ATPM

Think

The iMac G5

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

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Welcome

This issue of AT🍎M includes:

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"The same democratic principles that make the Internet a great thing also mean that you may be democratically exposed to con artists and incompetent people claiming great skills."

About This Particular Outliner: Deep Tinderbox

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Networks In Action: Mac to Windows: Troubleshooting the "No Logon Servers Available" File Sharing Error

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Sunsets by Lee Bennett.

Frisky Freeware: Camino

Matt Johnson introduces Frisky the Freeware Guinea Pig who will "bravely test free software for you."

Review: AirPort Express

Eric Blair takes us along for the ride as he installs an AirPort Express and makes an insightful observation regarding the lack of a remote control, often-discussed by AirPort Express critics.

Review: Optipix 3.0

This professional set of tools to aid digital photography enhancements in Photoshop is like getting more than 15 tools in one, and they all can work with 16-bit images.

Review: Mac OS X Panther for UNIX Geeks (book)

"The primary goal of this book is to assist with the transition to Mac OS X for those advanced users of Linux- and Unix-flavoured operating systems with a particular developer or system administration interest."

Desktop Muse

I have always promoted the idea of a renewable copyright. I suggest a renewal fee that's small but real. Say $100. The idea is to sort the economically viable works from the rest of the herd.

You see, the copyright extension act is brought forth every 20 years so that corporations won't loose their profitable properties. The Disney Corp is the most obvious example. Their vault of classic animation is far more valuable than gold. But, if the copyright ran out, it would be worthless—to Disney, anyway. To avoid this disaster, Disney (and the rest of the entertainment industry) goes to Congress every 20 years and arranges for an extension.

But they also extend the copyright on every other work in the country at the same time. Books, music, and movies that have no commercial value left—but that *may* have value as the basis of new works. As a recent example, look at *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*. All those characters are in the public domain. So they could be used to create a new work of art. (OK, there is some disagreement about how much *art* was in that movie, but the graphic novel was brilliant!)

Without material falling into the public domain, we lose the intellectual equivalent of fertilizer. We lose the ability to build on the works that have gone before. We must "reinvent the wheel" for every work created.

But realistically, we are never going to see Mickey Mouse in the public domain. It just ain't gonna happen. So let's keep the mouse safe, along with the rest of the Disney Vault, but free the hundreds of thousands of other works to the public domain.

—*Dave Reed*

So, you're saying Disney is exempt just because it's Disney, but Joe Schmoe's cartoon character—one of those "hundreds of thousands of other works"—is not? Sorry, but copyright laws should not give preferential treatment based on popular culture or anything else. Yes, copyrighted works that are owned by deceased individuals and/or nonexistent organizations—things from which absolutely no one is or could be

profiting—should be considered for release to the public domain. But I should not lose a copyright just because I live longer than a certain number of years or just because I chose to give oversight of the copyright to a particular organization that will be around for a long time.   —*Lee Bennett*

DEVONnote Review

You *can* import images into DEVONnote. It took me a while to figure it out, but DEVONnote can handle RTFD files, which is a NeXT file format that includes images or other attachments. So you can just create an RTF document from the menu, and then drag an image into the document. It will then be stored and shown as an image. I use this application for writing. It helps me organize characters and plot lines easily. I wish the backup was all one file as well, instead of six.

—*Jeff*

iRac Review

A question/comment about portability. It looks like the iRac would be rather bulky to fit into a computer case, briefcase, etc. The ends might also damage the inside of the bag. One good feature of the Podium Pad and some other stands is that they can be folded or disassembled to fit nicely into a bag.

Also, for travelling, I would like a stand that can be used anywhere, like on an airline seat tray, on one's lap in the waiting area at an airport, etc. I'd reverse your recommendations and suggest that the iRac is better for local use, not for travel.

—*George Slusher*

Tactile Pro Review

Great review, covering exactly the criteria I'm interested in. I too have been looking for a great replacement for my Apple Extended Keyboard (which, I must say, was even better than the Extended Keyboard II), and I too settled on the Micro Connectors keyboard (labeled something else)—after trying four others; I "joke" that the Micro Connectors product cost me $500…

I am curious if you have tried the Kensington StudioBoard Mechanical Keyboard, which looks almost identical to the Matias product reviewed here (they are clearly twins separated at birth).

My own judgement of it is similar to yours about the Matias product: not quite the right feel, not quite as good as the Micro Connectors / Ballistic product, which is itself not quite as good as the original Apple Extended Keyboard.

I guess this is another example of a product so commoditized that it's impossible to make money selling it, and so it's impossible to find a quality version any more…

—Michael Alderete

I enjoyed your article very much. I went to a yard sale about a year ago and they had three of these Micro Connectors keyboards for $2 each, two Blueberrys and one Graphite. I bought them all. I sold two of them but kept one for a backup. I recently bought a G4 Dual 533 that didn't have a keyboard, so I pulled the old Graphite Micro Connectors out and hooked it up. My son and I love it. I can tell when I've actually hit a key and when I haven't.

—Craig Parks

Because of some miscommunication between me and the wife, I ended up with both the Matias and Kensington keyboards. I also have a Micro Connectors, a Northgate Ultra keyboard, and a Ortek MCK-142 Pro. Yes I'm a keyboard snob, and for me the louder and springier the better (if they had a keyboard with hydraulics I'd be right in line for that).

The Micro Connectors keyboard is pretty good, but I had an early model that had weird firmware issues with the USB (would stop working every so often).

The Northgate and Ortek are very similar and both are awesome. The Ortek is too tall for my keyboard drawers so I haven't used it much. The Northgate is a perfect fit but I spilled some Coke on it a while back and it killed some of the keys.

When I got the Matias keyboard I was very disappointed. Its nice enough looking but just doesn't feel right. I think the main problem is the keys wobble when typing. I probably can't describe the exact issue, but it just doesn't feel right.

I got the Kensington a few weeks after the Matias and thought I was in for the same problems. However the Kensington keyboard feels right. I think the keyboards are made in the same factory, but they must use different keyswitches.

I did eventually replace my beloved Northgate with the Kensington, and in my opinion that's the Mac keyboard to get. Its not perfect, but I think its better then all the mush that's out there.

The two big problems with the Kensington are that it's too light (which means it slides around a lot), and there are issues with pushing some key combinations.

The Matias has the same problems above (though different key combinations) plus the weird feeling (to me) keys. On the other hand, it's got the different key combos printed on the keys which is probably nice (for the 1–2 times a year I need those).

Oh, and the Kensington one is a bit cheaper then the Matias.

Sorry for the rambling, but it's hard to describe a keyboard's feel in words.

—Paul Haddad

I too hate the mushy keyboards Apple use these days. I'm using an Extended Keyboard II (bought brand new at a show!) on my iMac G4 using a Griffin iMate. Works like a charm. Shame about the grey color, which doesn't look right with the white iMac.

—Jay

Wanted: Left-handed Keyboard

I am ambidextrous and mouse with my right hand, while operating the keyboard with my left. (I cringe when I see people painstakingly move between keyboard and mouse with their right hand, while their left arm lies in their lap like a dead log.)

Anyway, to avoid moving my left hand to the right side of the keyboard to press Enter key, I have been looking for a keyboard with an enter key on the left-hand side. Anyone seen one?

Kensington has one with programmable buttons, but it doesn't say what you can program them to do. Anyone used it?

Here is my quick-n-easy, home-made solution. Ya, I know I am a freak but what else do you wish you can have on your keyboard?

—Steven Seiller

Ergokomfort makes a keyboard with the numeric keypad, arrow buttons, and cursor/scroll buttons to the left of the typing area, but the numeric keypad's Enter key may still not be in a good position and, unfortunately, it's only sold with a PS/2 connector. Alternatively, check out the Matias Corporation's products. On that page, toward the bottom, you'll find a Half-QWERTY Keyboard that can work as both a single-handed or standard input device. If you wish to save real estate on your desk, you can even get a literal half keyboard. There's even a wearable half keyboard. The cheapest solution for what you desire might be to remap the keys on your keyboard. You could simply swap the Caps Lock and Return key locations. *—Lee Bennett*

In Which a Loss Comes With a Gain

I finally did it. I finally got myself up to OS X. The upgrade itself was painless, except for two losses. I did not know how to save our address books and stored e-mail messages, and I did not know I needed to save our bookmarks. That part I could have done if I'd known I needed to; I'd seen a way to save all of them in one file as HTML. The e-mail messages, I still don't know how I would have saved. I just thought the newer versions of the software would find that information, or I could import it. But it's gone. Or maybe I'm just not smart enough to figure out how to see it.

I have not lost hope that all that stuff is still on the drive, somewhere, if I just knew how to look for it. I copied my System Folder to a second drive, plus the Documents folder, but I bet the Documents folder should have included some stuff besides the stuff I copied. I bet there was a Microsoft User Data folder I should have copied and didn't. But I think it's still on the main drive, perhaps written over with new information by now, though.

I will be very sad if those stored e-mail messages are lost forever. I had a moment of realization that they were probably gone, and it surprised me how wrenching it was. I have four years of letters to and from friends, and I used to re-read them sometimes. It reminded me of how two friendships evolved, and still are evolving. I was desolate for a day or two while we tried to find those files.

Then I realized that those friends are still in my heart, and the words we said are not as important as that fact.

The e-mails about hotel reservations and plane tickets, I can reconstruct by returning to those Web sites. As for the receipts from online book and clothing orders, if I wait long enough, the items will be delivered—and I would have tossed those e-mails anyway. The messages I wrote to my friends, and they to me, I will mourn for a few more days. Then I will get over it and remember that our connections are not based on only words.

As for the bookmark situation, I've approached it like I did when I used to move every year or so in my early 20s. Back then I would use every move as a chance to get rid of a third of my stuff. Clothes got donated, furniture pared down. I never trimmed my book collection, though. It is still out of control. But I didn't start letting it get that way until I finally stopped moving. Once I started recreating a list of the bookmarks I'd saved, I realized there were two sorts: those I visited regularly and those I was saving for a specific endeavor. It was a chance to shorten the list.

The sites I visit regularly were pretty easy to re-mark. The others, study sites for a game show, I can gradually rebuild if I want to. With many of them, I'd already printed out the important information, so there is no need to re-bookmark them. If I have occasion to wander into a US Presidents site, I'll save it, but I'm not upset about losing all those sites. It was a good time to trim that list. I'm not so good with clutter anyway.

I still have a slim hope that my e-mail messages are hidden somewhere. I asked a work friend who knows far more about Mac stuff than I do to look at it, and he couldn't find anything. I was cussing the upgrade process and complaining that I thought Apple made everything so easy. He pointed out that the trouble is not with Apple but with Microsoft, as both pieces of software I was using were made by them. That shut me up.

I suppose this tale could serve as a warning to those who have yet to upgrade. Figure out how to save your stuff before you do it. I would have cut and pasted each individual message if that had been the only way. It would have been worth it. I have gotten past most of the first two stages of grief: denial and anger. There is no one to bargain with, so I am skipping stage three. Depression went with anger, so now I guess I am working my way through acceptance. The first big step was acknowledging that I had lost something important to me. If I had not done that, I would still be banging my head against the wall, trying to recover my files.

We lose stuff. It happens. This is one of those rare events that, 10 years from now, I may actually remember. Mostly, though, the stuff we get worked up about isn't that big a deal. It's good to be able to move on. Fresh starts are good.

I really do like the OS. It's likability doesn't yet outweigh my loss, but it will after some time has passed.

Onward.

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Internet Democracy Gone Bad

We are all working in a more interconnected world, with unprecedented access to information and other people with skills. You might think that having a pool of thousands of new and skilled people working with you on a project would be a bonus. Unfortunately, the same accessibility that makes great people accessible also makes questionable people just as likely to contact you. The same democratic principles that make the Internet a great thing also mean that you may be democratically exposed to con artists and incompetent people claiming great skills.

The following information may appear to be common sense, and most of these suggestions are the same things you might do if someone were applying in person to work with you at a business or on a project. Apply the same principles to working with people on the Internet that you would in "real life."

Beware of Lofty Claims

Someone who claims great things should be able to prove it. If she teaches at an internationally renowned institution, she will give you equivalent material to back up the claim. Additionally, most institutions list their affiliations and employees on the Web. If you visit the institution Web site and she is nowhere to be found, something is probably wrong.

If an applicant is really known for her work in a particular area, there is a high chance of finding corroborating evidence on the Web.

Beware of Inconsistencies

Someone who claims to be a teacher and a week later claims to be an Art Director is misrepresenting something. If he were both a teacher and Art Director, he would have presented that information to you in the first place. You want nothing to do with him. I have never found an exception in which someone "accidentally" forgot to mention all the important information.

Look out for "backtracking" with information. If a potential partner or applicant claims to work somewhere, and upon being questioned changes the employer, something is wrong. After all, don't we all know who we work for? There is no example I can give in which someone legitimately misrepresented his current job, title, position, and employer.

A potential contributor may profess to be many things, but he should be able to back it up. For example, if she claims to be a video camera operator and video editor, she should be able to give proof of both skills and not just one. Simply providing proof of camera work does not prove editing skills, and vice versa.

Also beware of people who state "I would like to…" such as, "I am a cameraman who would like to be involved in production." This person is telling you that while he may have video experience, he wants to be something else that he has no proven skills with. He will refrain from doing his proven work (video camera work) and will instead try to only do what he imagines as his "proper" position and title. What he is really saying is, "I am a cameraman but don't want to do that anymore and I want to be a Producer even though I have no experience."

Ask for References

The same things that apply in the rest of world apply on the Internet. Someone with false claims will be unable to present corroborating references. Of course, it is also important to check the validity of references to make sure they are legitimate.

If someone gives you a reference that is extremely impressive (example, Steve Jobs) then don't be impressed…yet. E-mail the person in the reference, no matter how important. If the reference in question, no matter how lofty, responds favorably, then you are in good shape. You might be surprised at how many times you will get a response of non-association and unfamiliarity.

Writing

If a potential partner isn't willing to adhere to the established principles of grammar and spelling, you shouldn't waste your time. No more than 10% of an article should need correction and/or editing, and that is being generous. The more you let partners get away with, the more work you and your competent staff will suffer by being forced to compensate.

Language is Not a Problem

Don't let anyone fool you with providing excuses like "I didn't understand your request," or "Forgive me, I do not speak well." If she can manage to express those sentiments, she can also understand everything else perfectly. While the Web language translation engines are far from perfect, they can usually give clear enough translation for most people.

Pay Attention to Presentation

Professionalism translates to e-mails just as much as it does with other media. If someone professing to be a designer doesn't present you with images and examples that indicates an understanding of line, shape, negative space, composition, type, and color, then he is not a professional designer.

Beware of Forums & Forum-presented Content

A large number of people want their "name in lights" but are too lazy to present their materials properly. It is enough for them to have their artwork, their articles or other content posted in forums—because this gives them the attention they desire.

Even decent articles and artwork are not best represented by a forum presentation. If someone proudly displays her work in that format, she is unlikely to understand the demands of a professional organization. These days it is too easy to set up a Web site (even for free) for anyone to use the excuse that her only option is displaying work in forums on another Web site.

If the forum-presented work is exceptional, you can judge the work based upon the exact content but not on other abilities. Judge the work in the forum, and realize the person cannot show you examples of how she is competent to present her excellent works.

Judging Web design, design, and presentation skills based on forums is impossible because forums are easily had. For example, someone who has set up a PHP Nuke forum Web site does not necessarily know Web design. Installing PHP Nuke or any equivalent forum technology is easy, and there are hundreds of free templates available to present the site well. A poorly presented PHP Nuke Web site demonstrates a lack of understanding or outright laziness about proper presentation, design, and merchandising. Having a PHP Nuke Web site means she installed PHP Nuke, but nothing more.

As tempting as it may be, you should also avoid advertising for new contributors and staff on forums-based Web sites. If you advertise this way, you will only increase your work as you weed through the responses.

Demand Original Files

You might be surprised at the number of people who present work from others as their own. Anyone can copy images, 3D graphics, or other content from the millions of Web sites available. There is no way to check to see whether a person has stolen content from other sources without spending months searching the millions of Web sites worldwide.

By demanding original works in original formats from the application used for creation, you can increase the chances that you are actually seeing work that represents the person in question. A designer who copied a graphic, photo, or other material from another Web site will have no supporting material.

Listen to Your Gut Reaction

"Listening to your gut" sums up everything above. Many times when people are in need of services, they have a tendency to look for what they want rather than what is actually being presented. Be as objective as possible in your determinations and your communications with people over the Web.

Do not worry about having to turn away people you feel are questionable. The people who truly offer something will shine though the mire. You may get thousands of e-mails and only end up with a half-dozen people to work with, but at least the ones you pick are more likely to come through.

Remember the scene from *Indiana Jones and The Last Crusade*: "He chose poorly." By not paying attention to what is in front of you and instead picking what you envision, you will most likely "choose poorly" and destroy everything you intended to create.

Deep Tinderbox

For those new to *ATPO*, this is a column about outlining. Each column examines some corner of outlining. We don't do reviews—ATPM reviewers and others do a great job of that elsewhere. Instead, when we look at specific outliners we want to tell you *how* they work. We hope it will help you understand some of the issues concerned with arranging ideas, and possibly make a product choice.

In this column we attempt to survey Tinderbox, with an overview that includes a special offer for *ATPO* readers. At the end of the column is our outline tracker, which introduces some new outliners to the corral.

Tinderbox—here's something of a polarizing application. I've gotten lots of mail about it. Much of the mail calls it a paradigm-busting application, sometimes life-altering or uniquely empowering. Other correspondents call it inscrutable, ugly, or too complex to use.

It is at the very least something that its creators have trouble explaining to potential buyers, and indeed many experimenters give up on the demo before they "get it." I hope this column does the job of introducing Tinderbox with little pain, because though it clearly is not for everyone it may be just what you are looking for.

Tinderbox Icon

One problem is that Tinderbox is partly a tool and partly an environment for creating your own tool. In either case, it can bend pretty far toward your own working style if you lean toward lots of "metadata"—information about your information or notes. It isn't something you buy and just use; it is something you adapt and invent over time. Some potential users have a lot of trouble with this idea: they like to be presented with a tool that does a very specific or a well-understood thing. Then, they can learn it or not, but they at least know what "it" is.

What we're going to do here is provide only one of two possible passes over the application. This first pass will look at Tinderbox as an outliner. Tinderbox is not really an outliner at all; it is more of an environment for annotation-rich information architectures. Eastgate probably doesn't like it to be considered a mere outliner, but it can surely be used as one. Shocker of shockers: in this mode, Tinderbox is the most powerful outliner available by many measures. I believe that you can buy it and use it as an outliner and be supremely happy with it, never having explored its more extraordinary side. At the very least, it is the ideal way to begin using it before adventuring into more unfamiliar territory.

The second pass is just inferred. This would be a survey of Tinderbox as what it really is, a "spatial hypertext" environment, more in the spirit of [the mindmappers we looked at in the last column](#).

You don't need to know all the stuff we survey to start using Tinderbox productively. But you will want to be exposed to most of it to know what distinguishes this application from others. After all, you want to be educated voters, right? (Speaking of which, if you are an eligible US voter, please register and vote. Consider it payment for *ATPO*.)

Tinderbox as an Outliner

I think the best way to be introduced to Tinderbox is as a two-pane outliner. Later on, we'll discuss some of the basic design decisions. For now, what you need to know is the basic design stance: familiar outliners use the header structure as the main citizen of their world, and header manipulation is something of a fetish for traditional outline users.

In this paradigm, a note or comment is something that is attached. In Tinderbox, it is the other way around, a situation that will produce some unfamiliar behavior for experienced outliner users.
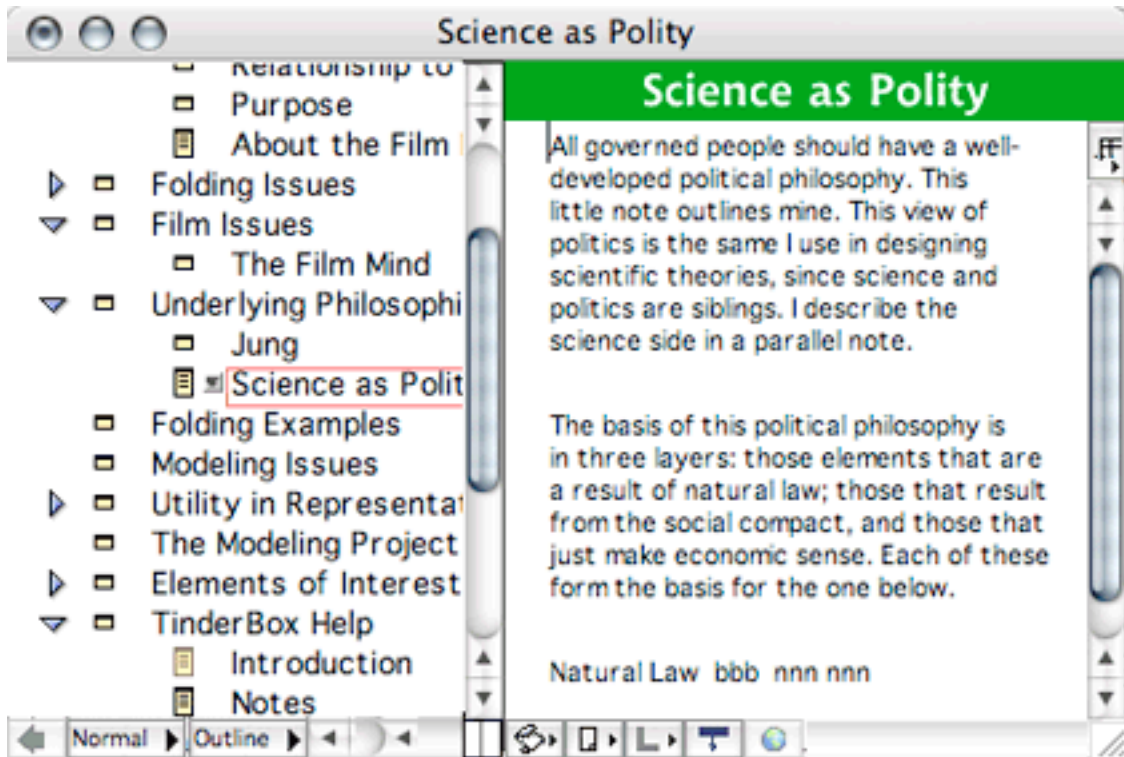

The Two-Pane Outliner

The screenshot shows one of Tinderbox's several views, the one we'll stick with for a while. It is what Eastgate calls an "explorer" view, with a navigator on the left and a selected note on the right. The navigator in this case is the outline, though that "outline" pop-up on the lower left of the window allows you to shift to a mindmap tree view (called a "chart") or the hypertext map view.
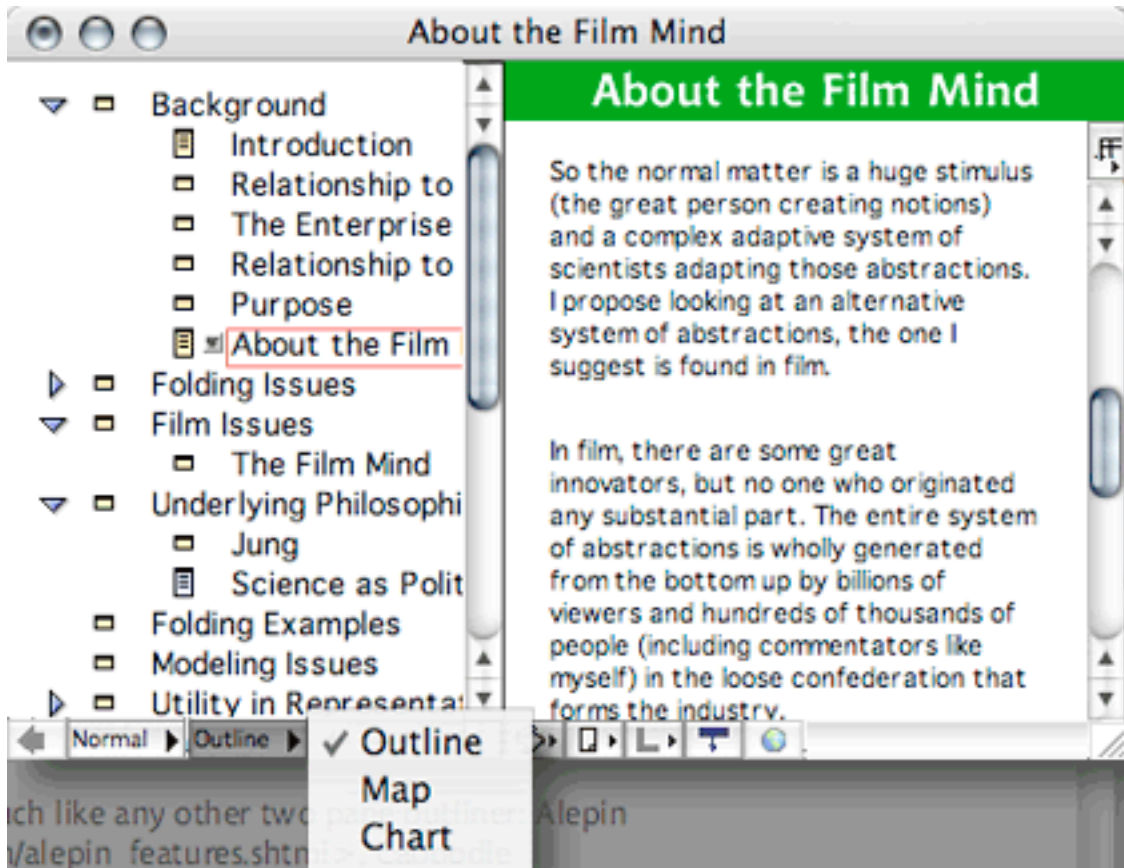
Explorer Pop-up

In this configuration, it looks much like any other two-pane outliner: Alepin, Caboodle, FO, NewNotePadPro, (Hog Bay) Notebook, NotePod, (Skinkhunt) Notes, Notes, OmniOutliner, PocketNotes, Sh-out!, and Shadow are the primary ones on our tracker list. The screenshot shows Hog Bay Notebook.
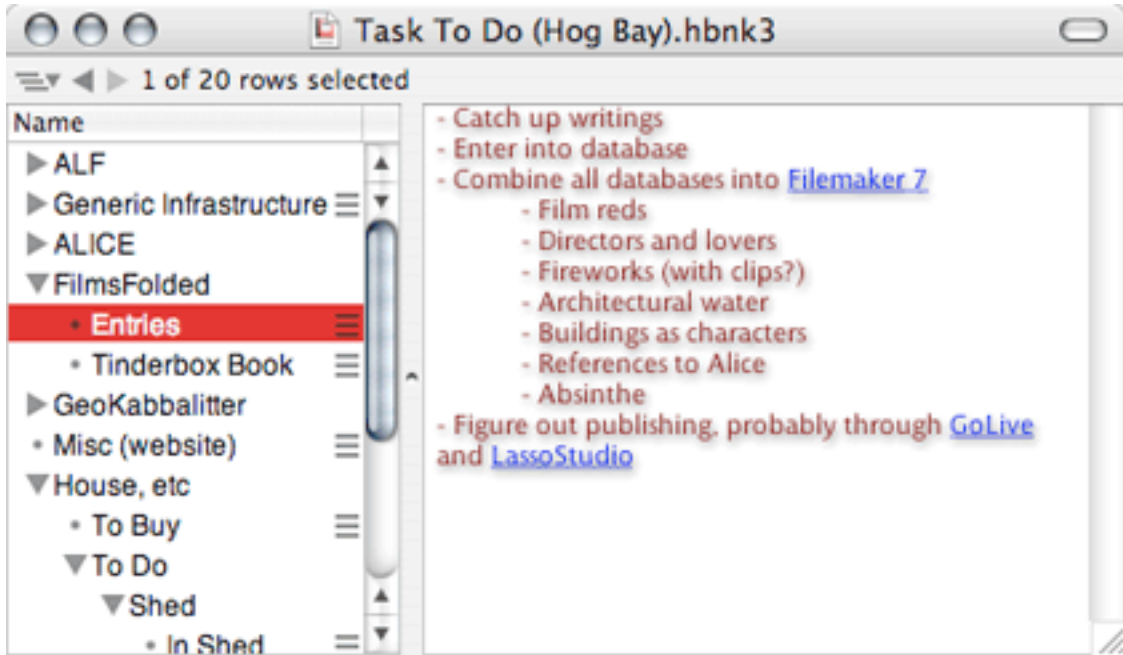
Hog Bay Notebook

You can shuffle the order and hierarchy of the outline in several ways. It has *all* the basics of an outliner. Regular readers will recall that in our second and third *ATPO* columns, we listed outliner features with the intent of recalling them to examine specific outliners. You might want to refer to those columns for more definition and examples of a particular feature.

So let's look at how Tinderbox addresses this collection of features.

The ATPO Feature List

Ordinary Nesting, Promote/Demote, Collapsing

We start out with the basics of outlining. This first feature is a freebie because we wouldn't be discussing it at all if it didn't support robust outlines. You can create headers (Tinderbox calls them "note titles") and move them about readily as you would expect. Collapsing and expanding is perhaps not as well supported as in some of our *ATPO* outliners; for instance, you cannot display only the top three levels of the hierarchy. And for reasons we note below it is not feasible to support header splitting and joining.

Styles

There are no named styles. We'll note why in our complaints section below. No outliner at all does a good job at this in the note field, except Word, which has its own share of problems. Some outliners (such as Circus Ponies' NoteBook) currently support styles for header levels, which is good, but a lesser good. Tinderbox does neither through a simple specification preference or dialog, except you can customize some header styles in a way we'll indicate later.

(We note some new outliners in the *ATPO* tracker below; two do styled headers, another named styles throughout.)

Headers and Non-headers, Views and View Templates

This characteristic is exhibited by all two-pane outliners by definition. It means that the outliner keeps text notes separate from the outline. Many simple outliners are designed as list or task managers and cannot do this. Having these separate is essential to writers and is the equivalent of keeping section headers separate from paragraph text. After all, for writers the main advantage of outlining is to be able to literally see a document's structure (the relationships of the components-as-headers) and manipulate it.

Tinderbox does this as well as any two-pane outliner and has several organizational views that no other product has, as we will see. On the other hand, outliners that display inline notes, where the notes are placed under the headers as a continuous flow, give special power. Inspiration and Word do this, and the forthcoming OmniOutliner 3 will as well.

This matter of inline notes and styles is an example of how Tinderbox takes a different approach than the familiar. Tinderbox is all about content and enrichment. It assumes that export for presentation or publishing is an option and that you will specify styles at that point. So it has a "Nakakoji" view that displays a note or document according to "style sheets" that you specify. So you could, if you wanted, have an inline, styled view or many views. The novelty of the Nakakoji view is that it can unravel links so they display in different ways. Only text is displayed.
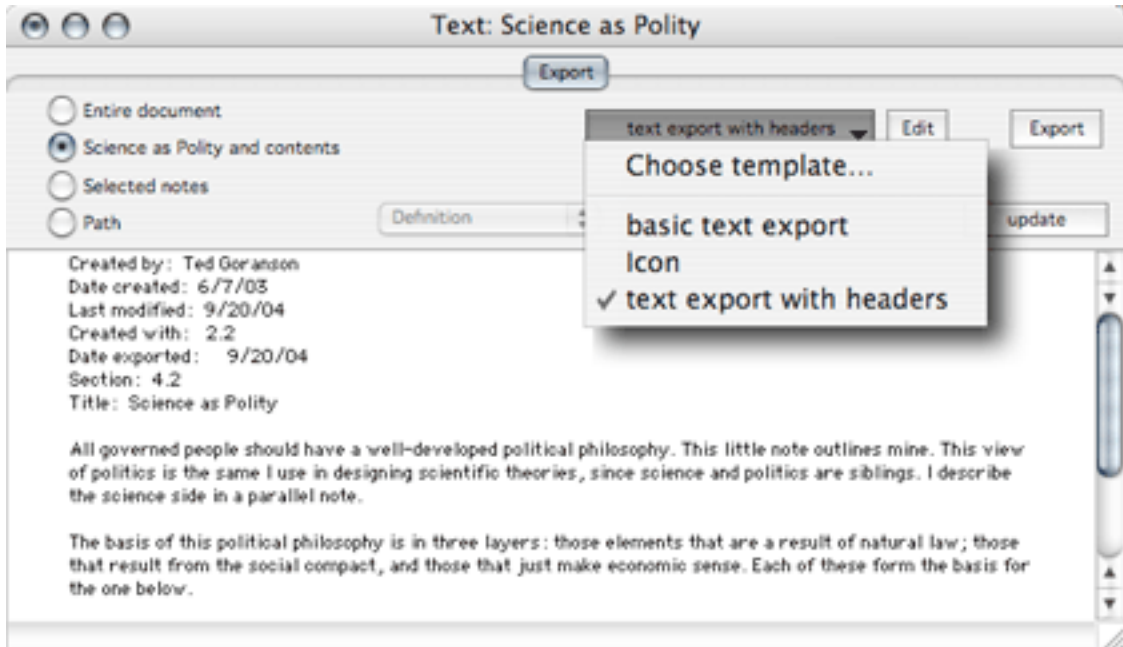
A Nakakoji View

Multilevels, Multilevel Finder Integration, Integrated Multilevels, and Distinct Meta Levels
The title of this section is so long because it combines several similar features having to do with layered outlines, none of which are really supported in Tinderbox.

By multilevels, I mean outlines where the "notes" are themselves outlines where levels can be promoted between a lower outline and a higher. At present, only Circus Ponies' NoteBook does this and, even then, this feature has its limits. I highly recommend playing with this useful technique.

Finder integration recognizes that the Finder is the 800 pound gorilla of outliners, at least so far as folders serving as headers and documents as notes. An ideal outliner will span different documents and integrate at the top level with the Finder. In previous columns, we've noted some such integration in other outliners.

Integration among levels is when you can move elements seamlessly from one level's outline to the next. Tinderbox supports none of these features, but in fairness, few outliner developers so far seem as excited about them as I am.

Distinct metalevels are when you can have an outline out of the main flow. You might want to do this if your outline is a long document and your "side" outlines are to-do lists about various sections of that document. Tinderbox *does* support something like this, because its linking strategy can support all sorts of annotation and comment strategies where an annotation can be a full-blown outline. We'll note that when describing various links.

Folding

Several outliners (NoteBook, NoteTaker, and Inspiration among them) support simple folding. That's a command that takes a note or paragraph and tucks it all under the first line. It is like outline collapsing where children headers are tucked under their parents and useful for the same reason. It helps reveal the structure of huge segments of the document for analysis and reorganization.

Full folding is not supported by any OS X outliner on our *ATPO* tracking list. This is where any selected block or a complex array of predefined elements can be collapsed. You can in theory create a Tinderbox style sheet that will do this, but the Nakakoji view is read-only. You cannot edit the outline in such a view, so it sort of defeats the purpose.

Other Graphical Layouts

Tinderbox wins a prize of sorts here. You have several built-in views. Aside from the outline and Nakakoji views we've seen, you can also produce a "chart" view, which displays the structure in a hierarchical, horizontal tree:
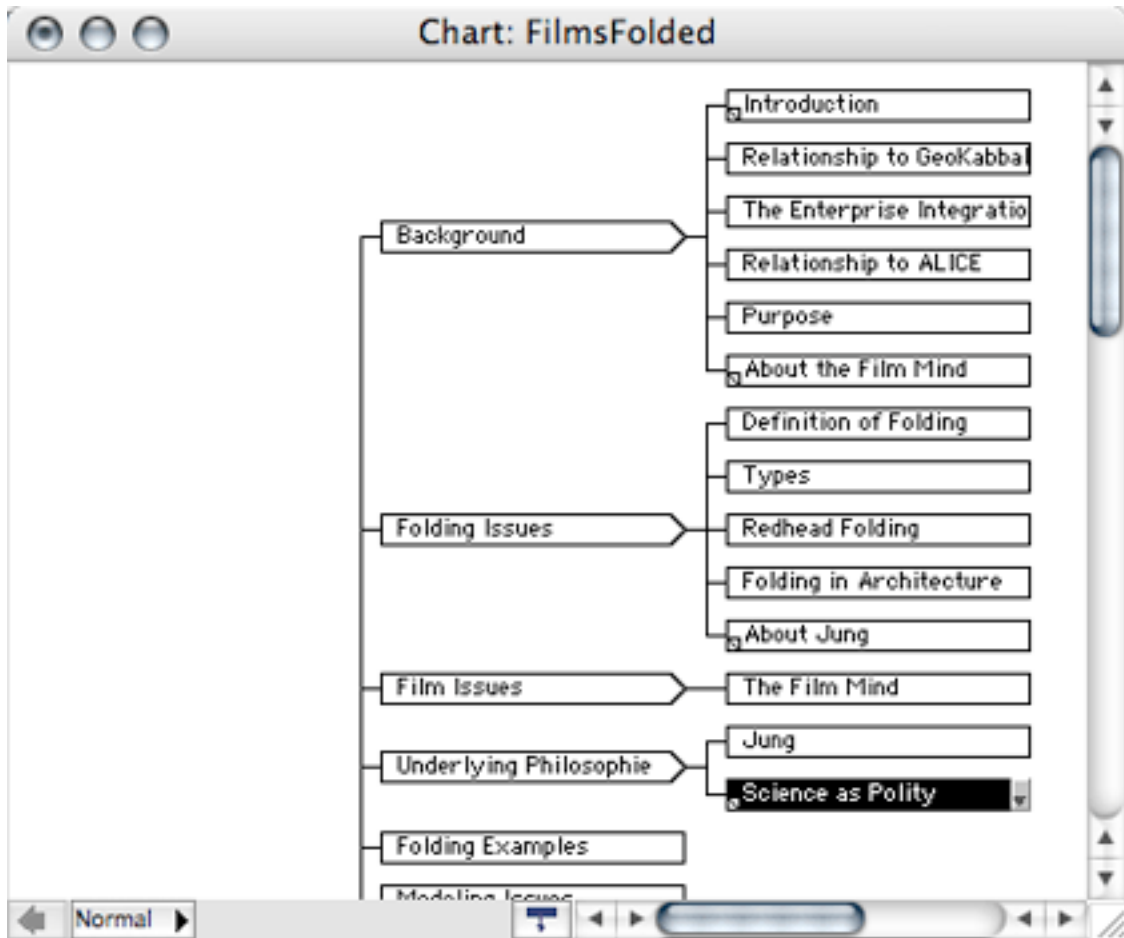

Chart View

Or a "Map" view in which each note is displayed as a rectangle. The hierarchy is shown as colored rectangles within parent rectangles. This map view is the core view for advanced Tinderboxers, and we revisit it below. Links are displayed. Boxes can be dragged, opened, hoisted, and linked just as in the outline view.

Also, you can also have something that is a hybrid of Map and Chart called a "treemap," which combines both the notion of a tree and layered containment.
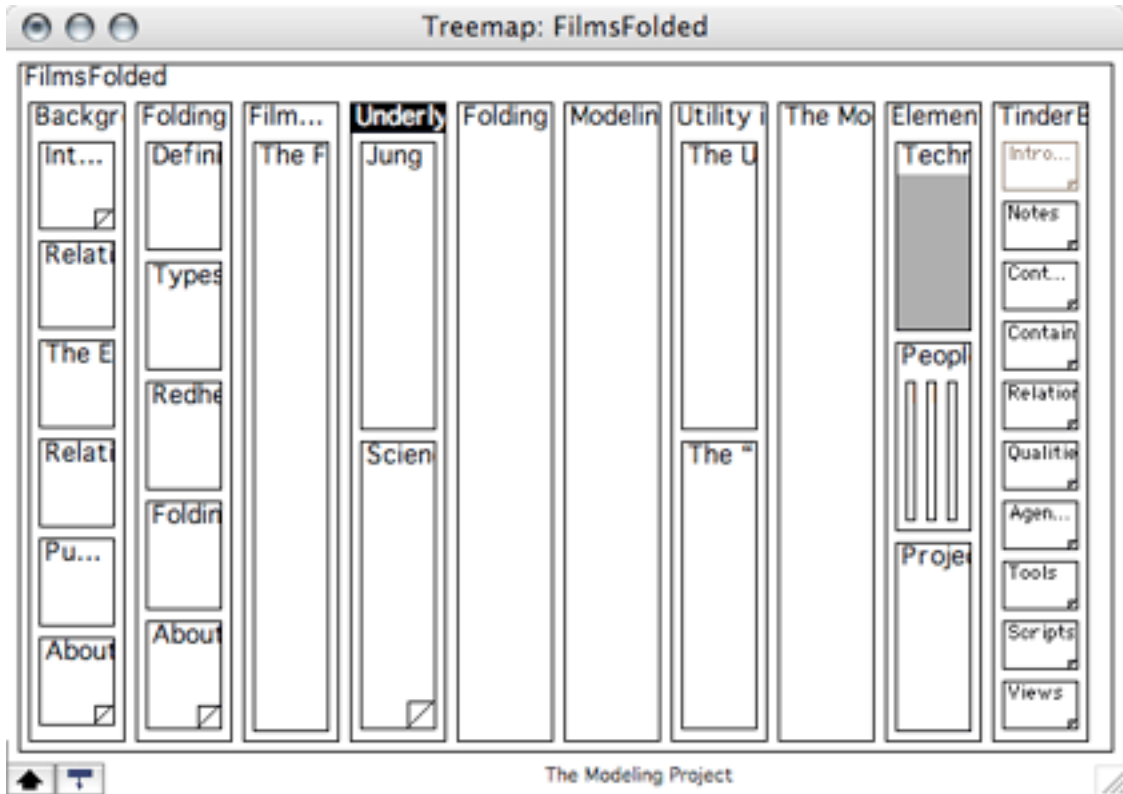
TreeMap View

All these views, plus individual panes for notes, can be open and live if you wish.

Snipping Input and Drag and Drop

This is the ability to easily input items from other applications (or the Web), usually by "snipping." There's no question about this: Tinderbox is designed for people who write stuff rather than snip it from elsewhere. It has no special service for snipping from other applications like DEVONthink, which is intended as a drop box database for varied forms of "borrowed" stuff in all forms. NoteTaker, Circus Ponies' NoteBook and Hog Bay Notebook have good facilities for grabbing and placing stuff as well. I understand that many Tinderboxers combine their 'boxing with a good snipper/database.

It supports text drag well enough, and dragging a Finder icon of any file to the box creates a link to that file, but it doesn't "show" in the note. On the other hand, if the material is available as an RSS newsfeed, Tinderbox can fetch and display it as a simple RSS reader.

External Links and References

By this, we mean the ability to handle URLs of various types in a number of ways. There aren't many outliners that won't let you put a live URL in a note, and most outliners support links or aliases to files as well. Now that OS X has Web rendering built into the operating system, outliners on our tracking list are starting to allow the display of a Web page right in the note field.

Here's how Tinderbox handles URLs: Each note has a large number of built-in attributes (and you can add any others you like). You access these from the "FF" pop-up on the upper right of the window. Selecting one displays that attribute in a line at the top of the note. If the attribute is editable, you can change it right in that field.

Some of these are: "URL," "AutoFetch," "ViewInBrowser," "ReadOnly," and "LastFetched."
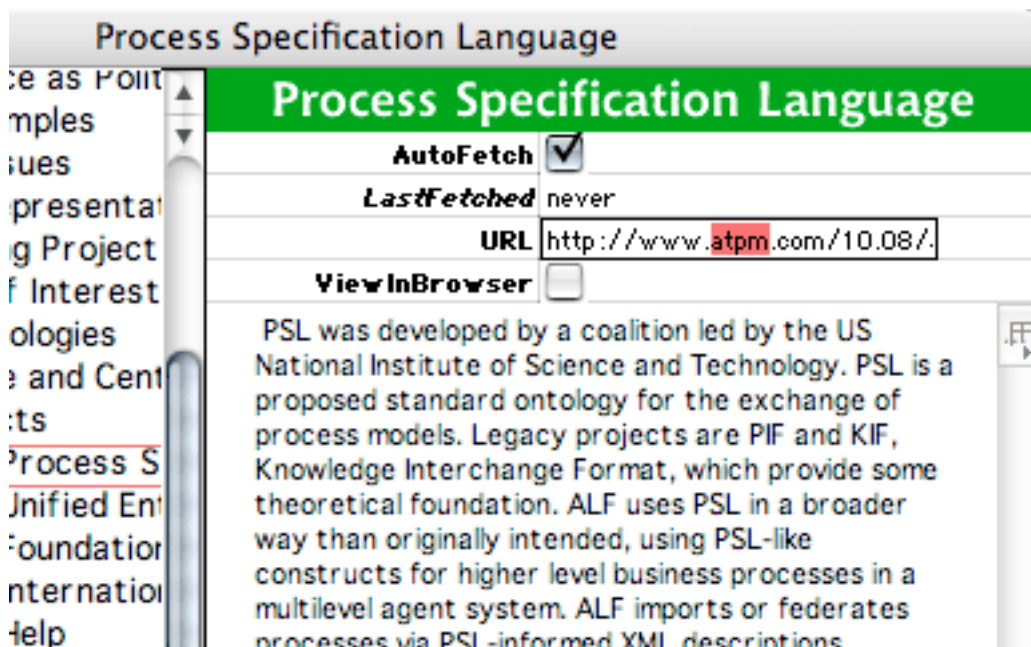
A Note Showing Attributes

If you enter a URL in the URL attribute, the note will consist of the text from that page if AutoFetch is set ("AutoFetch" tells Tinderbox to update the note based on the latest version of the page). "ViewInBrowser" tells Tinderbox to display the note in the system-specified browser. Dragging a URL to an outline or map view creates a note with those defaults (minus AutoFetch), making Tinderbox an extremely powerful bookmark manager.

Agents—which we'll "outline" in a moment—can update pages automatically and sort them according to a variety of criteria. For example, I could set Tinderbox to monitor some key pages (not sites, Tinderbox won't follow links from tracked pages) and look for pages that have "Goranson" and "idiot" or "genius" in the same text, make clones of them and put them under the "strokes" or "whacks" headers accordingly for my perusal.

Tinderbox's handling of RSS feeds is even more advanced, as we've already noted. Tinderbox is set up as an authoring/publishing tool, so as with HTML, all the various RSS standards are supported. It publishes RSS feeds and can be used as a simple RSS reader.

Internal Links and References

Judging by the large number of outliners that support linking to external files and Internet resources, this feature must be relatively easy to program. Slightly more difficult are hypertext links that provide hot navigation from marked text blocks to notes elsewhere in the document like the Web. But why stop there? Web-type hyperlinks are pretty limited; there are lots of other types of hyperlinks.

Real hypertext theory existed well before the experiment that stuck us with HTML. Its entirely possible to have different kinds of links, and Tinderbox thankfully supports some of them. This is not the only thing that discriminates it, but it may well be the most mind-bending.

You can have links of different types, as many as you wish, or you can apply a vanilla link. The screenshot shows the type definition dialog, where you also specify color and visibility (useful for the map view).
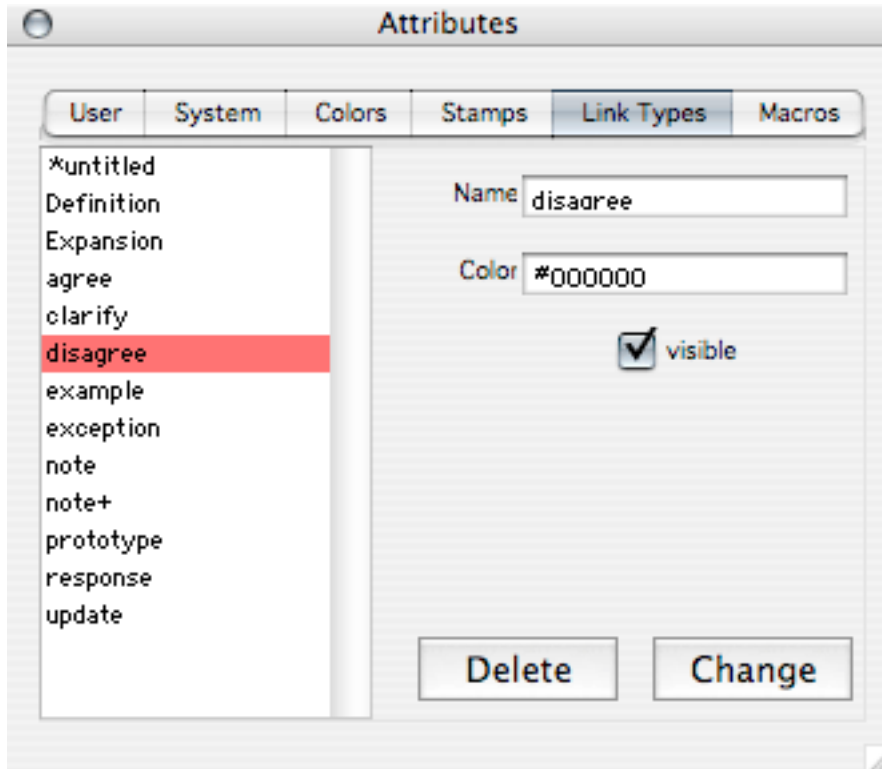

Link Type Editor

Links can be from notes or text blocks to notes or text blocks. Multiple links can be assigned, even to overlapping text selections. Naturally, you'll have to think about how to translate all this if you are exporting to a less capable environment like the Web.

Later, you'll read my grousing about some user interface ugliness, but the functionality is near-orgasmically elegant, with a great example being how links are assigned. You select text if your link is from a text selection, or don't select text if your origin is the entire note. Hit a key combo (or select the "make link" button at the bottom of the window, or a similar button on the toolbar or of course from the menu bar) and you literally get the beginning of a link, one end of which is attached to the origin, the other end attached to

the cursor. You simply drag the loose end to the target. If the target is currently not visible (or doesn't yet exist), you can "park" the unattached link in one of three parking spaces on the toolbar.
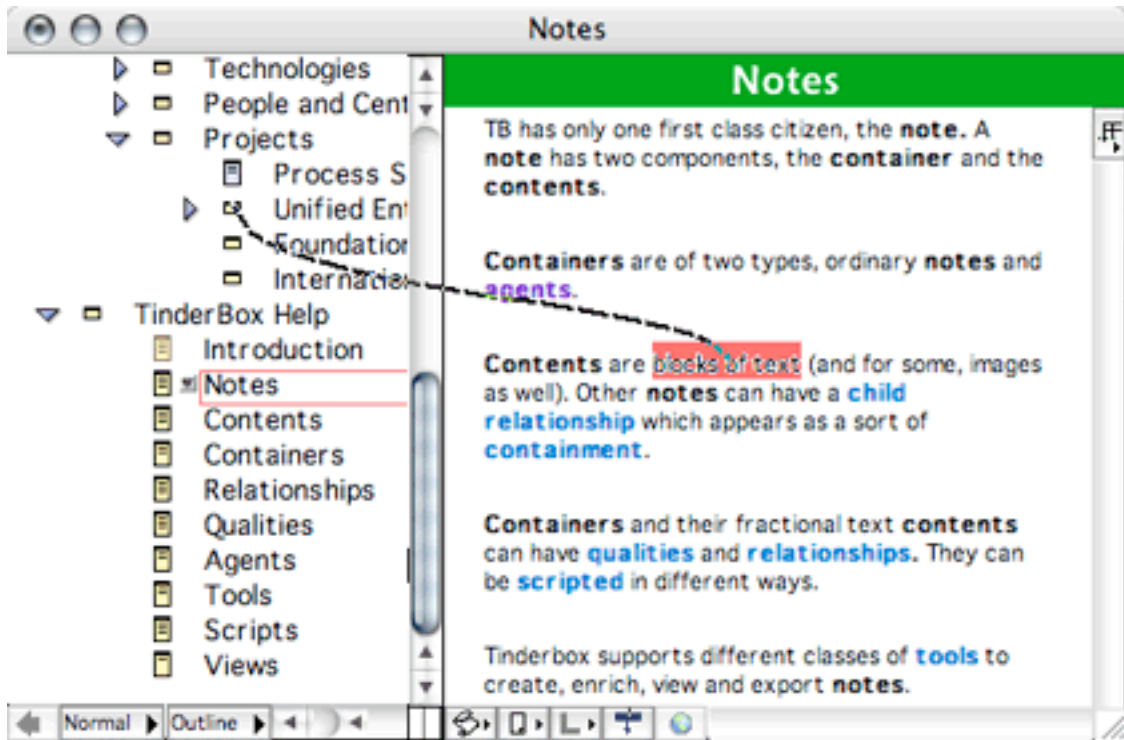

Making a Link

On dropping the link, you get a link specification dialog to determine certain characteristics of the link.
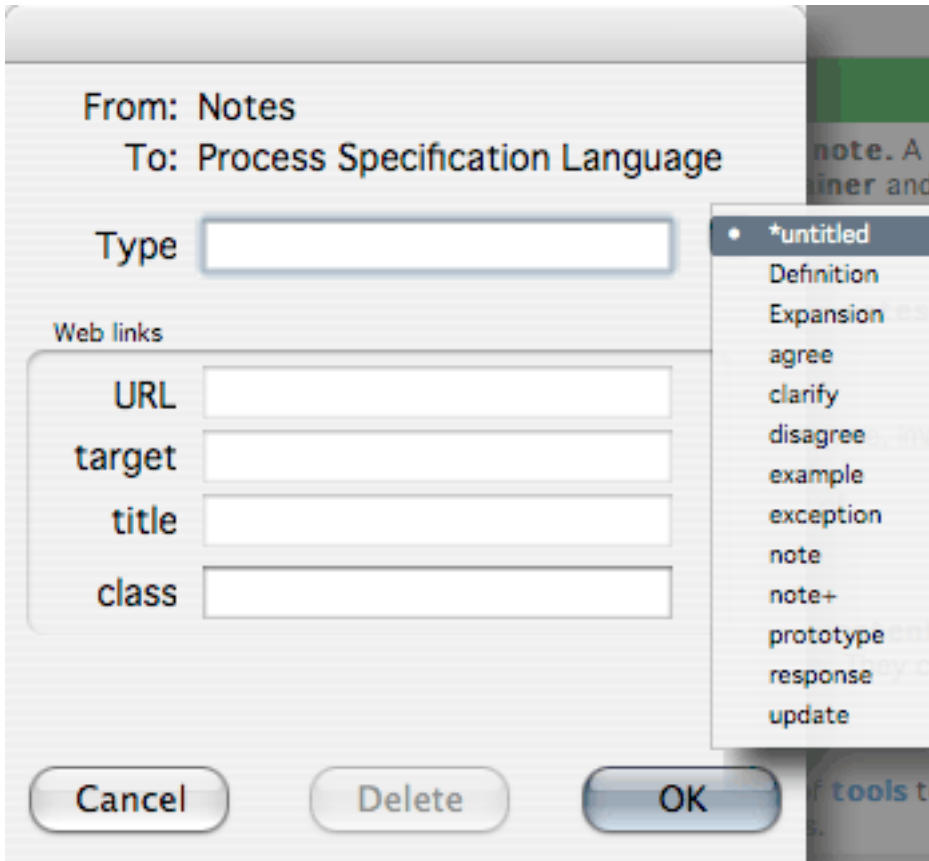
Link Characteristics Dialog

Here's where you specify the type, and give direction if required about how you'd like the link to behave once translated to the Web. There are tools to easily modify links as well. Two of these are way cool: you can open a "Link Browser" for any note and see a list of all the links associated with that note and modify or delete them.


Link Browser
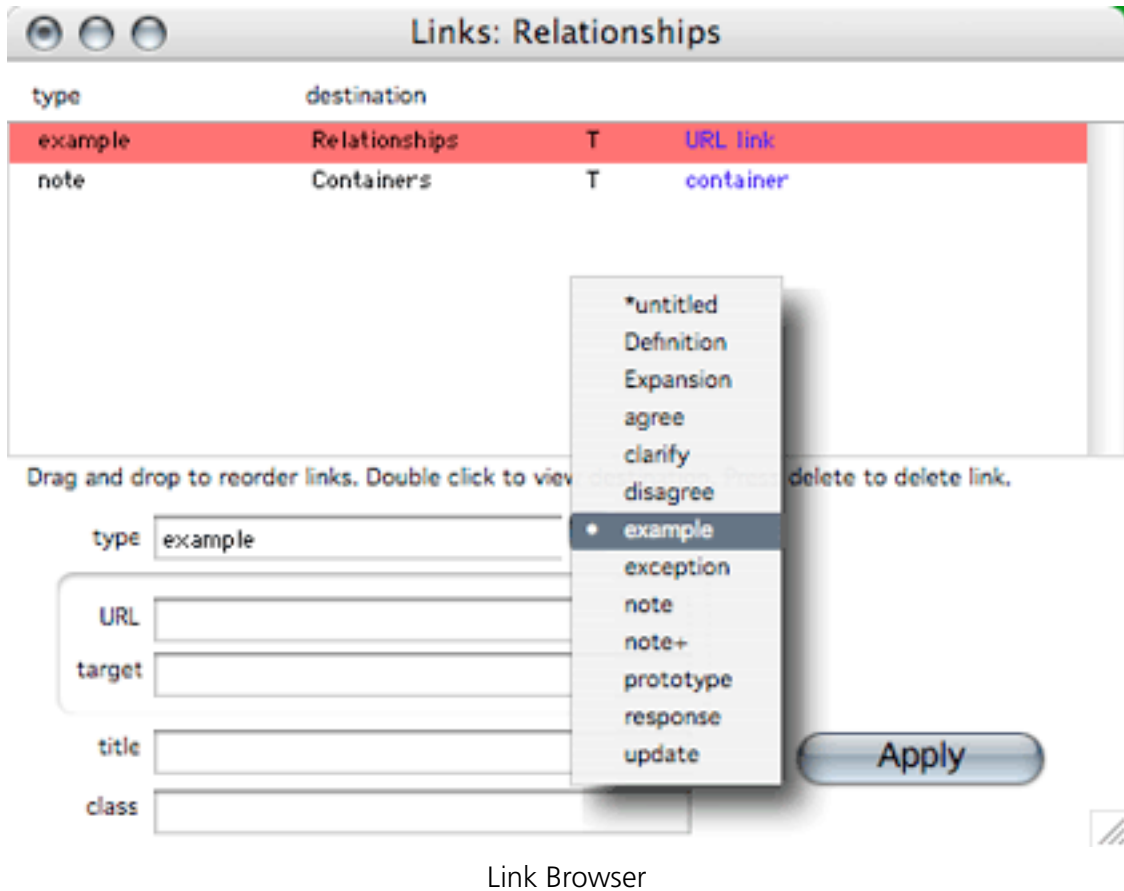
Or you can see similar information in a more graphical format in the "Roadmap" dialog.
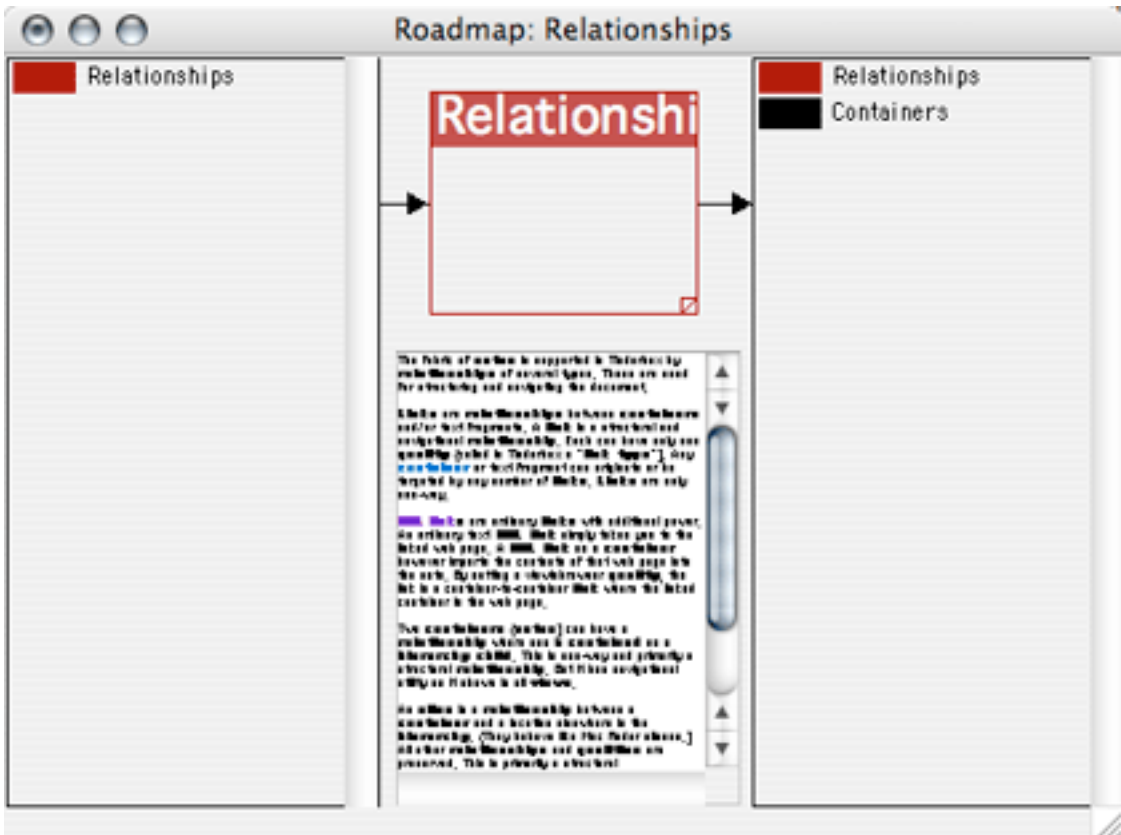
Roadmap Dialog

If the links are specified as "visible," you can see and follow them in the map (mindmapping-like) mode, something we'll get to in a moment. In the outliner mode, you can open a pop-up at the bottom of a note to see all the links and follow one if you wish. These kinds of links only can be made within the current Tinderbox document. Naturally, you can follow a hyperlink.
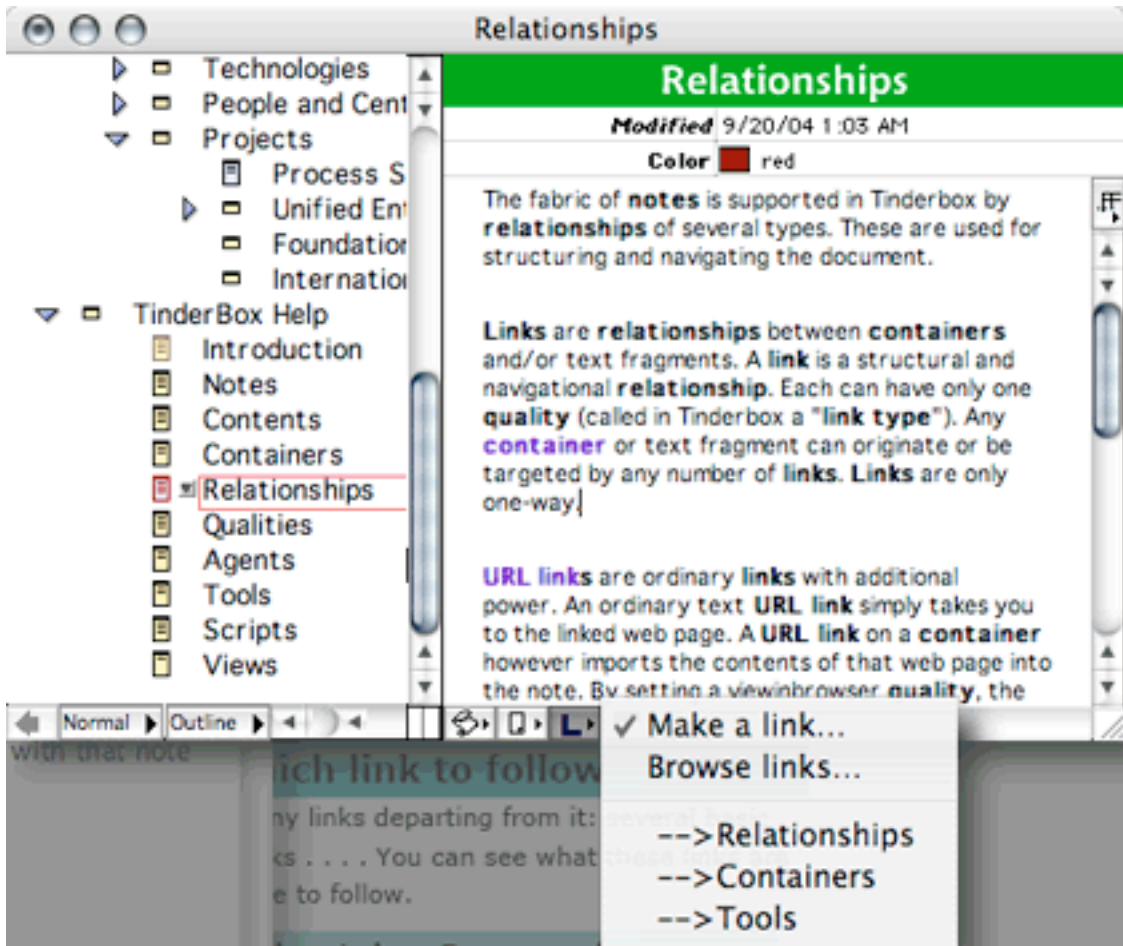
Link Pop-up

Tinderbox's handling of links by itself puts it above all the alternatives.

Clones

I don't know why clones are so hard to do, but few outliners support them, currently only Tinderbox, Hog Bay Notebook, to some extent DEVONthink and now [TAO](), which you'll meet way below. Clones are essential to most advanced outlining simply because trees are handy but not ideal. Sometimes you need something in two or more places.

The Finder addressed this shortcoming eons ago. The late [MORE]() led the way for desktop outliners well before that. We need more clones in outliners! Developers, arise!

Making a clone (which Tinderbox reasonably calls an "alias") manually is a matter of selecting a note and choosing a menu item or hitting a key combo. The new header appears in italics to designate it as a clone. It can be moved wherever you like. Changes in the clone are reflected in the original, including changes to the title. This is unlike the Aliases in the Finder which can be renamed.

But watch out. When you make a clone of a parent in the Finder or Hog Bay Notebook, it is exactly like the original and includes children. (In fact, in Hog Bay, once a clone is created, the distinction between the original and the clone goes away; both are displayed exactly the same.)

Not so in Tinderbox; the clone is an image of the note only; children are not included. It is one of the consequences of the focus on notes as the beings with souls rather than the header outline itself.

As we'll see, Tinderbox clones can be created and moved automatically by agents. When you are moving stuff around by agents, it is not feasible to carry the children.

Group Operations, Sort and Search, Mark and Gather

The title of this feature group is influenced by a capability in MORE. In that abandoned outliner, you could "mark" headers manually or by a find operation and then "gather" the results under a header, either by moving them or making clones. It was a much celebrated capability.

Something like this is addressed in our current flock of power outliners. NoteBook and NoteTaker have some attribute marking facilities and auto-gathering that in some ways exceed MORE's. Hog Bay has an ordinary "gather" command similar to MORE's and a really novel "Assemble Document" command that goes much farther.

Outliners with columns can use the columns to assign tags. A "gather" in this regime is a "sort." Tinderbox, of course, does not support columns.

But Tinderbox bests them all because it supports agents. We'll get to the agents themselves in a moment. Let's just note here that agents can see all the metadata of a note: all its text, attributes, and links and can do so automatically. It can "find" notes that have certain combinations of characteristics and "gather" them in special agent containers. These containers appear in the outline as headers but are identifiable by having the bar in the icon at the bottom rather than the top.
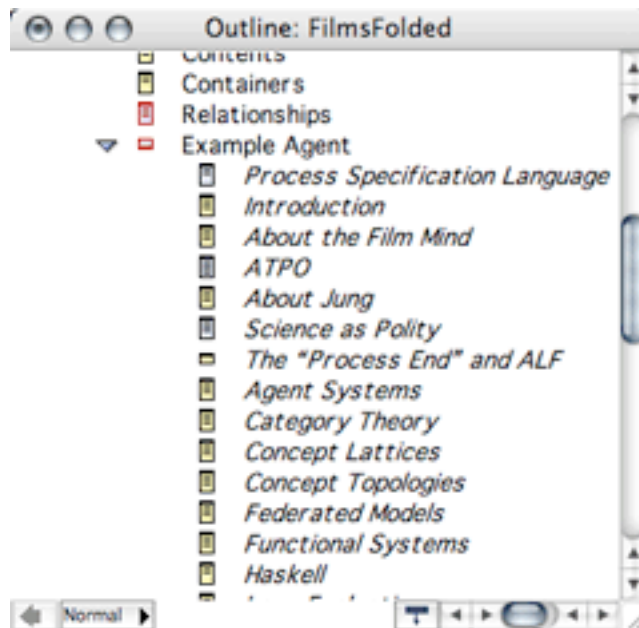
An Agent Container

Hoist

Hoist is a simple feature, one that matters more when the notes are inline rather than in two panes. But it is still useful when the outline is large. It simply allows you to zoom into an area of the outline and display it by itself. Tinderbox supports this in the map mode, as well as an interesting little sister in the outline mode: you have nine levels of "zoom" so far as the font size of the outline headers. A handy little touch.
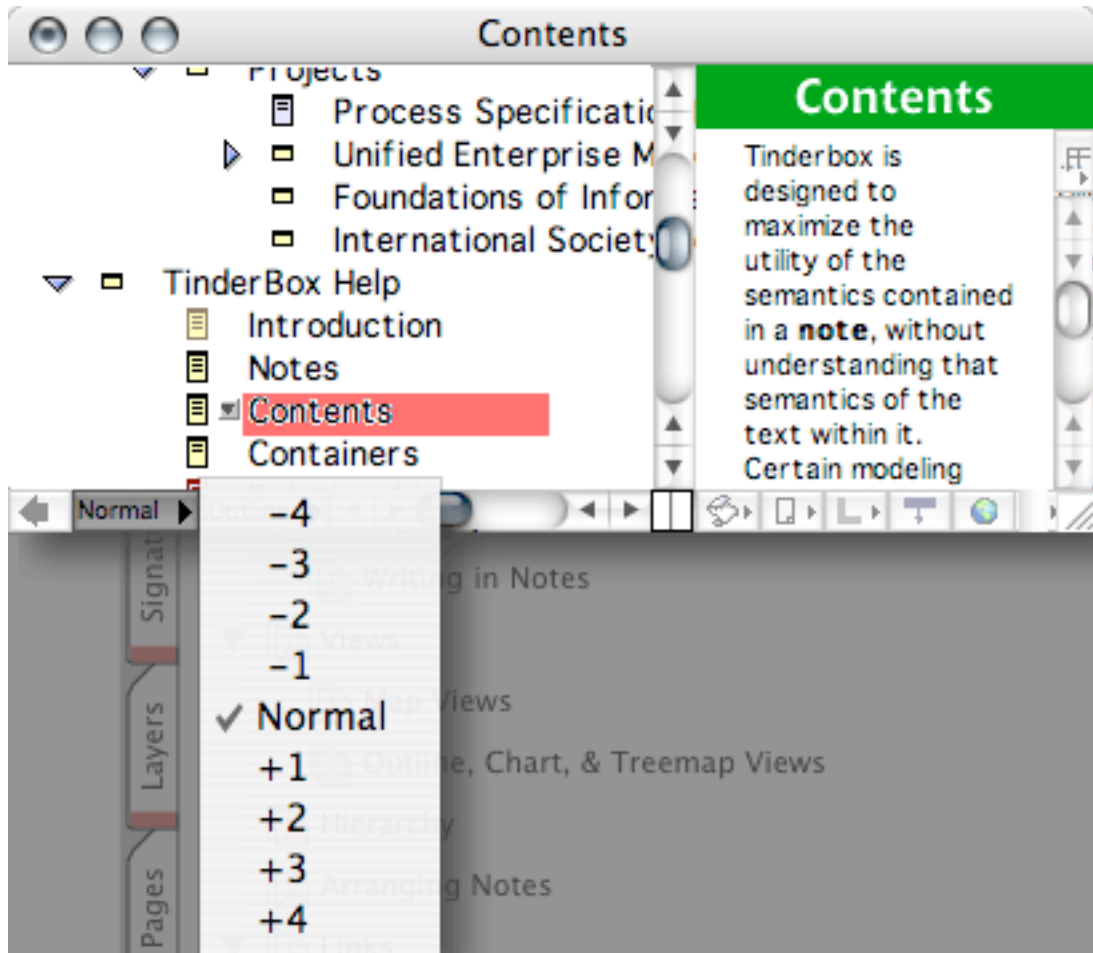

Outline Text Size Pop-up

Standards-Based Export

If Tinderbox hasn't yet impressed, here's a killer: XML. Tinderbox's storage format is XML. Let's make it clear that we are not talking about *exporting* XML; the files themselves are XML.

That means that you can open and edit a Tinderbox file in any XML editor (or a text editor if you have the guts). You can perform all sorts of transforms and mappings on the native file, and there are lots of tools, including many open source tools, to help you do this.
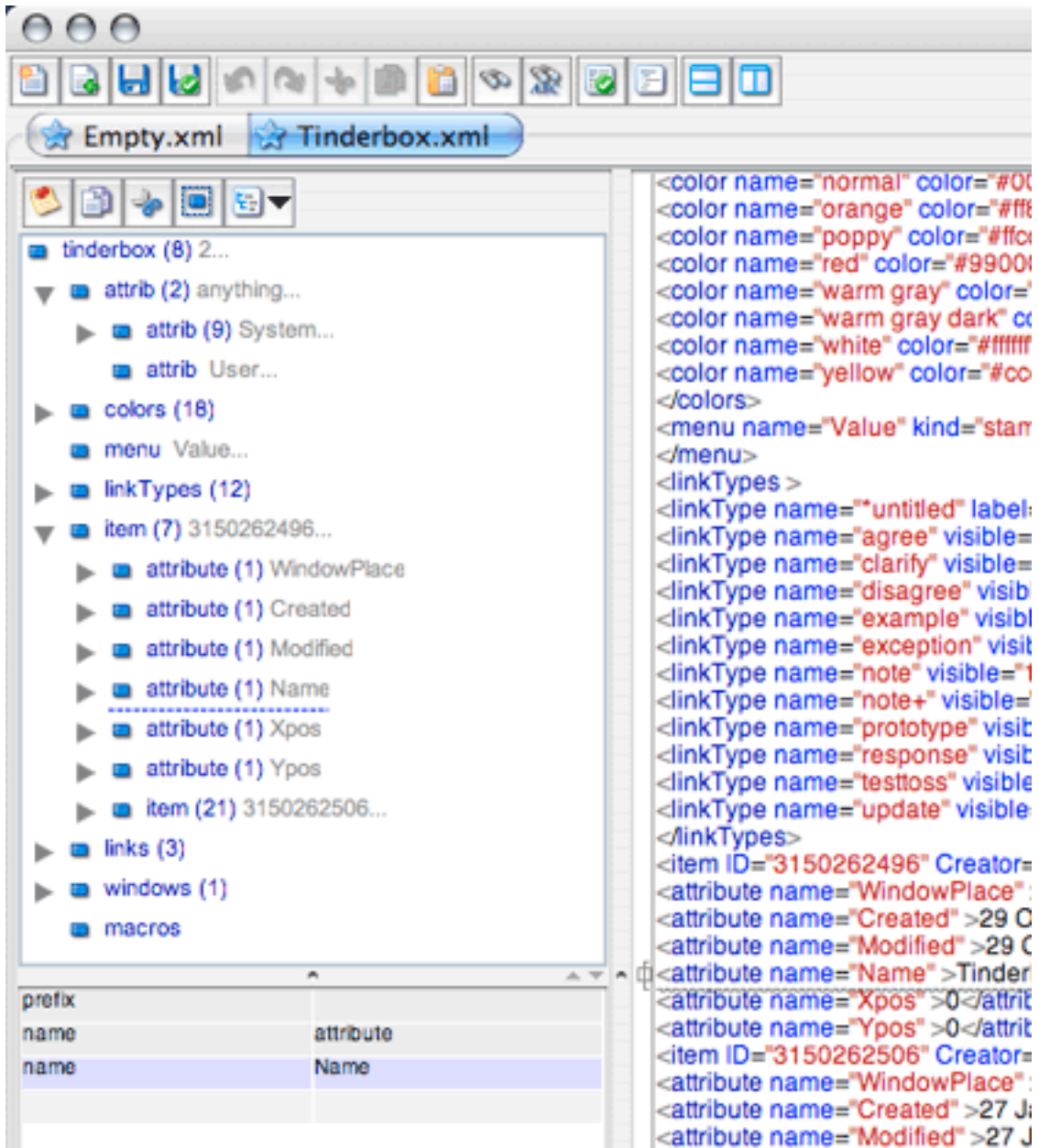
Tinderbox Data in EditiX

This alone is one reason for serious users to consider Tinderbox. XML is essentially the only open standard we have for rich documents. If you want to ensure that your thousands of hours aren't wasted when the market shifts, you may want to take this into account. I've been seriously burned in the past, and I'm sure as heck not going to trust Microsoft or Adobe again. Are you?

If for some reason, your machine explodes in some way and corrupts the file, XML may be the easiest of all so far as being able to repair or recover,

ATPO is a champion of OPML, which is an XML specification for simple outline structure. It was created by Dave Winer to allow sharing of information among Frontier users. It is terrific for tying together suites that deal with "straight," simple outlines, like merging OmniOutliner's outlining tools with NovaMind's mindmapping. But it just doesn't cut the mustard when things get rich. That's why NoteBook and NoteTaker have NBML and NTML respectively.

Tinderbox (and hypertext) maven Marc-Antoine Parent has created TinderToolBox, an open source Python facility for translating Tinderbox XML (a useful thing) and also direct manipulation of Tinderbox files (a *very* big deal). TinderToolBox also allows importing data into Tinderbox files, but this is on the advanced side. He currently exports to LaTeX (via HTML), which is bound to be of interest to many.

No other outliner is open in this way. Forget wanting open access to the source code if we can supplement Tinderbox functionality in this way, and on the TinderToolBox list are some pretty clever and heavy ideas.

On the negative side, saving in Tinderbox would likely be a lot faster if it used a compact proprietary format like the other guys. Some users have remarked on the long save times of large documents.

Tinderbox also exports to HTML. In fact, it does this so well, leveraging note attributes and actions, that many users purchase it purely as a blogging tool. I think Tinderbox may be unique in its approach to blog management: everything is maintained on your desktop and published or updated to the server. I'm completely skipping over this very interesting, strong capability because it isn't central to outlining per se; but I will note that of blogging tools, the two most capable and flexible seem to be Frontier and Tinderbox, with radically differing approaches.

Events

When we put events on the feature list, we had in mind the ability to track time as a component of task management. Most outliners don't understand time. Tinderbox does—at least its agents do in a simple sense. You can trigger an agent to perform a task on a given day, or after so many days.

I think you would be hard pressed to choose Tinderbox primarily as an ordinary to-do list or task manager, especially with so many good special purpose outliners out there. But you can use its capabilities to roll your own credible task manager if you've committed for other reasons.

Tagging, Keywords, and Indexing

OK, now we can talk about metadata. Metadata is information about your information. In NoteBook, it can be stuff like a text highlight, a keyword or graphic sticker, even "date created." In OmniOutliner, it could be any value you put in one of the columns. In the old Nisus Writer Classic, it could be a named style or variable.

In Tinderbox, there are two sources of metadata: note attributes and note links (with their own link attribute). Most people stick to the note attributes.

Some note attributes are determined by the system, like who created the note and when. Some are always there but user-editable such as note color, title, and location in the hierarchy. And then you have a third category of any attribute and value you can make up, like "draft status" or "public viewable."

You can "Get Info" on a note and get a complete report of every attribute. You can edit attributes right there if you wish.
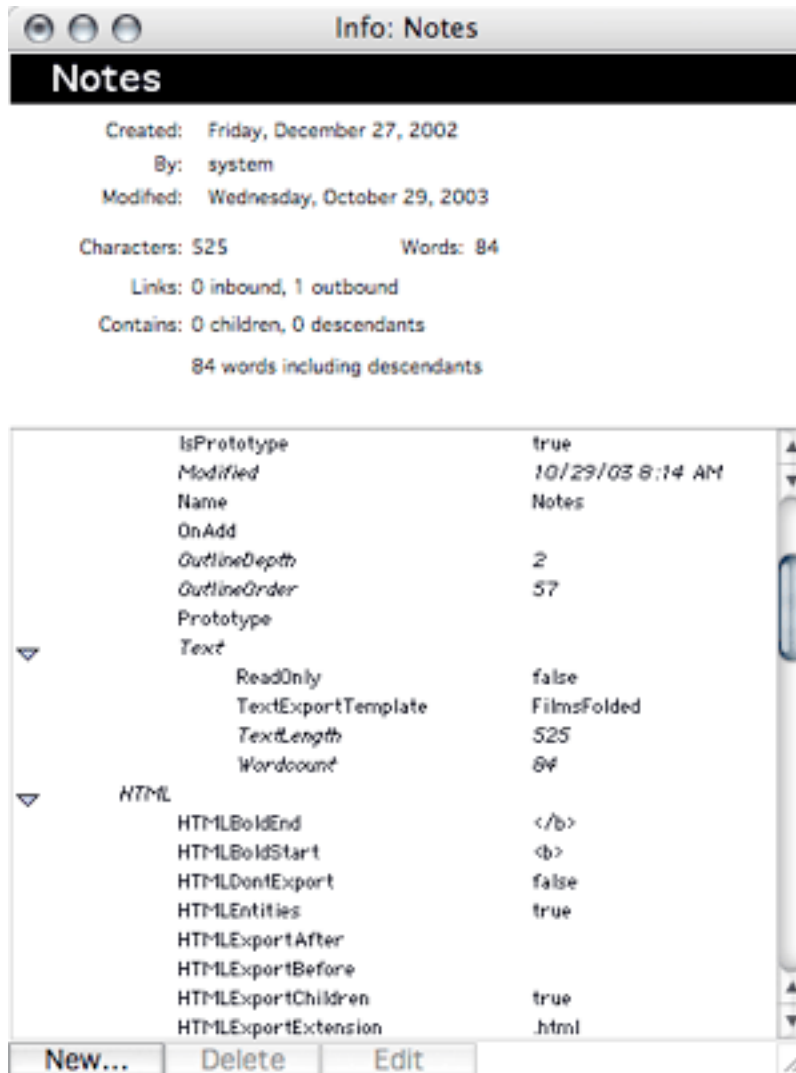

The Get Info Window

We've already shown one way to access these and display them as database fields at the top of the note. Any attribute can be displayed this way and edited there. When I said everything is an accessible attribute, I meant it; these displayed attributes are called "key" attributes. Their list is itself an attribute!

For a long time, I wondered why that pop-up menu in the upper right of the window is labelled "FF." Actually, it is supposed to represent a table. The text content of a note is itself an attribute and you can create another attribute to put other note text in (but you have a small editing window for this).

Attribute management is eased by two tools. One is the poorly named "stamp" tool. A stamp is a collection of attribute values that you can apply to a note in one whack. It is like a style template: you may want to have one stamp for draft stuff, another for ideas, another for ready-to-publish and so on. "Stamping" a note changes attributes wholesale.
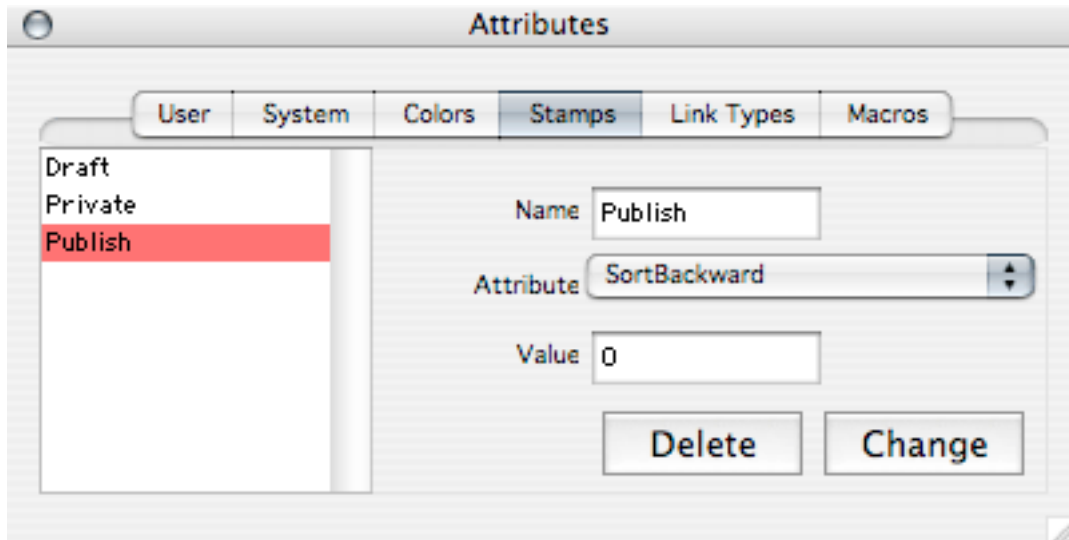
The Stamp Editor

A more sophisticated tool is the "prototype." This is a note, possibly an empty note. Assigning a note to a prototype note (via a special kind of link) makes that note inherit all the prototype's attribute values. As your document evolves, you can change the prototype and all the linked notes change.

Don't be fooled into thinking the prototype is a trivial tool just because we mentioned it in association with stamps. The idea here is one common in programming, that of "inheritance." Attribute inheritance is an extremely deep deal, especially with cascading prototypes, and can form the basis of a capable knowledge representation system. This

feature leans itself more towards the artificial intelligence end of the spectrum. Tinderbox may be the first desktop software to expose inheritance as a user leverageable concept outside the software development community.

Agents can see and take action based on these attributes, typically cloning and collecting notes. But an agent can change an attribute value as well. Agents can similarly see links and act according to them, so you can use links to add metadata. For instance, you might link certain notes to a "high priority" note, which exists only to allow that tagging.

You might want to do this because placement in the hierarchy is something of a hybrid between a link and an attribute, and you can exploit the different behavior of each. For instance, you cannot create a new attribute by using an agent, but you can create a new child relationship that can be treated like an attribute.

This here is powerful stuff, which creates a somewhat difficult learning curve.

Metaphors and Header Relationships

An outline is a pretty abstract thing by itself. But it is conducive to metaphors. For instance the Finder uses the "folder" metaphor where a file is "in" a folder. Our last *ATPO* dealt with mindmappers, many of which use images to create other useful metaphors. Tinderbox is brazenly metaphor-free, austere in this regard—except for the name of course. A tinderbox was an essential technology in days past, before matches. It contained the stuff (tinder) you used to build a fire.

"Header Relationships" is a technique that advanced outliners use to denote more meaning in the parent-child relationship. It is used in many modeling contexts and depends on different symbols being used for parents. Then when an entry is under a parent, it carries that context as well. Tinderbox can do something like this with agents and clones, and separately with links and associated agents to change header styles, but without the graphic symbols. We'll give an example in a moment that uses header fonts.

Multimedia

You can import graphics. However, users report that documents get slow when they contain too many images. Eastgate says that performance in this regard has improved, but the tool clearly prefers text and pointers. You can create a URL that points to media file on your disk or network, but Tinderbox is eclipsed by some other outliners in the ease with

which you can just drag a file to a note and get a linked reference. You can only do that in Tinderbox by linking through the "file" icon at the bottom of the note window, which is a real shame.

We would hope that at some point soon we'll see support for <u>SVG</u>, the Adobe-created specification for XML vector graphics, and the ability to use or at least reference data in external files directly within the note.

If you need lots of multimedia, or full drag and drop support, another tool is your best bet.

Actions and Action Hierarchies (Internal Scripting)
We've already touched on this. Tinderbox adds its marvelous attribute and link assignment capability to an internal scripting language. That language is amazingly rudimentary when seen by itself, more like a notation for setting attributes. It understands "boolean expressions." That's where you can ask it find text patterns like where "Goranson" and "jerk" but not "isn't" are found in the same sentence.

One could hardly guess that this, by itself, would be useful, but it is.

Action Editor

Eastgate seems open to adding any new command that makes sense. Naturally, they have some clear ideas about what makes sense, ideas that may differ from yours. For instance, an agent can collect items as children but not as grandchildren. It's a design thing. There's a similar constraint that aliases cannot have children, as we've already mentioned.

Logical ways for Tinderbox to grow its internal scripting abilities would be to provide greater scripting control over prototypes (like conditional inheritance) and support "plug-ins" that can use external scripts in any language that conforms to a plug-in architecture. Also, it would be nice to assign multiple attributes to links.

Scripting

We at *ATPO* make a big deal about AppleScriptability. OmniOutliner and Hog Bay Notebook do it well, and NoteTaker will soon. AppleScript is the first resort of the Mac power user, though many do so with reluctance (as it is notably less elegant than, say, Tinderbox in its design). After you get past user interface gloss, AppleScript and (its newly arrived cousin) shell scripting are what makes a Mac a Mac.

I just couldn't believe Tinderbox eschewed it. Tinderbox does support AppleScript in one powerful way: you can drag a script to the icon in the bottom of a note's window and thereafter that script will be executed when the note is opened. That means that you can have a note's text open in BBEdit (and perform a scripted text dance) if you wish to have a power editor. (You'll need QuickKeys or something similar to paste the text back, and you'll have to avoid links from text blocks.)

Eastgate's lack of enthusiasm for AppleScript comes from the desire to only introduce complexity where there's a big payoff—there doesn't seem to be much that AppleScript is needed for so far as Eastgate can see. If we have the internal scripting language and access to open XML (plus tools like TinderToolBox), there isn't much left over, it seems to them.

Here's one example: if Tinderbox supported AppleScript, someone clever could write some collection scripts to enter documents, so that local files were supported like Web pages and RSS feeds. Then Tinderbox would also be a spatial substitute for the Finder, more in the spirit and advanced vision of the original Xerox PARC concept than the OS X Finder, and you couldn't read an issue of *Macworld* without tripping over it. But…this *could* be done by collecting the Mac file information in AppleScript (or by many other means) and folding it into the Tinderbox XML files!

Here's another example you can't escape, though: if it were scriptable, you could integrate it in useful ways with a media-friendly freeform database like NoteTaker and/or a special purpose task manager.

There is a long-announced version of Tinderbox for Windows that is forthcoming. Perhaps the reason for no AppleScript is: why build in something for a cross-platform application that is a Mac advantage?

(Here is the only qualm I have about Eastgate's apparent reluctance to leverage Mac technologies. I sincerely wish them well and if future sales to Windows customers make them stronger, that's good for us too. But I've seen many of my treasured applications—my trusted lovers—make visits to Windows with promises of fidelity that were all broken, every one. All of those now lack even a passing nod to Mac-unique features and some like FrameMaker have abandoned us completely. Eastgate's dual-platform Storyspace, for instance, still hasn't fully made the leap to OS X! On the other hand, the recent updates to Tinderbox have been frequent, even while Windows porting is underway.)

Outliner Complaints

Complaining about Tinderbox as an outliner is a bit graceless. It is as if one went to the store for a broom, bought a vacuum cleaner for about the same price, and complained about the noise.

The negative feedback I've gotten is in three categories. One of these I'll dismiss early. At $145 regular price it is among the priciest outliners we track. Some *ATPO* readers balk at this. My own attitude is that compared to your hardware investment, the difference between $20 and $200 is insignificant in the shadow of unleashing your mind. Tinderbox is a Photoshop-scale application that is underpriced.

A common complaint is about the Tinderbox documentation. This is one that I do concede: the included documentation *is* inadequate. But I am prepared to cut Eastgate some slack. After all, you can noodle about in most applications and never need to look at the documentation unless you want to do something unusual. In Tinderbox's case, you can't really get past the simple outliner use without understanding how the thing is put together, a requirement that "ordinary" applications don't have.

The documentation doesn't address this well. It is mostly clear and complete, but there is no index or task-based how-to, so finding what you need is unnecessarily hard. Beyond that, there are problems in explaining core concepts. In fact, it don't really explain how Tinderbox really works under the hood. Instead it does what ordinary application help does: tell you how to do certain things, or what specific commands or dialogs do.

This is a somewhat petty complaint compared to the problem. Tinderbox is a sophisticated knowledge representation system wrapped in an accessible form. What it really needs are two sets of documents, one that is precise, technically daunting, and complete; and a second that is task-oriented and user friendly. Both need good indexes!

Speaking of indexes, that list of note attributes can get pretty long, too long to manage well with the current user interface. Maybe the next view will be a column view, or TinderToolBox will help us view Tinderbox files in a columned outliner.

I sincerely hope that this modest column helps new users see the underlying machinery—I've used my own decomposition and understanding in what I present here.

The Tinderbox Web site used to have a help forum, but that has been replaced by a wiki, which has a ton of great stuff from some expert users. But it is hard to find what you are looking for and all but impossible to know when and where the latest killer new tip is posted. A moderately active independent mailing list exists as well.

I'll say that direct e-mail support and the mailing list are both impressive, and you'll be hard pressed to find a more expert, helpful community, tolerant of beginner queries. But I just cannot fathom why Eastgate doesn't support a frequently updated downloadable Tinderbox document of the help and the best of the user-contributed hints that appear on the wiki.

The final category of complaints is about the user interface. *ATPO* has generally celebrated certain elements of the Tinderbox interface (like the icon that shows note size and age and the animation of the live link assignment), but others are a bit quirky or disappointing.

I'll divide these into the ugly, the incomplete, and annoyances from design decisions.

The Ugly: I'll underscore that the functionality is elegant. But the actual appearance of some elements looks temporary (like the icons in the toolbar or the "active" triangle in the outline view) or seem barebones (as in the rudimentary displays in graphic views).
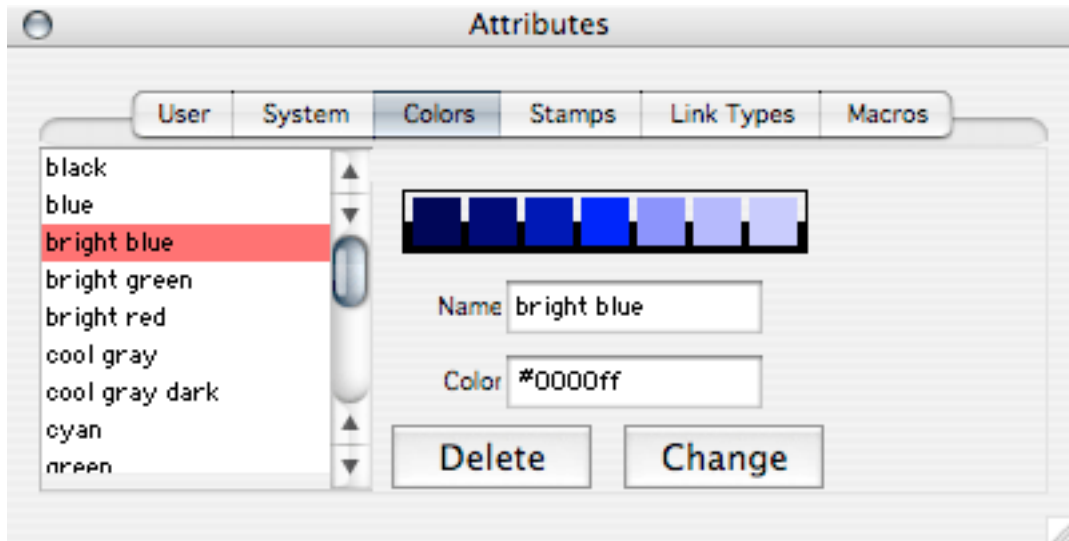

Icon Ugliness
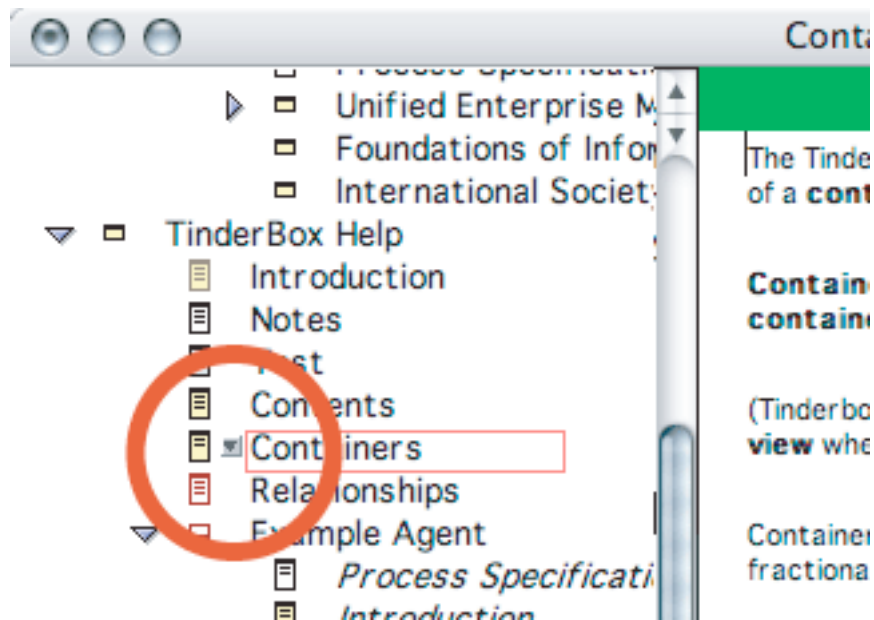
The "Active" Indicator

The Incomplete: There are a few baseline features that give the impression of unnecessary austerity. For an example, check out the Color Attribute Editor:


Color Attribute Editor

You'll see from the screenshot that you can edit the color of the note. This is something you *will* want to play with when you extend your use of Tinderbox to "see" notes when you advance to using the very advantageous map view. To choose a color, you can either select from the list or type in the hexadecimal code for a color. No simple calling of several Apple-supplied color pickers here! Oh how we get spoiled. Notice, however that there are some samples of other shades, three on either side of the selection. Guess what? They don't work. They are indicators of lighter and darker shades that you can select, but in a different dialog.

The Annoyances: These are fair complaints only if you are comparing Tinderbox to other power outliners, and they revolve around the eminence of notes over the outline hierarchy. In many other outliners, you get to choose how much information you put into the "header" text as opposed to the note. For example, in Hog Bay Notebook and OmniOutliner, you could literally treat some headers as paragraphs and the note field as your comments to yourself.

Not so in Tinderbox. The title of a note is actually an attribute of that note. You cannot edit it directly as a text field, like you might in any other outliner. Instead, you have to open a "Rename…" dialog box:
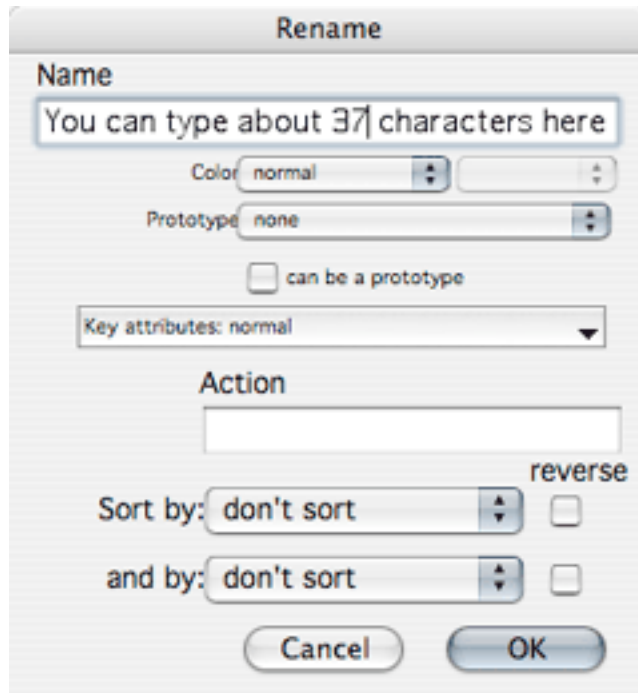
Rename Note Title Dialog Box

And then you have that little tiny box within which to edit your text, which gives you about 37 characters before it begins to scroll. Once it is changed, you might still be unhappy. That's because the outline headers don't wrap, so you if they are longish, you

won't be able to read them in the outline view. The screenshot shows this and another problem: how the anti-aliasing gets messed up when the header is highlighted. (This problem is fixed in version 2.3, which may be available when you read this column.)
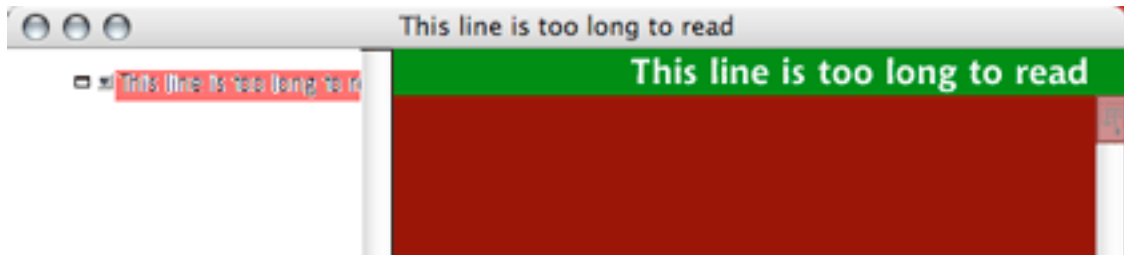
Outline Headers Don't Wrap!

Ordinarily, outliners focus on support for writing and arranging headers with lesser support for notes. For instance, it is common to have named styles for headers but ordinary TextEdit functionality in the notes field. As you'll see below, the emphasis in Tinderbox is on creating notes, and the headers just go along for the ride. So the extreme focus on header operations in other outliners isn't matched here; for instance, "split and join" commands don't exist in Tinderbox.

But as noted in the very beginning, except for direct editing, Tinderbox has all the "rapid fire" entry commands you expect in an outliner: sibling (Return) and child (Shift-Return), plus Command-Return to open the attribute editor for the current note and Tab and Shift-Tab for promote/demote.

The final (but relatively weak) complaint is about the support for styles. This is only a complaint for beginners and is one of the things you would never discover from noodling with the demo or even reading the docs. It seems at first as if there is no support for header styles; that's where level one headers display one way and level two differently, changing styles when levels change.

And it also appears that Tinderbox notes are pretty darned "flat," meaning that there are no named styles in the note itself. You are limited in the note field to rudimentary local styling of the type you'd see in HTML: bold, italics, size, font, and color. This ain't bad and is the best you'll find in pretty much any outliner. But I'm used to the halcyon days of the old Nisus Writer where I could assign meta attributes to text blocks through named

character styles, sort of like some outliners allow you to tag text by highlighting or bookmarking. In Nisus, you could leverage that style-based metadata and write a macro that found, gathered, and/or modified the marked text. (The style didn't even need to have a visible attribute.) Tinderbox has no named styles whatever.

If Tinderbox is the ultimate in support for metadata, this lack of metadata-by-style assignment is noticeable. Also, regular *ATPO* readers know that I like to use Quartz's text shadowing. Hey, you bought a Mac, right? This isn't supported in Tinderbox, another cost of OS 9 compatibility.

But all that isn't as bad as it sounds. Header styles are supported in an interesting way, much more cleverly than just assigning a style to a level; it is just hidden. The font, color, and justification of a header is an attribute of a note. That means you can write a simple agent that converts the header to a style based on the note's outline level attribute. Voila, styled headers like everyone else, sorta.

As it turns out, the changed font only shows in the outline view, with the color and justification showing only in the graphical views. But with a smart selection of fonts, you can get *some* header styling, as the screenshot shows.
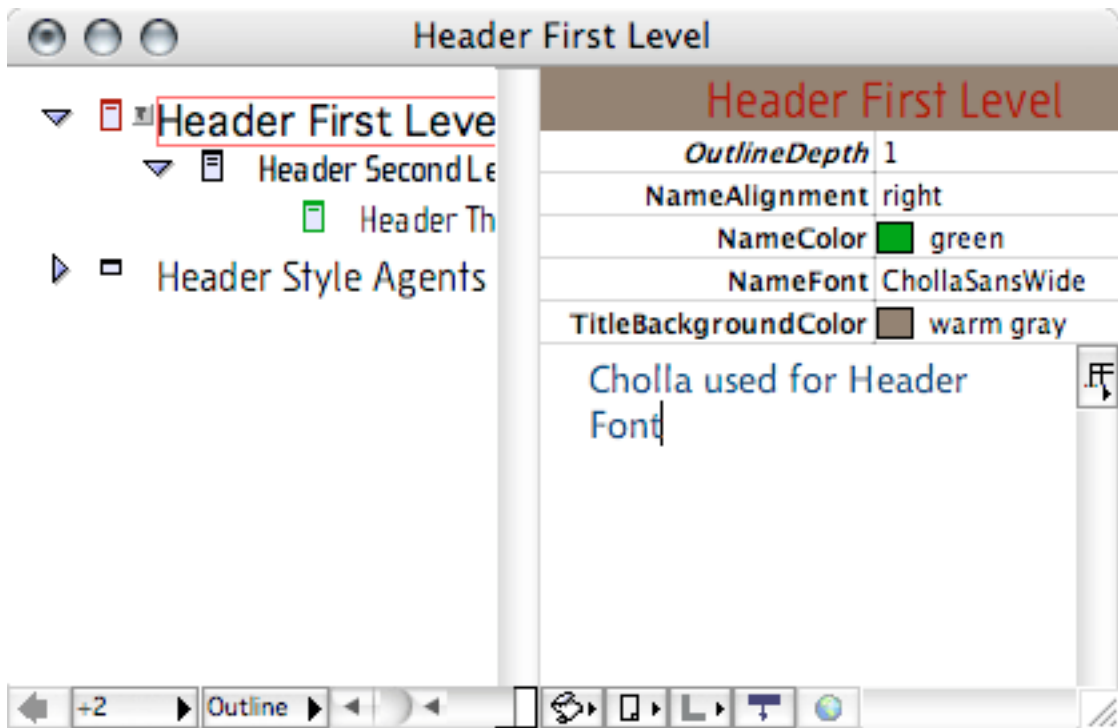
Styled Headers

Or you can go far beyond, assigning a font to high priority or draft notes, or however you wish to tag your headers with fonts. You cannot adjust the size individually (except by choosing smaller fonts of course) and italics are reserved for aliases. But beyond that, anything goes in terms of showing note attributes through header font style.

Note font, color, and background color are similarly programmable; you can set them up to indicate whatever you like, and change as the note changes. And if like me you really want to satisfy your named character style fetish, there are several macro programs you can use to apply named styles. Or you can use the attached AppleScript function to open your notes in the styled text editor of your choice.

Tinderbox agents could not see named character styles easily, and in any case Microsoft has patents with broad claims on styled text in documents, including metadata search. Bummer. Flat notes are, well, flat. Eastgate obviously knew this and decided to emphasize the arguably more manageable path to metadata—metadata at the note level.

Tinderbox Blox

We've said that you have to have a feel for how Tinderbox is put together. That's true, but it is true of all applications; if you understand the design goals and implementation philosophy behind the product, it becomes easier to know if this product fits within your creative activity.

My own feeling is that you have to judge a product on features of course, but also on the level of philosophical symaptico. And you have to have confidence that the developers will continue to evolve the product.

Tinderbox is a note creator and manager. After the note, the important citizens are attributes and links.

Attributes are what gives it meaningful metadata to allow for note management and are extremely well supported. Links are conceived in a more sophisticated manner than you will find anywhere else, and are a really novel thing. Prototypes and clones are special sorts of links. The outline hierarchy is a type of link that also appears as an attribute. Agents operate on attributes. Everything else is a tool, including the visualization tools.

Tinderbox's heritage is in hypertext theory. In my experience the cleverest ideas about life and tools are rousted about by this community—it's been that way for years. Eastgate publishes [Storyspace](), the clear leader for authoring and publishing hypertext fiction.

Eastgate is also a facilitator in the several communities of fiction theorists and users. They sponsor conferences; they are the leading publisher of hypertext fiction; they know a lot about hypertext, that on-beyond-zero type of hypertext that isn't constrained by the Web. They even publish an intelligent online [periodical]() about hypertext ideas and tools (and other interesting things). I know of no other software house that is as engaged in the real matter of advancing their user base.

In 1996, at the height of the mad Internet rush, Eastgate introduced Web Squirrel. It was an advanced visual tool for bookmark management which had the map view (supporting "information farms") and agents more or less like Tinderbox. Web pages In Squirrel were much like notes in Tinderbox. It was cool, but too hard to use in a market that was built on extreme simplicity. Web Squirrel failed. (Interestingly, Web Squirrel was scriptable by AppleScript and Frontier!)

The whole idea was based on work done by Frank Shipman and Cathy Marshall on VIKI.

Because of my research management experience, I firmly believe that only a second generation tool can hit a home run. You have to be able to afford that failure of the first try. I believe it is the only way to really blaze new territory. Eastgate's second try, Tinderbox, started life under the code name Ceres, the Roman name for the goddess of grain (and also the first named asteroid). Tinderbox today is something between what a grown up Storyspace and Web Squirrel would be (though it has differing design purposes).

The key design notion of Tinderbox is to avoid premature commitment to structure and at the same time provide tools for deep structure. One of those tools is the map view, which we've been avoiding until now. The map view is a way of conveying structure by physical arrangement on the screen (including containment of boxes within boxes). The eye can discriminate extremely subtle variations of color, so notes have that as a key attribute.

Compared to the mindmappers of the last column, Tinderbox looks austere, You have rectangles with color and titles (the outline headers) and their arrangement including their nesting in other rectangles. The map view can display any and all links as well, with their names.

The screenshot shows a view of a trivial example outline. We are already in a first level header as you can see from the faint watermark in the back. We named that header "Header First Level." There are two children under this header, the one you saw in the "styles" example named "Header Second Level," and the beginning of an outline on my notes on Paul Graham's Hackers and Painters.

You can see the "colors" of the notes (red and black); here is where the header styles would show font colors. You can see that each of these headers has children as shown in the bottom halves of their boxes.
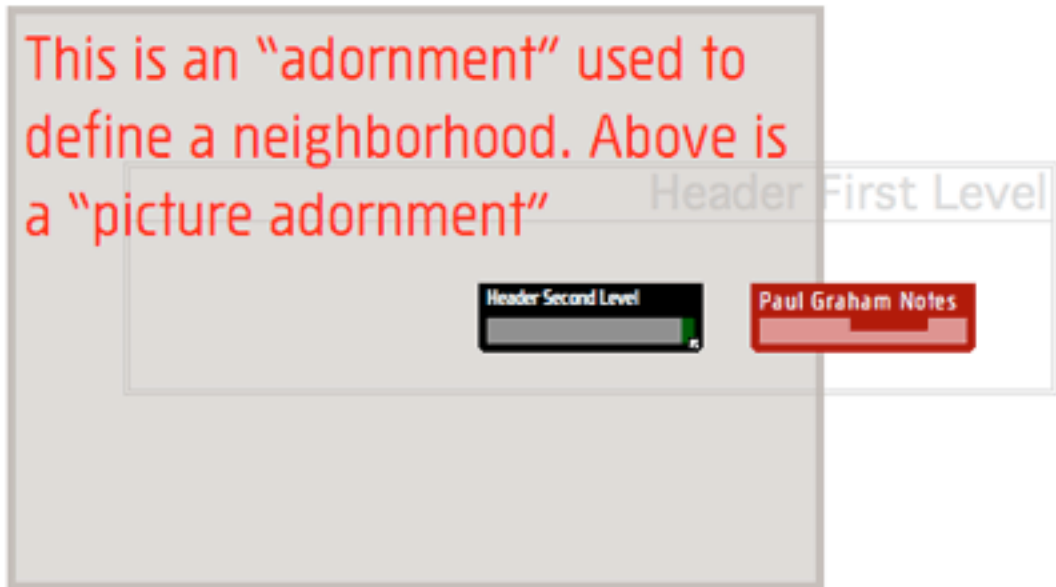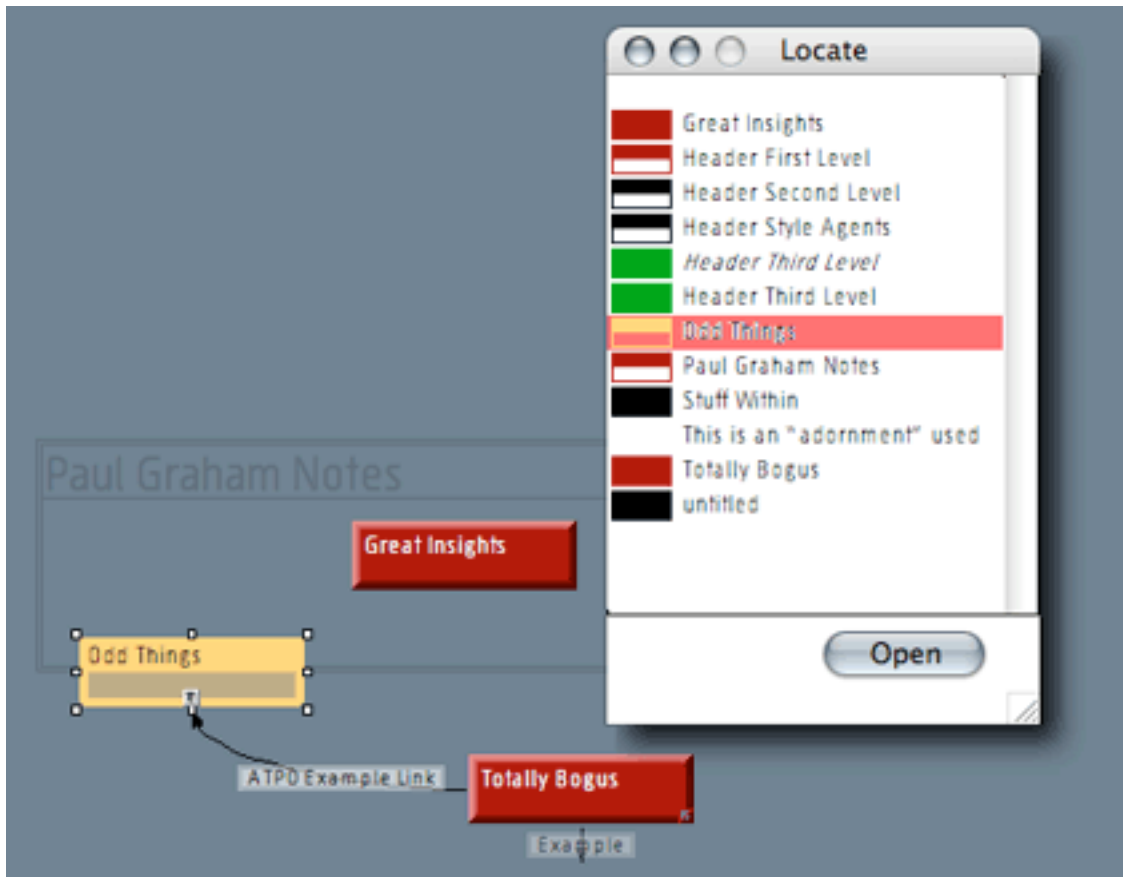

The Map View

Note that the map has two elements that show on no other view: the "adornment." This can be a decorative image (here the ATPM logo) but usually is an additional rectangular container or zone that provides for a third type of nesting, adding to prototypes and hierarchy.

Zooming or hoisting is natural in this view. Zooming into a parent—by just clicking—gives you a view with just its children. In the next screenshot, we've zoomed into the Graham box, indicated by the "Paul Graham Notes" watermark. This has three children and a

couple example links. The two red notes have no children. Also shown is the "locator" list, used so you don't have to wander through outlines and zoomed maps looking for a specific note. Consider it an alphabetical "list" view.

A Zoomed Map

The map view window commonly becomes a virtual desktop within which you scroll around. Once you get used to it, you will spend as much time in the map as in the outline, I guarantee. That's because so many subtle indicators are leveraged. One of these of course is position, which you'll fiddle with quite a bit at first. Alas, you cannot build multiple map views for different purposes. (But you can fake it with clones.)

Here's a side rant: what brought me to the Mac many years ago wasn't at all the ease of use, nor the admittedly cool desktop publishing stuff. No, it was because everything was spatial: I could arrange windows however I wished. I was an early Frontier power scripter; you know what I did? I wrote scripts that arranged icons within windows and pasted icons on them according to certain "attributes."

Spatial arrangement is an extremely powerful aid to thinking and concept assembly. Alas, the Mac has [moved away](#) from this with the one-window columnar Finder views and the possibly ill-advised rush of applications to "tabs," what we used to do with stacked windows. While much of the rest of the world seems to be drifting away from spatial leverage, Tinderbox stands out all the more. To me, it seems more Mac-like than much of the Mac these days.

The Bottom Line

Tinderbox is as powerful an outliner as you will find so long as you don't need an editable inline view, or large numbers of graphics. As an information management assistant, it exploits techniques you will find in no other non-research software and really can be life-altering. It is easy to use as an outliner but has a daunting learning curve for advanced features—on the order of Photoshop or FileMaker. And it doesn't quite "fit" modern OS X services.

If you are a regular *ATPO* reader, you will likely find it engaging, leading you to confront whether to make the investment in "serious" software. It is a Carbon application and runs well on OS 9.

Tinderbox's architect, Mark Bernstein, has a huge Web presence, including his own [blog](#) and the [Tinderbox development peekhole](#). That latter is a great asset to users and says a lot about Eastgate's relationship to users. (As much as I like and support Mac boutique developers like [Bare Bones](#) and [Omni Group](#), their Apple-like policy of just surprising us is a bit patronizing. I appreciate Eastgate's openness.)

Here's the real bottom line: what other "outliner" can host a party of users and have them fly all over the country to attend? Eastgate had a "Tinderbox weekend" in Boston this May, is hosting one in San Francisco in October, and has one planned in Europe. Good times, I hear.

Eastgate has set up a special limited offer for *ATPO* readers. It fits the *ATPO* demographic, in that it offers what is probably the best paper-based notebook together with Tinderbox and an introductory subscription to their TEKKA publication.

Ted's TinderGarden Tips

As with all the great applications we discuss, you should try out the demo. But you might consider a few suggestions from your *ATPO* lifeguard:

- Join the Tinderbox e-mail list.

- Read the entire PDF help without the application open. (Really, it's not long.)

- Stick with the outline view until you are familiar with the internal machinery. It is too frustrating to learn a new application while you also learn a new manner of information visualization.

- Before you write any notes, noodle about with the default note and outline font until you are happy. Use a variety of colors for notes and links even though you won't see them until later. (Realize that the color of the note's background, text, title background and title text, and the color of the note name text have nothing to do with the note's color, which is really the color of the note's "envelope." In other words, keep all the "insides" the same to start with and vary the "outsides.") Write simple agents to create header styles based on outline level.

- Also before you start, download one of the preformatted Web or blog templates and associated style sheet (for exporting). This part of Tinderbox is among the coolest but surely the most frustrating and if you just use the defaults you won't get mad. But you have to begin with a prefab template.

- Use prototypes where you can, instead of stamps. Make aliases of them and keep them in a separate outline area for reference. You'll thank me, even though this is the hard way to do things. Similarly, make an annotation or to-do outline section within the outline for stuff you need to do with links to the notes or areas you need to do them to.

- Name your links. Make all links from note to note unless you really want an HTML link when published to the Web. I mentioned above that you can use links for metadata assignment; don't try this. Stick with attributes initially.

- Keep your notes short. Add and display your own attributes.

- Make an agent (in addition to the header styles agents) even though you don't have to, possibly one that collects aliases of "draft" notes. You'll get addicted.

- When you do explore the map view, don't immediately go to a huge virtual desktop. Try the "zooming in" (like hoisting) instead.

- Have fun. Joy isn't always "lickable."

Mark Bernstein (Architect of Tinderbox) Comments

A lot of software tries to help us do things that are easy but boring. Tinderbox sets out to help tackle one of the most challenging tasks we face: gathering, organizing, understanding, and sharing information. Tinderbox is a tool for learning—for discovering structures we don't (yet) understand.

Over the years, I've worked with lots of brilliant, creative people—scientists, engineers, writers, and artists. If you look at their laboratories or their offices or their studios, you'll find complex and clever strategies for managing input and capturing ideas. Much of this is done today with scraps of paper and piles of photocopies. It often *looks* messy, but it's actually very efficient; the key problem, of course, is that you can't file things away until you understand what they mean and how they fit with the other things you're thinking about.

Meanwhile, our powerful, personal computers are often little more than typesetters and file drawers. Right now, computers make ideas look good, but they don't give us much traction for organizing and relating them.

Tinderbox can be very *simple* to use—as an outliner, as a whiteboard, and a collection of note-cards. And, a lot of the time, that's exactly how I use it myself. But Tinderbox also gives you ways of tying ideas together—links, agents, templates—that give you lots of expressive power when you need it. It's not just

about making lists or diagrams; it's about really understanding your ideas, and Tinderbox offers a rich toolkit for working with ideas to get them down and get things done.

Where will Tinderbox go next? One active area of research—both within Eastgate and in the hypertext research community—is finding ways to make our maps even more expressive. The interplay between Tinderbox and the Web, and the way Tinderbox can work as a presentation-and-working tool in meetings, offer plenty of food for thought. We're looking at ways to get more leverage from Web services like Google and Amazon and from RSS feeds.

Not all of these ideas will work—that's why it's research—but I think it's important research to undertake. Working with ideas is hard, but it's terribly important work, and it's vital that we get better at doing it.

The ATPO Tracker

Now we turn from Tinderbox to report important events elsewhere in the outliner world.

Mellel

Folks, we have a new outliner. Mellel is a word processor that is worth checking out. It has four things to commend it: it is built from the ground up for OS X; it is inexpensive ($29!); it has superb support for non-Roman languages; and, most importantly to me, it has a great paradigm for named styles.

I can't overstate how useful named styles can be for metadata management (though I've been trying!), and Mellel has the best implementation on the Mac, one that combines with variables and supports OpenType. Now that's leveraged to provide an outline pane for documents.
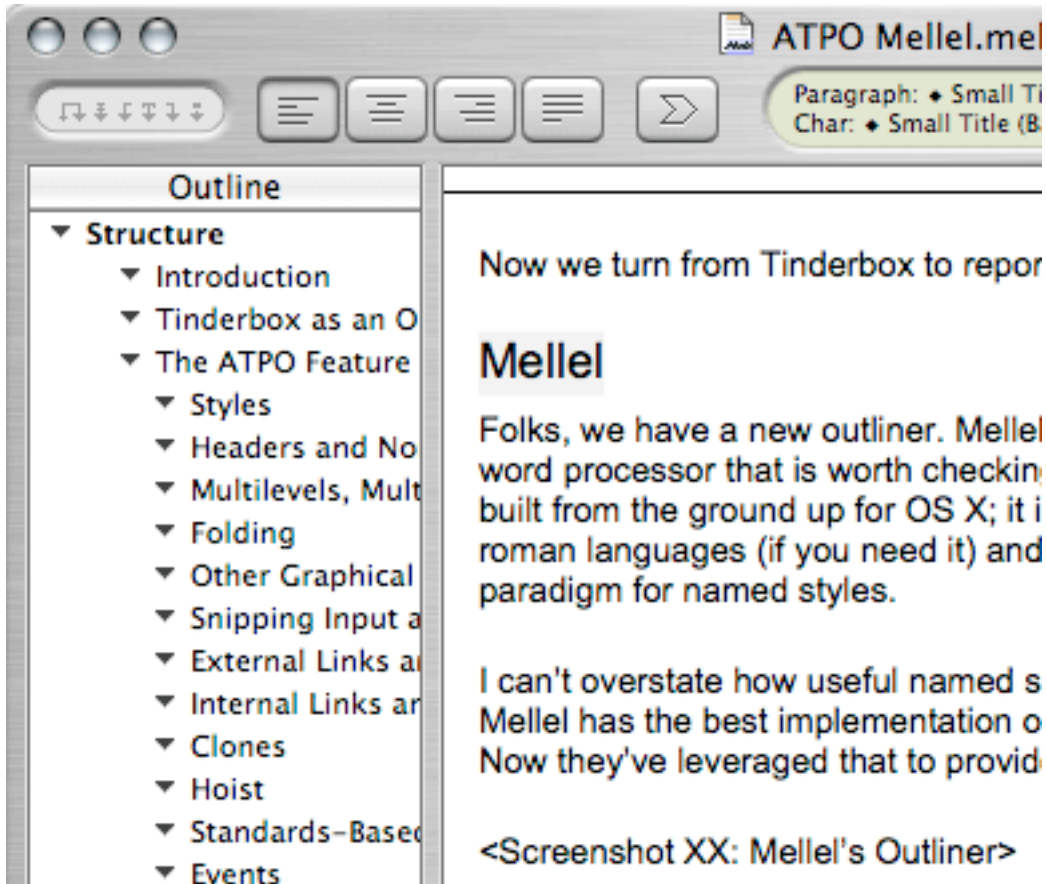
Mellel's Outliner

In that outliner pane, you can add, rearrange, rename promote/demote, and delete headers and have the subservient paragraph text (with tables and images) follow suit in the "document" window. Finally, we have an alternative to the clunky outliner in Word, to which Mellel pretty seamlessly imports and exports.

The outline cannot span multiple Mellel documents yet. Too bad, but a minor complaint considering the achievement. Oh, and RedleX advises that they are migrating to a native XML storage format. There's another one!

If you buy it, tell 'em *ATPO* sent ya.

TAO

The two-pane outliner formerly known in public betas as FO is now available as TAO. It enters the power outliner class, currently occupied by Hog Bay, NoteBook, NoteTaker, OmniOutliner, and Tinderbox. Its power features are: unlimited undo, header styles, really cool stylesheets, multiple file search, OPML export (but apparently not import!), links, and clones together with numerous but more common OS X niceties. I haven't seen the final release—it is supposed to appear concurrent with this column—but betas have potentially irritating palette design and behavior. Some users compare it to MORE, which they intend as the highest compliment.

Its clones are like Hog Bay's: you can delete the original and the clone survives. You can display note attributes in the lower window border. Clones, links, and styles alone make TAO worth checking out if you have not already.
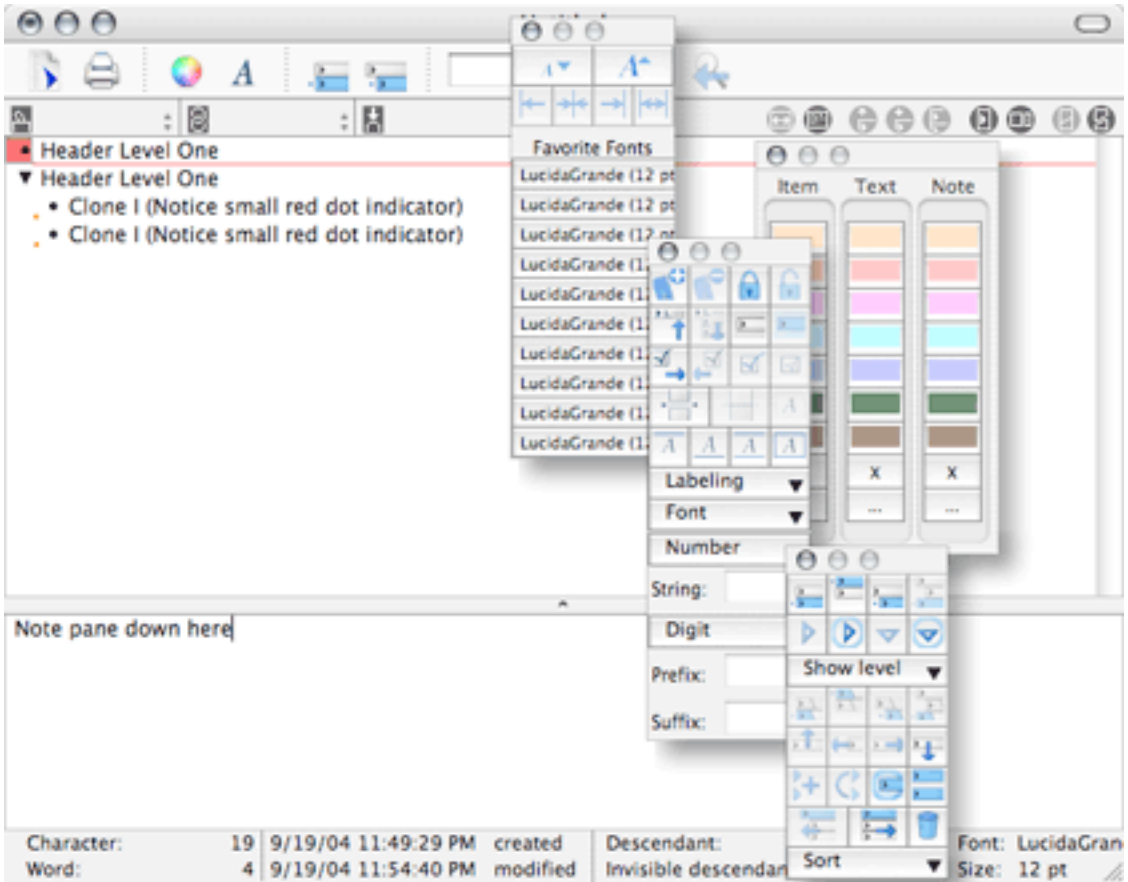

TAO

ActionItems

Here is a clever tack on task management and outlining. Usually these things are based on a single outline where each header is a task. Everything flows from that notion. ActionItems is different, a consolidated database of outlines based on templates (people, projects, groups, etc.) and a daily journal which is an outline, entries in which can be "action items" and to which people and projects can be linked. Outlines appear all over the place as notes and also as tasks. In other words, it supports the outline of outlines features, but in a matrixed way.

This is pretty novel, check it out.
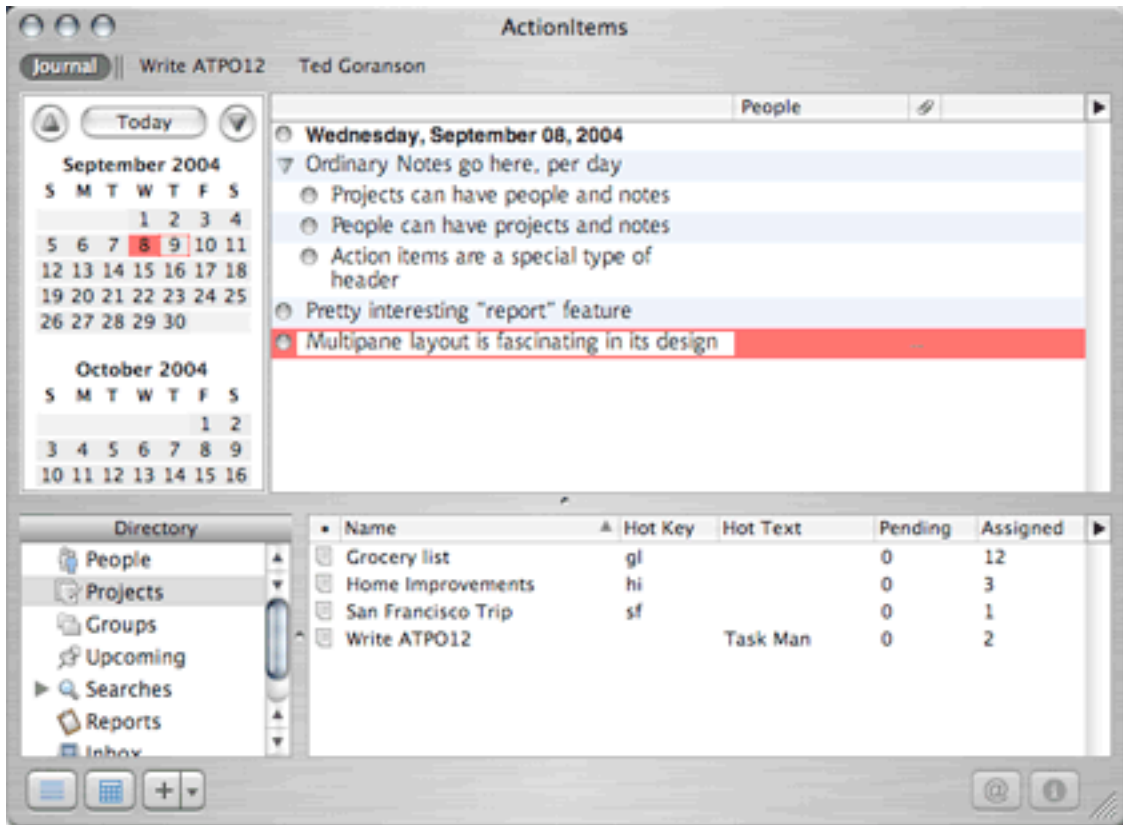
ActionItems

To have so many new outliners and each with a completely new take on things is really exciting. The Mac is the place to be for these sorts of things right now. I think the next *ATPO* might review task, project, and to-do list managers that use outlining. What do you think?

Process

I'm often on the inside know about these things, but this one took me by surprise. Process is another new task and to-do list manager. It has predefined, unchangeable columns for priority, etc. These are not the user-definable columns of the venerable OmniOutliner and the donationware MyMind.

It also supports tasks, alarms and calendar items well. It has a competent exploitation of Aqua conventions that looks great. If it can, it will display the linked file or Web page in a pane below the outline as shown in the screenshot, which I think is unique to this application.
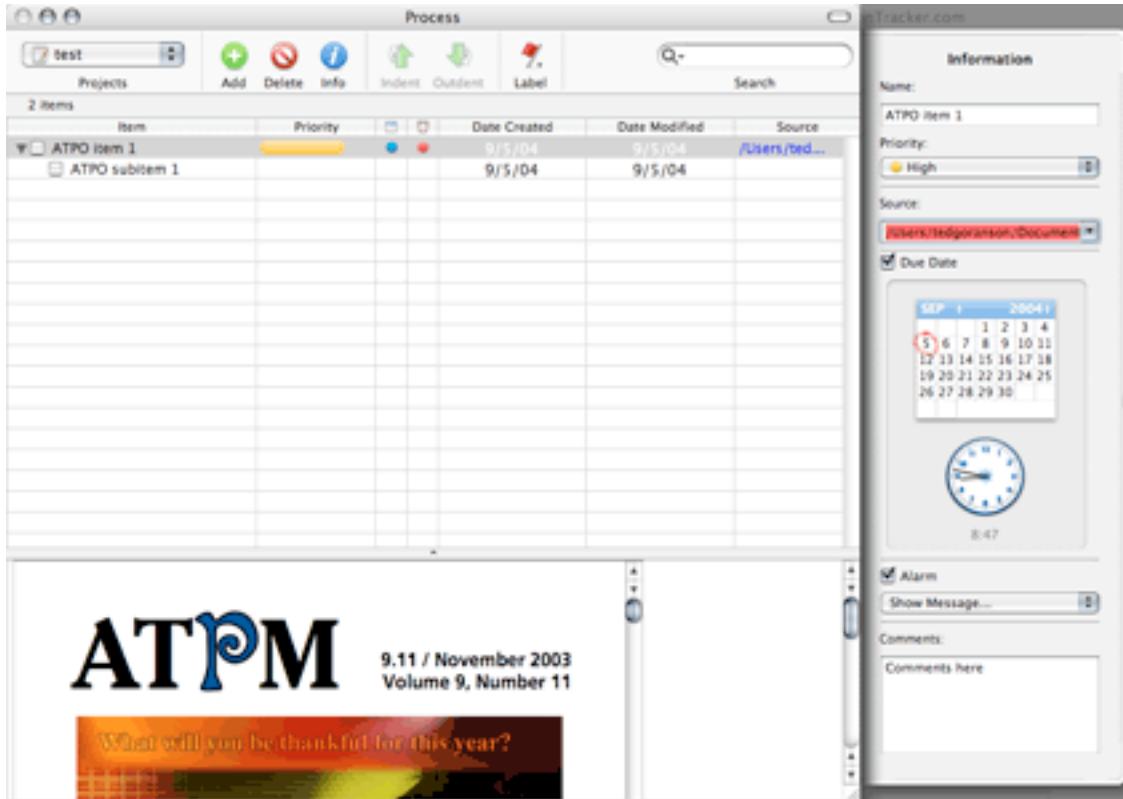

Process

It comes with a seven-day demo, which is far too short for serious evaluation. It exports to OmniOutliner, iPod, and OPML, but has no apparent syncing with a handheld. Task items can have short comments and links to URLs and files.

Your evaluation will likely be on user interface and ease of use plus the utility of the "source" display. The help is rudimentary. We'll add it to the *ATPO* tracker list.

MindFortress

MindFortress is another one that came out of the blue, at least for me. Perhaps it recently added an outline capability. It is a structured repository for your information. Each "note" is a card with predefined data fields, for instance serial number, Web page, and so on.

You can select the "general" template to make notes. The idea here is that it is a consolidated, ordered, encrypted storage system. You can create your own templates and the whole thing is AppleScriptable. No export currently exists, so whatever you put in there stays, at least for now.
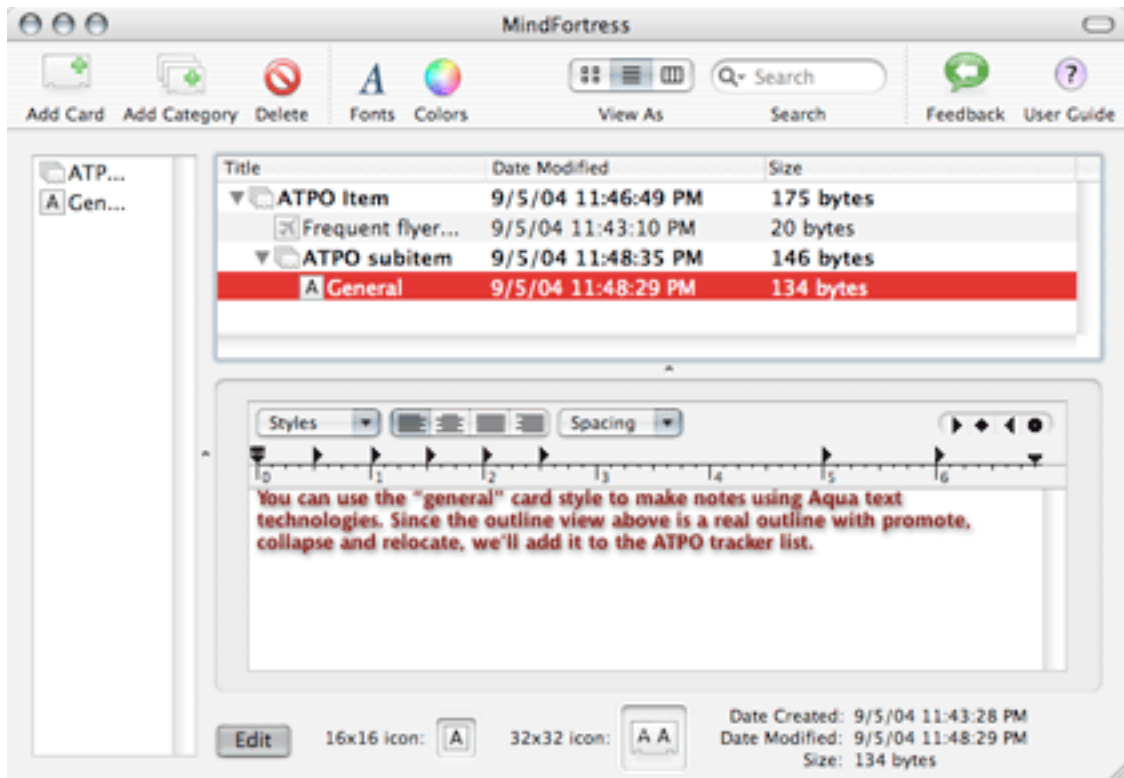
MindFortress

Pyramid

MindMap Pyramid released version 1.2 that addressed one of the major limitations we noted last column. You can now export (but not import) via OPML to an outliner. They also seem to have fixed the connection glitches I noted.

NovaMind

NovaMind has been bumped to version 2.2, adding exchange with the Windows Mind Manager application and providing additional adornments.

Inspiration

The venerable writer's outliner and mindmapper, Inspiration has introduced a syncable version for the Palm.

Roll Your Own

Bare Bones has released BBEdit 8, which adds a "tabs" drawer. Entries in that drawer cannot be hierarchical. But check out Tactile Interrogator which is (get this!) a cross-platform Finder replacement. It is unlike anything you have seen, very visual. It is somewhat in the spirit of Tinderbox's Map view, especially regarding color tagging. You can create a Finder hierarchy with BBEdit documents and come up with something like a bare bones (sorry) outliner.
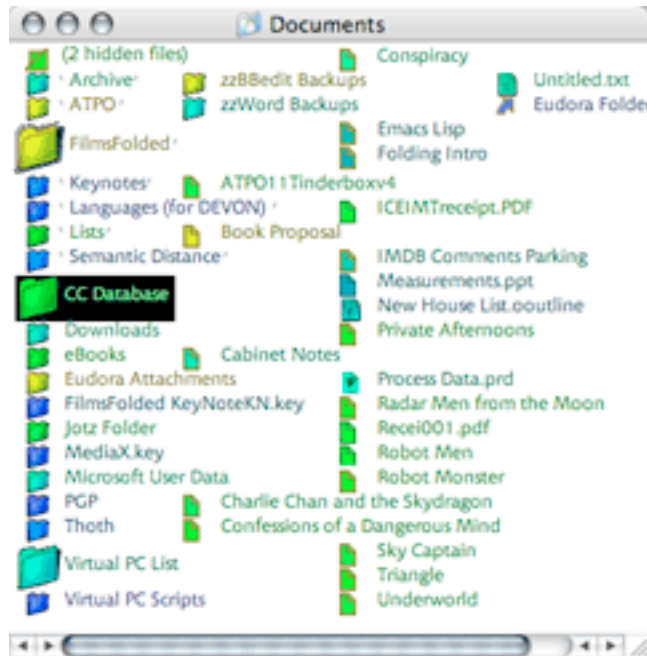
Tactile Interrogator

Such a hybrid will have terrific text editing and such, true Finder integration, and certain OS X windowing and search services. Pricey, but geeky cool.

ADM (Windows)

I get lots of welcome mail, some from Windows users championing this outliner or that. I dutifully check them out. Some are very good, but so far I have found nothing on any operating system that you cannot get better on Mac OS X. (That excludes some of the legacy outliners from systems 7 and 8).

Now, ADM 3 has been released on Windows, and a few readers with extensive Windows backgrounds (but scant Mac exposure) believe it to be uniquely powerful. As with many Windows outliners, its site has no useful information. I am soliciting help from an inclined reader to help me explore and report on this (or any other) if it proves to be interesting to *ATPO* readers.

• • •

If you are a developer and wish to have us survey your outliner, please contact us. Readers: let us know your interest in specific uses, categories, or applications for future columns.
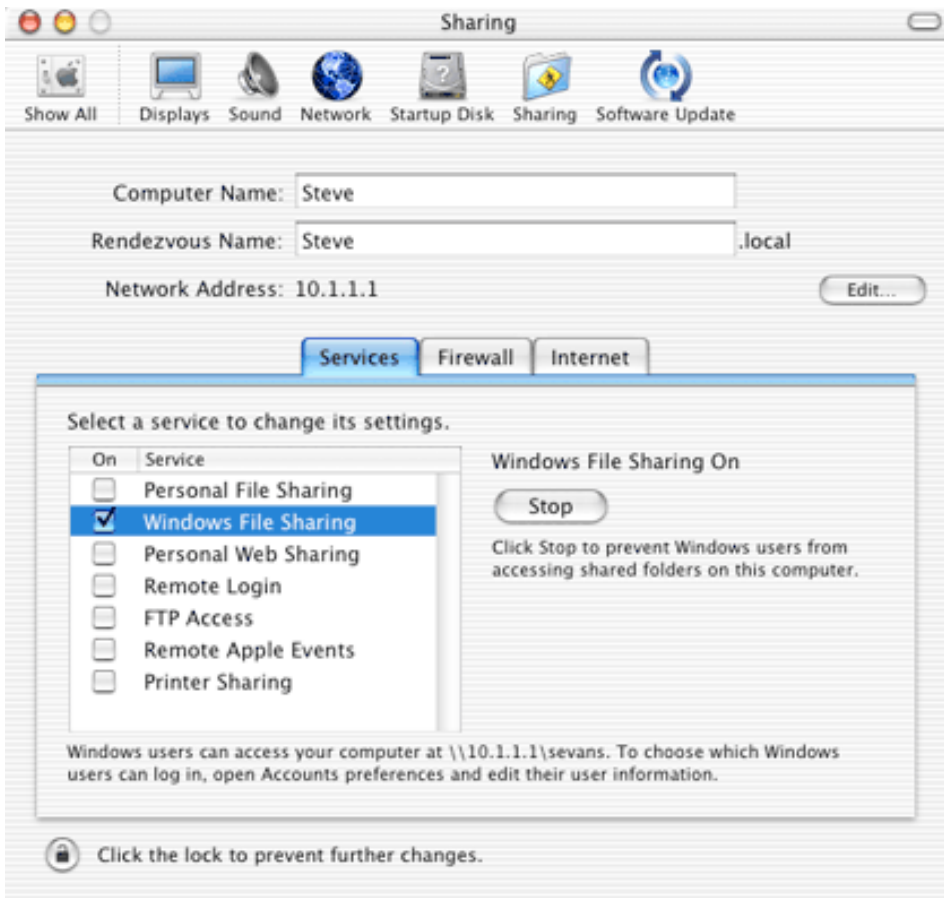
Mac to Windows: Troubleshooting the "No Logon Servers Available" File Sharing Error

The Error

If you've shared files from your Mac to networked Windows users, you know how easy it is. Open the Sharing preferences pane, enable Windows File Sharing, and click Apply Now. The Mac even tells you what address to use (\\10.1.1.1\sevans in this example).

Theoretically, seeing the files from Windows is pretty easy. Click Start, select Run, and enter the address. Sometimes, however, you see this error: "There are Currently no logon servers available to service the logon request."

Zounds, what a vague error message. Logon server? Is that in System Preferences? (It's not.) It's hard to even know where to start looking for solutions. On the Mac? In Windows? In your other pants pocket?

What's Going On

The error is a case of mistaken identity. When it looks for the network share, Windows gives your Windows account name. If that name doesn't exist as an account on your Mac, however, the Windows system is kept out. On being rejected, Windows reports the above error.

The easiest solution? Change the network mount to an account that already has sharing access on the Mac (such as the Mac's owner).

1. Go to the Desktop and right-click on the My Computer icon.

2. Select "Map Network Drive…" and its window appears.

3. Enter your Mac's address and shared directory as the folder.

4. Select "Connect using a different user name."

5. Enter the Mac owner's user name and password or another account with access to the shared files.

6. Select OK to close the window, then Finish.

7. A window showing the shared Mac files should appear.

Check the "Reconnect on login" check box to look for these files each time you start Windows. (This also preserves the name change.)

If you're using a wireless network and still see the error, connect the computers with a physical Ethernet cable and try again. Sometimes the distance between computers and the wireless switch makes sharing files impossible or impractically slow. Direct Ethernet is much faster.

Summary

Fixing the Windows-to-Mac account issues will get your computers working agreeably again. The "No logon servers available" error is annoying, but shouldn't stop you from talking to your friends. (Or yourself, but we won't dwell on that.)

Cartoon: Cortland

by Matt Johnson, mjohnson@atpm.com
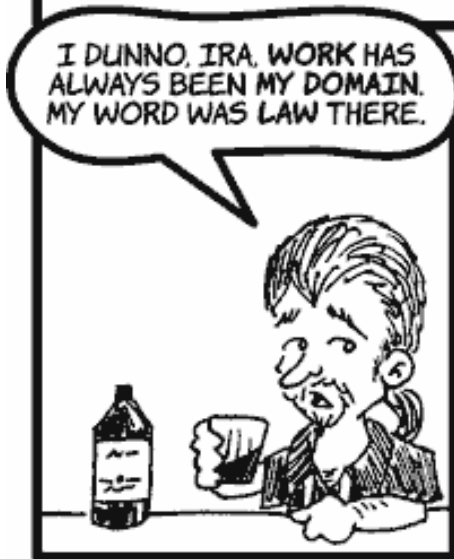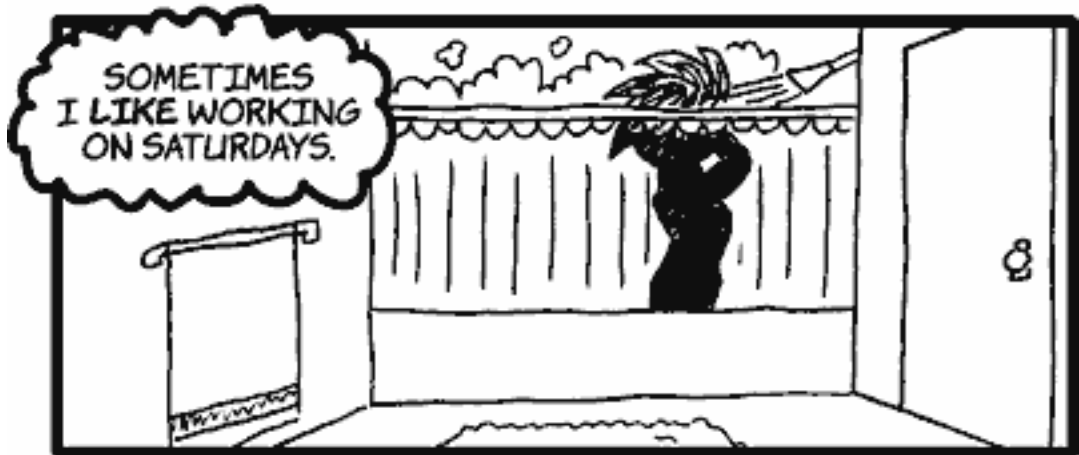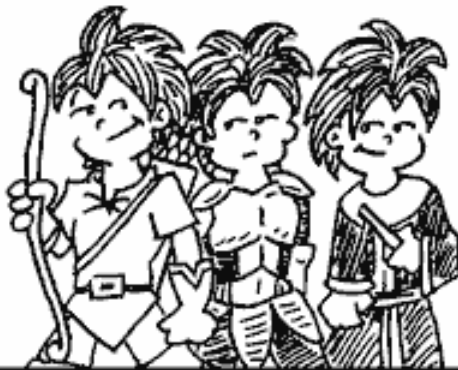
Extras: Desktop Pictures
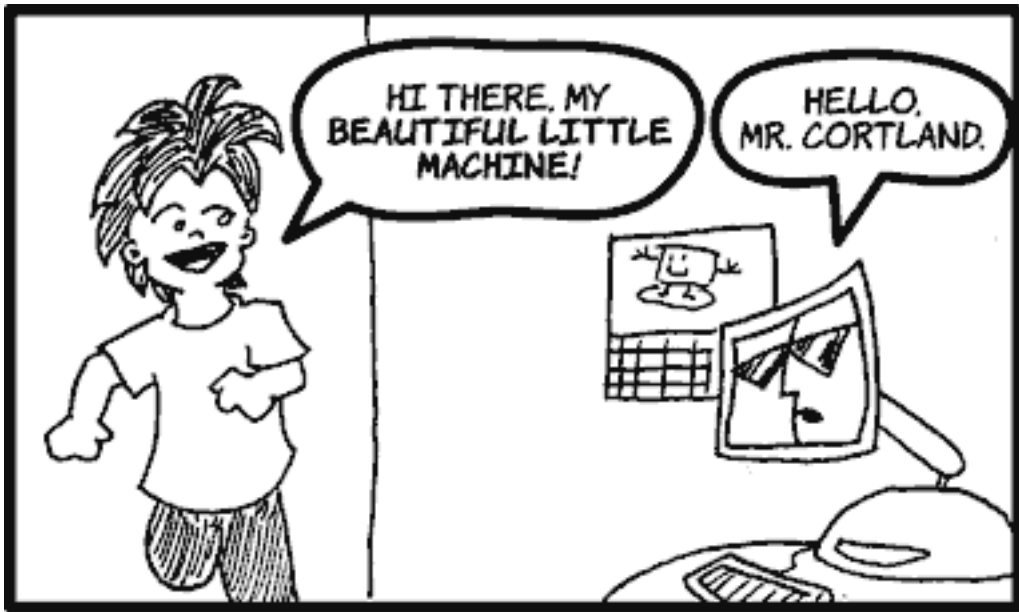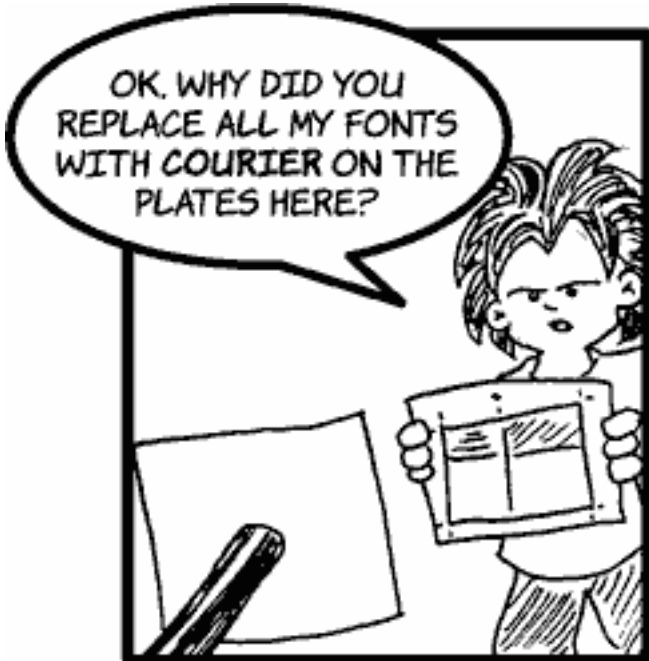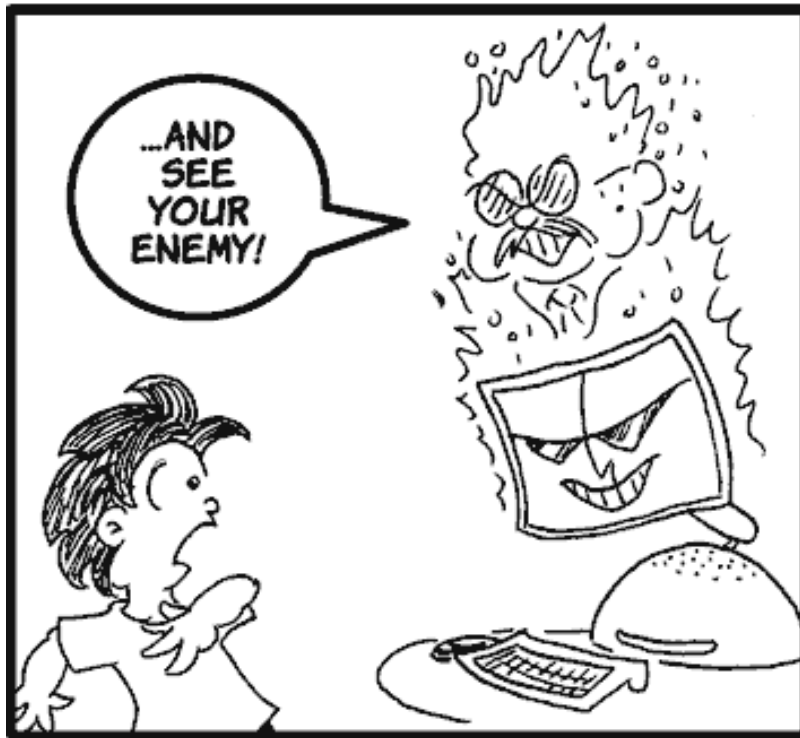
Sunsets

Sunsets

These desktop pictures were taken by ATPM Web Editor Lee Bennett in August 2004 near Orlando, Florida, with a Nikon D100. The images have not been retouched or color-corrected.

Previous Months' Desktop Pictures

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

Downloading all the Pictures at Once

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

Contributing Your Own Desktop Pictures

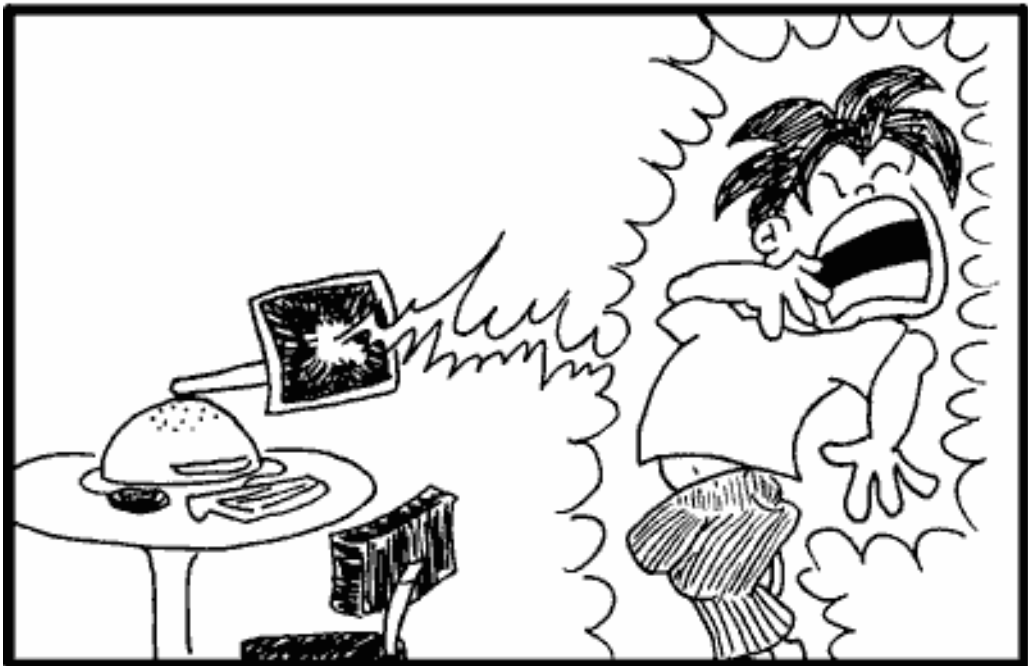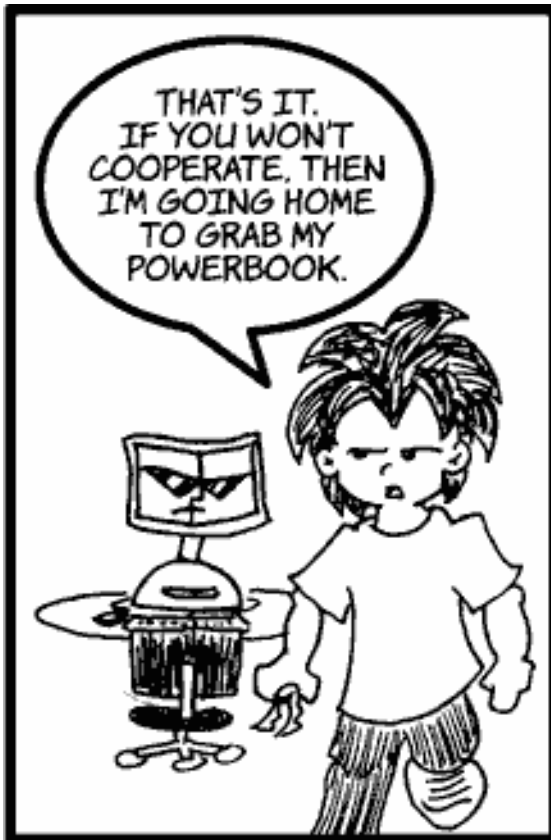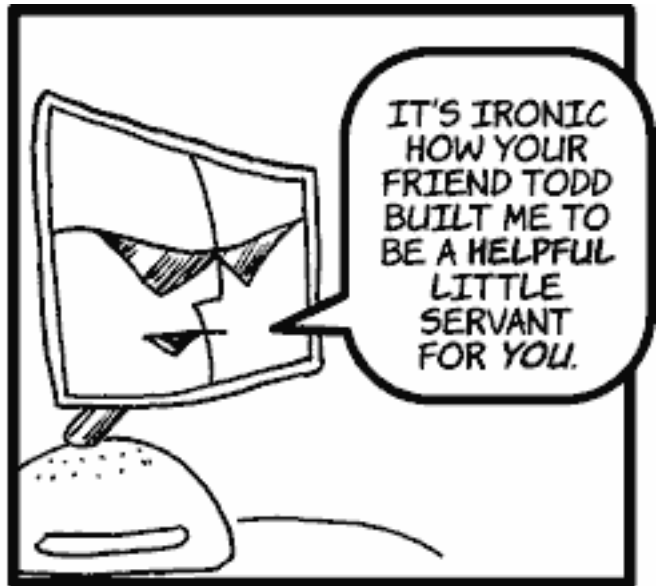If you have a picture, whether a small series or just one fabulous or funny shot, feel free to send it to editor@atpm.com and we'll consider publishing it in next month's issue. Have a regular print but no scanner? Don't worry. E-mail us, and we tell you where to send it so we can scan it for you. Note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

Placing Desktop Pictures

Mac OS X 10.3.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 popup menu, select the desktop pictures folder you want to use.

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

Mac OS X 10.0.x

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

Mac OS 8.5–9.x

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

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

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

Mac OS 8.0 and 8.1

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

Random Desktop Pictures

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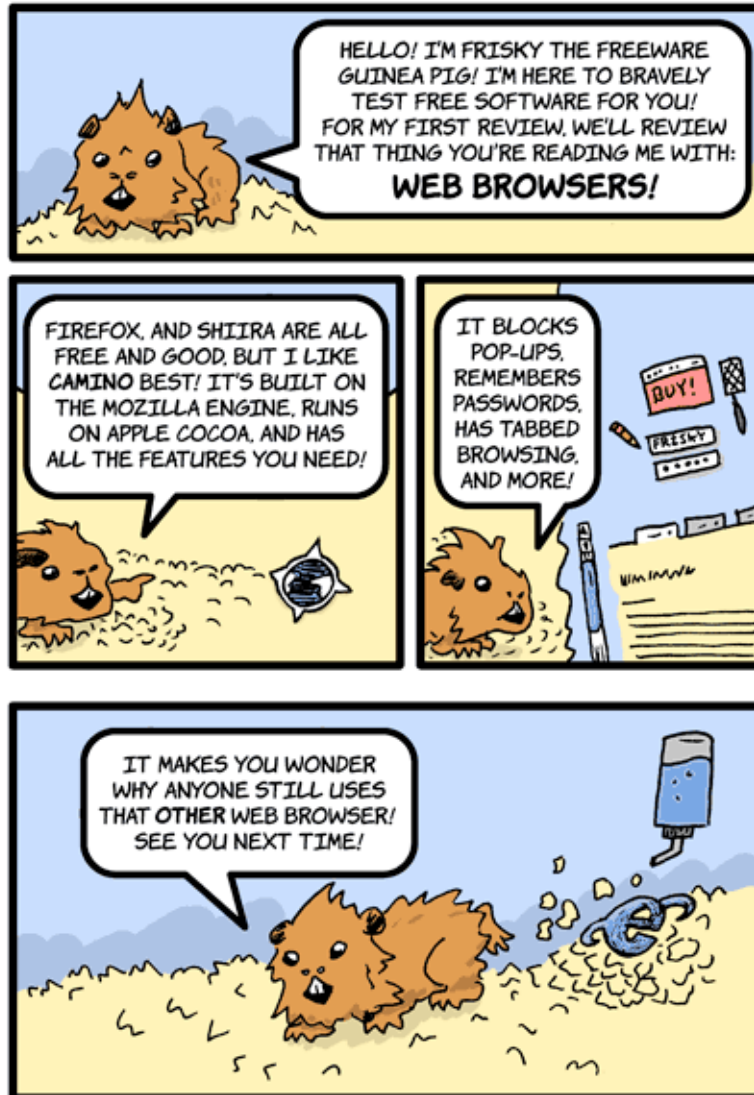
DeskPicture

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

Frisky Freeware

by Matt Johnson, mjohnson@atpm.com

Camino and CEP

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Review: AirPort Express

by Eric Blair, eblair@atpm.com

Developer: Apple Computer
Price: $129
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.2 or Windows 2000
Recommended: Mac OS X 10.3 (to configure the AirPort Express, share a USB printer, and use Wi-Fi Protected Access)

Over the last five or so years, Apple has been one of the industry leaders in the push to get wireless Internet access into homes and small businesses. The original AirPort Base Station wasn't the first wireless access point on the market, but it was one of the first easy and affordable 802.11b units. The AirPort Extreme Base Station was one of the first affordable high speed 802.11g access points.

Although the features in the AirPort family evolved over the years, the shape of the base stations remained fairly unchanged. The AirPort's UFO shape made it one of the most recognizable access points on the market. It was also larger than a number of competing access points.

AirPort Express is the first major body redesign in the history of the AirPort family. Replacing the "hang on a wall/sit on a shelf" UFO casing of the previous models is something that looks like an older sibling of the PowerBook and iPod power supplies.

Small in stature, the AirPort Express lacks some of the features of the larger AirPort Extreme. Some of the notable omissions include a lower maximum user count (10 users instead of 50), no second Ethernet port, no modem, and no support for Power-over-Ethernet.

In addition to inheriting the AirPort Extreme's 802.11g chipset, the AirPort Express also features a USB port for wirelessly sharing a printer. Also, like seemingly many younger siblings, the AirPort Express has something that it's older sibling lacks—AirTunes.

Setup

Setting up an AirPort Express is a fairly easy. Plug up to three cords into the AirPort Express, plug the unit into the wall, install the AirPort software on your computer, and follow the instructions in the AirPort Express Assistant that pops up when your computer finishes rebooting.

The AirPort Express Assistant walks you through all the steps you need to configure your network. After you've selected an AirPort Express, the Network Setup screen prompts you for all the necessary information to have a properly configured AirPort Express network: the network name, the encryption type and passwords, and the AirPort Express name and password (used by the AirPort Admin Utility and AirTunes).
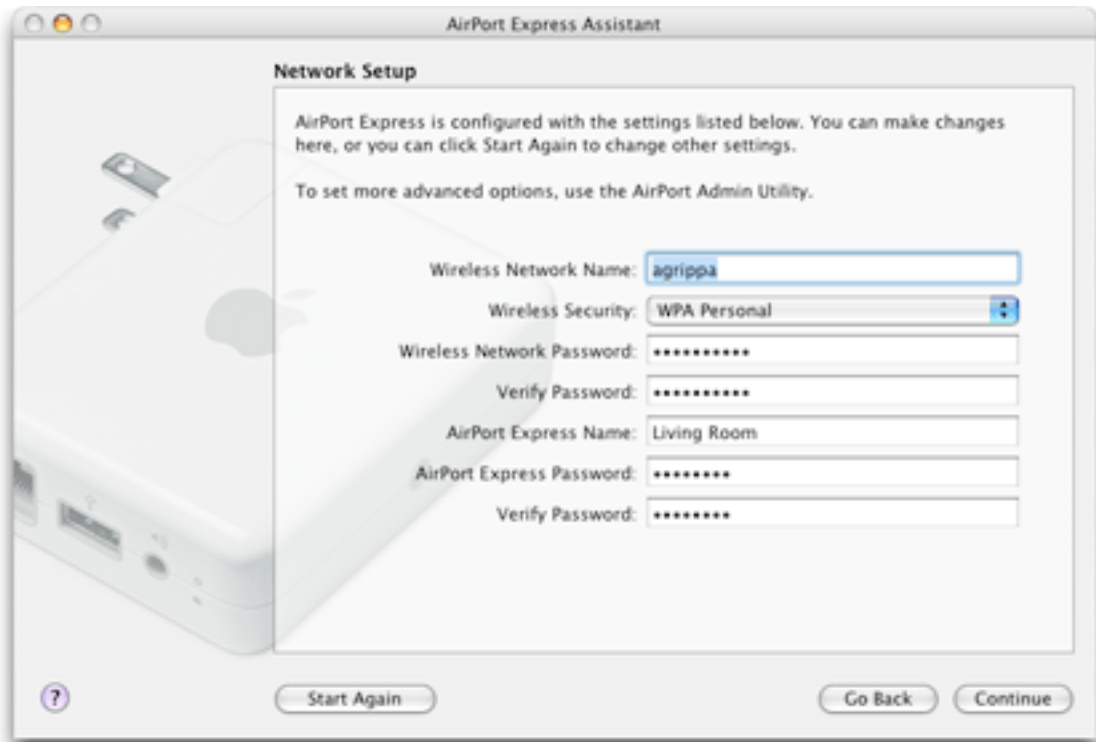
AirPort Express Assistant's Network Setup Screen

For more complex networks, you'll need to use the AirPort Admin Utility and the Network Preference Pane to configure your network and your computer. For instance, I wanted to manually assign the IP address for my computer and share my Internet connection via a

wired router instead of the AirPort. I was able to do all of this through the Admin Utility fairly simply. Additionally, the Admin Utility also allows you to change the AirTunes settings, map publicly accessible ports to private ports on your wireless network, access additional security preferences, and change profiles.

The Admin Utility contains a number of options, many of which don't apply to the average user. I'm willing to bet this is why Apple created the AirPort Express Assistant. That being said, the Admin Utility is light-years ahead of the Windows-only tool I used to configure my last wireless access point. I was able to figure out all but one of the options without referring to the help—the only item that stumped me whether or not the AirPort Express supported a DMZ (forwarding all ports to a single computer—quite useful for Internet gaming). According to the Designing AirPort Extreme Networks PDF, the AirPort Admin Utility supports this feature, but I couldn't find any information about enabling it, either for the AirPort Express or the AirPort Extreme.

For the physical setup of the AirPort Extreme, I had some difficulty with the "plug the unit into the wall" portion of the directions. I wanted the AirPort Express near my speakers, but the only free electrical outlet was connected to a light switch. I didn't want to use that outlet, as I was concerned that I might turn off the wireless network when I was trying to turn off a light.

At first, I tried plugging the AirPort Express into my power strip. I still had a few outlets available, and the design of the AirPort Express allowed me to plug it in without covering adjacent outlets (this may vary, depending on the orientation of the outlets on your power

strip). Unfortunately, the combination of the Ethernet cord, USB cord, and mini jack made this an untenable situation—the cords reached the ground and ended up pulling the AirPort Express out of the power strip when I was arranging my living room.

The beginning of a failed attempt at plugging the
AirPort Express into a power strip.

Eventually, I dug one of my old PowerBook power cords out of a box and I used this instead of the adapter Apple included with the AirPort Express. With the additional flexibility provided by actually having a power cord, I was able to move the AirPort Express out from behind my television, which had the side effect of increasing the signal strength in the far corner of my apartment.

Using a power cord to place the AirPort Express in a better location.

I really wish that Apple would just include the power cord in the box with the AirPort Express. Sure, the AirPort Express looks a lot neater when it's connected directly to a power outlet, but sometimes there just isn't an accessible power outlet in a location that's conducive to placing a wireless access point. Just for kicks, I looked on the Apple Store Web site to find out how much the power cord would cost had I purchased it separately.

I wasn't able to locate one.

The only way I could see to purchase the power cord for an AirPort Express was to purchase the AirPort Express Stereo Connection Kit with Monster Cables…for $39. In addition to the power cord, you get a Monster Cable mini jack-to-RCA jack cable and a Monster Cable mini jack-to-optical digital Toslink cable. Knowing how much Monster cables cost, I'm willing to bet most of the cost of the kit comes from the two audio cables (of which you likely only need one). I didn't try going to one of the retail Apple Stores, nor did I contact any independent Apple dealers. Perhaps I would have had more luck through one of those avenues, but I find it fairly annoying that such an inexpensive part is so hard to acquire, especially when it's use can substantially increase the usefulness of the AirPort Express.

Wireless Networking

As I said earlier, the AirPort Express is an 802.11g device, meaning it can provide speeds up to 54 Mbps when used with other 802.11g equipment, like the AirPort Extreme cards offered on late-model Macs. I'm using an older PowerBook with AirPort card. As an 802.11g device, AirPort Express is backwards compatible with 802.11b equipment, like the original AirPort cards. As a result, I'm able to connect to the wireless network at speeds up to 11 Mbps, the same as I was using my older 802.11b access point.

According to Apple's documentation, the AirPort Express allows you to connect at high speeds (802.11g) from up to 50 feet away and at lower speeds (802.11b) from up to 150 feet away. I'm not sure what the 802.11b range is on my old SMC access point, but it seems like the signal strength on the AirPort Express is lacking when compared to the SMC.

Using the highly-accurate "walk around the apartment with the PowerBook and watch the signal strength in the menu bar" technique, it appeared that the signal from the AirPort Express would drop off prior to that of the SMC. Where I had 4 bars with the SMC,

I had 3 with the AirPort Express. When I carried the PowerBook into my bathroom (not that I make a habit of computing from the bathroom, but it was the furthest point in the apartment from the two access points), I had 2 bars with the SMC and fluctuated between 1 bar and no signal with the AirPort Express.

I don't know why there were differences in the signal strength. Was it the 802.11g chipset in the AirPort Express? Was it the small antennas on the SMC? Was it something in my walls? Who knows.

If signal strength was all I cared about, I could probably reposition the AirPort Express so it was closer to the middle of my apartment to get better coverage. However, it also needs to be positioned close to a stereo and, if you so desire, a printer. Although the additional functionality opens up a number of possibilities, it can limit you to some degree.

AirTunes

When people think about AirPort Express, AirTunes is often one of the first things that comes to mind. AirTunes is the technology that allows you to broadcast music from iTunes to almost any type of radio or receiver.

When iTunes detects the presence of an AirTunes-enabled AirPort Express, a new pop-up menu appears in iTunes' bottom status bar, just to the left of the equalizer button. This menu allows you to select where iTunes' audio will be sent. There is an entry for your computer and entries for any AirTunes-enabled AirPort Expresses. If a given AirPort Express has password protection enabled for iTunes playback, a lock icon appears next to the AirPort Express name. Select a locked AirPort Express and you will be prompted for the password.

Once you're connected to an AirTunes-enabled AirPort Express, the experience of playing music is essentially identical to playing music through your computer speakers. The only noticeable difference is that system and iTunes volume controls no longer change the volume of the music—that functionality is delegated to whatever device is connected to the AirPort Express. In this way, AirTunes is sort of like the wireless equivalent of a line-out jack. This metaphor doesn't hold with regards to the equalizer, though. If your equalizer is turned on, iTunes transmits the modified audio. This could be useful if you are

transmitting to a device without its own EQ, but it could also lead you to equalizing the audio twice. It would be nice if each output in the AirTunes menu could remember independent equalizer settings.

I think the user interface gets a little flaky when it tries to deal with AirPort Expresses that iTunes can no longer detect. If an AirPort Express network goes away *for a bried period of time* while it is selected in iTunes, the selected AirPort Express name is displayed in italics. Aside from this minor change, there's no visual indication that something's gone wrong. If you try to play something, iTunes just sits there, waiting for you change the audio output setting.

If you attempt to play via an AirPort Express that has been unavailable for an extended period, you at least get an error message that the selected network is unavailable and that you should double-check the audio output settings.

Since the release of AirPort Express, I've heard two main complaints about "limitations" in AirTunes. First, it only works with iTunes, not My Favorite Application. Second, there's no remote control.

Given that AirPort Express is still fairly new, I don't think either of these are real problems. Given how AirTunes is implemented, sending time-dependent audio data would likely be problematic. Prior to sending the audio, your computer needs to compress and encrypt the audio with the Apple Lossloss Encoder. Once the AirPort Express receives the audio, it needs to decompress and decrypt the Apple Lossless–compressed audio prior to outputting it via the audio mini-jack.

If you tried to use this process with the sound from a DVD or a video game, I think it's quite likely that the audio and video would end up getting out of sync.

I'm not putting it beyond Apple to solve this issue. For the first release of a product, though, I don't think it's inappropriate to make a single, popular case work and work well.

I think the remote control argument falls flat for similar reasons. None of us really have any idea where Apple plans to take the AirPort Express product line. If there were a remote control designed for use with AirTunes today, it wouldn't be an AirPort Express remote, it would be an iTunes remote. What happens if Apple makes AirTunes integration available

to third party developers and they take the feature off in directions previously unimagined? You would still have an iTunes remote, but now you would want a remote that worked with all these other applications.

Printer Sharing

Printer Sharing is one of the AirPort Express features that sometimes makes people scratch their heads. Most people want to use the AirPort Express as a wireless access point and as a music streaming device. To also use Printer Sharing, they'd need to put the printer next to the stereo. In some households, putting the printer in the middle of the living room might not go over so well.

That is one of the advantages of being a bachelor—you can do stupid things like put a laser printer on the bookshelf next to the television. It might also be one of the things that helps keep you a bachelor, but that's another issue for another day.

Assuming you've got a printer that supports Rendezvous and the appropriate driver, setting up the printer is a snap. If you plan ahead, you launch Printer Setup Utility, click Add, and select Rendezvous from pop-up menu. Your printer will show up in the list printer list, where you will select it and click Add.
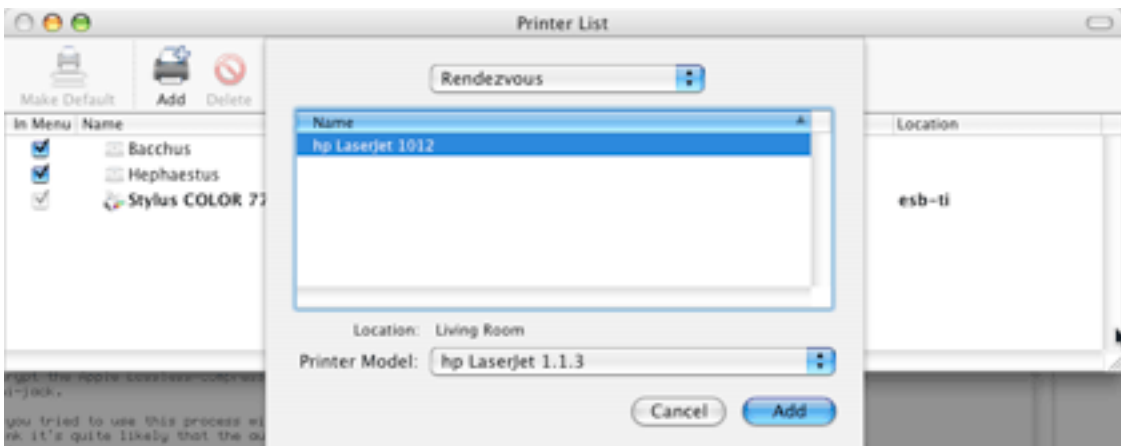
Adding your AirPort Express–shared printer in the Printer Setup Utility.

If you don't plan ahead, you'll try to print something and realize that you haven't yet added the necessary printer. Not to worry, the printer pop-up menu in the Print dialog contains an item name "Rendezvous Printers," which has a submenu listing any Rendezvous-enabled printers. Selecting your AirPort Express–shared printer adds it to the list of installed printers.
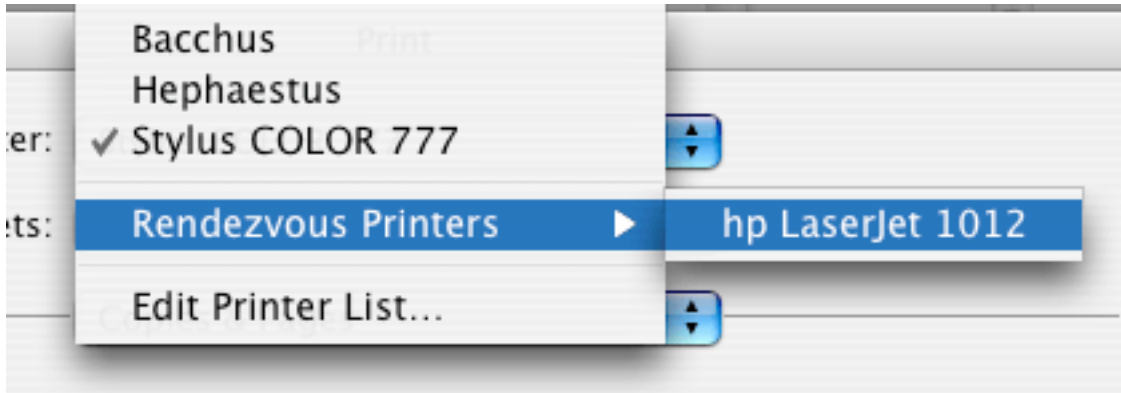
Adding you AirPort-shared printer through the Print dialog.

Both of these methods set your newly-added printer as the default printer on your system.

Once you've gotten this far, it seems like the only potential gotchas are the same ones you'd run into printing via USB, Ethernet, or some other wired connection: paper jams, the printer getting turned off, and so on.

Profiles

One of the other features of the AirPort Express is support for up to five profiles. It seems to me that this feature gets lost in the shuffle from time to time.

Since the AirPort Express is so small, Apple pitches it as a portable solution for creating wireless networks. Running a wireless network in different locations often requires reconfiguring your access point so it's compatible with its surroundings. For instance, at home you use the AirPort Express as a wireless access point, at work you use it as a wireless bridge to the main network, and on business trips you use a different password that you don't mind giving out to your co-workers.

Profiles let you setup and save these settings so you can quickly reconfigure your AirPort Express without needing to toggle 17 different settings.

Conclusion

I really like the whole AirPort Express package. I wanted a replacement for my flaky 802.11b access point. I wanted a wireless print server. I wanted something to stream music to my stereo. I got all that.

The decreased reception concerns me a bit. Right now, I have coverage where I need it, but what happens if I move to some place larger? Will I need a second access point to cover the entire domicile?

I mentioned this already, but the thing that I'm most unhappy with is the seeming inability to get a power cord for the AirPort Express. Using the spare cord from my PowerBook was the difference between roaming throughout my apartment and rearranging my bedroom so the desk was inside the wireless network. Basically, Apple went out and made a very nice device at a reasonable price; then they skimped on what's likely an inconsequential part.

If you're building a wireless network and you want either a wireless print server or wireless music streaming, the AirPort Express is certainly a competitive option. If you want all three of these things, I don't believe there's anything on the market that competes with the AirPort Express.

Review: Optipix 3.0

by Lee Bennett, lbennett@atpm.com

Developer: Reindeer Graphics
Price: $150; $75 (upgrades)
Requirements: Mac OS 9 or Mac OS X 10.2,128 MB RAM, Adobe Photoshop 5.5.
**Trial:** Time-limited (one week)

As increasing numbers of professional photographers have turned to entirely digital solutions, those photographers encounter the problems inherent with digital photography and need professional solutions. Reindeer Graphics offers tools to solve those problems—tools that even operate in 16-bit mode.

There are at least 15 tools available in Optipix 3—far too many to completely detail in this space, considering the user manual is a 78-page PDF with step-by-step examples and screen captures to help you learn how to use each tool. Reindeer Graphics offers an online guide that showcases each tool and gives examples of its use. Since the examples utilize pictures that specifically benefit from each tool, perusing this guide is the best way to see how the tools can improve a digital photo. The available tools are: Auto Contrast, Blending Exposures, Interactive Interpolation, Layer Modes, Image Averaging, Edge Enhancer, Photoshop Actions, Detail Sharpener, Grain Maker, JPEG Cleaner, Safe Sharpen, Safe Median, Power Median, Refocus, and Selection Tools.

I have a small confession to make. When I requested to be the one to review this product, I had only been exposed to a few of the Optipix tools and did not understand it to be the professional workflow utility that it is. Admittedly, there are some tools or specific controls inside some of the tools that are above my skill level. Since the online guide provides excellent descriptions and examples of each tool, I'll simply show examples of how a few of the tools helped even an experienced amateur photographer such as myself. (I'm not yet willing to call myself an advanced photographer!) These are my favorite Optipix tools.

Auto Contrast

Auto Contrast is what Reindeer Graphics calls a "mini-enhancer," letting you improve exposure in a photo. Since the tool contains an interactive histogram, it affords a degree of feedback that you don't get from Photoshop's Levels and Curves tools.
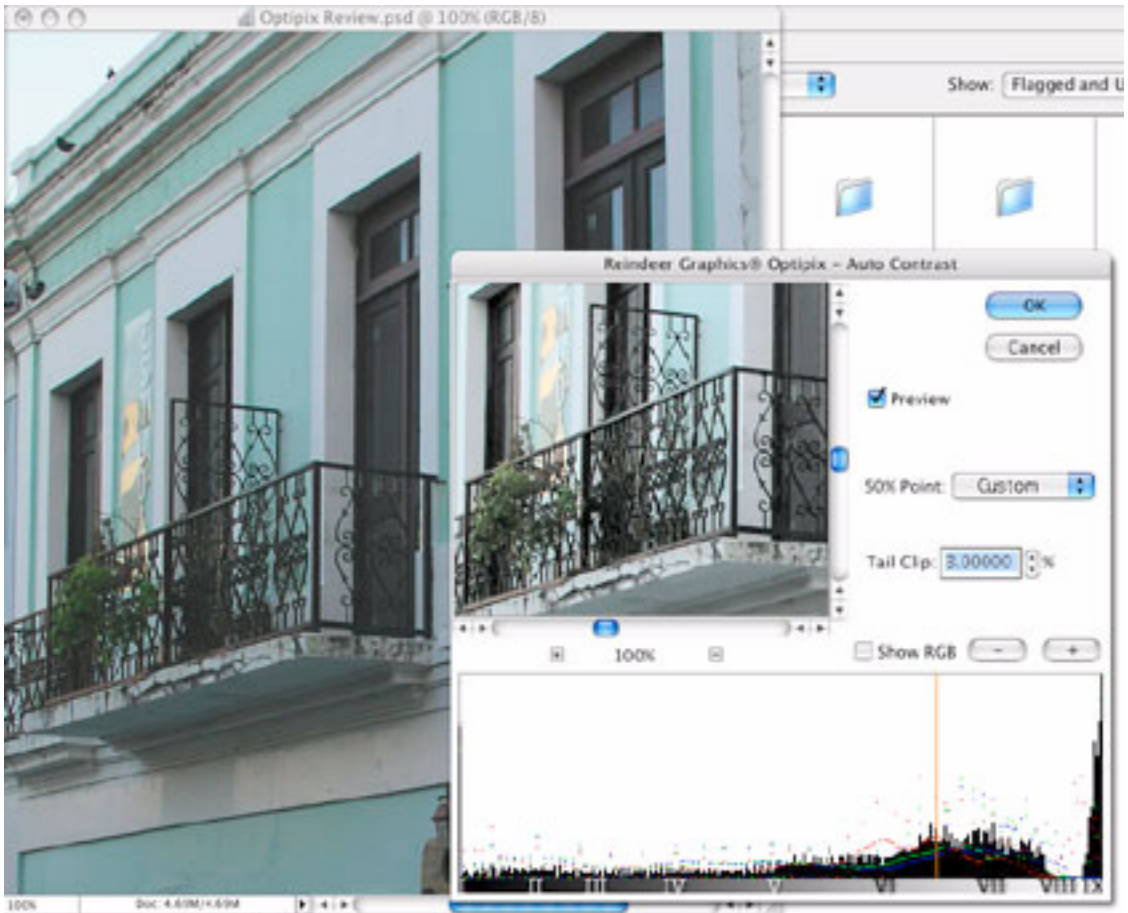
Blend Exposures and Layer Modes

The tools I've probably benefitted from most are the Blend Exposures and Layer Modes tools. I often find myself shooting the exact same photo with two different exposures with the intent of later combining the images in Photoshop. A common example of this is a photo with a bright sky and a shadowed foreground.

Because these two tools are my most favorite, I'm going to depict the process of using them. Besides demonstrating how to use these tools, this should adequately describe the overall process and simplicity of all the tools.
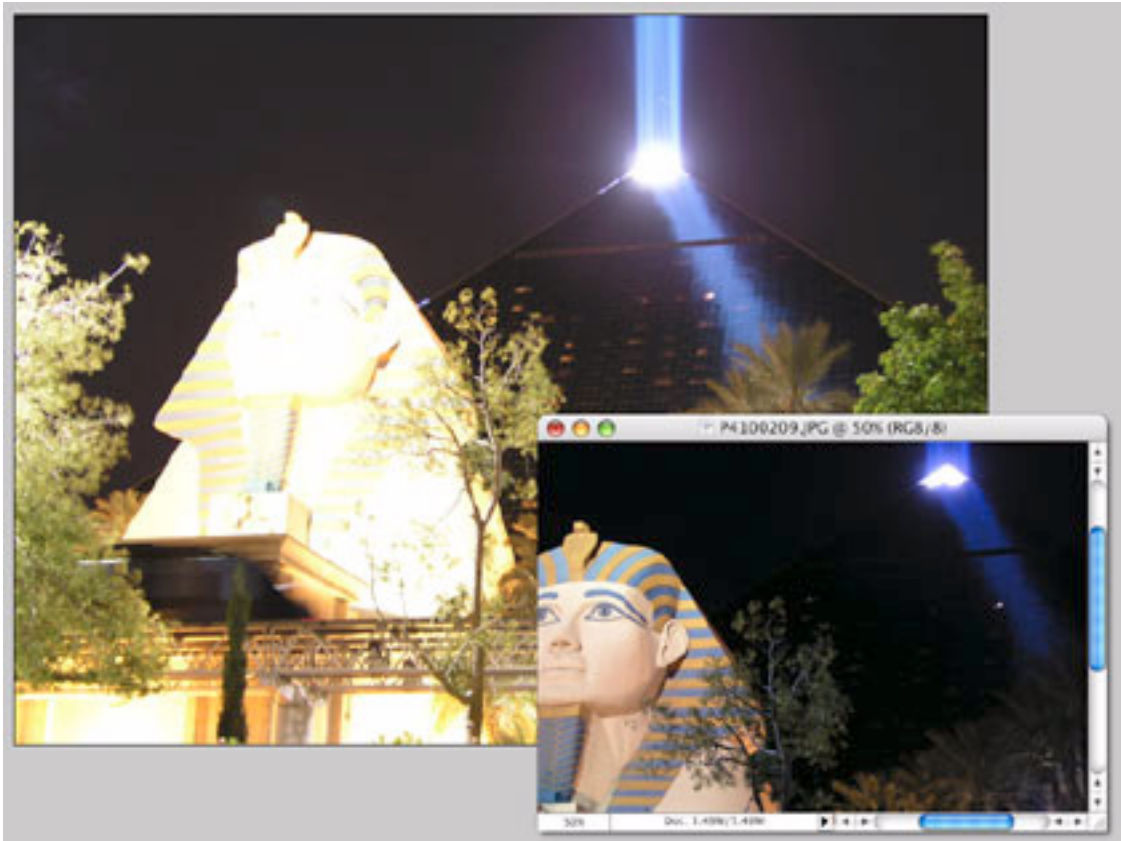
In this first image, we see two shots of the Luxor hotel in Las Vegas at night.

One photo was exposed for the pyramid against the night sky at the expense of blowing out the sphinx in the foreground. A second photo was exposed for the sphinx, making the pyramid nearly indistinguishable against the sky.

After combining the two shots into the same document on separate layers, it was apparent that, even though I recomposed the second shot fairly accurately, there was an inevitable misalignment. Normally, this would be corrected by changing the upper layer's blending mode to Difference or perhaps dropping the upper layer's opacity, then nudging

the upper layer around until it matched the bottom layer. The downside of this was that earlier versions of Photoshop could not do this in 16-bit mode. But even now that Photoshop CS has greater functionality in 16-bit operation, Optipix's Layer Modes is still the better choice. First, it allows for subpixel nudging—important if you're trying to align extremely fine detail. In addition, Optipix has included six additional blending modes to compare the two images: Highlight, Shadow, Subtract, Remove, Ratio, and Compare.

To perform the Layer Modes operation, the bottom layer is selected and Optipix's Setup 2nd Image command is run. This buffers the first image. Next, the upper layer is selected and the Layer Modes panel is accessed.
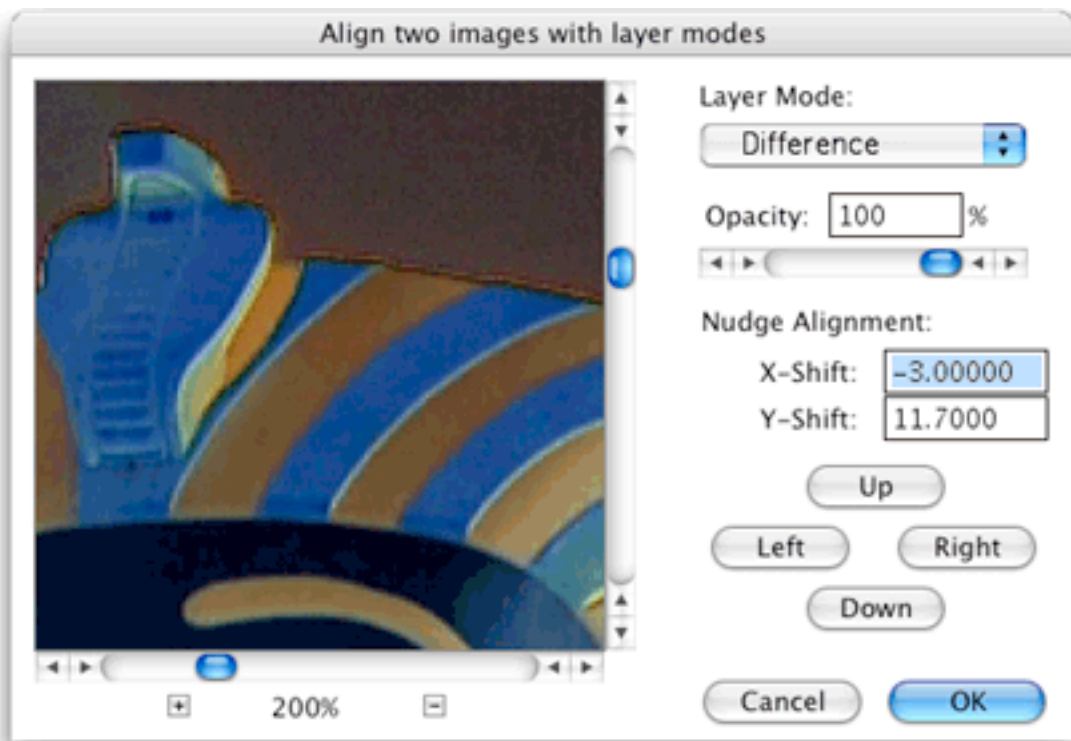
While I still like using the Difference blending mode for comparison, I found that toggling though other modes helps make my final choice for alignment. You can see above that I nudged the upper layer three pixels horizontally and 11.7 pixels vertically.

Once the images are aligned, be sure to change the mode back to Normal. When you click OK to act on your adjustment, whichever mode was selected in this window is applied to the newly aligned image.

With the upper layer still selected, the final step is to simply run the Blend Exposure command. Normally, you would first set up the second image as described above, but since the second image was already buffered for the Layer Modes operation, you do not need to repeat this step.

Safe Sharpen

For the final exposure blended image, above, I also increased the color saturation slightly and adjusted the color balance since the image was a little reddish, then applied Optipix's Safe Sharpen. Safe Sharpen is a single-punch command with no settings interface.

Generally, I've always applied an Unsharp Mask of 50%, a radius of 1 pixel, and zero levels of threshold to my final images if I felt they were a bit soft. These days, I'm using Safe Sharpen. Besides yielding pleasing sharpness, it tries to maintain color information around contrasted edges—areas that often suffer after being sharpened. Safe Sharpen can, in some cases, even repair previously damaged edges.

Like any other sharpening filter, Safe sharpen will also enhance noise in a photo. Unlike other filters, however, color noise is usually not affected. According to the online guide, "The 'blue noise' that is so typical in a digital image is reduced while the edges in the images are enhanced."

JPEG Cleaner

Since professional digital photographers generally only deal with maximum quality JPEGs, uncompressed TIFFs, and RAW format images, it may be desktop publishers such as myself who will most benefit from Optipix's JPEG Cleaner—people who often receive digital images from other photographers who don't know better than to set their cameras at a higher quality. Like Safe Sharpen, there is no user interface needed. It's a directly applied filter.

As most people know, the more highly compressed a JPEG image is, the more visible the 8x8 pixel block boundaries inherent in JPEGs become.

Before JPEG Cleaner. Click to enlarge.

After JPEG Cleaner, applied twice. Click to enlarge.

In the first image above—a 400% zoom on the stripes of an American flag—the characteristic JPEG block artifacts are plainly visible. On the right, the same image has had JPEG Cleaner applied. In severe cases of block artifacts, applying the JPEG Cleaner two or three times in succession can make a big difference.

If JPEG Cleaner's effects aren't exactly what you're looking for, Optipix also comes with a tool that simply selects the 8x8 pixel boundaries without performing any action on the image. You can then perform your own steps on the artifacts.
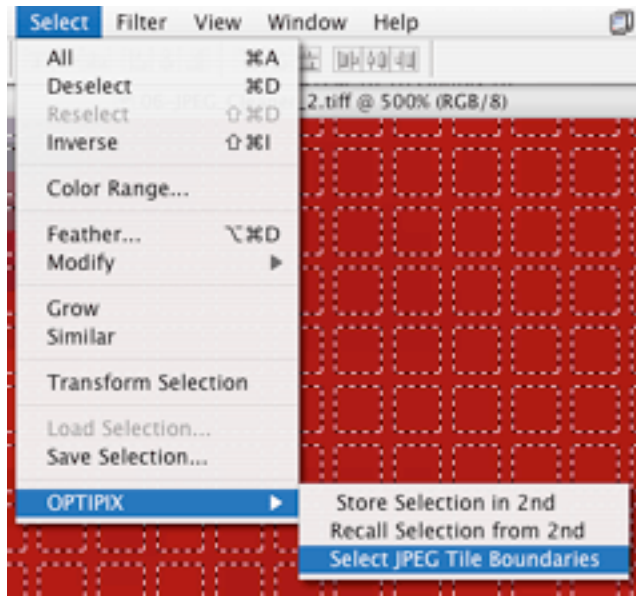
Actions

Optipix also comes with several actions you can optionally install. These include 1/3-pixel nudge commands (most helpful if a keyboard shortcut is assigned to them), an action to automate blending exposures, one that reduces the dynamic range of a photo to a state that is better for commercial printing, and two different actions for image optimization—one for general use and another designed to enhance portraits.

Before Optimize Image action. Click to enlarge.

After Optimize Image action. Click to enlarge.

The Optipix manual says that the Optimize Image action makes marked improvements to well-exposed original digital images, so don't assume that this action will fix sloppy exposure. In the example above, the first photo represents a shot straight from my digital camera with absolutely no adjustment. Other than having a slight red cast, I was very happy with how it came out. After applying the optimization action and making a slight color adjustment to remove the red cast, I could see detail I didn't even realize existed in the photo. Note the upper tip of the fresnel lens inside the lighthouse. This tip is virtually invisible in the unadjusted photo. The action also brought out detail in the bricks of the lighthouse and in the shadows of the tree bark on the extreme right edge of the photo.

Bundled Perks

Those who are serious about digital photography will be pleased to find two PDFs on the Optipix CD. *Photoshop for Digital Photographers* by John Ross is a 217-page guide for using Photoshop to work with digital images. *The Digital Fine Print Workshop* by George DeWolfe is a 76-page guide to producing the highest possible quality in a final print and was updated this year to include techniques that utilize Optipix's tools.

Final Thoughts

Optipix's control windows could use the handiwork of a user interface expert. Some controls seem haphazardly positioned with lots of wasted space. Also, whenever an image is larger than a tool's preview window, the only way to move around the image is to use the scroll bars. Adding a hand tool to slide the image around in the preview window would be extremely helpful. This should occur whenever the pointer is positioned over the preview. It should not be necessary to have to hold a key down while sliding.

Experienced Photoshop users should find Optipix's tools well-suited for their needs. Novice users may, at first, be a bit intimidated by the controls for some tools, but some experimentation should wean them rather quickly. Novices may also be intimidated by Optipix's price tag, but should realize this is a professional tool, not an off-the-shelf wannabe.

Review: Mac OS X Panther for UNIX Geeks (book)
by Johann Campbell, jcampbell@atpm.com

Author: Brian Jepson and Ernest E. Rothman
Publisher: O'Reilly
Price: $25
Trial: Table of Contents, Index, Sample Chapter

At first, I was horrified. Looking at the cover, I couldn't help but think that the publisher was at the least misguided, at most alienating its target audience entirely. Unfortunately, nine years of Internet experiences had left me unaware that unlike the word "nerd," the word "geek" is not actually a derogatary term: at least when used amongst friends. A quick search or two later, and I was satisfied that there was nothing untoward about this book—at least, in its title.
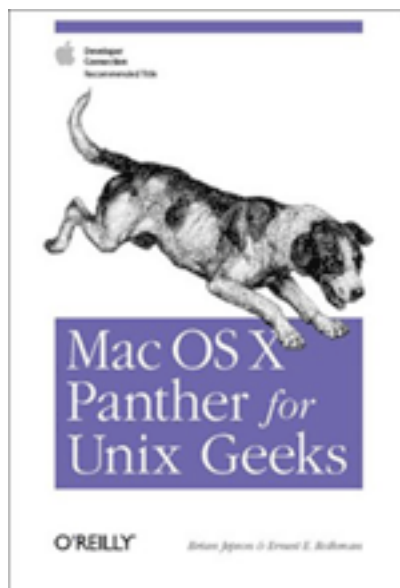
Apprehension cast aside, O'Reilly's *Mac OS X Panther for Unix Geeks* starts off by acknowledging that the depth and nature of the material covered makes it unsuitable for even those existing OS X users who perhaps know their way around the Terminal. Indeed, a lot of its content would leave this group of users searching for more interesting and

perhaps more relevant tutorials. The primary goal of this book is to assist with the transition to Mac OS X for those advanced users of Linux- and Unix-flavoured operating systems with a particular developer or system administration interest.

To this end, a lot of the book ends up describing the differences between what users might be used to on more standard Unix distributions, and what they will have to get used to when using OS X. Logically, the first place to start when doing this would be the Terminal application itself, where the vast majority of command-line activity occurs; and indeed, this is what the first chapter covers. The rest of the chapters in this first "Getting Around" part of the book deal with, among other topics, using Directory Services to manage users, groups and so on; printing using the Common Unix Printing System (CUPS); installing and using the X Window system; and working with various forms of multimedia.

Intriguingly, chapter two contains a full and detailed run-through of the OS X boot process, right from when the power key is pressed to when the login window is displayed. Also of particular note is the wide range of third-party applications mentioned or explained in some detail within various chapters, although as one might expect, Fink takes pride of place with its own chapter in the Packages section.

Those users who create or build their own applications will find three chapters explaining the various routes available, including compiling applications from source code, working with Perl, and what to do when encountering porting errors due to library, header, and framework differences. System administrators will learn about the available monitoring tools, about using MySQL and PostgreSQL, and about using OS X as a server. Finally, the appendices serve to map out a typical OS X file system, provide otherwise missing documentation for a few dozen command-line utilities, and describe a number of included development tools.

Considering the depth of information given on each topic in *Panther for Unix Geeks*, it is all too easy to compare this depth with the range of topics covered and find this range lacking. Also, sometimes this depth gives the casual reader the impression that the book is divulging everything there is to know on the subject, when in reality it offers just enough information to supplement existing knowledge while, at the same time, opening up many more areas to explore once the basics have been learnt.

There is not a lot to be said about this book, other than it accomplishes what it sets out to do and does it in full. The knowledge assumed by the book is great, and the diversity of topics will probably mean that certain chapters will go unread, simply because the reader is not interested in using a certain technology or accomplishing a certain task. A cover-to-cover read, this is not: however, if you are planning on making the switch and enough of the application areas fuel your interest, then this book is probably the most appropriate starting point for you.

FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions

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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.

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