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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

Welcome to the September issue of *About This Particular Macintosh!* It's been an exciting summer for Apple product enthusiasts, and new products release will continue into September. We'll cover the outcome of the company's early September media event and the new products that are revealed in our October issue.

We begin this issue and head into the waning days of summer with a nostalgic look at the cultural, social, and economic changes that have been brought about by the emergence of ultra-portable digital devices. In particular, devices developed by Apple.

A Man and His iPad

It used to be said that a dog was a man's best friend. That was before backyards became so small that their only use might be as a putting green, and the costs of caring for and keeping a canine at home went through the proverbial roof. It's not that we don't like dogs. But in our inter-connected world, the iPad and the iPhone have become the best devices around for keeping in touch with all of one's best friends, provided they are of the human variety.

In this month's *Segments* section, we look at one man's effort to buy an iPad. It has become his best friend for news and information gathering while at home, and in a future *Segments* section the author will detail his efforts to use the iPad at work.

Change Back From Your Buck

Some of us may remember the days before McDonald's had sit-down eateries. One would walk up to a counter under the golden arches and order a hamburger, fries, and a soft drink and get change back from your buck.

Today, there's another well-known outlet that has served up billions of product to tens of millions of happy customers. It's the iTunes App Store. In August, the App Store surpassed 250,000 apps available for purchase or free download. We expect Apple to forego the super-sized craze that brought derision to the McDonald's brand name and continue to offer apps for purchase that give consumers a penny back on their buck.

Superman Has No Place to Change

For most of the Man of Steel's fictional existence, Clark Kent would change into Superman garb in a common telephone booth. The iconic standalone telephone booths that seemed to populate almost every city street in post-war urban American are almost as hard to find today as Superman himself.

The global adoption of cell phones, and now the mass migration to smartphones, has eliminated the need for pay phones throughout our nation. The iPhone 4 with its FaceTime

feature and 5-megapixel LED flash camera is now replacing the need for a separate point and shoot digital camera and even a PC and Web cam for video chats.

If recent sales trends are a guide, Apple will sell well over 10 million iPhones in the September quarter. In the meantime, AT&T, the sole authorized service provider in the US for the iPhone, is racing to sell as many iPhones as possible before its exclusive contract with Apple also fades into our cultural history. Watch for announcements of new iPhone service partners in the coming months as iPhone supply eventually catches up with demand, and the calendar eventually brings AT&T's exclusive iPhone contract with Apple to a close.

Big Change for the iPod Line

It wasn't long ago that Apple's iPod product line was the revenue and earnings driver for the company. The line of popular digital music players sustained Apple during the Intel transition of the Mac, and the iPhone has catapulted the company into a new era of success.

In the June quarter, the iPod line represented less than 10% of the company's reported revenue. In that period, unit sales fell 8% below prior-year sales, yet revenue increased 4% due to a higher percentage of the iOS-based iPod touch in the unit sales mix.

The performance of the iPod touch and Apple's focus on iOS-based devices provides clues to the future of the iPod product line. The days of single-use digital music players may now be fading into history. Consumers want more for their dollars, and people are expecting more and more from their digital devices.

Our September Issue

It's an exciting time to be an Apple product enthusiast, and it's an exciting era in which we live. The editors of ATPM chronicle what we call the "personal computing experience." The digital devices we use may be getting smaller, but living large in the digital age requires an understanding of these products and the ways in which people use them.

Our September issue includes:

MacMuser: A Fine Pair of Dragons

Mark Tennent has been talking to Dragons.

MacMuser: Two Sides

Companies may brag about using less paper, but Mark Tennent believes their reduction efforts have only resulted in us, the consumers, using more paper.

Heather Sitarzewski, Graphic Designer

Heather Sitarzewski is a graphic designer by day and all around artsy/creative the rest of her waking hours. She chats with a member of our editorial crew on artsy, crafty, Mac-y life.

Segments: Life With an EeePC and Ubuntu Linux

Wes Meltzer shares his rationale for traveling without a heavy Mac laptop or expensive MacBook Air and opting for an EeePC netbook running Ubuntu Linux.

Segments: My $1,000 iPad Purchase Odyssey

Robert Paul Leitao shares his purchase story, noting that the iPad is a revenue and earnings monster.

Desktop Pictures: Flowers

Reader Sterling Garwood shares this month's desktop pictures of flowers taken in North Carolina with a Nikon D80.

Out at Five

Matt Johnson's new series, *Out at Five,* looks at the workplace and its boundaries from all angles, revolving around many of the same characters from his former series, *Cortland.*

Review: AccountEdge and FirstEdge

Ed Eubanks Jr. finds these business accounting software tools to be a delight to use.

Review: Loop

Eric Blair is pleased with this simple iPad stand.

E-Mail

Next Actions: E-mail Tricks and Tools

As always, great post, Ed. I really enjoy reading these. For those who use Ready-Set-Do! on their Macs, there is a new set of podcasts, one of which discusses how to handle processing e-mail with Ready-Set-Do!. The one on handling e-mail can be found here.

—Todd V

• • •

I can also highly recommend Notify App. I have it notify me of new messages via Growl, and if I want to read and/or respond straight away, the in–menu bar mail interface is perfect. That way I only open the full Mail app a few times a day.

—Mark Aufflick

OWC Express

Thanks for the review. Just for your information, my 13-inch MacBook Pro looks like a black MacBook because I have covered it in an Apple-approved third-party black shell. Very elegant looking. Just FYI in case you eventually upgrade to a MacBook Pro.

—durbrow

• • •

I've got one of these for my black MacBook. I also lusted after that BlackBook for quite a while. I'm considering a MacBook Pro, but my wife's been eyeing my sleek black machine. Maybe I'll buy *her* the MacBook Pro! :)

OWC also makes a small, clear enclosure for 2.5-inch SATA hard drives. I like them because you can see the drive installed inside. It has a built-in heat sink and tiny rubber feet on the bottom. Great for backing up photos while traveling.

—Grover Watson

• • •

There are several vendors making colored shells for the current MacBook Pro lineup. I have a black satin shell from Speck Products on my 17″ MacBook Pro. Note that the smaller

your MacBook Pro, the better the color selection; the only colors Speck offers for 17″ are clear and black satin. :(

—John

> I received a clear Speck shell from the gentleman I purchased my BlackBook from, but I don't use it because I don't like the glossy slickness of it. I much prefer the feel of the BlackBook's native exterior.
>
> I'd missed the news of their Satin line, however, and these look like just the thing I would buy were I to step up to an aluminum MacBook in the future. Thanks for pointing them out!
> *—Christopher Turner*

How To: Networking

I generally recommend any router capable of running DD-WRT firmware. Bridging multiple routers, setting up hotspots, adding USB file storage, and extending the range of the router is all very easy to accomplish. Plus, the interface is the same regardless of which router you have.

I also generally recommend an expandable NAS in place of a Time Capsule since those don't contain nearly enough storage to accommodate Time Machine backups for several systems, as well as an entire digital library of CDs, DVDs, photos, movies, and other files.

Apple makes nice products, but they are definitely not "one size fits all."

—John

> You raise some valid issues. I hope to address some of them in future articles. Each of the issues that you mentioned, along with other issues such as wireless security, could be separate articles in their own right. I recently became aware of the DD-WRT firmware but haven't taken enough time to really become familiar with it just yet.
>
> You are also correct in that the Time Capsule is not right for everyone. Its firewall, for example, might not be adequate for some applications. In my case the Time Capsule replaced a NAS that went bad on short notice. Although my 2 TB model isn't full, I have a USB hub attached with additional hard drivers that are used for backup.
> *—Sylvester Roque*

MacMuser: …001 a Space Odd…

To be fair, Windows must run on a wide range of hardware from a multiverse of manufacturers, and an endless range of internal and external attachments. Apple has the advantage of hardware control, so an OS installation should be quite straight-forward. That said, you forgot to mention the absolute horror of updates, service packs, and patches that must follow the initial Windows installation. I've recently restored XP Pro to a few (elderly) friends and found the online download and install process can add several hours to the

process. And as you mentioned, one cannot simply leave the machine: one must "attend" to click the various menu acknowledgments.

Infuriating, simply infuriating!

—Gray

OmniFocus, TaskPaper, and Things

I know it's been a while since this review was written, but thanks for the incredibly comprehensive review. Very impressive—and very helpful in my decision process. Much appreciated.

—Chris

Size Really Matters

I don't understand why the iPad does not have a built-in cell phone with a Bluetooth detachable earpiece and a detachable bluetooth camera that automatically stores the pictures on the iPad as they are taken. Both would charge when plugged into (mated) with the iPad. Plus, the camera could be placed across the room and operated from the iPad or independently by itself or while mated to the iPad.

—Charles Rafalaf

> The iPad simply isn't intended to be a phone any more than a laptop computer is. However, there's already an application you can put on an iPad and an iPhone to use the iPhone's camera wirelessly on the iPad via either Bluetooth or WiFi.
>   —Lee Bennett

Apple Keyboard

I actually just bought this keyboard so that I could use my MacBook Pro in clamshell mode with an external monitor and my Magic Mouse.

This keyboard mimics the MacBook Pro's keyboard remarkably well, and that just so happens to be the best keyboard I've ever used. I used to swear by IBM ThinkPad keyboards before I discovered Apple's first on my PowerBook G4, then taken to the next level with my MacBook and MacBook Pro.

But by any standards, this keyboard is flawless. The size and functionality of a desktop keyboard with the feel of Apple's notebook keyboards. I was hesitant to spend $49 on a keyboard, but I knew from experience that, with Apple, you get what you pay for.

I only wish they made the full size keyboard with numeric keypad as a wireless model.

—Michael

We'd love to hear your thoughts about our publication. We always welcome your comments, criticisms, suggestions, and praise. Or, if you have an opinion or announcement about the Macintosh platform in general, that's OK too. Send your e-mail to editor@atpm.com. All mail becomes the property of ATPM *and may be edited for publication.*

A Fine Pair of Dragons

Dragon Dictation is 100% accurate nearly every time and far better than the iPhone's built-in speech recognition. Its sibling, Dragon Search, uses the power of Dragon Dictate to search Google (or Yahoo), YouTube, Twitter, iTunes, and Wikipedia. But let me digress a moment.

Back in the last century, Apple paid me to evangelise at a local PC World. The Mac mini had just come out, and I spent most of my time convincing people that what they thought was a power supply (like on the PCs) was actually the computer.

One punter, who worked on an oil rig, had me demonstrate the Mac mini, PowerBook, and iMac, and promptly ordered two of each. I wasn't there to sell, and nor apparently were PC World because they had none in stock according to their salesperson.

Alongside my Mac aisle was a guy from IBM who was demonstrating ViaVoice, which he made look easy as he dictated in his South African accent. Everything he said appeared on screen. He gave me a copy, and for the next month I spent hours training the software and trying to use it.

It was a complete flop as far as I was concerned until I tried to speak with an "accent." My "Australian" seemed to be the best, rising inflexions and pronunciations copied off *Neighbours* went straight into ViaVoice, which understood them immediately.

With Dragon Dictation, I expected the worst so my first sentence was: "I bet you are a pile of crud and won't understand anything I say."

What I got was: "I bet you are a pile of crowd and won't understand a word I say." The rough language went but the apostrophe was in.

I continued: "Blimey you're actually going to be useful I don't know whether I'll ever do any, oh bollox what am I going to dictate?"

The result: "Blimey you're actually going to be useful I don't know whether I'll ever do any of blocks what am I going to dictate."

This is pretty darned good for zero training, no instructions, and a free app that will send the result to any of the text applications on an iPhone, or save to clipboard memory ready to paste where you want. Making changes and deleting is easy, too. Click on a word such as "block" and suggestions appear, top of which is "bollocks." Sweep from top to bottom to select and delete text.

From my experience with ViaVoice, I knew a little about dictating. My first piece of real testing was reading aloud and trying to get correct punctuation. Dragon Dictate automatically builds an understanding of the user's voice, which means it is important to correct mistakes.

Dragon Dictate is limited to 60 seconds of audio every time the recording button is pressed. This is a long time to dictate without a break, and successive 60-second spells can be added to each other. The support site explains it is to ensure accuracy. Plus, the iPhone 3GS's chip is a little slow for processing long batches of recording.

My experiment with a long piece of text is that it is easier to dictate than entering words using the iPhone's "keyboard" and more accurate, too. Punctuation is inserted by saying the punctuation mark needed such as: "ampersand," "comma," "new paragraph," "single quote," "open bracket."

Text can be adjusted if necessary via the "keyboard" or further dictation and then inserted into an e-mail or text message.

Dragon Search and Dragon Dictate worked almost flawlessly for me and have migrated to the home screen of my phone where they will be in daily use.

I would be really impressed if they could interpret speech when an insertion point is reached, such as clicking into the URL box in Safari and speaking the Web address. Isn't that what multitasking is supposed to bring?

MacMuser

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

Two Sides

The only reason my new employers use e-mail to send highly confidential documents—instead of faxing them—is because the facsimile machine had broken. No one could get the new one to work. When I started with the company a year ago, my employers were happy to send 50 pages of reports by fax. They thought it was safer and more secure because "The Internet" was open to anyone to read what you sent.

They are correct up to a point, but when the 50-page confidential fax gets delivered to the wrong number—wrong by only one mis-dialed digit—security has just gone out the window. Plus, the time it takes to send a fax meant we could lose the order because someone else had got in by e-mail before our fax had finished arriving. Finally, requests for our services also contain highly personal details but are sent to us by e-mail. We know our customers have reconciled themselves to the insecurities of the Internet.

With the fax fixed, it is now mainly used to send time-sheets for the agency workers in the office and to receive junk faxes. The latter killed fax transmission for my own business in the late 1990s. We got fed up with getting long, unsolicited junk faxes, and nothing seemed to stop them from coming through. Not even the Fax Preference Service or telephoning the senders and threatening them with dire consequences or telling them which part of their anatomy we will shove their fax up.

Meanwhile, the amount of paper generated by our office hasn't declined in the slightest. It is all very well keeping documents in electronic formats, but at some point they have to be printed. This has shifted from producer to consumer. In exactly the same way as I am sending 50-page e-mails for others to print off, they are doing the same to me.

Every switched-on household in the U.K. has had to suffer this. Our banks and utility suppliers brag about how many trees they are saving when they issue us paperless bills and bank statements. That's as much bollocks as their reasoning why they pay themselves enormous bonuses to reward the huge financial mess they have left the world in.

All they have done is moved the burden to the customers. My shopping list regularly contains "ream of A4 paper." Who, five years ago, would have expected supermarkets to sell paper—let alone inkjet cartridges, memory sticks, blank CDs, and DVDs? Nowadays our local Waitrose has an aisle devoted to them.

The industry I have just left (temporarily I hope)—design, printing, and publishing—used to take the stick for creating unnecessary paper. Right-thinking but misguided clients started to demand recycled paper, never thinking about the amount of bleach needed to make used

paper white again. They moaned about the quality of the printing on the expensive, inferior stock that couldn't take an image as well as a coated paper. We eventually got them to reconsider recycled and instead go for paper from renewable sources with a high-recycled rag and pulp content. Ordinary paper, in other words. Or bite the bullet and spend a fortune on high-quality wood-free stock.

Yet those same clients never thought about the reams of paper their photocopiers churned through, none recycled and most from often-dubious sources. All printed on one side of the page even though most output devices can duplex.

The National Association of Paper Merchants even introduced an initiative in 2007 that it calls "Two Sides." It is the association's attempt to change the perception of the paper industry and especially to counteract the environmental lobby's stance against the paper industry.

One thing is for sure. Even though it has have suffered a huge downturn in the recession and bad debts from printers, the paper industry is in good shape. The days of a paperless office seem further away than ever.

Heather Sitarzewski, Graphic Designer

Heather Sitarzewski is a graphic designer by day and all around artsy/creative the rest of her waking hours. She loves using found, recycled, and repurposed materials in projects and is always looking for ways to take the mundane and transform it into pretty and purposeful. She lives in Thornton, CO with her husband and son.

Heather was kind enough to sit down with Christopher Turner for a chat.

ATPM: When did you begin using the Mac?

Heather Sitarzewski: Around 1990 or 1991.

ATPM: You're a graphic designer by profession. Did you receive any formal training, or are you self-taught?

HS: I received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Old Dominion. However, my computer knowledge and usage was completely self-taught. I had a very traditional design professor who viewed the computer as any other tool. He showed us the basics (turning it on and starting an application), but figuring out to use the applications and how to use it to create designs was up to me.

ATPM: What are your current computing tools?

HS: I have a desktop Mac Pro (Quad Core, 2.8 GHz, 12 GB RAM, etc.). I use Adobe's Creative Suite 4 (including Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign).

We recently purchased an iPad, and I'm having a great time exploring all the different apps available and discovering new ways to use it. The SketchBook Pro app is amazing and so fun to play with. It's also handy to have as a photo gallery to showcase additional work available while I'm out and about.

And I have an iPhone that I use for correspondence, checking e-mails, taking pictures of new ideas I come across, and the impromptu look up on the Web or note taking.

Cake made for Heather's son's sixth birthday.

ATPM: Have you designed anything professionally that our readers might recognize?

HS: Texas readers may see some of my work at local grocery stores like the [Tom Thumb](#) food chains (look for Dr. Pepper floor displays and giveaways). I've also designed several food packagings like Magic Milk Mix, Golden Bowl products, and a few wine labels. If you've ever been in a Walmart or Costco during demo (sampling) events you may have seen my signage and taken home one of the brochures I created.

I've done brochures and other collateral for Qwest, and some displays at the Texas State Fair. And back in the day, if you used time tracking software like Timeslips, [TimeSheet](#), or Carpe Diem, I created the packaging, literature, and program graphics.

ATPM: Anyone who's read your [blog](#) knows you're a "crafty" gal. Have you always been a hands-on arts-and-crafts creator?

HS: *Yes!* I can't remember a time in my life that I wasn't creating something. I spent hour upon hour in my room as a child coloring, illustrating books, making doll clothes, doll furniture out of cardboard boxes and other found objects (i.e., trash), and any other pretty thing that struck my fancy. I even added a craft store I called, "Gaines Gift Shoppe" (Gaines was the name of the street I lived on) to my lemonade stand when I was about ten. I made small trinkets.

It's been much the same ever since. I've experimented with a wide variety of mediums, including stained glass, sculpture, printing, found object art, photography, handmade gifts, sewing, jewelry making and accessories, and home decor. I love staying on top of current trends and am still a sucker for sparkly, pretty things that strike my fancy.

Making Trails

ATPM: How do you use your Mac in your crafts creation?

HS: I do a lot of my research via the Internet for ideas, color palettes, textures, collages, and other sources of inspiration. I do most of my graphic design work, which includes layout, printing, scanning, drawing with Adobe Illustrator, retouching photos in Photoshop, and a host of other techniques.

I also use Blogger for my blog hosting and use Twitter, Facebook, and other social media vehicles for networking and staying up-to-date on current trends.

ATPM: You've done three covers for ATPM (for which we are grateful). We traditionally don't do theme issues and give our artists free reign (within the scope of Mac-related and family-friendly) on their cover art. What inspired each of these?

HS:

March 2010

This one is easy. The Disney/Tim Burton version of Alice in Wonderland came out in March, and I was (am) completely obsessed with the movie. The Caterpillar was on my mind and made me think of a worm in an apple. Then I kind of did a mashup of the caterpillar with a Cheshire grin and his teeth made me think of a bite out of the Apple (logo) so it just all fit.

June 2009

It was "springish," and I was a little wrapped up in simple tree images, though I don't recall exactly why now. It just made me think of a grove of apple trees and the sunrise behind one lone apple on the ground making it glow.

If memory serves me correctly, Christopher Reeve had recently passed away. It was a tribute to "old classics."

ATPM: For those who don't know you, you're a real Disney freak, and it's come across in some of your creations. How did this obsession begin?

HS: I have always enjoyed Disney art and movies, but in 1991, when I was in college working in a computer lab (and totally loving using the computer in art), Beauty and the Beast was released in November. It was one of my favorite stories as a little girl so I was excited for the Disney version. The ballroom scene was completely computer generated. It was the first time anything like that had been done, and I absolutely fell in love with it.

Not only was it amazing technology for the time, but the possibilities it opened up seemed to be endless. I became instantly obsessed with all things relating to the movie and began collecting Beauty and the Beast memorabilia. I was so dedicated to it that in 1997, at a Disney Store for the second or third time in a week, an employee (or Cast Member, as they're called) recognized me and said, "You should get a job here. You'd get a discount on all the merchandise." So I did, loved it, and worked for the Disney Store for eight years!

Now I spend as much time as possible visiting Disneyland and Disney World. I've even made it to Disneyland Paris. Tokyo DisneySea and the cruises are next! The parks fuel me in a way I can't explain. Being there is truly magical, and I love the art and innovation that make those places run!

ATPM: What other creative sources inspire you?

HS: Wow. . .what doesn't inspire me? Children's books, hardware stores, thrift stores, craft stores, craft fairs, farmers' markets, Halloween, music, things in nature, my son, talking with friends, dreams I have. . .there's so much in the world, it's hard to make a list. I am constantly amazed at where inspiration comes from. I'm very open and love to look at things in ways they perhaps aren't usually seen. I constantly ask "what *could* this be" and look past what it is.

Happy Meal Ornaments

ATPM: It's no secret that creative types are drawn to the Mac. As a designer, if you were turned loose on the Mac interface, what's the number one thing you'd tackle?

HS: You know, one of the best things about using and working on a Mac is it allows me to *not* think about the interface. I've worked on Macs since about System 6 or 7, and

with each upgrade, new machine, new program, I've only needed to take a few moments to adjust to any new features before I'm back into my work.

It's more about what I can create with it, and not so much about how it looks. I love that the usability and interface is intuitive and fits how I think. It leaves me with the creative energy to do my work and not worry about what's not working. It just works and I love it!

ATPM: Heather, thanks so much for allowing our readers to get to know you better.

HS: Thanks again for inviting me to do this! This was fun!

Copyright © 2010 Christopher Turner. You can find Heather online through her portfolio site: hsitarzewski.com, blog: www.hsitarzewski.blogspot.com, Etsy store: Art Junkie Designs, and on Twitter: @TorreyBelle.

Life With an EeePC and Ubuntu Linux

I love my Mac laptops. I really do. They have everything that's great about a Mac: rock-solid Unix back end, Apple front end, great hardware with solid industrial design and build quality, and of course all the software I need. I don't know where I'd be without it.

But they're also kind of heavy: 5.2 pounds for my white 13″ MacBook, and almost 6 pounds for my 15.2″ aluminum MacBook Pro (after wireless-mouse USB adapter and cellular Internet card).

Ordinarily that's no big deal. I mean, five pounds for the known universe at your fingertips at all times? But I've spent much of the last year traveling for work, by plane, and currently I believe all of the domestic airlines are colluding to make life as miserable as possible for frequent fliers. I've been traveling for a week at a stretch with only a 20″ carry-on suitcase and small travel briefcase, and for trips in September I'm trying to get the packing list down to just the Tom Bihn Tri-Star.

Every pound and every inch counts. Your shoulders feel every ounce when you're running the length of the terminal at Denver International Airport or just walking six blocks to catch the Amtrak in Baltimore; even setting aside weight, the 15-inch laptop has to go in a larger briefcase than the 13-inch one.

I am here to tell you that it's possible to slim down. But there's no such thing as a free lunch. The answer was an ASUS EeePC netbook.

You can't even see the EeePC in my briefcase! It's in the back pocket. This very fancy Tumi briefcase is terrific, and was bought on sale for about $100. Its only flaw is that I grimace every time it gets scraped against a wall, or shoved into something, at the airport or on the train.

Tightly packed suitcase, ready for lightweight travel. Highly recommended: TravelPro Crew 7. You can probably find this on sale; like cars, I believe it is the end of the model year for Crew 7.

The Netbook, Considered

All along I've been skeptical of the whole netbook wave for a few reasons. So it surprised me that I was really shopping for netbooks last fall.

First: Emphasis in netbooks is on portability, period. In 2007 that meant compromises that I wasn't willing to consider. The EeePC is a PC, of course, and it's one with a low-powered CPU and limited RAM to boot. The original 700-series models had a 2–4 GB hard drive, a ridiculous 7-inch 800×480 display, a 900 MHz CPU, and a funky custom Linux user interface. And most of the other PC netbook vendors (HP, Dell, Acer) were just selling small, cheap PC laptops, not anything I would have recognizably called a netbook. Turns out, modern netbooks are basically very small laptops, and although I use the term "netbook," I think it's a bit of a misnomer.

Second: When I'm at home or at work, I live on the software that makes a Macintosh a Mac: the Adobe Creative Suite, Excel, Entourage, NetNewsWire, Aperture…the list goes on. It was the awfulness of Photoshop 5 and Quark 4 for Windows that pushed me into the arms of my first Mac all those years ago, and I've never looked back.

Third: My experience with PC laptops has been terrible. I was the first Mac user in my extended family, and now they almost all have Macs, mostly because of their experiences with their own PC laptops (and my experience fixing and troubleshooting them). At the

very pinnacle of PC laptops, the Sony VAIO and IBM/Lenovo ThinkPads, they have excellent build quality but strange software and weird hardware decisions. (What *is* it with ThinkPads and the keyboard pointer?) And further on down the quality curve, you get rattly Dells, HPs with squishy cases, and universally bad keyboards and annoying trackpads.

But I did some hard thinking about all of this. My circumstances are a little unusual: when I'm on the road, I am not doing my day job; I'm doing tech support and training. All the enterprise software we use runs either in Citrix or using a Web browser. So essentially, I was hauling around 6 pounds of modern Mac—2.2 GHz CPU, 4 GB of RAM, 15″ LCD display—when my Micron desktop from 1999 would've done, with the internals crammed into a laptop case.

ASUS EeePC 1005HA

So in December I took the plunge and bought an ASUS EeePC for about $300. It's the 1005HA model, to be specific; typical of PC makers, there have been several new releases with inscrutable models since then. It barely tips the scale at 3.2 pounds, and has a 10-inch diagonal screen, a 160 GB hard drive, and a battery that is so far averaging 6 hours of life with WiFi and 9 hours with Ethernet. That's actually turned out to be *more* than I need to travel.

Before I bought, I did some shopping around, and I had to refamiliarize myself with the PC landscape. There are other excellent-sounding netbooks, particularly the HP Mini series, but I went with ASUS mainly because they basically invented the genre. I've used a co-worker's Mini 10, and it's also a good little netbook. A lot of the others seemed like the PC-laptop scene circa 10 years ago: the Dells felt cheap, and the Sony looked and felt weird.

I'm not giving up my Mac laptops anytime soon. One is on my desk at the other side of the room, while I write this article, and another is in my briefcase. After a long stretch with the netbook, I sigh with relief when I open my Mac and see the familiar, comfortable, pleasant interface.

But my travel bag is three pounds lighter, and the EeePC is scarcely visible in the laptop pocket of my briefcase. You don't even see it in the photo I included above. That's how much of a size difference we're talking about.

And I have to say, things have worked out great. I am here to tell you that this can be done. But you have to know what you're getting yourself into.

What This Article Isn't

I am not going to write you a guide to switching to Linux. First of all, I haven't done it; and second of all, I am not at all persuaded (unlike [Mark Pilgrim](#)) that it is a suitable operating system for casual use.

Some of this could be tone: advocates have long said, "You can run it on any old PC!" Although true, "a Ford Pinto can run this software" is not exactly a selling point for me.

But another portion of me believes it to be true. Google Docs and OpenOffice.org are not replacements for Microsoft Office. There is no replacement even worth mentioning for InDesign. Many of us use so-called enterprise software, or funky bits of software on our personal computers, that makes it hard to imagine getting by without it.

So this article is more a story of how I use my EeePC netbook when I am traveling and don't want to lug the heavy aluminum laptop across a continent. For personal travel this is a no-brainer—in fact, much of this article is about how to use a netbook for business travel.

In addition, this is not a guide to running OS X on your netbook, period, full stop. I am aware that it is possible to do this, because OS X runs on Intel processors. But if you do this, there's a good chance that things won't work or work sporadically, because Apple only supports the hardware they put in their own units. In addition, the methods that I have seen advertised for installing OS X on an Intel-based PC stand a good chance of being a violation of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act. The legal implications are murky. I have not tried and cannot recommend this route. Unlike on a real Mac, and unlike running Linux or Windows XP on your PC, things will not Just Work—the hallmark of a Macintosh.

Compromises

The Operating System, Part I

Until Apple releases a netbook (don't hold your breath) all that is on the market are PCs. And the emphasis is on inexpensive and portable in this sector. So remember that you are not going to get high-end Jonathan Ive design, nor will you get custom media-management software built into your OS, like when you buy a Mac. If that's important to you, and/or money is no object, buy a MacBook Air.

At the same time, you do not have to live with Windows. The minute I got the EeePC out of the box, I installed Ubuntu Netbook Remix on it. To unpack that, Ubuntu is a Linux distribution, and the Netbook Remix has a graphical user interface customized for wide, short, lower-resolution displays. There are a lot of netbook Linux distributions out there, in fact. It is astonishing how much more human the entire Linux ecosystem is today than it was a decade ago.

A lot of you, when you saw the word "Linux" in this graf, probably tuned me out and went back to YouTube, or whatever. But let me tell you this. In 2001, just installing

Linux at all meant repartitioning your hard drive from the command line. If you wanted a graphical user interface (gasp!) you had to be prepared to deal with configuration files for an incredibly complicated server-client system called the X Window System. You had to use the back pages of the manuals that came with your video card and your monitor to get X Window to output the right display resolution and refresh rate, and to figure out what graphics processing the card was capable of. It took me days of tinkering to get my dial-up modem to connect to my ISP. The scroll wheel on my mouse never did work.

Today, you run an installer to get a disk image onto a CD or a 1 GB USB memory stick (the hardest part!) and boot the computer into the Linux installer. It almost immediately comes up with a graphical installer. You can drag around your partitions and even shrink the Windows partition that is preinstalled on your netbook. In about 20 minutes, you're rebooting into Ubuntu. The only thing that didn't work is the function keys (volume, etc.), and a little Google research fixed that.

Virtually everything you will need for a netbook is built into the 700 MB Ubuntu disk image: Firefox for Web browsing, Evolution for (most) e-mail, OpenOffice.org for word processing and spreadsheets. The EeePC has a webcam and microphone, so I installed Skype. You can install Tweetdeck, and the installer actually takes care of installing the Flash Player and Adobe AIR for you, if you don't have it already.

In the beginning that's most of what I needed.

There are still some things that could use work about Ubuntu...I spent a lot of time reading the Ubuntu Netbook Remix's Wiki page to review compatibility issues, or Googling "ubuntu eeepc [whatever]" to find a solution to a problem. The Flash player is really slow. The open-source Silverlight replacement is unusable. And the notification system (like Growl, but un-disable-able) makes me want to scream every time I get a pop-up notification.

Could my mom use it? No. (Longtime readers will know that's often my barrier to entry.) At least, I don't think my mom could use it without getting me on the phone regularly to ask why something doesn't work. But you're reading this article, so in 2010, Linux on a netbook is within your bounds.

I would not have said that in 2001.

The Operating System, Part 2

It's certainly possible to use Windows on your netbook. I am not going to recommend this or tell you how to do it, because (a) it would be hypocritical of me; (b) Windows is preinstalled on basically every computer without an Apple logo; and (c) Windows is a total waste of the limited resources of your netbook. Microsoft has been designing user interfaces for bigger and bigger displays for years (like Apple!), so unsurprisingly I found Windows XP to be totally unsuitable for the 1,024×600 resolution of the EeePC.

But you may find using Windows to be better, or take less effort at least. For instance, at work we upgraded our e-mail system from Microsoft Exchange Server 2003 to Exchange Server 2007, and Evolution does not support Exchange 2007. (More on this later.) Perhaps

you need to use an enterprise application that relies on the Microsoft Silverlight plug-in; or the infernal Nortel VPN system, which I could barely get to work on my Mac before my employer replaced it with Cisco; or some random piece of hardware that isn't supported by Linux.

There is always Windows. I left 20 GB for it on my EeePC. I have not yet booted into it.

Living With the Netbook

Remember when I said, "In the beginning, that's most of what I needed"? That was true at first. But I found that I had needs beyond that. To use the netbook as my only computer for any length of time, there was still some customization and software-finding I had to do.

The hardest thing for me has been remembering to hit the Control key, in fact. This is already a problem for me: at work I juggle a Mac desktop keyboard, my laptop's keyboard, and PC keyboards in the training room, and at home I have a different Mac keyboard. On the EeePC the Control key is even *further* to the left, at the spot where the Fn key is on my Mac, which is to say that it is three keys too far over. With Linux it's probably possible to swap these keys, but I am wary of the text on the keys not matching its functions.

So. You want to use this computer, eh?

User Interface

As I mentioned before, I use a sub-distribution of Ubuntu Linux called Ubuntu Netbook Remix. It has a user interface that has been specially customized for the small, unusually-proportioned screens on netbooks.

The principal difference is that the conventional Ubuntu menu bar across the top of the screen with a launch menu (similar to Classic Mac OS, actually) is replaced with a launch menu that, when clicked on, takes over the entire screen, with a left pane of application categories and a right pane of applications.
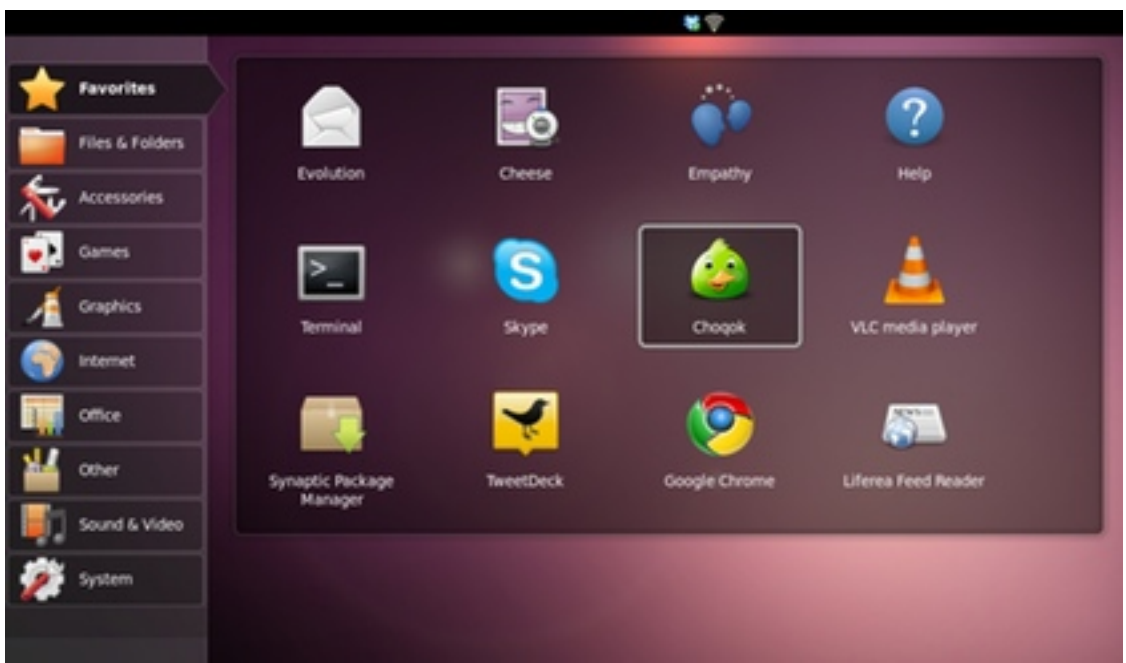
The Ubuntu main menu takes over the entire screen, rather than dropping down on top of the screen's contents in a conventional user interface. In a way, this is more like the iOS method of launching applications than a traditional operating system.

One problem with this is that Ubuntu's graphical user interface is built on top of something called GNOME. As a brief foray into the Linux world's endless politics, there are two desktops for Linux, GNOME and KDE. They operate somewhat differently, but at their core the reason there are two is this: GNOME is part of the GNU project, which builds software with the GNU Public License (GPL), and GNU has a very strong ideological bent about software and freedom. KDE uses a license called the Lesser GNU Public License (GPL), a kind of compromise license that allows organizations to build non-free software on top of it. For what it's worth, Mac OS X is built on top of the Berkeley Software Distribution, a kind of competing Unix, which is licensed with a *much* more permissive license known as the BSD license.

So although the Ubuntu user interface itself has been optimized for netbooks, and many applications either have also been or play nice when maximized, some applications and notably most dialog boxes and configuration wizards are too deep for the screen. Fixing this is annoying and is probably the single most aggravating thing I spend my time dealing with in Ubuntu.

The other result of this is that Linux applications have a comically variant look and feel. It is absolutely nothing like using a Mac. GNOME applications look one way; KDE applications look different (it is possible to run KDE applications in GNOME); and applications that have cross-platform code bases often look *completely* different, like Firefox and Eclipse.

If you're interested in trying something even more unconventional, Ubuntu's KDE-based brother, Kubuntu, also has a netbook-optimized sub-distribution (Kubuntu Netbook Edition). It has a desktop with active widgets like the Android OS, a retracting panel for launching applications like the Mac OS X Dock, and a Spotlight-like interface for finding and running applications. I've been curious to try it but reluctant to mess with a setup that works.

Software

Installing software is a breeze. It's not quite as easy as Mac OS X's drag-and-drop method, but it's on par with Windows. Better still, like the iPhone and iPad, there is a kind of App Store for Linux, called the Ubuntu Software Center, maintained by the company that owns/maintains/sponsors Ubuntu. (I am not going to delve into the theology of Linux in this article, but if you're curious, read Eric S. Raymond's The Cathedral and the Bazaar. Also on my list of recommended reading, even for Mac users, is Neal Stephenson's terrific In the Beginning was the Command Line.)

Here is a list of what I use on my Mac, and what I have found or done to replace it on my netbook:

- **Web browser.** Mac: OmniWeb. Ubuntu: Google Chrome.

  Why: Firefox feels slow and bloated on this fairly slow computer. I have to use it for some things (notably launching Citrix apps), but Chrome is much, much faster. You can use the Ubuntu Software Center to install Chromium, which is the open-source base of Chrome, but I didn't.

- **E-mail.** Mac: Mail (MobileMe), Entourage (Exchange). Ubuntu: Web browser tabs.

  Why: Evolution is a middling e-mail client, but it performs poorly on Apple's IMAP servers, and was always slow at best with Exchange 2003. But the final nail in the coffin was that the version that ships with Ubuntu 10.04 (2.28) does not support Exchange 2007. It is possible to manually upgrade Evolution, with the appropriate amount of command-line mojo, and then to add a very-difficult-to-install plug-in called evolution-mapi. Evolution will then crash fairly regularly. I found this annoying, suffice it to say.

  There are lots of other e-mail clients, but the MobileMe Webmail is pretty good. Microsoft cripples Outlook Web Access for non–Internet Explorer users, but OWA 2007 is better than OWA 2003. Microsoft supposedly supports the full version of OWA in Firefox with Exchange 2010, but it's 2010 and my employer just upgraded to Exchange 2007. I anticipate a lengthy wait.

- **VoIP.** Both platforms: Skype. With earlier versions of Ubuntu, I had a hard time with Skype, but with the latest version as of this writing (10.04) it works like magic.

- **Twitter.** Mac: Tweetie. Ubuntu: TweetDeck.

Why: There's not a native client for Linux that even *remotely* resembles the polish of Tweetie. I've tried everything I can find. TweetDeck is not necessarily a best-in-breed Twitter client, but it maximizes well on my small screen, it supports URL-shortening and photo-upload services, and installing Adobe AIR and TweetDeck was a cinch, just a couple of clicks.

- **Text editor.** Mac: TextMate. Ubuntu: GEdit.

Why: TextMate is wonderful. It feels more OS X–like than BBEdit (which is a much older codebase) and has terrific bundle and plug-in support. But with Linux and text editing, we step into a three-decade holy war between the partisans of an editor called vim and an editor called emacs. They are both primarily command-line editors, although both have visual interfaces, and they are incredibly complex in the way that text-editing software for techies developed in the late 80s should be. But you're new to Linux and you shouldn't need what Neal Stephenson infamously described as "thermonuclear" text-editing software.

GEdit is the GNOME interface's text editor. It is not bad. It's not particularly full-featured, not particularly pretty, and not particularly fast. But it supports all the familiar keyboard shortcuts you know from using a Mac.

(Note: I use an editor called Redcar, which aims to support TextMate's bundles. But if you are not a bundle addict, it's not worth the effort. Configuration is controlled by text files, and installing it requires more command-line expertise than the average Mac user will have. If you are comfortable in the Terminal, you could try this.)

- **Word processor.** Mac: Microsoft Word. Ubuntu: OpenOffice.org Word Processor, or Google Docs.

Why: I have to be able to exchange files via e-mail with my colleagues. You will have the occasional font issues (all of the names are different), but we already have this problem at work, between Mac users with Office 2004 and some Windows users with Office 2003 and some with Office 2007. So this may not be a crisis. If you are an executive, a lawyer, or a proofreader, the combination of fonts, possible size/page numbering discrepancies and the absence of Track Changes may cause you trouble. So far it has not been a problem for me.

Also worth note is that the OpenOffice.org interface is *much* too large for a netbook screen. Surely someone is working on this. You will have to grin and bear it.

You can try Google Docs if you are just writing for yourself, or you are already accustomed to it. I found that it did a poor job of importing the files I received and an insufficient job of exporting the files I wrote (plus time wasted exporting them) for what I needed.

- **Spreadsheets.** Mac: Microsoft Excel. Ubuntu: Wait until I get home.

Why: OpenOffice.Org Spreadsheet is not bad, but it is too slow, and ever so slightly too unfamiliar, for me to do any real data-crunching; I found myself grinding my teeth. Your mileage may vary.

- **News reading.** Mac: NetNewsWire. Ubuntu: Liferea Feed Reader, or a Web browser tab.

  Why: You could just open a Google Reader tab in Chrome. In fact, I sometimes do this. But Liferea synchronizes with Google Reader just like NetNewsWire does. So if I want something that runs in the background, like when I'm at my hotel in the morning reading news and killing time, I will use Liferea.

- **VPN client.** Mac: Cisco VPN client. *Not* the built-in OS X one; for some reason, that doesn't work for me. Ubuntu: Built-in VPN client.

  Why: There is really no other option, other than a Cisco VPN plug-in for the Linux networking system. This is surprisingly well-integrated into the interface, almost as well as OS X's built-in VPN software. (Yes, the one that does not work for me.) Be forewarned that there is a good chance your corporate IT department will refuse to support this, or even pretend it is not possible to do.

- **Photos.** Mac: Aperture. Ubuntu: Wait until I get home.

  Why: I have an Eye-Fi, and it automatically pipes the photos to Flickr via my hotel's WiFi. I don't generally need instant access to the digital copy when I'm on the road; I just want to get the photos downloaded so I can clear off the card, or post them on Twitter, or whatever. When I get home, I dump the photos into Aperture.

  Worth noting that I also am really terrible about remembering to take photos. If you are a real shutterbug and shoot hundreds of photos a day, the Eye-Fi is probably going to annoy the living daylights out of you. It is finicky in combination with my Nikon D40 and times out during transfers. But it's usually fine for my volume of photos.

  (Aside #1: I'm cheating here—this might be more complicated for you than it is for me. Many Eye-Fi cards require a conventional wireless network, and in a hotel, you often have to log in or agree, and the EyeFi can't connect to these. However, the Eye-Fi Pro supports ad-hoc networks. So I just publish an ad-hoc network from my EeePC.)

  (Aside #2: If you don't want to buy an Eye-Fi, or if it's unsuitable for you, or whatever, you could just download the photos and put them in any Dropbox folder and then pick them up when you get home. I have not tried this.)

- **Web development software.** Mac: MAMP, Sequel Pro, Flash Builder. Ubuntu: Installed Apache, PHP, MySQL, and PHPMyAdmin separately; downloaded and installed Adobe Flex SDK.

  Why: On my Mac laptops, I don't like leaving Apache and MySQL running in the background. Server processes take up RAM and CPU cycles even when I am not using them. So I like MAMP because I can start the servers when I need them, and stop them when I don't. However, this does not seem to be an issue on Ubuntu. It is possible to stop and start them whenever you want, but I don't bother.

Worth noting that Adobe actually does have an alpha release for Linux of the Flex plugin for the Eclipse IDE. But on the occasions when I have attempted to use Eclipse on my EeePC, the entire computer has basically come to a halt. I can do the MXML and ActionScript (minus code hinting) in Redcar.

- **File synchronization.** Dropbox.

  Why: There are probably lots of choices here, but Dropbox was the first provider I encountered with a native Linux client and Mac client that supported synchronizing folders. It works great!

Odds and Ends

When you have four computers, you quickly discover that there are some things about all of them that you like and dislike. I wish my 13″ MacBook had key backlighting. (Yeah, I know, it's from 2007. I know the new unibody 13″ MacBook Pro does. Still not buying a new computer.)

My favorite thing about the netbook is that I have only rebooted it two or three times. You just don't need to, with Linux. And when I do reboot it, it takes scarcely any time to reboot. It is the only computer I have ever owned that can last an entire day of flying without a charge.

(Again: Yes, I could replace my Mac laptops and then I would get better battery life. But that's missing the point of this article. Besides, I don't have any say in when the work Mac gets replaced. Welcome to Corporate America.)

There are some things which I don't particularly like but have come to live with about my EeePC and Ubuntu.

- The trackpad is terrible. It has this weird bumpy surface that is otherwise flush with the case, and that took me weeks to get used to. The button is weird and clicky, and although there is only one button, it senses whether you are clicking on the left or right side of the button for left- and right-click. Because of my many years of using Macs, I am in the habit of clicking in the middle of the button, and this has wildly inconsistent results. Also, the trackpad doesn't support the vertical/horizontal scroll gestures I am pretty accustomed to. So that gets old.

- It only has a VGA port, and only supports VGA output at 1,024×768, at least in Linux. I've been told that in Windows it can go higher. Either way: how much could it possibly have cost to put a DVI port on this instead? Really? Even the HP Mini 210, which claims a "720p HD display," uses VGA out! To run a projector or use any relatively modern monitor, I have to carry a VGA-to-DVI adapter. I bought this thing in 2009, not 2004, guys.

- My 1005HA model EeePC doesn't have Bluetooth. I miss my Magic Mouse from home, and even more acutely my fancy, ergonomic, six-million-button Logitech Bluetooth mouse, when I am on the road.

- With earlier versions of Ubuntu, the headphone jack didn't correctly sense whether a headset had plugged been in and, you know, mute the speakers. I accidentally woke up the passenger next to me on the train from Los Angeles to Santa Barbara that way. I would not be surprised if this stopped working again in a later release; there are so many moving parts in Linux that the dependencies are impossibly complex. (One group maintains the Linux kernel, another maintains the Debian core that Ubuntu is built on, another maintains the Ubuntu software distribution, and a subgroup the Netbook Remix I use. Again, read "The Cathedral and the Bazaar.")

- No matter how many times I tell it not to, whenever I plug my iPhone in to charge it, the netbook asks me if I want to connect it to software to synchronize the music, photos, whatever. In April, I spent a week constantly clicking "Cancel" when I didn't take my iPhone's USB-to-AC adapter with me. I'd like to be able to travel with only the netbook's power brick and use the iPhone's dock connector cord and a mini-USB cord to power various devices. So far that's a pipe dream.

Why Not a Smaller Mac?

When people see me with the netbook and inquire if it's my primary computer, it usually leads to an interesting conversation about how I juggle multiple computers. And I've often been asked why I bought the EeePC and not a smaller Mac, so that I wouldn't have to juggle.

The short answer is, well, the 13″ MacBook is the smallest Apple gets, and it's not the right combination of light and small. The only computer that Apple sells that is sufficiently lightweight is the MacBook Air, and that's not exactly price-competitive with the $279 EeePC.

I am not going to pretend that it's *easy* juggling multiple computers. This article is all about *living with* a netbook and Ubuntu, not dying of the great joy of it.

Here's the longer answer. This is, at its end, a balancing act of cost, timing, and portability.

The EeePC set me back $279 plus sales tax. Now, at home I have a white 13″ MacBook from 2007, which weighs in at 5.2 pounds. This means it's only a half-pound lighter than my company's 15″ MacBook Pro, and, with no backlit keyboard and fewer USB ports, it's somewhat less travel-friendly to boot.

I could've bought a new MacBook, it's true. They're lighter, at 4.7 pounds. But the extra $700 or so seemed like a needless expense to spend when Ithildin II (my MacBook) didn't really *need* replacing yet. The new MacBooks are still more than a pound and a half heavier than my EeePC, to boot. I was not going to spend a cool G replacing a computer that otherwise will probably last me another two to three years, to shave off a half-pound?

If money had been no object, I would've bought the MacBook Air instead. It comes with roughly the same limitations as the EeePC (no DVD drive, etc) so I have joking referred

to it as the CEO's EeePC. It's a featherweight with a full-size keyboard, LED monitor, available with solid-state hard drive; but it also has a 1,280×800 display and can drive an external display up to 2,560×1,600. That's Apple for you.

But the MacBook Air is the CEO's EeePC for a reason. My EeePC cost roughly $1,500 less than the MacBook Air. For a *third* computer, that seems like a no-brainer.

If I still find myself hitting the road routinely when it comes time to replace my current Mac, maybe I'll buy a MacBook Air.

Why Not an iPad?

I have been asked, many, many, *many* times since the iPad was released in April why I have not bought one and retired the EeePC. Unlike the MacBook Air, the iPad is not totally out of the price neighborhood for an accessory computer. This comes up particularly often when people see me with the EeePC and my Amazon Kindle. After all, that's two devices, and a total of four pounds vs. just a pound and a half.

For some people, an iPad might not just be comparable but actually be the *better* choice. I'd love to carry one. They're beautiful, their battery life is comparable with the EeePC, and the OS and all the software is much more polished. It's an Apple product, for crying out loud.

But life just doesn't work out that way.

I need hardware keys, for instance, to be able to survive for more than a day or two. It's a running joke here at ATPM that I am extraordinarily long-winded. My fingertips hurt when I write too many e-mails on my iPhone. So now I am adding the keyboard, and we're back up to two devices. And using our Windows enterprise software in Citrix requires a mouse, which the iPad doesn't support.

I also love my Kindle. I've used iBooks on the iPad, and although I have nothing against it, it is not like reading a book. The magic of E-Ink displays (on the Kindle and Nook) is that they read basically like paper. It's an astonishing sensation. Reflective, backlit displays hurt your eyes in a way that the E-Ink display does not. Sure, iBooks is cooler and prettier, and the gestures are really impressive. But for long stretches of reading the eye strain concerns me.

Most importantly, I'm not a salesman or an executive. I don't sit in meetings, give presentations, or draw wireframes or flow charts on whiteboards when I travel for business. I need a computer with a conventional keyboard, mouse support, and a format that allows me to work upright, in a chair, at a cubicle for eight hours a day.

You probably don't need all of that.

So that's my tour of life with a netbook. I hope you have enjoyed it!

My $1,000 iPad Purchase Odyssey

I'm taking time out to share my iPad purchase story. My experiences in buying this device provide corroborating anecdotal evidence as to why I believe Apple will achieve $20 billion in revenue this quarter and blow away most revenue and earnings per share estimates.

My $1,000 iPad Purchase

At the end of that day, I had made a $1,000 iPad purchase (accoutrements and sales tax included). I spent $1,053.60, to be exact, and $960 before California sales tax was added. The pre-tax amount is a nice even number because Apple doesn't do the silly 99¢ thing on hardware devices. The purchase odyssey required an 85-mile round-trip trek along the highways and byways of southern California and visits to two extraordinarily busy Apple retail stores on a Sunday afternoon.

I have nothing against Best Buy *per se* and certainly not when the store is located conveniently in my home city of Santa Clarita. On this Sunday afternoon, the local store had the 64 GB Wi-Fi + 3G iPad in stock. It's not the model I wanted, and I was determined to purchase the desired iPad accoutrements at the same time. My list of accessories included the external keyboard, AppleCare, an additional power cable, and the Apple iPad case. I also wanted the 32 GB iPad and wasn't willing to fork over the additional $100 for the 64 GB model. Off to the Apple store in Glendale we went.

Glendale Apple Store

My wife and I arrived in Glendale about 3:30 PM to an absolutely packed store. Every digital device on display had someone tending to it, and every staff member was busy with at least one customer, with another waiting impatiently for her attention. The store also had absolutely no iPads in stock. Being the resourceful person she is, my wife grabbed the first seat that became available by a Mac on display, took out her iPhone, googled store numbers, and started making calls. The Best Buy in Burbank had no iPads in stock, the Best Buy in Santa Clarita still had the 64 GB model available, and the Sherman Oaks store had the 64 GB model in stock—but only if we hurried.

Not to leave the store empty-handed—and just in case the Best Buy in Santa Clarita was the only option remaining by the time we drove to Sherman Oaks—I bought all of the iPad accessories I wanted at the Glendale store. The accessories were easy to find. An available salesperson to handle the sales was the challenge. Finally, we got someone's attention. While processing the purchases, he recommended we get on the waiting list for an iPad purchase at the store. Estimated wait time was three weeks. I reluctantly signed up as the purchase mode of last resort. We made a beeline for Sherman Oaks. By the time we

made the 20-minute drive, I had already received my confirmation e-mail from Apple of my reservation at the store for the 32 GB iPad I wanted. I grumbled all the way to Sherman Oaks; I didn't want to spend the extra $100 for the 64 GB model, but I had resigned myself to that fate if I wanted the iPad that day.

The Sherman Oaks Apple Store

Similar to the Glendale store, the Sherman Oaks store was packed. Not a single device on display was unattended. We did quickly find a store staff member and explained to him we were told 64 GB iPads were available. As he went to check, I mentioned to him I really wanted the 32 GB model just in case one was available. A few minutes later, he came out from the back of the store with a 32 GB iPad and two small square boxes. He was intent on selling me MobileMe and AppleCare. I told him I had purchased AppleCare for the iPad in Glendale and had been a subscriber to MobileMe from its early days as a free service called iTools. He didn't want to relent. He said we could get a $30 discount on our MobileMe renewal. I told him my subscription renews in January and I was spending enough that day already. I told him the sales pitch was a good one. If it hadn't been a hot day in July and hadn't been so far from my January MobileMe renewal, I might have taken him up on the offer.

Purchase Complete

To complete the purchase, we had to walk back by the Genius Bar. I took out my iTunes Rewards Visa card. The salesperson was curious about the nondescript black card. I explained that it's an iTunes card and I was getting 2% back on the purchase in iTunes dollars. He seemed bewildered. I told him that after he swipes the card he'll have the option of sending me an e-mail receipt and the address is already encoded. I told him I wanted an e-mail receipt and a paper receipt for the bag before I walked out of the store. He smiled and obliged.

I looked around and said to him and my wife, "Just look at this store. It's as busy as the Glendale store. No wonder Apple will report record revenue in eight days." Again, the salesperson looked bewildered and asked me if I was a stockbroker. By then, two other salespeople were listening. I told him I wasn't a stockbroker but I follow Apple, publish revenue and earnings estimates for the company, and believe it is and will remain the most amazing enterprise of our times. He smiled again. I think we both enjoyed the encounter.

Denouement

We drove home. I cancelled the purchase reservation at the Glendale store and unpacked the iPad. That was seven weeks ago, and when I'm at home I hardly ever put it down. It's the most immersive Apple device I've ever owned.

All told, I spent more than $1,000 at the Apple stores on that Sunday and about 25% of the iPad's purchase price on accessories and services. That's not including the $30 I immediately spent from home on the iPad versions of Pages, Numbers, and Keynote. The iPad is a revenue and earnings monster, and these days the Apple retail stores are jammed

with foot traffic. I reiterate my early fourth fiscal quarter revenue estimate of $20 billion and my share price forecast of $400 by early May 2011. The law of large numbers be damned.

Copyright © 2010 Robert Paul Leitao is a contributing editor at ATPM and is author of the Posts At Eventide blog. The Segments *section is open to anyone. If you have something interesting to say about life with your Mac, write us.*

Desktop Pictures

by Sterling Garwood

Flowers

We need new desktop pictures each month. <u>Write</u> to us!

This Month's Desktop Pictures

ATPM reader Sterling Garwood took these pictures of flowers in North Carolina with a Nikon D80.

<u>View Pictures</u>

Contributing Your Own Desktop Pictures

If you have a picture, whether a small series or just one fabulous or funny shot, please send it to <u>editor@atpm.com</u> and we'll consider publishing it in next month's issue.

Previous Months' Desktop Pictures

Pictures from previous months are listed in the desktop pictures <u>archives</u>.

Downloading All the Pictures at Once

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

Safari Create a workflow in Automator with these three actions:

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

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

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

Placing Desktop Pictures

Mac OS X 10.3.x Through 10.6.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
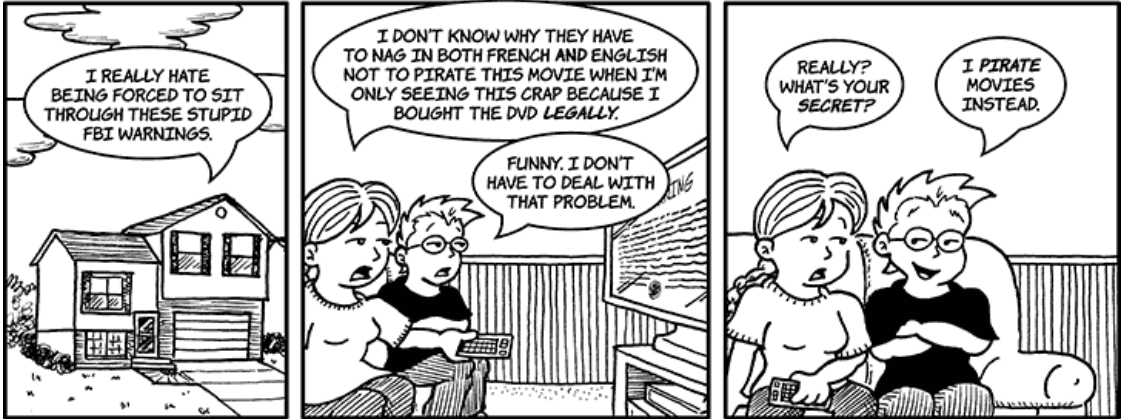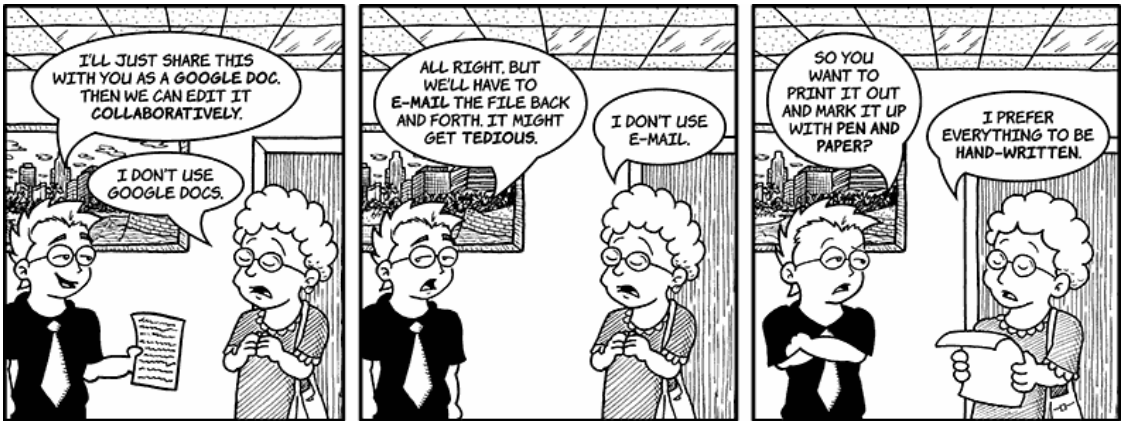
Evacuation
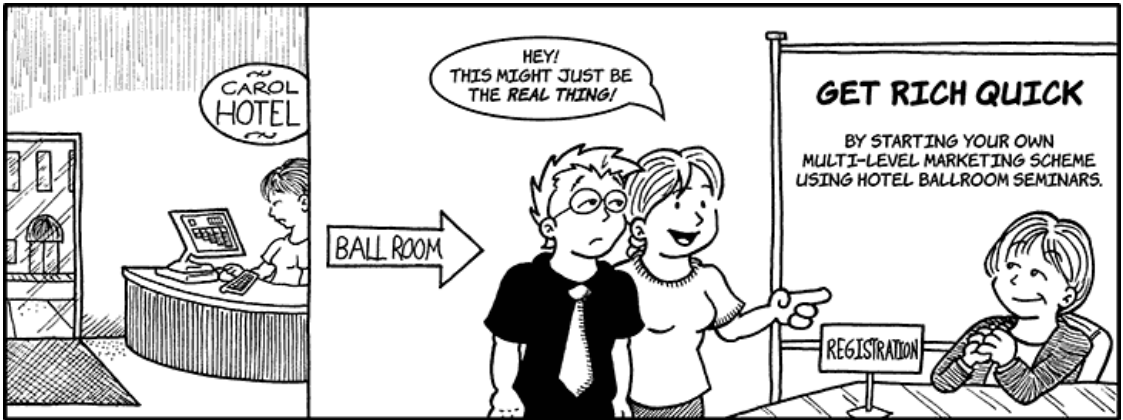

Morning Latte

FBI Warnings

Sharing Docs

Taking Temperatures

Get Rich Quick

Whatcha Doin'?

Bob's Purpose

Recycling: Part 1
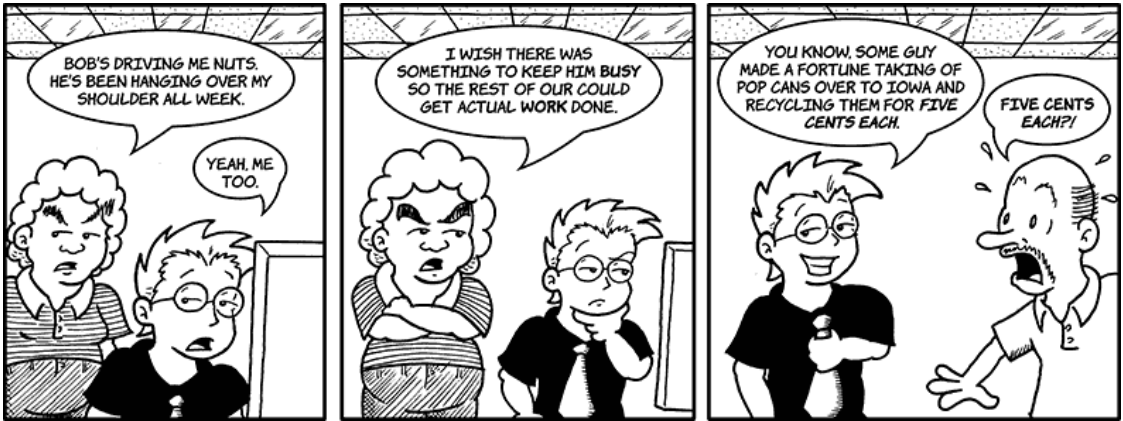
AccountEdge and FirstEdge

AccountEdge 2010 v10

Function: Double-entry business accounting.
Developer: Acclivity
Price: $299
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4. Universal.
Trial: Fully-featured (30 days)

FirstEdge v3

Function: Basic double-entry business accounting.
Developer: Acclivity
Price: $99
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4. Universal.
Trial: Fully-featured (30 days)

As one of my several occupations, I've been working with a small nonprofit organization for over a year. Part of my work with this group is to manage the bookkeeping and financial matters, which are not enormous or frequent, but require a few hours of my time each month.

Early on, we were unsure of what our bookkeeping needs would be. Among other things, we function as a micro-press, publishing a few book titles and paying royalties to the authors of these titles. Thus, going in we only knew that we would be taking in sales receipts and paying our authors and printing services. At first, we thought that something as simple as Quicken Online (now basically a version of Mint.com) would suffice. However, it quickly became apparent that this option wouldn't be sufficient to handle the tracking of billing, outstanding invoices, orders placed, etc.

From some previous work with another nonprofit, I was vaguely familiar with QuickBooks: I knew that it was something like the industry standard. I knew that it was sometimes hard to work with. I knew that it cost $200 and up. And I knew that the Mac version pretty much stinks.

I looked into the open-source options that were out there, and after a few false starts, decided that installing something like GnuCash was too much to attempt. Having waded through all of that, I cast my eyes upon FirstEdge from Acclivity.

Double-Entry Accounting

First things first: when it comes to managing the books for any organization that isn't simply a one-man operation, we're talking "double-entry" accounting. Set aside the comparison to the copy of Quicken that came with your Mac (OK, that *used* to come with your Mac!); this is a different animal altogether.

Quicken, your checkbook register, and all other similar systems are all examples of "single-entry" accounting, which is fairly self-explanatory: for every transaction, there is a single entry made in the ledger. With double-entry bookkeeping, there are two entries made for every transaction, because every transaction affects two accounts: the one from which the funds come, and the account into which they are placed. Furthermore, each account has two columns, one for debits and one for credits. This offers several advantages for keeping the books, including easier generation of reports on where money is coming from (and where it is going) and making errors stand out more readily.

So, for example, when our little nonprofit sells a copy of one of our books, a transaction is recorded reflecting that payment was received from one account (the buyer) and placed into another (our revenues). Likewise, another transaction shows that an asset (the book) was transferred from our inventory into the possession of the buyer.

Double-entry bookkeeping is vital for businesses of all sizes, and very helpful even for situations like a one-man consulting practice. It's more than you would need for managing your personal or household finances, however—which is to say, you may find AccountEdge or even FirstEdge to be in a different league if you're looking for something to replace Quicken.

FirstEdge—The Basics

FirstEdge is the basic, no-frills version of Acclivity's bookkeeping options. Setup of a new business file is straightforward in FirstEdge, and the New Company File Assistant offers templates for 84 types of business. Once you've selected your type (and walked through the input of essential information), those accounts that are most often useful in the type of business you've selected are automatically constructed. You can add others as you need them, of course. As someone new to setting up this kind of software, I found the New Company File Assistant to be both helpful and intuitive.

Once your business is set up in FirstEdge, you are presented with a "Command Center" with tabs for Accounts, Banking, and Sales. Each tab brings up its own collection of options, including a foundational list or register, under which are a variety of actions related to the tab.

For example, the Sales tab displays a register, as well as options to "print/e-mail statements," "print/e-mail invoices," and "print receipts." Also, under "print/e-mail invoices" is "transaction journal"—an overlapping journal that shows records of all transactions, or can be broken down by category (General, Disbursements, Receipts, Sales, or All). A similar hierarchy is offered for each of the tabs mentioned above.
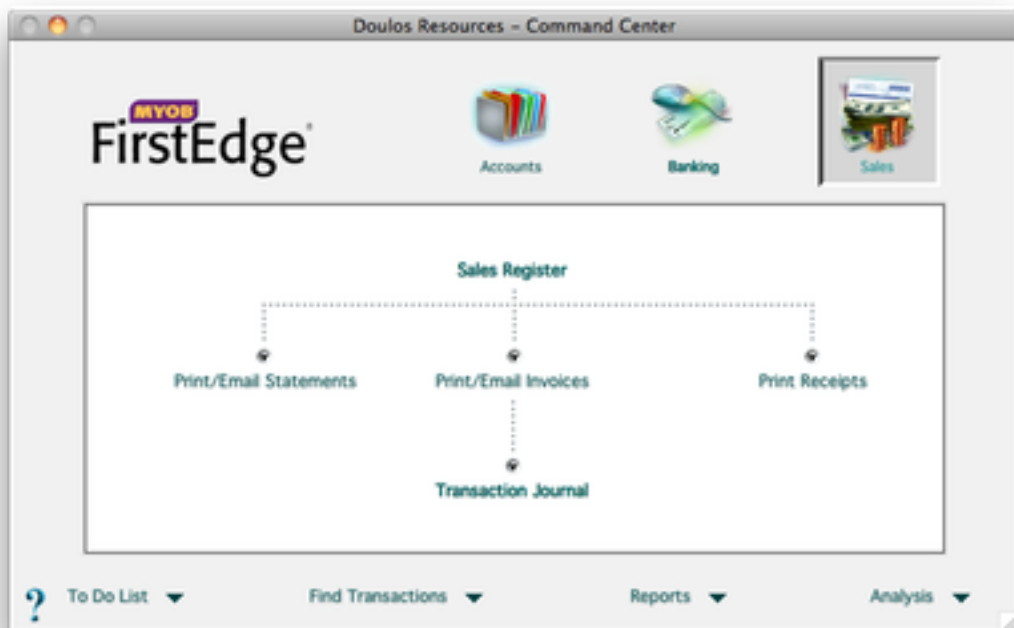
As you can see from the screenshot, there are readily-accessible menus for things like reports and analysis as well. The ready-made reports cover a standard array of business reports, and you can build custom reports. Analysis options are fairly thin, but you can grab anticipated cash flow and needs by certain categories according to account. It's also easy to quickly find transactions, and to see where open transactions need attention (by way of the To Do List option).

FirstEdge offers direct printing to paper checks, and Acclivity offers a host of (optional) pre-printed forms and other paper goods. You can also customize your quotes, invoices, receipts, and statements to look exactly as you want them to. While the layout tools in FirstEdge won't rival Pages or even Microsoft Publisher in terms of power or ease of use, they are usable, and produce satisfying results.

Acclivity also offers a number of other business services, like payroll and processing of credit card transactions, and some of these are available for FirstEdge users. Those that are FirstEdge-compatible (like the two mentioned) are integrated in a manner similar to the way that Quicken can download transactions from a personal bank account. They import/export without too much attention or work on the end-user's part.

Eventually, you'll have all of your inventory, customers, vendors, and employees put into the "cards" section of FirstEdge, though you don't have to set these up all at once. You can designate recurring transactions as they emerge, and customize sales information for each customer or vendor separately. Budgets are easy to build, and reports are available to compare budgeted to actual numbers for each account. Even auditing is fairly straightforward.

FirstEdge is great for a smaller business whose needs are basic. If you're running a small operation with just a few employees, or your services don't require elaborate bookkeeping, FirstEdge may be a good bargain.

AccountEdge—More of Almost Everything

When you need more than what FirstEdge offers, more is available. Much more.

When you open AccountEdge, you get five additional tabs in your Command Center: Time Billing, Purchases, Payroll, Inventory, and Card File. While each tab is setup similarly to FirstEdge, in a flow-chart style, there are more options under each tab, and additional services offered for each.
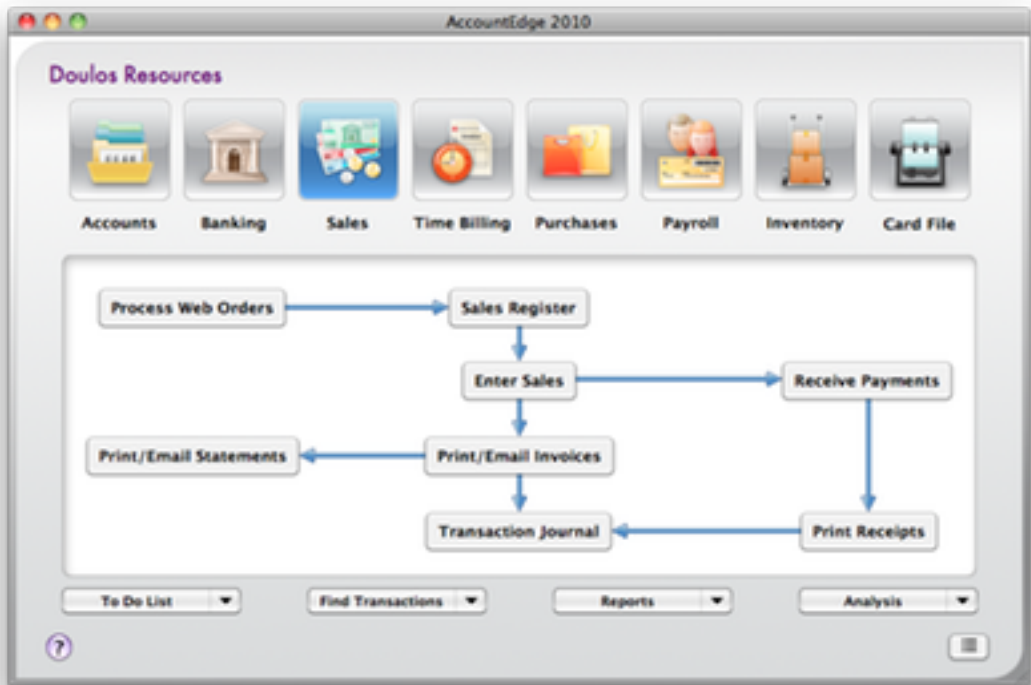
As the needs of our small operation grew beyond the abilities of FirstEdge, we found everything we needed with AccountEdge. There are good tools for managing inventory, for example, which integrate well with the Sales and Purchases sections of the application. When some of our team offer consulting services (by themselves, or in addition to our printed resources), the Time Billing and Payroll sections help us to keep straight what should be billed, and who gets paid (and how much) from the invoices.

It was also just a couple of clicks to upgrade all of our records from FirstEdge to AccountEdge; I expected this, and was pleased but not surprised to find how easy it was. Though I didn't make use of it, AccountEdge has even more business templates for new users. Naturally, there are also many more reports available in AccountEdge: each of the

tabs in common with FirstEdge gets a much wider array of ready-made reports, plus there are those reports relative to the new tabs gained in AccountEdge. Once again, reports and forms are easy to customize.

Acclivity offers good documentation for AccountEdge (and FirstEdge too). It's not perfect, and not every answer jumps off the page; I have yet to find software documentation that is that intuitive. But I haven't had trouble finding answers to my questions when they arise. In addition to a complete online manual, Acclivity offers specific how-to guides for topics like Payroll and End-of-Year maintenance. They have some industry-specific help for manufacturing, service, wholesale, or retail industries. There are also guides for getting started, upgrading, business basics, and using checks and forms. They also have a FAQ section of their Web site, and there is an active forum for user discussions. If all of the above are not sufficient, Acclivity also offers direct technical support (see comments below), and they also link to a number of technology consultants who are certified to work with their products.

A host of other, "add-on" services are available to work in conjunction with AccountEdge. Just like with FirstEdge, Acclivity's credit card fulfillment and payroll services integrate seamlessly; they are also in beta stages with an online "Web store" tool that will likewise integrate. Third-party tools also link up with AccountEdge, with solutions for Customer Relations Management (CRM), appointment management, reservations, human resources, and others.

If more than one user needs regular access to your AccountEdge data, a network edition is also available for no additional cost; workstation licenses, however, cost $149 each or in five-packs for $499. Up to 15 users may simultaneously access AccountEdge data.

Without going into details about the many features offered in AccountEdge, I will say this about it: it has done everything I have wanted it to do. And every time I come up with some new need or function that I ask of it, I have been able to find ways to accomplish the need.

Customer Service Concerns

A number of reviews (especially on Amazon) of both FirstEdge and AccountEdge mention the difficulty in getting customer service—or rather, mention the difficulty of getting *free* support and service.

Acclivity has an interesting approach to support: in a time when many companies are building their reputations on their elaborate and free support services (à la Apple's Genius Bar), Acclivity charges $129/year for e-mail support or $199/year for both e-mail and telephone service. Obviously, this rankles some who want the service for free. If you look around the Web, you'll find a number of "dissatisfied" customers who complain about how they paid big money for the products and now can't get support unless they pony up more money.

I take a different view on it, however. First of all, both FirstEdge and AccountEdge offer 30-day, fully-functional trials. It strikes me as short-sighted, if not irresponsible, to pay for

these products before trying them out in light of these free trials. If you have problems that seem insurmountable, you haven't lost a dime.

Once you have paid for the software you've chosen, Acclivity also offers "introductory support" for free for the first 30 days after you've paid for and registered your product. A careful planner, therefore, can get things set up during the trial period, then take advantage of the free introductory support to get the kinks worked out. If you need occasional support after that, Acclivity also offers ad-hoc support for around $50 on a pay-per-call basis. And, of course, if you continue to need ongoing support, then you can subscribe to the support services mentioned above.

These rates are far less than what you might pay a consultant who is fluent with both accounting/bookkeeping and the corresponding software. A well-functioning company, therefore, might easily justify such costs for the sake of all of the various parts of the organization that FirstEdge or especially AccountEdge keeps running smoothly.

Finally, Acclivity offers a 30-day refund. If you're not satisfied that FirstEdge or AccountEdge will be the tool for you at the end of a month (or two months, if you follow my rubric above), then get your money back and go with QuickBooks or one of the other alternatives. For what it's worth, most of the Mac users I've encountered running QuickBooks are doing so with Parallels or VMWare Fusion running the Windows version. For whatever reason—I won't try to speculate here—Intuit has not offered anything close to the Windows versions of QuickBooks on the Mac platform.

So I'm a bit indifferent to the concerns and complaints about support. Nevertheless, this aspect may be a deal-breaker for you or for your business.

What About MYOB?

Perhaps you've heard of AccountEdge as a product related or associated with a company or application called MYOB. If so, perhaps you are wondering what the relationship between them is?

MYOB is/was the name of both a company and an application that emerged in the late 1980s. The application, whose name is an acronym for "Mind Your Own Business," was first developed by Teleware, Inc. The intellectual property rights to the software were purchased in 1996 by an Australian company called Data-Tech Software, who changed their company name to MYOB Ltd. in 1999. They developed and maintained different versions and variations of the MYOB software throughout the 90s and into the next decade, and also grew into broader markets and areas of the financial sector, acquiring other related corporations along the way.

In 2005, MYOB (the company) sold the US division of MYOB Ltd. to Acclivity, though the property rights to the software remained with MYOB Australia. Acclivity essentially functioned as the local service provider to the US market, covering sales, marketing, distribution, and support in that market.

What happens next is a little fuzzy: according to the Acclivity Web site, in 2008 they purchased MYOB (again), this time acquiring all US development of the Mac product line. MYOB for Mac (which had previously been called MYOB AccountEdge) became simply AccountEdge, and FirstEdge (which was first released in 2002 as MYOB FirstEdge) also came under Acclivity's care and development.

Here's where it gets confusing: MYOB (the Australian company) still continued to operate as a software developer and distributor (and does to this day), offering a line of Windows software products called AccountRight (with variations like Standard, Plus, Premier, and Enterprise—you know, the usual ambiguous array of variations associated with Windows products), and an application called BusinessBasics. They also offer extensive services in other areas of the bookkeeping and accounting industry. They also sell a line of Mac products: FirstEdge, AccountEdge, AccountEdge (Network edition).

Yet, Acclivity also offered a Windows application marketed (until recently) under the name MYOB. They recently renamed it AccountEdge for Windows. They also offer a Windows counterpart to FirstEdge, called BusinessBasics.

From what I can tell, the roles between MYOB (Australia) and Acclivity simply reversed: MYOB now serves as the Australian distributor/marketer for Acclivity's Mac accounting products. I make no claims of how AccountEdge for Windows and AccountRight (in all of its variations) are related, nor do I understand where BusinessBasics comes from.

Wrap-Up

My goal in this review was not an exhaustive look at every feature in either FirstEdge or AccountEdge; in fact, I have not used every feature myself, as they are vast and many require much more specialized circumstances and accounting expertise than I could even approach. Rather, I set out to give a perspective on how these applications function in a single user's experience.

The conclusion is they function very well overall. Working with bookkeeping is nothing like managing music in iTunes or building home movies in iMovie. Users who step into this category of software must, by default, have a certain foundational understanding of some business accounting, and they must understand the necessary complexity required for software that will manage such information.

Are FirstEdge and AccountEdge hard to use? Relative to 90% of the applications installed on my Mac, yes. They are robust and complex applications that are built for serious end-users, and that brings a higher level of use-difficulty. Relative to the other bookkeeping applications I've used or looked at, FirstEdge and AccountEdge are a delight to use, and pack much more power and function than most (including, in my experience, QuickBooks for the Mac).

As I said before, if you are looking for a Quicken replacement or the next step up from Mint.com, look elsewhere; you will be confused and frustrated with either of these.

But if you need a Mac-native tool to manage business accounting for your small (or large) business, FirstEdge and/or AccountEdge will be worth your consideration. Given Acclivity's generous trial and refund policies, it will cost you nothing to find out if they are right for you.

Loop

Function: iPad tabletop stand.
Developer: Griffin Technology
Price: $30
Requirements: iPad
Trial: None

As far as I can remember, every iPad commercial has shown people holding the device and, without a doubt, that's how I use it the majority of the time. However, there are definitely times when you want to prop the iPad up on a desk or table—watching movies, typing in Pages, and viewing slideshows all come to mind. Furthermore, these various activities all lend themselves towards using the iPad in different orientations.

With the iPad Dock and the iPad Keyboard Dock, Apple offers two different solutions tabletop usage, but both options are essentially limited to a single use-case: portrait viewing for the Dock and portrait typing for the Keyboard Dock. Having distinct accessories for use individual use cases can get expensive and cumbersome, and neither of these options allows for any sort of landscape viewing. Of course, I'd be remiss if I didn't point out that the Keyboard Dock includes the eponymous keyboard.

As the name would imply, the Loop is an oval-shaped stand made of black and gray plastic that attempts to address these different use cases. It has the ability to securely display the iPad in two different position—a higher position at a 10–15° angle that looks about to be about same angle as the iPad Dock and a lower position at around 60°. Furthermore, you can choose between either portrait or landscape mode for either position.

The Loop holds the iPad in a variety of positions.

The iPad is held fairly sturdily in any of the four positions. Using normal force, I've only see a slight wobble when tapping at the top of the screen in the higher position. The movement isn't anything that I would consider troublesome, however, and the iPad has been held perfectly in the other three configurations. The Loop's sturdiness is due to a combination of its slightly bottom-heavy nature and the three rubber feet that provide traction against the tabletop. You won't be swiveling this stand to show your iPad to other people.

As you might expect from a stand that supports arbitrary positioning of the iPad, the Loop doesn't have a dock connector. Instead, the back of the Loop includes a small cutout where you can slide a dock cable. In any of the four positions, it's technically possible to plug in both a dock cable and a set of headphones, with two caveats for portrait mode.

The Loop can hold the iPad in a a similar position to Apple's iPad Dock.

First, when using the lower position, you'll need to have the dock connector at the top and plug in your headphones at the bottom. Apple's headphones will fit in the space available, but you'll need to position the iPad at your table's edge to use headphones with a larger plug.

Second, when using the higher position, it usually makes more sense to put the dock connector at the bottom. There's plenty of room for Apple's slim dock cable, but the taller style Apple used to make sits with the cable connection point against with the tabletop. I don't know if this could cause issues with the cable, but I'd be hesitant to put constant pressure on the connection point in this way. It's also conceivable that third-party accessories might have trouble fitting into the available space. (I don't know about any home accessories that would fall into this category, but I know the connector on my car kit wouldn't fit.) However, there's nothing stopping you from flipping the iPad and plugging the dock cable in at the iPad's top.

The dock cable functionality generally works well, but I've occasionally had the cord slip outside the cutout and lift part of the Loop off the table. When this happens, the Loop can wobble or even slip around the table (since the cable will lift one of the rubber feet off the table surface). It seems like the most common reason for cable slippage is when the cord isn't perpendicular to the Loop, and gets pulled to one side of the cutout.

While the Loop's clearly not the more portable device, it's perfectly functional on the road, assuming you have the ability to carry it. (It's not going to fit well into a slim carry bag, for instance.) I recently took the Loop and the iPad on vacation and used the combination in my hotel and on the flight. In my room, I had no trouble typing up e-mails (in the lower position) or flipping through Twitterrific (in the higher position). While I was on the flight, the iPad was held in the perfect landscape position for tray table movie viewing, all while leaving plenty of room for my (for now) complimentary soft drink.
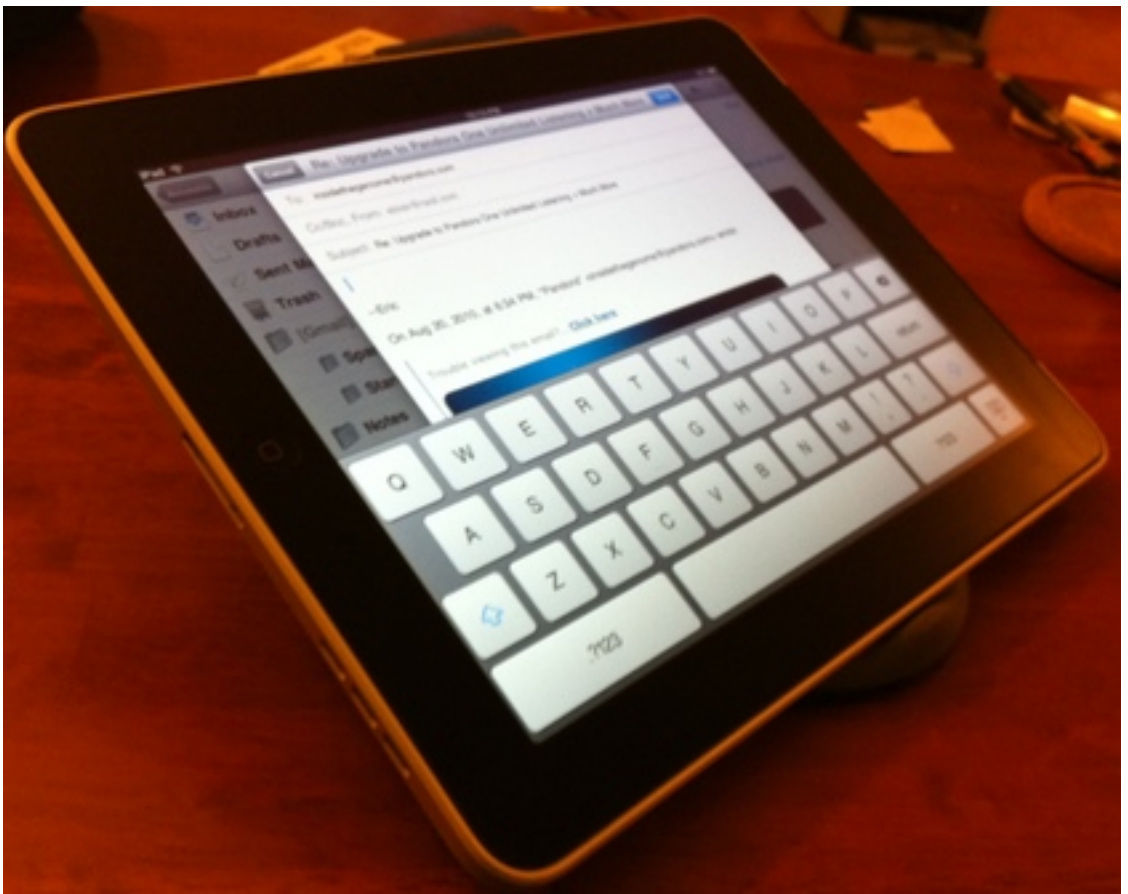
The Loop also hold the iPad in a position that's comfortable when typing.

On the one hand, $30 might seem a bit expensive for what may seem to be little more than shaped plastic, but I'm hard-pressed to think of many iPad-specific devices at a lower price point. The one device that does come to mind is Apple's iPad Dock—at $29, it's a whole dollar less expensive. It does offer audio-out capabilities that the Loop lacks, but it only holds the iPad in one of the four positions offered by the Loop. As somebody who owns both, I definitely get more use out of the Loop and, if I had to do it all over again, I wouldn't even bother with Apple's dock. The Loop is just that good.

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?

ATPM is looking to add more regular reviewers to our staff. Though all positions with *About This Particular Macintosh* are volunteer, reviewing is a great way to share your product knowledge and experience with fellow members of the Macintosh community. If you're interested, contact ATPM's Reviews Editor, Paul Fatula.

How Can I Subscribe to *ATPM*?

Visit the subscriptions page.

Which Format Is Best for Me?

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

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

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

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

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 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.

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 strongly we recommend it. Please contact our reviews editor, before you begin writing, if you have a piece of hardware or software that you'd like to review.

Which Products Have You Reviewed?

Check our reviews index for the complete list.

What is Your Rating Scale?

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

Will You Review My Product?

If you or your company has a product that you'd like to see reviewed, send a copy our way. We're always looking for interesting pieces of software to try out. Contact reviews@atpm.com for shipping information. You can send press releases to news@atpm.com.

Where Can I Find Back Issues of *ATPM*?

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

What If My Question Isn't Answered Above?

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