figure that out on my own.

One more note on setup: some extra steps were required for getting the Apple TV to recognize the Harmony as a valid remote. But this isn't the Harmony's shortcoming; I don't really consider it a shortcoming at all, but simply another step in the setup. The "fault" for it, though, lies with the way that the Apple TV deals with remotes.

Usage

Now that my Harmony remote is set up, and my video sources troubleshot, it works very well. I have four basic activities set up, and they all do what I expect them to about 95% of the time. With everything powered off, a single press of a button for "Watch TV" turns on the Dish receiver, the A/V receiver, and the TV, and it sets the A/V receiver to the correct audio and video sources. This was a two-remote, three-button-push minimum (and possibly four or five button pushes) before.

Likewise, from the above I can push another single button and my Apple TV will become active, along with the A/V receiver switching audio and video sources. Or I can power everything down with a single button-push.

I don't lack any of my functions on any of my devices—another complaint that I had with any other universal remote. I can call up the DVR controls for my dish receiver, perform remote setup with my A/V receiver, and turn on closed-captioning on my TV.

Even the Apple TV, which has the quirkiest interface of all of my devices, is fully controllable by the Harmony.

When it comes to that, I frequently prefer my iPhone as an Apple TV remote over the Harmony, for the same reasons I prefer it over the little white Apple remote: it simply offers more control, with faster access to content. But unless I'm going to scroll through a long list of artists or song titles, or type something into the YouTube search, I'm usually content with the Harmony for the Apple TV.

The Harmony occasionally fails to control every device as expected. For example, when powering down it might turn the TV off, but not the dish or A/V receiver. Or it will omit switching the video source on the A/V receiver, so the audio will switch from Apple TV to DVD but the video won't. (I should note here that this has only happened when I'm trying to use one of the comprehensive controls, like an Activity or a global power-down; the controls and functions for individual components work with 100% reliability.) I attribute these failures to the likely possibility that the IR signal didn't properly reach the IR receiver, but that's my speculation; however, the Harmony's screen actually reminds you to keep the remote pointed at the devices, suggesting that my speculation has grounds.

One other (minor) complaint about usage: I would like to be able to create more specific activities. For example, I'd like to have an activity that is "Watch DVR Recording" that would not only switch my components on and to the proper A/V settings, but that would also invoke the DVR menu and even pre-select the "My Recordings" option in the first menu. I would be surprised if this sort of setup isn't possible with one or more of the higher-level models in the Harmony family. Indeed, it might be possible in mine—but if so, I haven't been able to figure out how to do it.

A Note on Price

The prices are listed on the Logitech Web site for each remote, and these are good ballparks for getting a sense of what to expect to pay for these devices. Naturally, one might expect to find some variation on other Web sites, like Amazon.com. But I found that prices varied substantially and was surprised at the savings that could be had with just a little comparison-shopping.

I bought my Harmony 510 for a full 25% less than the price listed at the Logitech Web site, and I was given free shipping to boot. I've seen other Harmony remotes offered for nearly 50% off of the listed price. All of that is to say, it is well worth your time to shop around for a better price.

Wrap-Up

The Harmony remotes are attractive devices, and the brand suggests hope in a category that normally disappoints; still, the price might be high enough to give some people pause. My advice: pause no longer. I love my Harmony remote and consider the price money well-spent. While there are some minor nuisances and bumps in the setup and usage of the Harmony 510 remote, a little perseverance in setup and attentiveness in use renders the Harmony a great addition to my living room.

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Software Review

by Matthew Glidden, mglidden@atpm.com

Marketplace 1.2.2

Developer: Josh Abernathy[1]
Price: $20; $30 (family license)
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.5. Universal[2]
Trial: Fully-featured (25 days).

The ad behemoth Craigslist[3] presents everything newspaper classifieds can, with a bunch more bits tossed in. You can buy or sell stuff, look for homes, find local events, and carry on discussions. Most users stick to their local area, but nothing stops people in the US from checking a Japanese site and vice versa. Whether or not it's killing daily print media, the usefulness of Craigslist is impossible to ignore.

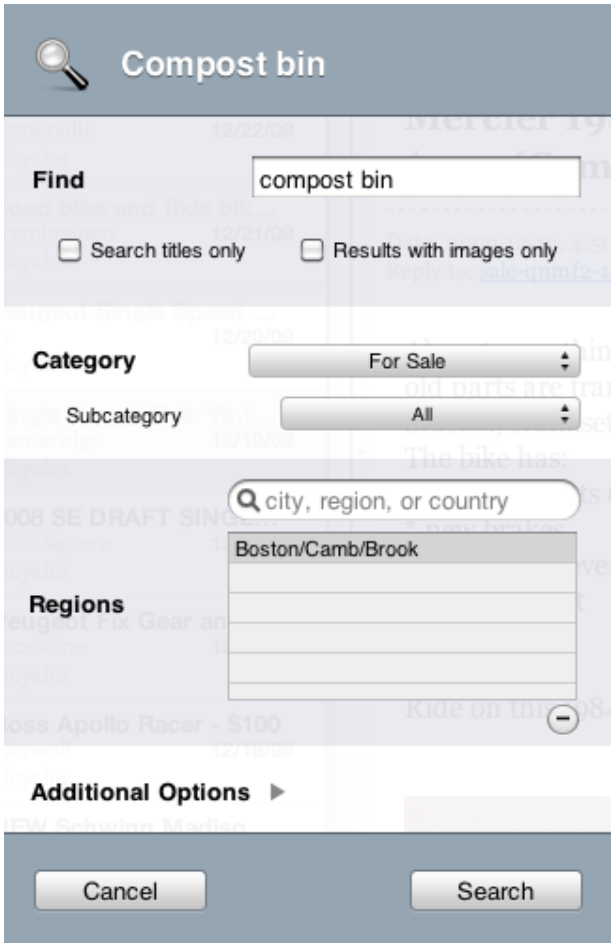
Marketplace says it presents Craigslist "without the ugly," which I assume means the Web site's text-only (and click-heavy) presentation. Its multi-panel layout looks more like an e-mail client and includes similar organization features.

Installation

Marketplace comes as a single, small download with no extra installation steps. Drop it into your Applications folder and open to start searching.

Feature Exploration

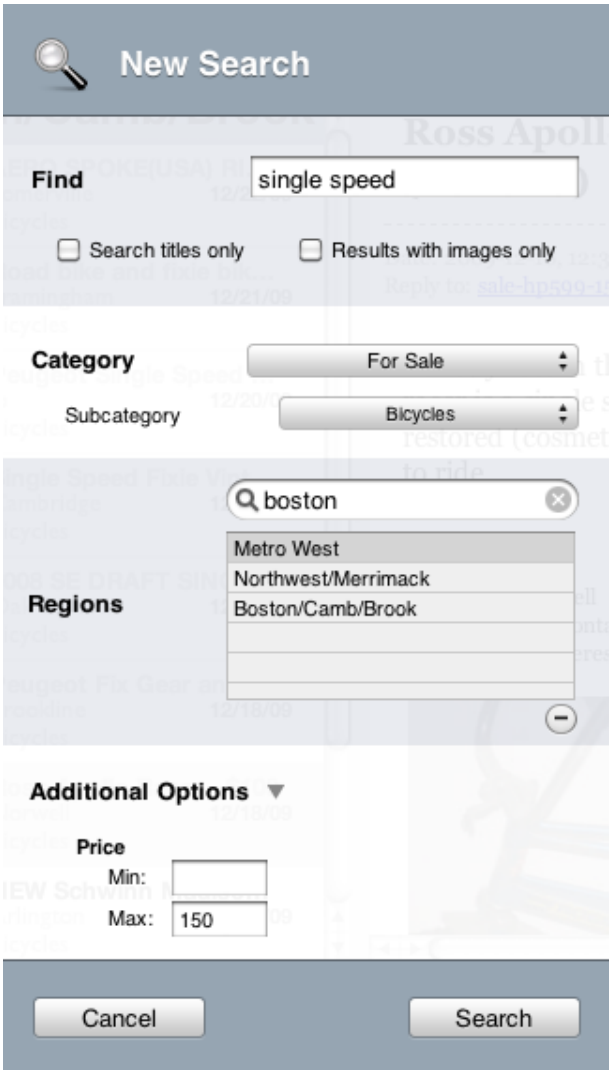
Almost everyone will start using Marketplace with "New Search." I like to do off-season shopping, as people dump their skis in May or sell off extra swimwear in November. This year's wintertime hunt is for a compost bin, which someone in Boston surely needs to part with to save December storage space.



Looking for a bin in my local area.

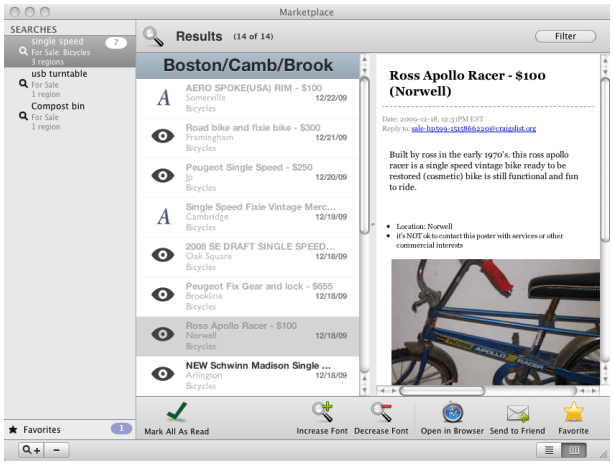
If you sift through Craigslist regularly for the same stuff, saved searches prove Marketplace's most useful feature. I've been seeking a single-speed bike under $150 for some time and am willing to check a wider area than my immediate neighborhood, so add those details to the search. (This would take three different searches on Craigslist, one per area.)

[1] http://www.marketplacemac.com
[2] http://www.apple.com/universal/
[3] http://craigslist.org



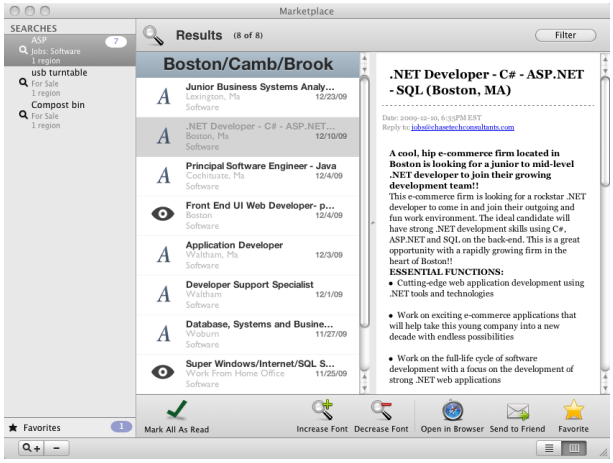
Looking for a bike in three Boston regions.

The result panel looks very similar to Mail, with saved searches on the left, locales in the middle, and ad details on the right. A group of additional functions—change font size, open in Web browser, e-mail listing, and mark "favorite"—lines the window's bottom edge. Switch the results panels from vertical to horizontal by choosing the "list" icon instead of the default "columns."



Search results.

Searching isn't just about stuff, of course. There are plenty of jobs, résumés, events, and other subjects to check out.



Looking for a "cool and hip" software job?

In Craigslist, you have to bookmark any searches or listings that you want to see again later. To speed this process, Marketplace's "favorite" button automatically adds the selected listing to the lower-left Favorites list, so you can refer back to it later.

If any search returns a truly overwhelming number of ads, use the "filter" button to limit the date range, look for more specific phrases, and so forth. This didn't do much for me, but it is there.

Bugs and Annoyances

One disadvantage, noted on the Marketplace site itself, is that you can't create new Craiglist postings, just read what's already there. People selling stuff,

promoting things, or looking for discussion forums need to use the Web interface.

The first Marketplace version I tried crashed on any job résumé search. To the developer's credit, he responded quickly to my e-mail and fixed the problem in version 1.2.2.

Is It Worth the Money When Craigslist Is Free?

The Mail-like interface is smooth and easy, but how much time does it save? Folks looking far and wide for specific items regardless of locale would get the most from it. If you're a regular Craigslist shopper or dislike the site's cluttered look, give Marketplace a try.

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[4] mailto:mglidden@atpm.com

Software Review

by Linus Ly, lly@atpm.com

Ortelius 1.0.5

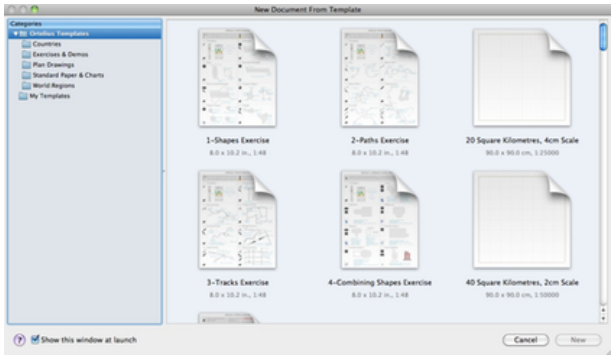
Developer: Mapdiva[1]
Price: $99 (educational discount available)
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.5. Universal[2].
Trial: Feature-limited (watermarks).

A few weeks ago, my 9-year-old son had an idea for a mash-up. Not content with just playing with plastic toy soldiers, he wanted to have them engaged in a game of world domination. He needed a large world map upon which he would deploy the green soldiers on some continents and the light tan soldiers on the rest. I heartily approved the idea—what a great way to learn some history and geography! When I set about looking online for a map, much to my surprise, it was not that easy. I managed to find one after about an hour of searching. Recently I came across Mapdiva's Ortelius, a map-making program for the Mac. You can draw maps from scratch or work off the included templates. One of the templates is a world map, with a layer of country names as an option. It would make a perfect map for my son's game of world domination, but it is much, much more than that.

Usage

When you launch Ortelius, you are presented with a list of templates like that shown in the accompanying picture. As the left side shows, Ortelius templates are grouped by categories such as Countries and World Regions. For the screenshot, I happened to choose all templates so that the right side shows all the templates sorted alphabetically. The templates provide a quick way to get started.

[1] http://www.mapdiva.com
[2] http://www.apple.com/universal/

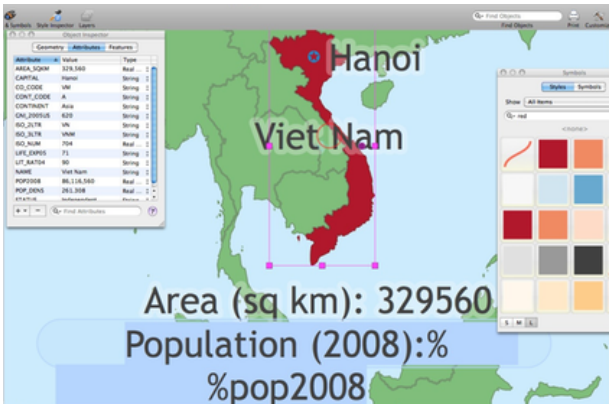


Templates provide a quick way to get started, if your mapping project can use them.

Let's say I wanted to show the US states I visited over the years. I chose one of the two USA templates, selected the states I visited, and highlighted them with an orange shade. I did not stop there and added the state names as well. I did not have to type the state names, as they are the default labels already associated with the state objects. I only needed to select New Label on the state objects to show their names. The nice thing with labels, as opposed to a text object that I add myself, is that as the main object gets moved the label follows it. For illustration purposes, in the northeast and mid-Atlantic regions, I moved New York, Maine, and others out of their positions. Note that I made use of Leader Lines to point the names to the smaller states. Lines and labels nicely followed the states as they were moved.

US states I visited.

Other attributes besides the names are associated with the objects. There are a few useful attributes included with the US states, so to better show the attributes I instead zoom in on Southeast Asia with Vietnam as the selected country. Here we can see that the Object Inspector shows information like area in square kilometers, capital, life expectancy, literacy rate, etc. Shown on the map are the capital (Hanoi), area, and population. I happen to know where in Vietnam the capital is, so stamped the general area with a star. Note that for population, I am showing it in Edit mode. I added the text label "Population (2008):" then appended to it the variable "%%pop2008". I got the variable name "pop2008" from the Object Inspector window, Attributes pane. Should I wish to, I can add attributes like main religion, official language, independence day, etc. There is much potential in using Ortelius as an educational tool.



Vietnam and some useful info associated with it, like area in square kilometers and population (2008).

Main Purpose

The main use for Ortelius, of course, is making maps. Besides templates, you can have a map as a background picture to trace from or to draw on top of. Of course, the usual copyright applies, so if you use an existing map as a background graphic, be sure you have permission from the owner. You can add a background picture via the Drawing Setup menu command or use the Image Browser. With the Image Browser, just be sure to drag the picture onto your drawing and not double-click it, which in my case would just open the picture in Preview.

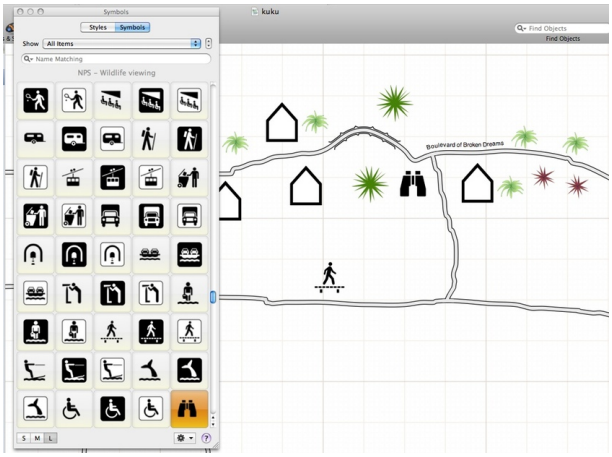
At some point though, you will need to make maps from scratch. You will learn to appreciate the many tools Ortelius has at your disposal, especially for making maps. Roads merge into other roads when they are drawn close enough to each other.

Traditional select tools work by drawing a shape to enclose the items to be worked on. You are probably familiar with, say, highlighting an area in Photoshop to apply some effects to it. Since Ortelius works closely with lines that represent roads, it has a special select tool called linear select[3]. For example, to turn a part of a road into a bridge, you would select the part with the linear select tool, then select Insert Special ▷ Bridge. Similarly, you can use the linear select tool to highlight a portion of the road to change its color to indicate a different kind of pavement.

Symbols of many kinds are plentiful; just be sure to uncheck the option to show Actual Size or Smaller symbols to see them at their maximum sizes.

Ortelius produces vector lines or Bézier curves so that after the lines are drawn, you can adjust them by dragging the many anchor points to get the lines to fit what you envisioned. If adjusting existing points does not do the job, you can add or remove points. Likewise, although roads tend to automatically merge together when they intersect, if they do not merge you can force the merger by joining them. In my experience, most of the time they do not merge on their own only because I unwittingly created them on different layers. That is right, to help you better organize the various elements of your map, Ortelius lets you have layers. You typically would have a layer for roads and tracks, one for text, and perhaps one for buildings. Objects can be moved to another layer, and if you prefer not to have to click on a layer to select its objects, you can enable Auto-Activate Clicked Layer.

[3] http://mapdiva.com/resources/screencasts/DrawingRoads.mov?width=720&height=450



A simple map showing roads that merged and symbols for trees, houses, and activities, along with the Style and Symbol window.

Import/Export

While making your own maps can be exciting and educational, you may work in an office that needs to plot tons of data, so much that placing the symbols by hand is impractical. Governments and companies already have such data professionally prepared in the form of shapefiles. There are shapefiles for all kinds of data, including airports, volcanoes, and climates. Web sites like NationalAtlas.gov[4] even have them available for free. Ortelius supports the use of shapefiles, and I was able to make a map showing Amtrak train stations in the US. Matching the shapefile data to a template map requires a little more skill that I do not yet possess so the overlaid data does not line up with the map, but you get the idea.

A map showing Amtrak stations made from freely available shapefiles and an Ortelius template.

[4] http://www.nationalatlas.gov/atlasftp.html

As already mentioned, Ortelius can import bitmap formats like JPEG and TIFF for use as a background. Supported export formats also include the typical ones, but layered PDF is the recommended option. After all, Ortelius produces vector results, which can be resized and adjusted without loss of quality. I think it is wise to support the PDF standard instead of having specific vector formats as export options. Unfortunately, I do not own any of the popular vector programs, such as Adobe Illustrator, to see how well PDF exported from Ortelius performs in these other applications.

Documents Galore

Ortelius is a massive program chock full of features. I was able to find my way around most of the time, but the multiple forms of documentation in Ortelius help a lot. For starters, there is the standard Apple Help, although I find it distracting when it goes outside of the current application's help file. If you go to Mapdiva's Web site, you can view the many short videos that progressively take you from the basic tasks to the more advanced ones. Last, and my favorite, are the PDF documents, one to get you up and running and the other covering every facet of the application. If all that is not enough, you can also use Mapdiva's Web forum to exchange ideas and questions.

Minor Issues

Ortelius does so much so easily, but I do have some very minor issues with it. Ortelius makes it difficult to change a built-in style to prevent unintentional global changes to other documents. You would have to unlock the style and confirm a dialog box before you can do so, even before you specifically select a style, i.e. the same security measure is in place for even the Basic Track. If possible, I think if the Basic Track should somehow be reset with each new document and be allowed to be adjusted without first requiring it to be unlocked. The alternative would be for the user to create his own Basic Track, but the typical user getting started with Ortelius most likely would not know that.

The other minor issue is when a large map has all the object names shown, the names would be of the same size regardless of the sizes of the objects. One example is the world map, where countries with small area getting the same large text that is probably larger than the countries themselves. It would be nice if the smaller countries were assigned smaller text

or had their names floating nearby with leader lines pointing back to the countries.

A very minor issue with maps having many objects is that the labels can be unreadable.

Conclusion

Mapdiva has a winner on its hand. For now, Ortelius has found a niche market to fill. There are some Mac map-making programs out there, but none in the price range or that possess the features found in Ortelius. With the specific map tools found in Ortelius, it is easy to make maps, whether from templates or imported bitmaps, or even if you have to start with a blank page. You can take mapping even further by importing shapefiles, many of which are freely available on the Web. If you have a mapping need, Ortelius makes an excellent choice.

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Accessory Review

by Chris Lawson, http://chrislawson.net

U-Motion

Developer: Uniea[1]
Price: $25
Requirements: iPhone 3G or 3GS
Trial: None

Ever since Sony made music portable with the Walkman, people have been listening to music during their workouts. With the iPhone's ability to function as an iPod, all you need is an appropriate case and you can stop carrying around an iPod for gym sessions. Uniea's U-Motion case is one such case, and after several weeks of use it's time to evaluate how well it does the job.

The U-Motion holds the iPhone securely on your arm.

The idea of armband-style cases is pretty simple. Strap the music player to your upper arm tightly enough so that it won't slide around, in a position that allows easy access to the controls. The U-Motion certainly fits that bill, with its translucent plastic cover allowing the iPhone's touchscreen to work normally.

The devil, however, is in the details, and that's where the U-Motion starts diverging from the ideal.

The metal D-ring that connects the two halves of the armband is rather uncomfortable when running, because unless you strap the case to your arm like a tourniquet, the motion of running causes the case to slide down your arm to the crook of your elbow, where the metal rubs your skin. Workouts involving less arm motion or a long-sleeve shirt under the U-Motion aren't as prone to this problem. For runners, though, the issue might be alleviated by using a smoother finish on the D-ring, or by making it of a different material or shape. Kudos to Uniea for making it of what appears to be chrome-plated aluminum, so it won't rust, although stainless steel would have been significantly stronger.

That metal clip tends to irritate my arm when running.

More worrying than the discomfort of the D-ring is the design of the pocket for your iPhone. The opening for the phone is in the back of the case. That means, the opening is against your arm when you're working out—and that means, your iPhone is going to get sweaty.

[1] http://www.uniea.com/product/iphone-3g-3gs-u-motion-armband-case.html

For some inexplicable reason, Uniea put the slot in the back of the case, exposing the iPhone to sweat.

I do most of my indoor workouts in the winter in hotel fitness centers, so I almost always have a plastic room key that I need to keep with me. I get around the sweaty-iPhone problem by sticking my room key in the case behind the phone, which means that the sweat gets on my room key instead. I can live with that, but a much better solution would have been to put the opening in the top of the case or even in the front, so that there's no risk of moisture getting to the iPhone.

This seems like a glaring oversight on Uniea's part, especially since they had enough forethought to make the metal D-ring out of a reasonably sweat-proof material.

You can see the distinct rectangles of hook-and-loop fabric here. The band would have been much more easily adjustable if it were made of continuous hook-and-loop; as it is, the band tends to settle in the thin areas between the rectangles.

The armband's construction is somewhat of a mystery, too. Rather than explaining it all in words, I'll just refer to the photo, where you can see what I mean. Making the armband out of one solid piece of hook-and-loop fabric would allow for easier adjustability, as the D-ring tends to fall naturally between the rectangles when adjusting the band. The tiny amount of elasticity given up by such a design wouldn't be missed, and once the armband is adjusted, your arms aren't going to get significantly larger or smaller over the course of one workout anyway.

The plastic window in the case isn't clear; it's translucent, and noticeably so. This isn't a huge problem since you probably aren't trying to read while staring at your arm during a workout, but the iPhone's screen is noticeably blurry and slightly dimmer through the plastic. Clear vinyl is certainly available, so it's a bit of a mystery why Uniea didn't use it here.

The plastic cover over the phone isn't totally clear, causing text to be noticeably blurry.

Finally, Uniea makes a big deal of the cable management. Because I use a couple of different music players on a regular basis, and because the U-Motion isn't the only iPhone case I use, storing earbuds on the U-Motion's armband doesn't make a lot of sense to me. If you don't ever use headphones except at the gym, though, you'd probably find this feature more useful. However, the cable management is *only* useful when storing earbuds; it's totally useless when you're actually working out and wearing the case.

Despite the blurriness, it's still reasonably easy to see and control the iPhone through the case.

If you're the type who can't work out without music and you spend a lot of time in the gym, a case *like* the U-Motion is well worth the $25 to extend the utility of your iPhone. After all, an iPod shuffle is still more than double that price, and a Nano is at least six times as much, and neither one comes with a case of its own. However, I'm not convinced the substantial disadvantages of the design make the U-Motion *the* case for working out with your iPhone.

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[2] `http://chrislawson.net`

Accessory Review

by Chris Lawson, http://chrislawson.net

U-Suit Folio Premium

Developer: Uniea[1]
Price: $35
Requirements: iPhone 3G or 3GS
Trial: None

The U-Suit Folio Premium case is another of Uniea's many entries in the iPhone case market. Compared to others, how does it stack up?

The bottom-hinged flip easily folds out of the way to play games or make calls.

Overall, the Folio is of a similar design to their U-Suit Premium that I reviewed last month[2]. Both are black leather, with a Uniea logo on the back, and both are stylish and attractive. The biggest difference is the flip design, which requires you to flip open the case to answer a call or use the phone, but provides substantially better protection against direct impacts on the iPhone's screen.

[1] http://www.uniea.com/product/iphone-3g-3gs-u-suit-folio-premium-leather-hard-flip-case.html

[2] http://www.atpm.com/15.12/u-suit-premium.shtml

The camera and upper corners of the iPhone are largely unprotected.

This protection for the screen comes at the expense of protection for the corners of the phone. While the U-Suit Premium's hard plastic shell covers the corners of the iPhone quite nicely, all four corners of the iPhone are exposed in the Folio case. In particular, the top corners and both sides of the phone are totally unprotected down to a point past the volume buttons. Insertion and removal of the iPhone from the case is substantially easier than with the U-Suit Premium, but most people I know don't take their phone out of its case very often.

The iPhone in the U-Suit Folio looks classy, but protection along the sides and corners is inferior to that provided by many other cases.

All this is not to say that the Folio doesn't have some nice features. It does. The soft, fake-fur lining is good at reducing the possibility of scratches to the iPhone, certainly more so than the hard plastic lining of the U-Suit Premium, and probably better than the thin foam-rubber lining in the Core Case[3]. The flip clips closed with a soft latch that covers the SIM card door, and it's easy to close the flip with a flick of the wrist. Opening it, however, requires a tricky one-handed maneuver or a second hand.

[3] http://www.atpm.com/15.05/core-case.shtml

Here's a closeup of the soft lining that covers the entire inside of the case.

The design of the flip itself bears attention, too. The hinge is at the bottom, astride the dock connector, rather than at the top. This means that when you're talking on the phone, gravity helps to hold the flip out of your way rather than hitting you on the head, and it doesn't interfere with the headphone jack (as the flip does on several[4] iPod[5] cases[6] we've seen here). And, as I mentioned before, having the extra layer of protection for the iPhone's screen is a clear benefit as well.

[4] http://www.atpm.com/8.09/leatherpod.shtml
[5] http://www.atpm.com/14.05/flipp.shtml
[6] http://www.atpm.com/13.10/podfolio.shtml

Here's what the Folio looks like with no phone in it.

Putting that hinge at the bottom created one fairly significant problem, however. The hinge blocks the iPhone's speaker to such a great extent that it's sometimes difficult to hear sound output with even a moderate level of background noise. Removing the iPhone from the Folio case immediately resolves the problem. It looks like Uniea thought about this, since there are tiny holes cut in the hinge over the speaker and microphone ports, but unfortunately they don't solve the problem adequately.

The hinge at the bottom is nice, but those holes don't help much with the muting of the iPhone's sound. Microphone pickup seems to be relatively unaffected.

If Uniea could somehow combine the best features of the U-Suit Premium and the Folio, they'd have a really great product on their hands. They haven't, however, and the problems with the Folio, on balance, outweigh its advantages. Unless you just really have to have a flip-style case for some reason, the original U-Suit seems like a better option.

Again, protection for the top of the phone could be better.

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[7] http://chrislawson.net

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[3] mailto:reviews@atpm.com
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