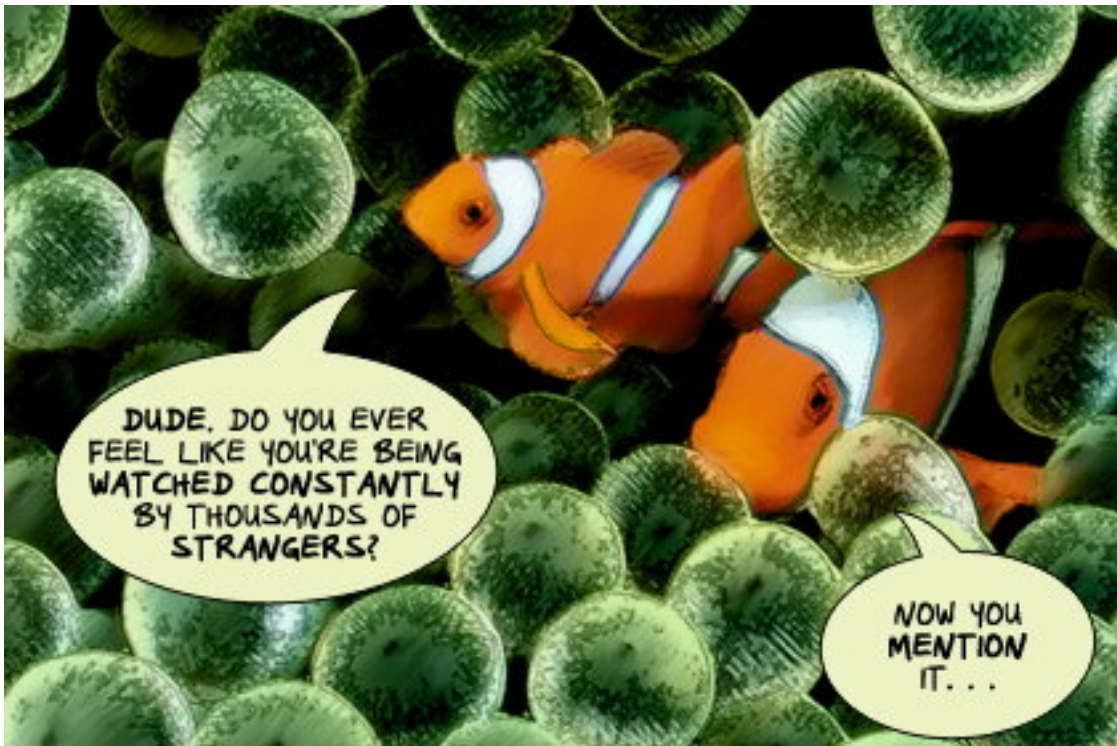# ATPM

13.09 / September 2007   Volume 13, Number 9

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

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

Welcome

Robert Paul Leitao, rleitao@atpm.com

Welcome to the September issue of *About This Particular Macintosh!* We begin the fall school term with anecdotal reports tha the Mac has reached new heights of popularity on college campuses across the country. A few years ago a Mac in the dorm or classroom was seen almost as an oddity in an otherwise Windows-centric world. The iPod and the iPhone are driving college students to the Macintosh in droves. We expect these reports of a hot Mac market on campus to be validated in August and September PC industry sales estimates.

How might the popularity of the Mac change computing on campus? We will be following this story in the months to come.

Audacious Tidbits and Puckish Musings

Years ago an editor at ATPM observed, based on our content and approach to editorial development, that the letters stood less for "About This Particular Macintosh" and more for "Audacious Tidbits and Puckish Musings". Maybe she was correct in her observations. At ATPM we celebrate not the computer, but the "personal computing experience."

We chronicle the interplay between people and technology and the manner in which computing enhances our lives at home, at work and at play. In the information age and this technology era, the personal computer brings news and information into our homes and offices much more quickly than most would have imagined just a few short years ago.

The Macintosh is unique in its functionality and design. Good news or bad, the Macintosh delivers content in a way that's unmatched by any other PC in the world. This month we look at the news in a decidedly ATPM kind of way.

The Month That Wasn't

August is a month of vacations, high temperatures, and a race against the calendar to pack in as much fun in the sun before September's Labor Day weekend and the unofficial end of summer. We began August's 31-day trek with high hopes of warm sunny days, a reprieve from the pressures of the clock, and a respite from day-to-day cares to replenish, recharge, and re-create. The waves of early August optimism crashed against the rocks of economic reality as the sub-prime crisis took center stage, the stock market plummeted, and news stories about a global credit and liquidity crisis filled the newspapers and airwaves. The innocence of summer gave way to reporters covering the rise in home foreclosures and dissipating consumer confidence. September should be a better month for news. It's too bad most us will be reading that news at our desks instead of in the backyard or at the beach.

NBC Forgets the ABCs

At press time Apple announced that the company will not be selling NBC television content for the upcoming season through the iTunes Store. Rather than subject customers to a near trebling of the price for NBC shows, Apple has chosen not to offer the content through iTunes. Has NBC forgotten the ABCs of success by choosing not to provide content to consumers at an industry competitive price?

ABC and other content distributors appear content with the $1.99 retail price for TV shows sold through iTunes. We'll soon know if the executives at NBC change their demands. Can Apple influence pricing on behalf of consumers? This story will continue to unfold as the fall season begins and other online distributors enter the market to compete with Apple.

The September 5th Apple Special Event

Apple fans who have had their fill of August's problematic economic news are cheered by the announcement of a September 5th Apple special event. Tagged with the line "The beat goes on," rumor boards and newsrooms are filled with speculation about Apple's planned announcements. It's easy to assume the announcements will have something to do with the iPod and music. It's not as easy to assume what Apple has in store. To stay two steps ahead of the competition, most of us assume we'll soon have new iPods made available in September for the Christmas season. Let's just assume that no matter the liquidity challenges faced by millions of homeowners, it will be another merry holiday season for iPod sales. Stayed tuned for more in our October issue.

The August Apple Special Event

Among the few bright spots in an otherwise challenging month were the introductions of the new iMac and iLife '08 at an August 7th Apple special event. Priced more competitively and in a new enclosure, the new iMac is receiving generally favorable reviews. Many of these favorable reviews are coming from PC publications that had previously dismissed the Mac as merely a niche product. The iMac is being ignored no more.

iWork Goes to Work (Finally!)

While many of us enjoy discussing and debating the merits of Apple products, the attractiveness and usefulness of the Mac and its intriguing functionality, there was one matter upon which virtually all of us agreed—the lack of a spreadsheet component in the iWork productivity package was a glaring hole in the product. Relegated to home and school use due to the absence of a spreadsheet component, the new iWork suite includes Numbers, a spreadsheet component that nicely integrates with Keynote and Pages. iWork is now ready for work. It may take time for iWork to supplant Office in a Mac office, but the new iWork suite has garnered the interest of Mac owners who use their computer for heavy work as well as for play.

Acer Buys Gateway

Taiwan-based Acer is trying to stay at least one step ahead of Lenovo, its mainland rival in the global PC business. In late August, it was announced that Acer is purchasing beleaguered US PC maker Gateway in a deal scheduled to close before the end of the year. Lenovo's purchase of IBM's PC division has not brought that company the global success it expected. Acer is taking the fight to Lenovo in the US through the Gateway acquisition while the two firms battle for growth in Europe. For Apple, the Gateway acquisition means it will take the company just a bit more time to recapture the #3 spot in PC domestic sales. Growing at a pace about three times more quickly than the PC business itself, Apple's surge in Mac sales should not be affected by the Acer acquisition of Gateway.

The Bayou Bengals

The fall semester ushers in a new college football season. The pageantry, traditions, and storied rivalries begin anew for the new school year. This month, in a nod to the interests of our managing editor, we make honorable mention of the LSU Tigers and the team's pursuit of a unified national championship. Winners of the 2003 BCS National Championship, the imperfect BCS bowl system left the AP national championship that year in the hands of the men of Troy rather than the boys of Baton Rouge. Lamenting the perceived lack of attention paid the SEC's perennial championship contender, we make mention today of LSU's highest pre-season raking since 1959. Debuting in the #2 spot, the Tigers have high hopes of winning it all this season. For the sake of editorial constraint, we won't mention which team debuted at #1. Will this be the year the Tigers get their national championship game against the Trojans? Computing aside, September is the month to get back to school, back to work and back to life—pageantry and rivalries included.

Our September issue includes:

Bloggable: Our Sense of Childlike Wonder

There's no Santa Claus? No Easter Bunny? And Fake Steve Jobs isn't really a Silicon Valley celebrity, or Steve Jobs himself? Turns out he's just some East Coast senior editor at a magazine? What a let-down. The bloggerati react to the unveiling of the real Fake Steve Jobs, plus spam, spam, spam, egg and spam, in this month's *Bloggable.*

MacMuser: IT Pros Are Anything But

Mark Tennent wonders what's wrong with FTP.

MacMuser: Time, Ladies and Gentlemen

Microsoft could take some lessons from competitors regarding the amount of time required to perform certain tasks.

Photoshop For the Curious: Creating Seamless Tiles

A single tool in Photoshop plus a little know-how with the Clone Stamp or Healing Brush tools are all you need to convert most any pattern or texture into one that seamlessly tiles repeatedly.

Desktop Pictures: Great Ocean Road, Australia

Reader Jennifer Curry provides this month's images of Great Ocean Road in Australia.

Cartoon: Cortland

More and more, the swing dance hall offers naught but misery for Cortland, while Todd suffers iPhone

temptation. We're also given a handy guide to online forum denizens.

Review: Cocktail 3.8.1

Cocktail puts a wide variety of Mac OS X system, interface, and application settings under one application roof.

Review: Curio 4.0

Since our review of version 2.4, Curio has become a full-featured project planning suite.

Review: NetNewsWire 3.0

The most recent update to NetNewsWire represents more of an evolutionary change for a product that has traditionally seen major changes. Not that that's a bad thing.

Review: radioSHARK 2

A primarily visual refresh that does nothing to improve the poor reception or atrocious software.

Snapz Pro X 2.1.1

With many enhancements over the built-in screen capture methods, including the ability to record screen movements into QuickTime movies, Snapz Pro X is an indispensable tool for all Mac document writers, but there is a catch.

Review: Stikkit

Stikkit is a Web service that combines a personal information manager, a notes database, and natural-language parsing into one complex and very powerful service to organize your whole life. All you have to do is write a few simple sentences. You stukkit!

Portable Power Station Review[1]

Since preparing the above review, I have learned that Battery Geek has released a second-generation knock off MagSafe connector. To ensure that ATPM readers have as much information as possible in making their purchasing decisions, I've taken a look at this new iteration of the problematic component.
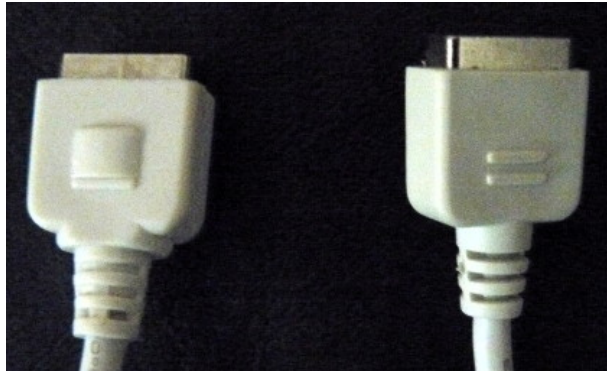
The connectors look almost identical, but the first-generation model on the right falls apart when disconnected from the PowerBook, and the second-generation model on the left stays together.

The second version, after being connected and disconnected repeatedly and from every angle, holds up just fine. The tip is mounted securely in its plastic housing. I can recommend it without hesitation. (In the interest of full disclosure, I should say I tested the piece only for its ability to hook up to the MacBook Pro satisfactorily and sturdily; I already gave the actual battery to my brother, who took it halfway around the world—but the battery itself was always fine.) To their credit, Battery Geek recognized the problem with their earlier design. It is too bad they didn't contact purchasers on their own initiative, but customers can contact them to get the new version free of charge.

—*Frank H. Wu*

MagSafe[2]

I tried my MagSafe adapter in two cars. Doesn't seem to really work. Seems to keep the thing powered but not charging when the car is moving. Doesn't work when the cars stays still.

—*Jeff Lorber*

Cars are unreliable power sources. It's the car, not the adapter, that's the problem. I would not count on a car to charge the computer.
—*Frank Wu*

A Tutorial on Resolution[3]

Thanks for explaining that as well as you did. Several years ago I made some of the mistakes that you mentioned while scanning photos. I couldn't find this information before scanning some photos so I forged ahead.

Knowing I wanted $8'' \times 10''$ printouts, I scanned at a very high resolution and saved the files as uncompressed TIFF files. It turns out I scanned at a higher resolution than I needed. I looked at one of them a minute ago, and it was a whopping 300+ MB file. Boy could I have used your help then.

Now on to color calibration.

—*Sylvester Roque*

• • •

My Panasonic Lumix DMC FZ8 snaps photos at 72ppi (JPEG), and I use Paint Shop Pro 9 to convert to 300ppi for printing, and used this example in PSP. It works great. This article helped me more at explaining PPI than any others I read and how to apply it to a printed image…thanks!

—*James*

• • •

1. Is there any way of improving—even slightly—the resolution of a limited number of pixels?

2. As Seen on TV: how do you express, to family and friends, the "magic" infinite resolution demonstrated on the crime investigation TV shows when they enlarge a fuzzy image to crystal clarity? Does it make you want to laugh or cry?

—*Paul Reitz*

[1] http://www.atpm.com/13.08/magsafe.shtml
[2] http://www.atpm.com/13.08/magsafe.shtml

[3] http://www.atpm.com/13.08/photoshop.shtml

1. Most people cannot discern any difference if you upscale a photo perhaps about half again bigger (e.g. from four inches to six), especially if some subtle sharpening is used as well. I'll also admit that I've sometimes intentionally enlarged an image by an insane amount just for the fuzzy effect.

   There is a utility called Genuine Fractals[4] that uses a far more complex algorithm for upscaling than Photoshop's. But it's rather expensive. Fortunately, an OEM copy came with my scanner at work, but you're currently looking at $160 to buy it outright.

   In my article, I didn't touch on the concept of line screen frequency of halftones, and I don't care to get into too much detail here. However, for those who are familiar with the little halftone dots used to make a single ink appear like it is many tints of that color, the measurement of distance between each dot is the line screen frequency. You'll often find that newspapers are in the 85–100 LPI (lines per inch) range, laser printers often in the 100–150 LPI range, and magazines are around 200 LPI and higher. The greater the LPI, the smoother the halftone appears. This is why you can easily see the halftone dots in a newspaper photo but not so easily in a magazine.

   The reason I say this now is because if you know what line screen frequency will be used, you can calculate the minimum resolution that should work with that frequency. I said in the article that I always send my images to press at 300 PPI. That's because most of the items I have printed are at a halftone line screen frequency of 200 LPI. The formula is LPI $\times$ 1.5 = minimum PPI. Some people will say LPI $\times$ 2, but your mileage may vary. I'm happy with LPI $\times$ 1.5.

   Therefore, if you have a black-and-white laser printer that you know only outputs 100 LPI halftones, you only need a 150 PPI image. Any higher of resolution is probably wasted.

   I should probably also say that inkjet printers use a different form of screening than traditional halftones. It's called stochastic screening[5] (or FM screening, which stands for Frequency Modulation). Stochastic screening, while it can have drawbacks, usually produces results I like much better. I don't, however, know if there's a specific guideline for the minimum resolution that is ideal for printing on inkjet printers that are using stochastic screening. I've seen acceptable results on photo-quality inkjet printouts with 200 PPI images. However, while my current commercial press cannot do stochastic screens, the previous press I used (I left them for a variety of reasons) did do stochastic screens on request, and they advised 300 PPI images just the same as if I were doing traditional halftone screening.

2. I absolutely do want to cry when I see television shows "enhance" an image in the way you describe. But then I just have to remember: it's television, and it's fake. I can only pray that most people watching television realize that what they see is probably not possible in real life.

   —*Lee Bennett*

Always Use Digital Rights Protection[6]

Even this well done article skips any clue as to why Steve Jobs utilizes DRM at all. It's because there would be no legal sale of music or video content without it, and in case you still don't get it, that means that none [except EMI to date] of the labels and/or producers will allow their content to be sold on iTunes or anywhere else without it. Uncle Steve's open letter spelled that out, and when EMI found the courage to

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[4]http://www.ononesoftware.com/detail.php?prodLine_id=2

[5]http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Color_printing#Stochastic_screening

[6]http://www.atpm.com/13.05/bloggable.shtml

break ranks Sir Steve wasted no time in backing up his open stand on DRM by un-DRMing the only label that would allow him to.

Anyone who has ever thought that the Jobs-meister was all about using DRM to "lock" us into or out of any ability to choose our hardware of choice were just overcome by Microsoft propaganda being spewed about by the too-numerous-to-count MS "partners."

Whatever else Jobs-and-company's intentions were from the outset, it was clear to me that they [Apple] simply wanted get the attention of the public firmly on them [Apple] to remind people that they really do not *have to* use MS Windows if they didn't want to. While I'm sure that Apple is certainly not losing money on iTMS, I doubt that it is single handedly keeping the company afloat either.

I still sit in dazed wonderment as I read articles complaining about how a consumer can only use iPods with iTunes, and I read these articles as I plug my obsolete Rio Player in and manage its music files directly inside of iTunes. And I've read these articles on popular blogs as recently as two weeks ago—give me a break, folks. The iTunes Music Store is one of the most ingenious ad campaigns Apple has ever come up with, and prior to the re-arrival of one Steven P. Jobs, advertising in any real way was something that Apple just couldn't seem to pull off.

And all of the EU hoopla? Can you tell what I'm going to say next? The different pricing for different countries is about the hoops that Apple is compelled to jump through by the music labels and even the EU itself in order to even legally sell/distribute the music in those countries. Are we seeing any light here at all?

If Apple had its way it would sell non-DRMed music all over the planet for 99 cents or the exchange equivalent. Why? Because Apple is using the iTMS to get people to see them as the legitimate computer manufacturer, and a truly innovative one at that, that they are. With iTMS Apple has been doing nothing more than showing off their unprecedented ability to innovate with computing technologies in a way that offers end users conveniences that were only being talked about before iTMS—and now that Apple's done it, everybody's racing to get a piece.

The motivation for iTMS is really much more straightforward than anybody wants to see it—and of course, therein lies much of its genius.

—Mr. Peabody

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Our Sense of Childlike Wonder

Some guys have all the luck.

Fake Steve Jobs[1] has gotten more press than all but the tip of the long tail of the bloggers' bell curve. He has a sharp wit, an easy target for his satirical posts, and probably a top-five Google PageRank score. But that wasn't good enough! He's also a senior editor at *Forbes*, which means he gets paid to write probably 6–8 feature articles a year, and lots of time to blog, too.

The real Fake Steve, it turns out, is Daniel Lyons, the aforementioned *Forbes* senior editor. He was revealed by *New York Times* reporter Brad Stone, who wrote of Lyons[2] better than I could've:

> The mysterious writer has used his blog, the *Secret Diary of Steve Jobs*, to lampoon Mr. Jobs and his reputation as a difficult and egotistical leader, as well as to skewer other high-tech companies, tech journalists, venture capitalists, open-source software fanatics and Silicon Valley's overall aura of excess.
>
> The acerbic postings of "Fake Steve," as he is known, have attracted a plugged-in readership—both the real Mr. Jobs and Bill Gates have acknowledged reading the blog (fakesteve.blogspot.com). At the same time, Fake Steve has evaded the best efforts of Silicon Valley's gossips to discover his real identity.
>
> Meanwhile, on the other side of the country, Daniel Lyons, a senior editor at *Forbes* magazine who lives near Boston, has been quietly enjoying the attention.

There's been a great deal of speculation over who Fake Steve really was. You may remember that I wrote last month about poor Andy Ihnatko[3], who has been insisting that he is not Fake Steve for

a long time. He probably feels pretty good right now—although, considering that now Fake Steve's blog is going to be sponsored by *Forbes* and will have a book tie-in, Ihnatko probably wishes he *had* been the keeper of the Fake Steve blog.

Fake Steve (as Fake Steve) wrote, "Now you've ruined the mystery[4] of Fake Steve, robbing thousands of people around the world of their sense of childlike wonder. Hope you feel good about yourself."

This leaves us, or at least me, to wonder: what will become of Fake Steve Jobs now that we know who it is? It's not a Silicon Valley gossip, and it's not someone with inside information at Apple, either. But will we continue to flock to his blog? What incentive do we have to continue to read his blog now that we know who he is—will the fact that we know that Fake Steve is Daniel Lyons affect how we perceive his writing?

It appears that there's about as much agreement on that count as there was on the speculation about Fake Steve's real identity.

In *TidBITS*, Adam Engst asks the question most eloquently[5], but he doesn't have any answers. He thinks that Lyons' writing is what made the blog successful—his "ability to uncork Jobs's id into a stream of consciousness that seemed vaguely credible," as he puts it—and that keeping it up will be the ticket.

John Gruber of *Daring Fireball*, who insists on finding his way into every single one of my columns, thinks that the mysterious identity of the blogger was nothing more than a distraction[6] from the real message. "Is it that he's so good—sometimes scathingly funny, sometimes deeply insightful, and, at his best, both? Or was it the fact that his identity was a mystery?" he asks. "If it were the main source of Fake Steve's appeal, the novelty would have worn off months ago."

Ah, yes. That distraction. Some bloggers did bite on it: Michele Capots, of the *Buzz Bin*, for one.

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

[2] http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/06/technology/06steve.html?ex=1344052800&en=8ab7e0cf79cf8e96&ei=5090&partner=rssuserland&emc=rss

[3] http://www.atpm.com/13.08/bloggable.shtml#tinker-to-evers-to-chan

[4] http://fakesteve.blogspot.com/2007/08/damn-i-am-so-busted-yo.html

[5] http://db.tidbits.com/article/9105

[6] http://daringfireball.net/2007/08/fake_steve_unmasked

She believes that the whole thing is a publicity stunt. She's probably in a good position to observe, but she wrote:

> Was it a marketing ploy? It may have been a very good one. But what does that say about bloggers, much less journalistic bloggers. I think they get carried away with the anonymity[7]. It's easier to say what's on your mind behind a computer screen, especially when nobody knows it's you.

Dan Gillmor and Anil Dash both take note of Lyons' previous articles—in particular, one from November 2005 called "Attack of the Blogs." Lyons interviewed Dash for the article, and Dash must've felt burned. He wrote, this month:

> My initial temptation was to mark Lyons as a hypocrite. Upon reflection, it seems there's a more profound lesson: the benefits of blogging for one's career or business are so profound that they were even able to persuade a dedicated detractor[8].

> The deliberate antagonism of the story was especially frustrating to me because Six Apart, more than any other company involved in blogging, has taken its lumps for its advocacy and efforts around accountability and responsibility.... At the same time, we've been maligned by stories like the *Forbes* cover for apparently not doing enough to encourage accountability...

> Blogs are such a good business tool that *Forbes* has given its most valuable editorial promotion to announce their adoption of one. This, from the magazine whose cover touted that "They Destroy Brands and Wreck Lives."

Gillmor, at the Center for Citizen Media's blog (as opposed to his personal blog), piles on:

> The *Forbes* article in which Lyons trashed the blog world was such a bad piece of journalism that it was easy to discount. But let's be generous and give Lyons

credit for understanding that the new medium is worth trying after all[9].

And then there's just plain distraction. Scott Karp, at *Publishing 2.0*, all but calls Lyons a sell-out:

> What *is* surprising...is that *Forbes*, which employs Fake Steve's alter ego Dan Lyons, thinks moving the blog over to Forbes.com can keep the dream alive— the front page of Forbes.com right now feels so deeply ironic I can't even put it into words...I suspect Dan Lyons wasn't given a choice in the matter—and maybe Forbes.com felt they didn't have a choice in the matter either, to see whether they could milk the cow[10].

Lastly Debbie Weil, a corporate blog consultant who also runs a blog called *BlogWrite* for CEOs, turns her comments into a tacit business pitch[11]. She writes:

> So is fake blogging the same thing as ghostblogging? Well, no. Fake blogging is much funnier and, if well done, can be more effective at engaging readers. You can fake candidness much better than really truly being candid. And of course fake blogging is upfront about being "fake" which follows blogging's best practice benchmark of being authentic. Ghostblogging is just...fake.

You might ask what I think. Honestly, I couldn't have cared less whether we know who the real Fake Steve was (as long as it wasn't Andy Ihnatko, after all). But I know that it can be dangerous to blog, anonymously or not, when you work in the news media—and I sure hope Lyons told his editor, even if it was supposed to be kept secret. After all, Bob Woodward, Carl Bernstein, and Ben Bradlee kept Deep Throat's identity secret for three decades, under much greater duress. If he didn't, Lyons is lucky he kept his job.

Egg, Bacon, Sausage, and Spam

Now that the iPhone's been on the market for a little while, it's been interesting to kick back and see

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[7] http://www.livingstonbuzz.com/blog/2007/08/10/the-fake-steve-jobs-bugs-me/

[8] http://www.dashes.com/anil/2007/08/fake-steve-jobs-and-the-triumph-of-blogs.html

[9] http://citmedia.org/blog/2007/08/07/fake-steve-jobs-hypocrite-or-new-believer/

[10] http://publishing2.com/2007/08/05/fake-fake-steve-jobs-on-forbescom/

[11] http://www.blogwriteforceos.com/blogwrite/2007/08/through-the-loo.html

where the dust settles. So far, I'm not seeing any major complaints—other than the usual—about the device itself, but the service apparently sucks even more than I remember from when I was a customer of the Old AT&T Wireless.

My favorite: apparently AT&T doesn't really understand how to send out bills for devices with unlimited data service. They're using the same billing system that would at least make a little sense for limited-data plans, with a listing of all of the data downloaded and its size. But, as David Pogue found, they're impossible to read[12] (and literally useless):

> But then—get this—I get SIX PAGES of listings of data tidbits that the iPhone has downloaded in the form of e-mail and Web pages—KILOBYTE BY KILOBYTE! Every graphic on every Web page, every message sent or received-it's all carefully listed by date and time. Not as anything helpful like NYTIMES.COM HOME PAGE or EMAIL—no, no. Instead, every single one of the hundreds of listings says the same thing: "Data Transfer" of type "Data" at rate code "MBRF," along with how many kilobytes it was (usually 1K or 3K).

You read that correctly. Ben Kuchera of *Ars Technica* excerpted his bill so you can see it, and it's even more ridiculous[13] than Pogue makes it sound. It would fit right in on the set of Brazil[14]—maybe *this* is the elusive 26B/6 form!

Speaking of Brazil, Ed Felten at *Freedom to Tinker* ponders Apple's apparent application for DRM for portable-device chargers, and whether it would benefit consumers[15]. We don't know a whole lot yet, but one possibility is that Apple wants control of the whole market for device chargers. This would be odd, because it would, at best, slow down the accessories makers who have helped perpetuate the iPod's formidable market status. The other possibility Felten can think of is that it's an anti-theft measure, designed to allow the user to authenticate the device with only his or her charger(s). Hmm, a world without iPod theft?

Last but not least on the iPhone front, Scott Gilbertson of *Wired's* Compiler blog is concerned about iPhone-optimized Web sites. He writes, "[W]asn't one of the promises of the iPhone that it offered 'a real Web browser?' If that's so, why all the iPhone-optimized sites[16]?" Gilbertson sees an analogue here: Internet Explorer 4.0, with its wide variety of proprietary tags and extensions. He provides a good explanation, and those who are worried about Web Standards above all else will be worried about this, too.

But I think Gilbertson misses a key difference, so I'll note it here: in 1998, Microsoft's intention was to force people to use IE 4, not Netscape and not IE 3 either. In contrast, "iPhone-optimized" just means "designed for any mobile device with a relatively low-resolution touchscreen, vertical orientation, and full Web browsing capabilities." There's no reason future Treos or Windows Mobile devices or BlackBerrys couldn't use these "iPhone-optimized" sites. Most of them will even work in your desktop Web browser; if you ask me, the iPhone version of Facebook is better than the desktop version. Being able to use *any* Web site is great, but it seems silly to insist that iPhone users pinch and scroll on sites they visit regularly, when providing a mobile version of the site could be as simple as a different CSS stylesheet.

Spam, Egg, Spam, Spam, Bacon, and Spam

All right, guys. I'm having a hard time caring about the iMac refresh this month, since about all Apple did was make them thinner, bump up the CPU speed, eliminate the smallest size, make the case 100% metal and glass, and change the handle/stand. . .again. Nothing revolutionary.

You know what I do care about, though?

The new keyboards for the iMac, and, presumably, any other desktop Mac.

Lately I've been noticing a curious drive, in some corners, for more low-profile desktop keyboards. You know, laptop-height keys, less slant, the whole nine yards. It never made much sense to me—six months of using just my laptop keyboard gave me finger and wrist pain while typing like I'd never experienced before, and switching to using an external keyboard and mouse made the pain go away almost immediately.

I must be the only one, though, because Apple's now selling the Apple Keyboard as a low-

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[12]http://pogue.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/07/18/iphoneat
t-billuh-oh/

[13]http://arstechnica.com/news.ars/post/20070811-ipho
ne-bill-is-surprisingly-xbox-huge-lol.html

[14]http://imdb.com/title/tt0088846/

[15]http://www.freedom-to-tinker.com/?p=1180

[16]http://blog.wired.com/monkeybites/2007/08/the-ipho
ne-is-i.html

profile, MacBook-style keyboard. When *Engadget* first leaked photos[17], a few days before the new iMac release date, my reaction was pretty much the same as Erik Barzeski's:

> I'd give this, oh, a 75% chance of being a developmental version of the new Apple keyboard. I'd say there's very little chance[18] this keyboard will ship in this form.

Garrett Murray picked up on most of the changes, including some of the ones that I missed, so I yield my time to him:

> First, Apple has decided that the wired version of the keyboard should be full size, but the Bluetooth version isn't. It's missing the delete, insert, home, et cetera island, and the number pad. In fact, the Bluetooth version looks exactly like the MacBook keyboard, but with aluminum backing. The wired version has the whole keyboard layout. I'm not sure why they decided on this, and I don't think I agree with it. Sure, making the BT version smaller makes it more portable, but I don't think people are moving them around quite enough that it's worth shorting them the ability to input numbers conveniently.
>
> Second, and far stranger, is the new layout of function (or F) keys. The wired keyboard now has up to F19, and no dedicated volume controls. Instead, it moves the volume controls to special functions on F10, F11 and F12. You might remember those as two Expose keys and the Dashboard key. Well, not anymore[19]. In fact, F9, the other default Expose key, is now fast-forward/next track. And the eject key, which has nearly always been the last key in the upper right of the keyboard is next to F12. . . .
>
> And here's where it gets fun: you can, much like on a laptop, disable the special functionality of the keys and switch

to regular function key use using System Preferences, after which you can assign things to the keys you wish. That is, except the volume keys. Because when you turn off the special functions, there is no way to bind the volume keys to, say, the F16–18 keys which are useless on the keyboard otherwise. So if you want to use the keyboard the way you're used to, you won't be able to control volume without holding the "fn" key, which allows you to use the special functions temporarily when they're disabled.

On the other hand, Twisted Melon's Bruno Fernandes notes that Apple surely did research on ergonomics and function-key usage—he thinks the idea was to make these keys more accessible for right-handed mouse use[20].

Don't look at me to be indignant about the key-layout changes. I'm still upset that the old, traditional-profile keyboards are going away. But you might find that you could try it and like it.

Spam, Spam, Spam, Egg, and Spam

There's a new kid on the grid: iWork '08 has a spreadsheet, Numbers[21], now. In addition, the suite can import XML documents from Office 2007 (oddly enough, before Office 2008/Mac, which hasn't been released). Pages also has separate word processing and layout modes, which makes it a lot more useful than the old Pages—it's a little like Galley mode in PageMaker or InDesign.

You'll probably hear about it plenty in this month's issue, but I've gathered together a little of what you probably won't see anywhere else in this magazine.

- If you're an entry-level user of Excel and Word, you should be plenty happy[22] with iWork '08, Walt Mossberg says. After all, it's got much better presentation, it's cheaper, and it's certainly easier to use for ordinary tasks. He adds that since Numbers lacks many Excel functions, power users will probably find it disappointing. Mossberg notes that Pages requires many clicks to show formatting marks and word count—but this runs up against one of my pet peeves. Print

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[17] http://www.engadget.com/2007/07/27/is-this-the-new-imac-keyboard/

[18] http://nslog.com/2007/07/27/new_apple_keyboard

[19] http://maniacalrage.net/past/2007/8/8/when_i_went_to_the/

[20] http://twistedmelon.com/blog/aug2007.html

[21] http://www.apple.com/iwork/numbers/

[22] http://ptech.allthingsd.com/20070816/apples-iwork-package-is-elegant-but-wimpy-compared-with-office/

journalists are the ones who need those features, so we can see the exact fit and make sure all of the copy is exactly as we need it. (My mom's probably never used the word count feature, and one time I had to walk her through how to turn off those invisible formatting marks.)

- Paul Kim, of Noodlesoft and his blog, *Noodlings*, wishes that Numbers were a little more revolutionary. More specifically, he wants to know why it doesn't support three-dimensional[23] spreadsheets. Now, I have to confess that I have absolutely no idea how these things work, but Kim says they're pretty revolutionary. I'm not surprised that a company as focused on the ordinary consumer as Apple is didn't try something really complex, but I can understand his disappointment.

- The guys at Microsoft think that Numbers will be good for Microsoft, too. David Weiss works in MacBU, and he notes that Apple has proved that there is still room to innovate in the office suite market—and that this will help Office as well as iWork. Why? An open file format[24]! (Imagine that: you mean monopolies stifle innovation? Quelle horreur!) Weiss writes:

  > What Apple has done with Keynote, Pages and Numbers is [compete on features rather than lock-in]. With each one of their applications, they've created a user interface that reflects how they think people want or should want to act when building a presentation, document or spreadsheet... If someone else has what they think is a good solution for building Office documents, I think that's great.

- With all the hubbub over iWork, no one noticed that one of the things that is gone is AppleWorks[25], née ClarisWorks. Once iWork got a spreadsheet, that was it for the venerable suite. Peter Cohen, in *Macworld*, penned a fond farewell[26] to AppleWorks this month.

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[23]http://www.noodlesoft.com/blog/2007/08/15/numbers-and-the-next-big-thing/

[24]http://davidweiss.blogspot.com/2007/08/numbers.html

[25]http://www.atpm.com/6.05/aw6.shtml

[26]http://www.macworld.com/news/2007/08/15/appleworks/index.php

Lobster Thermidor Aux Crevettes With a Mornay Sauce Garnished With Truffle Pâté, Brandy, and With Fried Egg on Top, and Spam

- If you have a new portable Mac and had one of the older models, too, have you ever wondered why the Book takes a few seconds to go to sleep? The answer, it turns out, is Safe Sleep, which I'd forgotten existed until this month. Joe Kissell wrote a great how-to on disabling Safe Sleep[27], for those of us for whom it is not useful (or who just find it annoying and preferred the old sleep mode). He also has a follow-up on situations where you might want it, and how to use it with an encrypted disk[28].

- Tim Bray didn't just write an ode to his black MacBook. He has some useful advice to potential upgraders: "I gather the Pro line is due for a refresh soon; it better be good, because at this point anyone who buys a silver Mac is making a big mistake[29]."

- It's no secret that Apple doesn't really compete in the enterprise sector. *Ars Technica's* John Siracusa takes a look at the why, rather than the how, and comes to an unsurprising conclusion: the requirements for what makes a successful enterprise device are completely unlike the attributes that have made Apple an innovative success. Siracusa adds:

  > Maybe around item two hundred in this list [of attributes of a dream "enterprise" iPhone] there might be a bit about the people who will actually use these enterprise dream phones tolerating the things[30]. Really, as long as they don't openly revolt, it's fine. The people you have to please in the enterprise market are the ones purchasing and supporting the products, not the poor schmucks who actually have to use them.

- I hate my Internet connection. You probably do, too, if you live in the United States. Almost

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[27]http://db.tidbits.com/article/9090

[28]http://db.tidbits.com/article/9115

[29]http://www.tbray.org/ongoing/When/200x/2007/08/02/Black-Beauty

[30]http://arstechnica.com/staff/fatbits.ars/2007/08/09/stuck-on-the-enterprise

every US resident I know does. (ATPM managing editor Chris Turner can shut up now.) The reason, says Robert X. Cringely, is that our telcos have managed to change the definition of "broadband" so that offering 768K DSL is the moral equivalent of that FiOS service that Chris is so fond of. Cringely takes a good, long look at the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which was supposed to "improve" our national digital communications infrastructure and seems to have had very little impact at all[31]. Why should you care? Well, for one, your connection sucks; and for another, the telecommunications companies now want to leverage their own failure into destroying the Internet as we know it, with their proposals to eliminate Net Neutrality.

And that's the month that was, folks. Have a great September!

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[31]http://www.pbs.org/cringely/pulpit/2007/pulpit_200
70810_002683.html

IT Pros Are Anything But

There is a company we have to work with quite extensively, which, to protect the innocent, we'll call Company X. This organization is highly dependent on computerization and, like many British firms, seems wedded to browser-based solutions. The problem is, these are what is technically known as crap.

Even though we are friends with Company X, it makes it awfully difficult to work with the company. We have to send files (ranging in size from a few kilobytes to many hundreds of megabytes) to many different departments. Sometimes they are extremely urgent and have to meet strict deadlines. There is no alternative but to use Company X's Web browser interfaces, although once or twice we've been able to e-mail small files directly to the intended recipient, usually because he is as frustrated by his company's systems as we are.

What's Wrong With FTP?

Company X has incredibly slow servers, which dribble out Web pages. The file transfer site is just as slow, basic, and rustic. Like us, the people sending files are all professionals and able to get their heads around such a simple piece of software such as an FTP client. Before the Web was running, we were transmitting files around the world with ZModem, so a free GUI FTP program is a cinch. Company X would only need to spend a tiny amount of time keeping its FTP presence up to date. In return, we would have a robust and reliable file transfer method that should even allow resumable transfers.

To make matters worse, the Web programmers for Company X wear those Microsoft tinted shades, which make them see only Windows and Internet Explorer. They make the Web interfaces, check them from Windows, and announce they are up and running. No matter that a vast number of non-Windows users are sending files to Company X's publishing division from their publishing-industry-standard computers, which cannot see the Web pages correctly because the programmers used Windows-specific features or insist they must use a certain non-standard browser.

Then there are the spammers. As part of its Web presence, Company X has a blogging system open to the outside world to let staff and others exchange news and information and leave comments. Bloggers can find that their comments sections have an ever-increasing number of spams advertising the usual range of penis extenders, which girlie is bored this afternoon, and pharmacy paradises.

iDisk Amendments

Apple recently made some changes to mac.com, including giving ten times the storage space. We've now each got 20 GB of fast, two-way, high-quality file transfer space. Apple uses a browser-based interface as well as one that integrates tightly with Mac OS X. For older Microsoft operating systems, Apple provides a simple file transfer application. It does use WebDAV, but that doesn't limit it to access via a Web browser, as many programs can manage the iDisk space. We get fed up with the time wasted using bad interfaces such as Company X's, and my clients really appreciate being able to easily send files to our iDisk Public folders for us to collect.

We save work to our mac.com iDisks as if there were a disk connected over our LAN. They function exactly like a folder or disk on our desktops and integrate wonderfully with our other disk drives—we have about 4 TB across various disks, split into many partitions so that we can mirror them in different locations. A new off-site 20 GB each is a welcome addition, almost as cheap as a hard drive itself.

In addition to storage space, Apple's servers operate its shopfront, magazines, information libraries, forums, developers' sites, e-mail, Web hosting, streaming audio, and video. They are stylish, slick, and efficient, and open to all platforms.

Wishful Thinking

After trying British Telecom's attempt to do the same and dealing with the feeble Web presence running for many major companies, Apple's solution is so far ahead I cannot understand why it doesn't sell its server space and skills to other businesses.

Apple has really missed a trick here.

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Time, Ladies and Gentlemen

What is time? Nothing more than an illusion, according to Douglas Adams and the rant from Kant. Breakfast time is after we wake up, but in some parts of the world people have to live on the equivalent of a breakfast a week. Does time move slower for them? In the developed world, time can be measured in billions of years, billionths of a second, or the time it takes to get into a spreadsheet.

Why do Excel files take so long to open? A recent spreadsheet file we received took nearly 15 minutes from clicking to displaying. Inside, a few worksheets, some simple graphs, and that was it. Opening the same file in NeoOffice, the free open-source Office alternative, took a few minutes—still a long time, though showing how bad Microsoft products can be.

Apple of Newton's Eye

The computations in a huge, multi-layered Photoshop file are infinitely more complicated. File sizes can be hundreds of times bigger, but they don't leave you wondering whether your computer has had a little hissy fit. Given enough RAM, Photoshop exists in Newtonian Time as a background task, churning through a series of actions on billboard images.

If only it were the same working with Power-Point, which is sometimes more like bog snorkeling in treacle. Compared with opening someone's poster "helpfully" made in PowerPoint, or a newsletter "created" in Excel, Photoshop feels more like Lewis Hamilton though Eau Rouge rather than Button and Barrichello 'round the Bus Stop.

At least the latter aren't wasting their time, because they get darned well paid for driving uncompetitive cars, unlike the time my partner has just wasted working with a Word file. It simply needed a series of images inserted into a ready-made table. Most were cut and pasted from a PowerPoint file, but some had been created in Photoshop and saved as grayscale 8-bit TIFFs.

Time Makes You Mental

One resolutely refused to be inserted into Word. Leibniz would say this was time as part of the mental measuring system, especially as it drove my partner nuts. The solution was to copy the TIFF from Photoshop into PowerPoint, then copy from there to Word. Yet the same file pasted back into Photoshop showed no difference from the one which Word refused to touch.

The hegemony Office has had on the world seems to be reaching an end as free alternatives are offered by the likes of Sun and Google. Apple, too, has kept its AppleWorks[1] suite in a time-warp somewhere back to the latter part of the last century. The new iWork software will do almost everything the average word-processing, presentation-making, spread-sheeter will need, NeoOffice and the like filling in any gaps.

Microsoft has no to blame but themselves. Office is a mess of interfaces, confusing to use, and limited in how it integrates with other software and how it can output its files. Not that we mind, as yet another book created in Word is given to us to be redesigned at great cost in QuarkXPress or InDesign so that it can actually be printed.

This is charged-for time, our favorite as we bank the checks.

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[1]http://www.atpm.com/6.05/aw6.shtml

Creating Seamless Tiles

In the past eight or nine months, we've touched a great deal on the engine of Photoshop. We've taken a tour of the palettes and menus, explored some of the staple functions with which most every Photoshop user should be familiar, and even tackled the complexities of image resolution in an effort to reduce the complexity.

Unless specifically queried about a topic, I've essentially reached the end of my planned series of Photoshop functionality. It's now finally time to roll with various tutorials of practical tasks you may wish to do with Photoshop. We've already started with June's tutorial[1] on creating speech and thought bubbles. This month, we'll learn how you can adjust any pattern or texture image so that it seamlessly tiles together to make up a larger pattern.

One caveat: I implore you to not go around filling your Web pages with your latest tiled background creations, making text on those pages nearly impossible to read. Actually, if not for Web backgrounds, I am not sure what other reasons you may have for wanting a tiled background, but I know there are people who are visually more creative than I am.

Preparing the Image To Be Tiled

The first task is to decide how large the individual piece of the tile should be. Too small, and the pattern repetition might be too noticeable (unless that's what you're going for). Too large, and you defeat the purpose of a tiled image and may as well just create a full-size background.

I'm going to go with a 300×300 pixel size for this tutorial. But there is no reason you can't go smaller if the smaller size works for what you're doing. There's also no rule that the tile piece has to be a perfect square. The dimensions can be whatever works for you. It may be that you already have some sort of image that you want to tile seamlessly, and its size may dictate the dimensions of your individual tile piece.

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[1] http://www.atpm.com/13.06/photoshop.shtml

Starting With the Texture

If you don't already have an image you want to use for this tutorial, let's make one. I've opened a new 300×300 pixel document and am looking at the Textures folder of Actions. If you don't already have access to these Actions, you must first access the Actions palette from the Window menu. If the Textures folder is not present, click the pop-up menu in the upper right corner of the Actions palette, and choose Textures near the bottom of the menu. If you do not see Textures in this pop-up menu, instead select Load Actions, navigate to your Photoshop application folder ▷ Presets ▷ Actions, and select the Textures.atn file.

Now that the default Photoshop Texture Actions are available to you, spend a while trying them out and find one you like. You can use any of them, but choosing one that has a seemingly randomized pattern around all four edges will be easier to tile. I'm going to go with the Parchment Paper Texture.
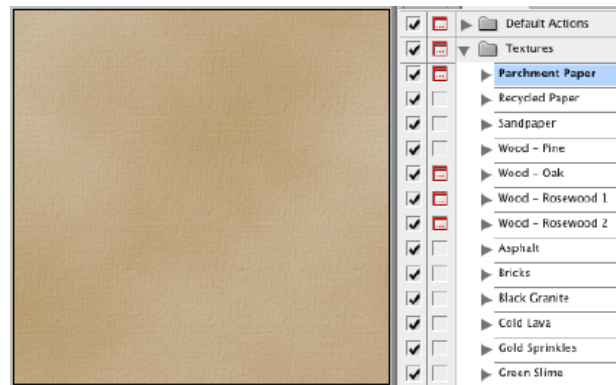
The Parchment Paper Texture from Photoshop's included Actions.

Visualizing the Edges Tiled Together

An image will tile seamlessly when pixels at any edge blend perfectly with matching pixels on the opposite, 180-degree edge—be they top-to-bottom or left-to-right.
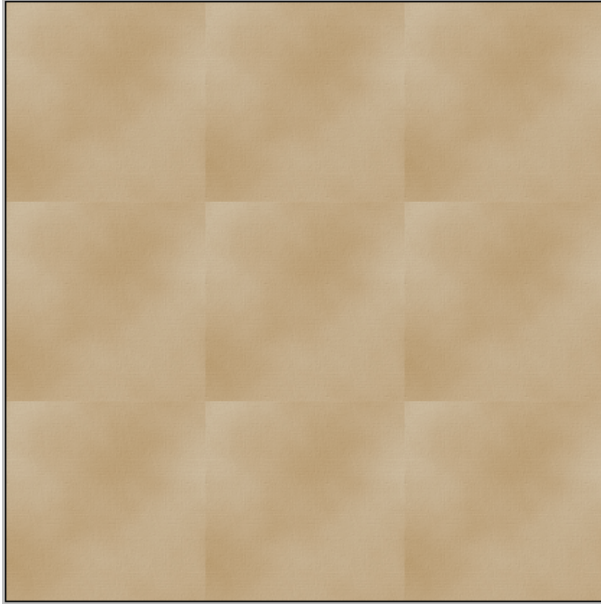
Tiled version of our texture before making it seamless.

In order to make the edges blend with repeated copies of the texture, we'd ideally be able to see all four edges adjacent to their opposite edges, simultaneously.

To accomplish this, head to Filter ▷ Distort ▷ Shear.... If the grid in the upper left shows anything other than a dark vertical line down the center, click the Defaults button.

Now, drag the black anchor points at the top and bottom of this vertical line all the way to the right corners. Also make sure that the Wrap Around option is chosen.
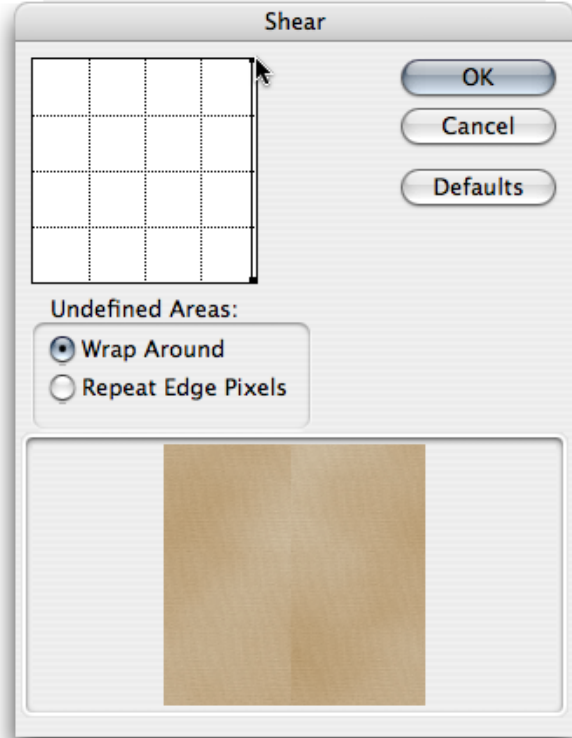
Shearing the image will offer the ability to edit the texture so the edges will blend.

This takes care of the left and right edges. We need to do the same for the top and bottom. Unfortunately, the Shear function only works on a side-to-side motion. But it's simple enough to get around that. Simply rotate your image 90 degrees from the Image ▷ Rotate Canvas command, and run the Shear function again.

A shortcut is that you can repeat any Filter you just applied by selecting it from the top of the Filter menu, or pressing Command-F.

Depending on your texture, you may wish to rotate it 90 degrees back to its original orientation.

So, what have we accomplished so far? Look above at the tiled sample with edges that do not blend together. The Shear function has essentially moved all four edges into the middle.
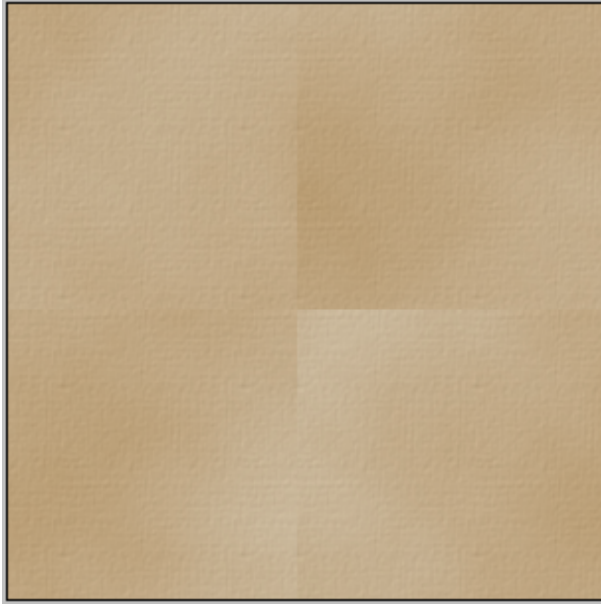
Our texture is now ready for editing to make it tile seamlessly.

Using the Healing Brush tool to blend the edges.

The center of the image now shows what used to be all four corners. Since we set the Shear function to wrap pixels (to the opposite side), the edges of this image *will* tile seamlessly. Only now, we have the visible seam going through the middle of our image. So let's fix that.

Hiding the Seams

There's no set rule for how you choose to blend the edges. I'm going to use the Healing Brush tool. For this particular texture, it should produce adequate results. I'm using a brush size of 50 pixels and 0% hardness.

As you can see, you don't want to limit your editing to just brushing across the horizontal and vertical boundaries of the original edges. If you only do that much, you'll still detect a grid pattern when the image tiles. In the image above, you can see the cross pattern of where the original seam was. So, continue to do some more blending until your eye no longer sees the edges, even if that means moving away from those original edges to blend in lighter or darker splotches that are nearby, such as the dark region in my above sample, located a little above and right of center.
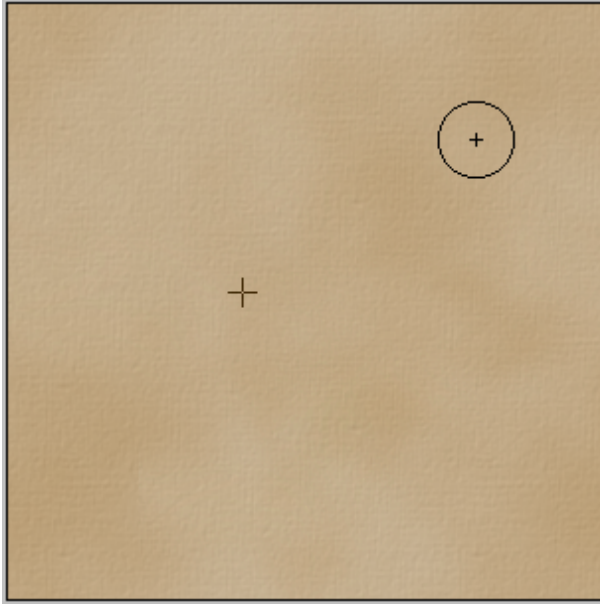
Touching up neighboring areas to hide ghosty, telltale traces of blending.

A completely optional step would be to perform the Shear functions again and double-check your blending. It could be that where you blended at the top, bottom, left, and right centers might not blend well with their opposites. Re-shearing the image will bring those points to the center where you can check them and easily hit them with the Healing Brush tool.

Reaping the Results

Save your image and define it as a tiling background for the desired portion of your Web design, and you'll see that it will appear like an endless texture. You may wish to load a large page of the tiled image on your screen and step back to look at it. This is where you might start to perceive repeating patterns of splotchy shades. If they bug you, you can either go back to the individual tile piece and try to soften it, or you can decide that your tile piece will need to be a bit larger. Of course, the latter choice means you'll essentially have to start over.

Feel free to send me[2] your results. I'll sort out what I think are the best ten (if I receive that many) and present them next month. Please only send the individual tile piece and not a large screen capture of multiple pieces.

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[2] mailto:lbennett@atpm.com

Topics For Upcoming Months

- Mask-erades

- Fun With the Automate Menu

    - Photomerge

- Fun With Filters

- File Format Fever

The running list that I began with is starting to dwindle, but never fear, I have more ideas for future columns. If you have a topic suggestion, please share it[3]. I'm definitely interested in expanding this list with topics that are of interest to you.

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[3] http://www.atpm.com/13.09/photoshop.shtml#comment s

Desktop Pictures

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

This Month's Desktop Pictures[2]

This month's photos are from Great Ocean Road in Australia. They include photos of rock formations known as The 12 Apostles and London Bridge. The photos were taken in 2004 by Jennifer Curry of Atlanta, Georgia.

Previous Months' Desktop Pictures

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

Downloading All the Pictures at Once

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

iCab Use the Download command to download "Get all files in same path."

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

Safari Use this Automator workflow[4].

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 and 10.4.x

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

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

Mac OS X 10.1.x and 10.2.x

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

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

Mac OS X 10.0.x

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

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[1] `mailto:editor@atpm.com`

[2] `http://www.atpm.com/13.09/great-ocean-road/`

[3] `http://www.atpm.com/Back/desktop-pictures.shtml`

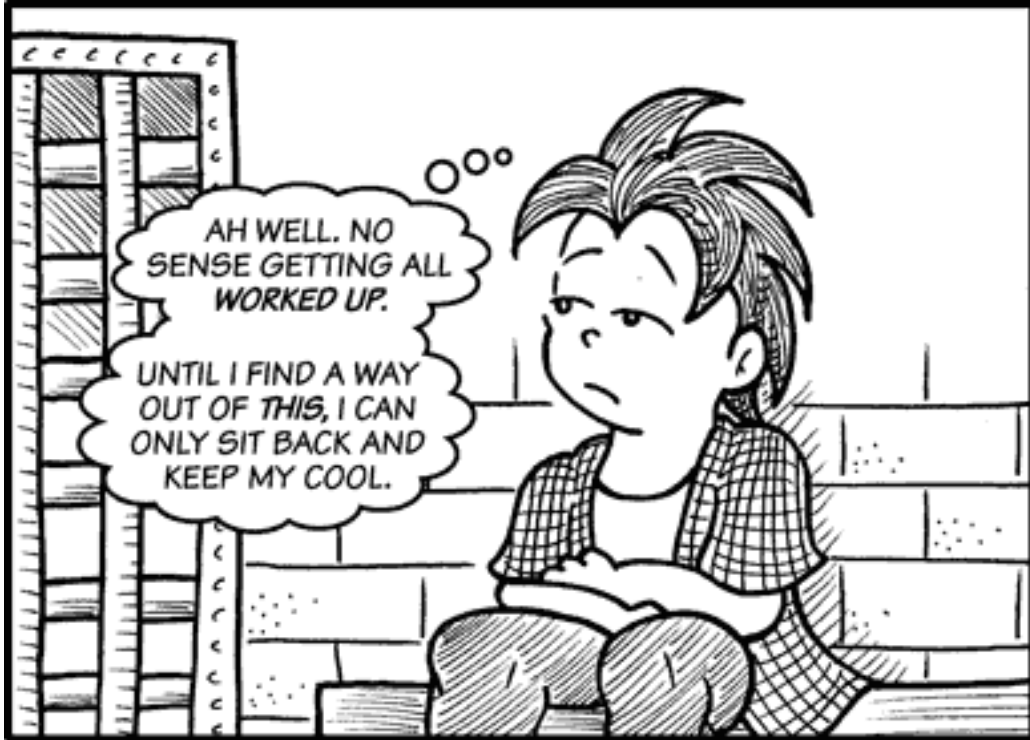[4] `http://automator.us/examples-02.html`

Cortland

by Matt Johnson, mjohnson@atpm.com

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Cocktail 3.8.1

Developer: Maintain[1]
Price: $15 (Tiger Edition); free (Panther
    Edition)
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4 required
    for Tiger Edition.
Universal: Yes
**Trial:** Fully-featured (10 launches)

Like the self-named drink style, Cocktail blends a variety of under-the-hood Mac OS X utility functions into one application. You can play with the Finder interface, inspect a multitude of log files, and modify "deeper" features like your Mac's network configuration. If Apple ever includes a digital bar, Cocktail will no doubt let you specify shaken or stirred.

Installation and Getting Started

Download the .dmg file, open it, and drag the Cocktail file to your Applications folder. If your hard disk supports the SMART automated maintenance system, Cocktail can run it on program launch. This will take several seconds per volume, so leave this option off if you don't like the delay.

Feature Exploration

The main window covers six areas: Disks, System, Files, Network, Interface, and Pilot. Each includes OS-level options (some more than others) and settings that seem opaque at first (some definitely more than others).
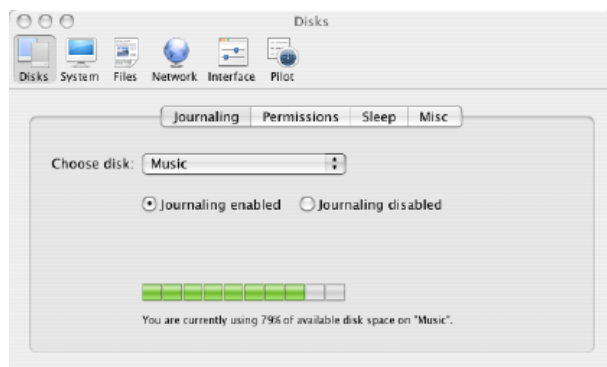

Cocktail's first window of settings.

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[1]http://www.maintain.se/cocktail/index.php

I recommend reading the Cocktail help file[2] beginning-to-end. It explains the panoply of options, critical for any you're not familiar with. The application brings several handy features to the fore, but you can create problems by changing settings without knowing what they do.

If you're used to working with OS tools on the command line, Cocktail brings many of them to life in a graphical interface. The pictured option, Journaling (enabled or disabled), for example, helps recover from errors by tracking changes on-the-fly, which means a performance trade-off. You can change this in Terminal (or circuitously in Disk Utility), but it's right there for Cocktail users. Some functions control more banal OS elements like log files and cache maintenance, but others impact the Finder and other interface elements directly. (I added dual arrows to my scroll bars double-quick.)
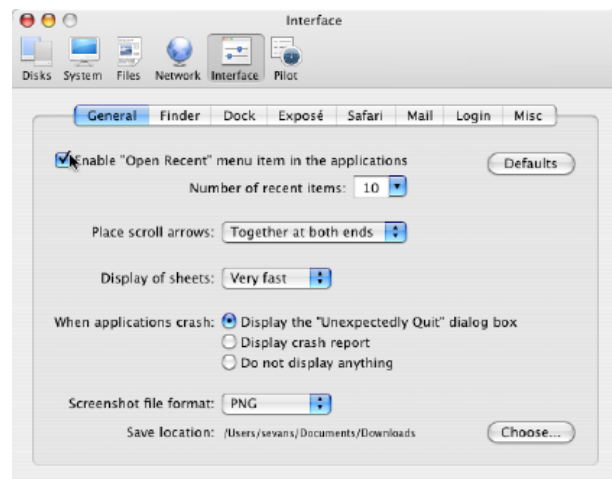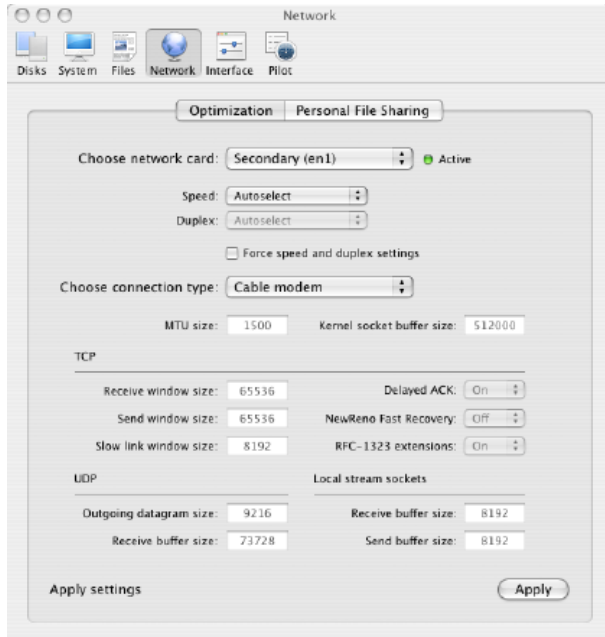

Interface options.

Cocktail's "Suggestive" Feature

The Network Optimization panel provided the most interesting controls for me. At first glance, it's cluttered with more than a dozen options. Fortunately,

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[2]http://www.maintain.se/cocktail/help/tiger/disks/journaling.html

you just need to pick a connection type—everything else updates automatically.

Cocktail tunes my AirPort card for a cable modem connection.

This task feels helpful, even if it'd be hard to compare before-and-after results of a network reconfiguration. I know that packet size can impact wireless detection and performance, so that may come into play—other settings on this screen feel like mystic runes. That Cocktail would suggest type-specific settings makes a real impression.

Cocktail lacks one feature I'd love love love (and would pay money for): something that disabled the Mac OS X Dock!
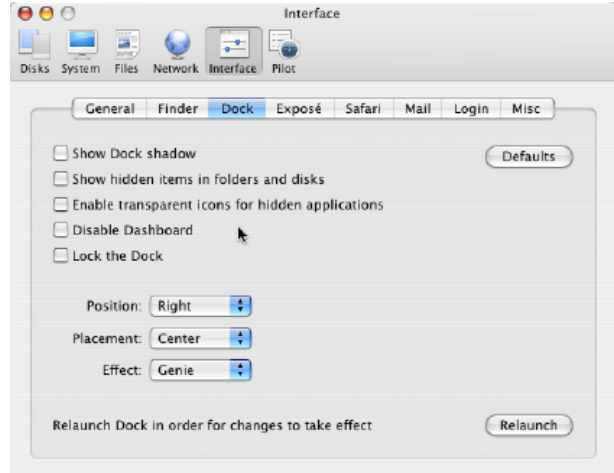
Eight Dock options, and none of them turns it off.

Unfortunately for me and Bruce Tognazzini[3], the Dock sits intertwined with some basic Mac OS X functions. A mere check box cannot disable it.

Now How Much Would You Pay?
Ultimately, what do you really want from an OS utility? Apple's Disk Utility and Alsoft's DiskWarrior[4] handle file repair, so they aren't in the same camp with Cocktail. Titanium's suite of maintenance tools[5] seems the real competitor, with many similar OS features and a freeware price. You arguably get a nicer interface and help file with Cocktail, so that will probably determine whether you lay out its registration fee.

Summary
At $15, Cocktail doesn't cost much. It's a nice collection of tools and options aimed at the "LEGO builder" user who wants to bring a bevy of OS controls from the command line to the GUI. Users like me need to lean on the help file to know what's what, but that's not a bad thing. Better to learn your options and what things do, even if you only make minor changes.

I look forward to smart features like Network Optimization creeping into other areas. Should a future version of Cocktail capably automate disk optimization or know how to "tune" my system for specific tasks like video editing or having 20 tabs open in Firefox, it'll move from "good" to "buy buy buy."

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[3]http://www.asktog.com/columns/044top10docksucks.html
[4]http://www.alsoft.com/DiskWarrior/
[5]http://www.titanium.free.fr/pgs/english.html

Curio 4.0

Developer: Zengobi[1]
**Price:** $99 (home); $149 (professional);
$69 (K-12/educational)
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4
Universal: Yes
Trial: Fully-featured (15 days); 60-day extensions available.

A lot has progressed since ATPM's review[2] of Curio 2.4. No longer just a virtual whiteboard or collection bucket for project data, Curio has matured into a fully-featured project planning suite. Version 4, Zengobi's recent release, brings even more goodies to the mix for still better project development.
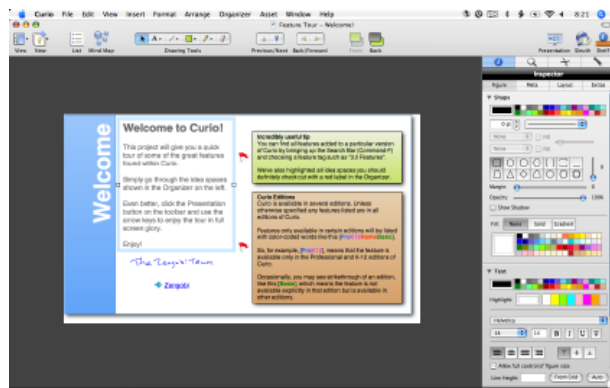
Felt Needs

Why do you need a project planning application? Most of us have undertaken projects that go beyond a simple task list, something more than a simple word processor or even a GTD application[3] could tackle in a helpful way. When it comes to developing these into well-planned (and therefore, usually, well-executed) projects, a specialized tool like Curio can be the very thing you'll want to pull from your toolbox.

Zengobi likes to encourage creativity—that's one of the core concepts behind Curio—and along those lines they have provided a few profiles[4] of users in different environments: artists and designers, of course,

but also a professor, a software developer, and an entrepreneur. If you're wondering how (or if) Curio might be helpful in your workflow, you will find these helpful starting points to think about how to use it.

What's New

I'm not going to re-cover the ground that Matthew did in the first review, instead assuming you've read that review. Since version 2.4, however, a lot—and I mean really, a lot—has been added to make Curio a much more complete package.

Version 3—a full generation behind the current release—introduced the Project Center and Presentation mode. It also improved searching, including use of metadata like tags and timestamps. Integration was boosted as well, most notably with the addition of iCal and Web archiving support. Many other features were also brought in; the release notes for version 3[5] will walk you through these great improvements. Later 3.x updates brought iPhoto integration, a universal binary, and speed/performance increases.

With the recent release of version 4, Zengobi has built in a number of key features that enhance existing abilities and add new ones. Major additions include mind-mapping, the Shelf, and greater control over the parameters about projects. I'll elaborate on each of these in a moment.

Other improvements include better formatting styles, tagging, and "adornments" such as flags. Also, further integration and import/export support has been added, along with easier list-management through new keyboard shortcuts. A number of other features and improvements have been added; you can read about them in detail in the version 4 release notes[6].

The major additions, though are the first three I mentioned above. To begin with, mind-mapping expands the abilities of Curio to be a complete brainstorming appliance. For the uninitiated, mind-

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[1] http://www.zengobi.com/products/curio/
[2] http://www.atpm.com/11.07/curio.shtml
[3] http://www.atpm.com/Back/next-actions.shtml
[4] http://www.zengobi.com/products/curio/profiles/

[5] http://www.zengobi.com/support/articles/AR030000.html
[6] http://www.zengobi.com/support/articles/AR040000.html

mapping is a diagram-like rendering of words or ideas, including connections and links between them; the concept was formalized by Tony Buzan[7], who codified some best practices for effective mind-mapping. Because of its flexible structure and adaptive approach to the introduction of new ideas, mind-mapping is preferred by many for note-taking, early-stage project planning, and general brainstorming.
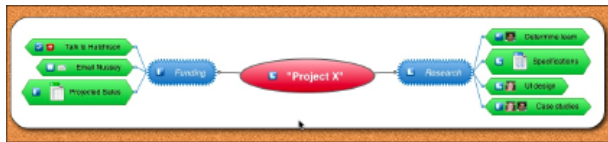

Mindmap

There are several good mind-mapping tools available for Macs, but most of them are stand-alone operations; Curio's integration of mind-mapping within a larger planning framework, therefore, makes it a more ideal solution for those who wish to include their mind-maps as an ongoing part of their planning, rather than just a starting point. (To be fair, Curio is not the only project manager that offers this; others, such as ConceptDraw[8] also include mind-mapping in their project-planning suites.)

As mind-mapping applications go, Curio's is good. It's easy to do a rapid-entry style mind-map, so brainstorming can flow without the distraction of having to right-click on cells or pull down menus to create sibling or child cells. Editing your maps once they are done is also easy—the provided inspector allows you to quickly change the color of cells and lines, their shapes, and even the fonts and text size.

One key mind-mapping concept appears to be missing, though: you cannot create links between sibling cells, nor can you connect one cell with multiple other cells. Therefore, each idea must remain purely hierarchical in relation to other represented ideas. In this way, Curio has only a diagramming interface that is very similar to mind-maps, but not a true mind-map element.

[7]http://www.buzanworld.com/
[8]http://www.conceptdraw.com/en/
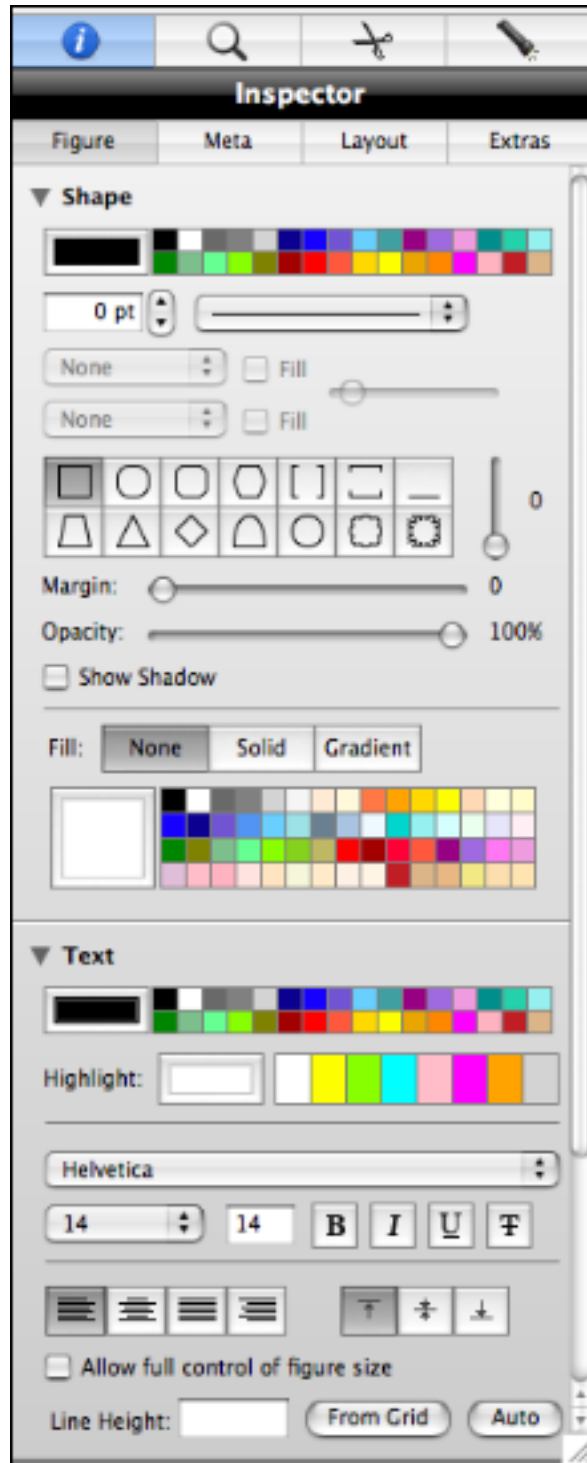
Shelf

The shelf, another core addition to version 4, offers a real range of function to Curio. Think of the Shelf as a dynamic Inspector with more capability

than any Inspector you've ever seen. In fact, the Inspector itself lives on the Shelf, but so does a Snippets module (like a multi-page clipboard), a Search module for both searching metadata within a Curio project and also applying it, and the Flashlight module, which is an adaptation of Mac OS X 10.4.x's Spotlight, allowing you to search your hard drive for a file you would like to add to a project. These modules are powerful, and deserve some attention to learn them well. For example, the Snippets module includes a Snippets service, giving you the ability to quickly add any clipping from any application to the Snippets, whether Curio is currently running or not.
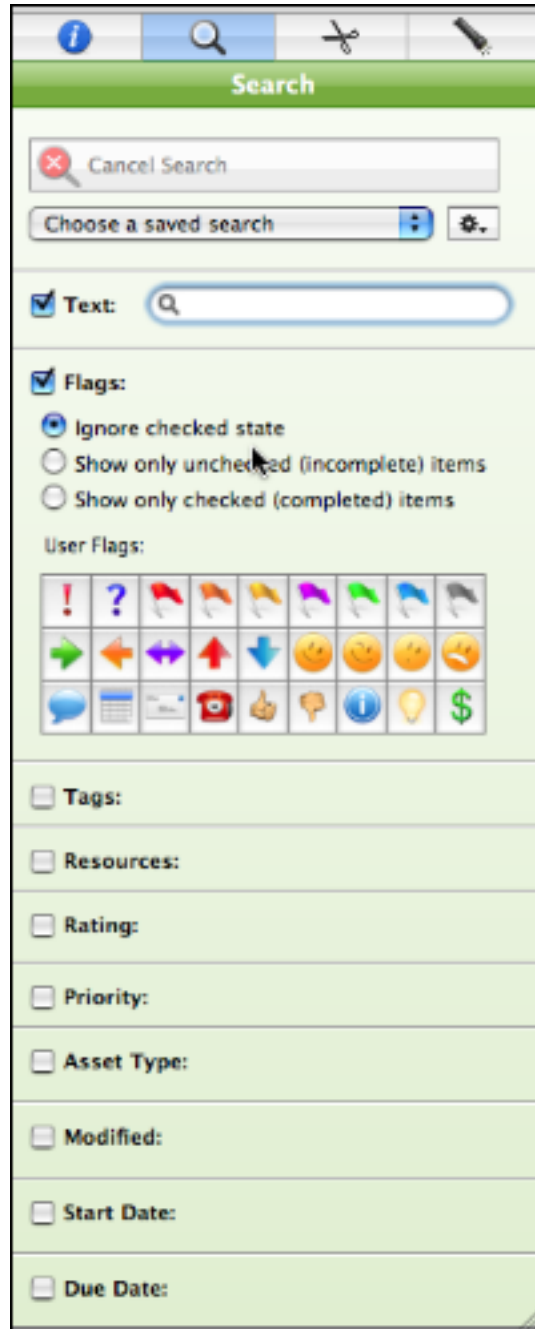
Shelf

The final major addition (in my opinion) is the expansion of tools for managing projects that are underway. Now, tools for better delegation, assigning priority to specific tasks within a project, and indicating progress toward completion are all readily at hand. This makes Curio a better tool for collabora-

tive work and extends its usefulness beyond just the planning stage more completely.

The other updates and additions are good and useful tools. I would encourage you to explore them more through Curio's Web site, rather than going into great detail here.

Using Curio

So, how well does it work? Well, my first impression of Curio was that I wasn't sure what I was looking at. Because Curio does so much, it is not like opening an application with a specific function: when you first download, say, a new word processor, you have some clear preconception of what that program is supposed to do, and you contextualize all the buttons and menus when you first open it. Curio offers a number of very different tools, so even though I was thinking "project planning" when I opened it up, I felt a little lost at first.

That said, Curio includes a project file of its own, entitled "Welcome to Curio!" This file automatically opens the first time Curio is launched, and it provides a comprehensive introduction to all that Curio can do, and is easy to follow along with. The introduction will quickly help you overcome a sense of being lost, just as it did for me. I recommend reading through this completely before you dig in too deeply with planning your own projects. [NB: this file is a few years old, and doesn't include coverage of new features like the Shelf or mind-mapping.]
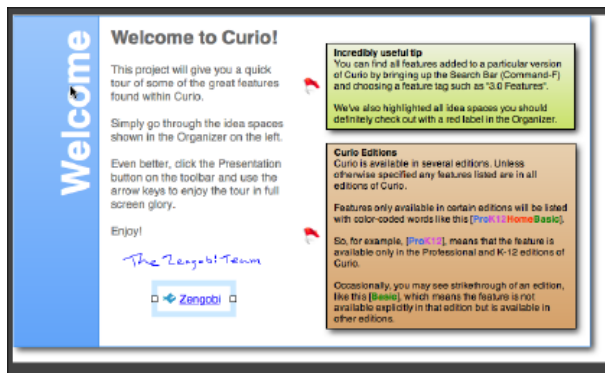
Once I began to use Curio to plan, however, I found that its tools are great for all stages of project planning. For example, Dossier is a wonderful template for outlining the basic motivations of a project: project title, when it was assigned, and by whom are included, as well as core concepts like overview, background, resources, and deliverables. Having quick access to this list alone is helpful.

Idea spaces are a key concept for Curio—they are where you do much of your planning. Whether you plan best with text, graphs, drawings, or pictures, you can create unlimited numbers of idea spaces for your project. If you use a tablet such as a Wacom, you may use it on idea spaces as well, to draw, scribble, or edit—making note-taking in meetings or planning sessions even easier.

As suggested above, Curio doesn't assume that all resources for projects will be created and maintained in Curio—instead, you can add in URLs, documents, images, movies, audio—just about any type of file that might be useful. In fact, it is easy to create new documents from Curio with other applications, using the Instant Document feature, which launches the specified application and automatically links the created document to that project.

It's also nice how well Curio cooperates with other applications for importing and exporting. You can drag an iCal event to Curio, and it will be added to the idea space and tracked. Import an outline from OmniOutliner or another outliner in OPML format, and it will be automatically added as a list. Paste an e-mail into an idea space easily from Mail. Export project files as a photo album to iPhoto, or upload them to .Mac. Curio is not a group project planner, but it is easy to mail the whole project to your team via Mail or other e-mail clients, either in the Curio format (giving them editing options) or as PDF.

Concluding Thoughts

Overall, I am quite satisfied with Curio. I tend to keep a lot of projects in process at once, and having one application to be a central organizer for them is very useful. I'd like to see some further integrations improvements, like more interactivity with iCal for events and tasks. I'd also like to see the mind-map module offer true mind-mapping, and I'd like those maps to be able to be converted to lists or outlines. And I'd like a bit more for working with teams—more collaboration tools.

There are also some key parts of traditional project management that are missing. Curio does a good job supporting task lists, but there is nothing built into Curio for contingent tasks, or for understanding the relationships between one task and others. Many project management tools include charting functions for Gantt charts, for example, that will show you graphically on a time line what tasks must be completed before others can begin.

This is a key concept for good resource management, and it is a glaring omission in Curio.

One more caveat as you consider Curio: pay attention to the differences between the Home, Pro, and K12/Education versions. The Home version is certainly a very good buy, but it lacks a few of the features that I found so helpful, such as the Dossier and Project sharing via e-mail. These features, available only in the other two versions, make the higher price worth it to me; your needs may vary, of course. The Pro version also offers a bit more customization, including a few different "modes" like full-screen and mini mode. The K12 version, while offering all of the Pro features, also has some built-in filters for profanity and access restrictions, as well as school-appropriate templates and Sleuth sites. All versions fit their intended markets well, but there is enough variance that care in choosing is, as always, a good idea.

Other than these few problems, however, I've found Curio a capable project manager. For the money, it's a great buy; the Home version is not crippled by any means, and if you qualify for the educational discounts then the price is even better. Professionals will want the Pro version, but even that is reasonably and competitively priced. Those who need the missing features I mentioned will want to wait or search elsewhere; anyone else, however, should find Curio to be money well-spent.

NetNewsWire 3.0

Developer: NewsGator Technologies[1]
Price: $30
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.4
Universal: Yes
Trial: Fully-featured (30 days)

NetNewsWire 3.0's user interface features several refinements over previous versions.

As products age, the nature of the changes seen in subsequent product releases evolves. Early in a product's life, the revisions often bring large changes as developers look to fully flesh out exactly what it is they are offering. This is doubly so in young, rapidly changing markets. Later in a product's life, though, the revisions tend to be smaller. Changes in mature products are often aimed at polishing the product and increasing usability instead of radically redefining the product.

The evolution of NetNewsWire follows this pattern, almost to the letter. As our previous reviews demonstrate, versions 1.0[2] and 2.0[3] saw many major changes. Features were added, removed, and spun out into new products while Ranchero Software and, later, NewsGator Technologies, determined what NetNewsWire would become. Market and technology changes in the syndication space forced the application's development in certain directions. With NetNewsWire 3.0, though, it's clear that NetNewsWire has entered the mature phase of its life.

That being the case, I will focus primarily on the changes to NetNewsWire since our last review.
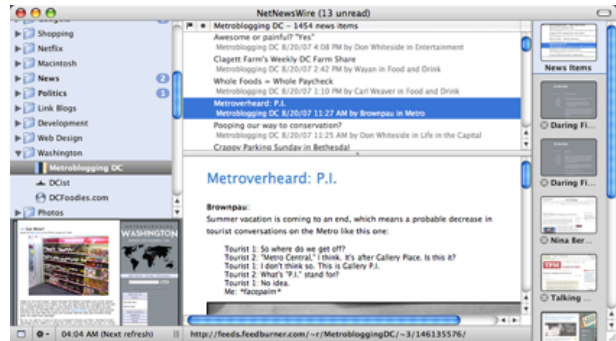
Appearances

Whenever you use an updated a piece of software, changes to the user interface are among the first thing that you notice. When launching NetNewsWire 3.0 for the first time, the most obvious changes can clearly be tied back to applications like iTunes and Mail. The subscription list has taken on the same blue background as the source lists in the aforementioned applications. NetNewsWire has also inherited another of iTunes' features, Cover Art. In NetNewsWire, the Cover Art widget shows a snapshot of the home page for the selected feed or article.

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[1] http://www.newsgator.com/Individuals/NetNewsWire/
[2] http://www.atpm.com/9.04/netnewswire.shtml
[3] http://www.atpm.com/11.06/netnewswire.shtml

Although displaying Cover Art cuts into the vertical space you could use for displaying subscriptions (and may be the difference between whether or not your subscription list needs to scroll), it provides several benefits. If you're viewing a folder of subscriptions, glancing at the Cover Art can quickly tell you the source of the selected article. Furthermore, Cover Art somewhat rectifies the complaint that, by reading feeds, you miss out on the overall design of the Web site. That's not to say that the Cover Art view is perfect, however. I know that the Cover Art image for a Web site does get updated, but I cannot figure out what triggers the update. As far as I can tell, there is no way for a user request a refresh. This comes into play because I've seen problems with the display. In one case, one feed was displaying the cover art for another feed. In other cases, feeds were displaying blank images (either all white or all black) in place of the Web site snapshot.

Another addition which appears similar to an iTunes feature is Full Screen mode. As you would expect, given the name, activating Full Screen mode hides the menu bar and enlarges the main window to take up the whole screen, allowing for undisturbed feed reading. To further minimize distractions, you can also hide portions of the user interface. NetNewsWire 2.0 allowed you to hide the tab bar when it wasn't in use, but new in 3.0 is the ability to hide the subscription list. Both the tab bar and the subscription list can be explicitly hidden at any time,

but both also support automatic hiding. Automatically hiding the tab bar works as you would expect. Automatically hiding the subscription list essentially makes the subscription list part of the News Items tab—your subscriptions are visible when viewing the News Items tab and hidden when viewing a Web page.

Automatically hiding subscriptions works well with another of NetNewsWire's new features, vertical tabs. The new tabs have additional functionality compared to the more-familiar horizontal tabs (which are still available). The vertical tabs can display a thumbnail of their Web page and can be dragged-and-dropped. The drag-and-drop feature can be used to re-arrange the tab order within NetNewsWire or to drag the URL to another application. Neither of these features is available when using the horizontal tabs.

Hiding subscriptions while browsing the Web opens up horizontal space, which can be used to display NetNewsWire's new vertical tabs.

There are a few other differences between the two tab types. The width of the side tab gutter is fixed, so you will only ever see the first word or two of the Web page title. For instance, the two *Daring Fireball* articles I have open in tabs currently display their name as "Daring Fi...." With only a few tabs open, the horizontal tabs would display more of the titles, though the difference would be lost as you opened more tabs. In either case, NetNewsWire could stand to inherit some of [Safari's smarts](#)[4] when dealing with tab titles. Conversely, if you choose not to display the page thumbnails, the side tab gutter can display many more tabs before running out of screen real-estate. Furthermore, the side tag gutter uses a scroll bar when tabs extend off the screen, as opposed to the pop-up menu used with the horizontal tabs.

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[4]`http://www.macosxhints.com/article.php?story=20070`
`418084404948`

The style of tab you prefer will probably depend heavily on your personal taste. I like the look and functionality of the new tabs, but I feel that they make the News Items interface a bit cramped. However, this is likely due to using the Widescreen View on a 1280×584 display. I suspect I'd have no such complaints on a larger screen.

In keeping with the theme of "Evolution, Not Revolution," NetNewsWire includes a number of smaller tweaks that pay dividends. The New Subscription sheet now includes a pop-up menu for choosing a folder for the subscription, which eliminates the frustration of having to re-organize your subscriptions after adding a new feed. Another such tweak is the addition of browser-style Back and Forward options for articles. I consider the Back button the more important of the two, as you now have the ability to jump back to the previous article when you accidentally continue on to the next unread item.

To further focus the news reading experience, NetNewsWire now allows you to hide your already-read items.

The new version of NetNewsWire also includes a user interface for the Attention Score feature introduced in version 2.1. The Attention Score attempts to provide a numerical value for how much you use a feed. In version 2.1, the score could be used to sort your subscription list. The new user interface in version 3.0 is called the Attention Report, which attempts to show how much you interact with each feed. Ostensibly, you can use this report to unsubscribe from feeds you tend to ignore. However, a feed's Attention Score is based on clicks, items flagged, items e-mails, and items posted to your Weblog or del.icio.us. My experience is that this algorithm systematically over-weights subscriptions that do not provide full text within the feed. The full-text feeds that I read religiously have some of the lowest Attention Scores, since I never need to click through to the original Web site.
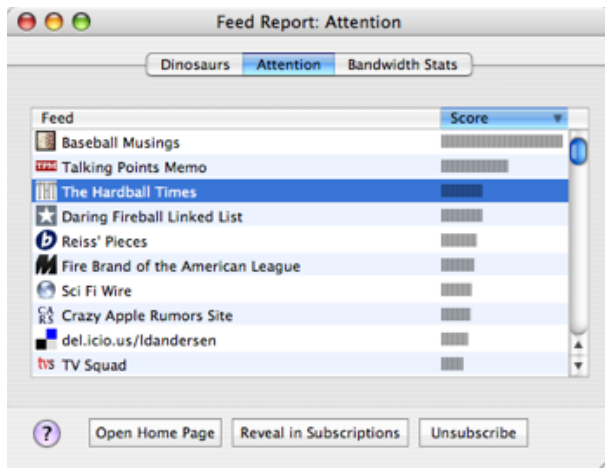
The Attention Report attempts to show you your most popular feeds.

Syncing

Syncing received a bit of an overhaul with the Net-NewsWire 2.1 release. This is understandable, since this was the first release following NetNewsWire's acquisition by NewsGator Technologies. The 2.1 release introduced syncing with NewsGator, which gave users the ability to work with their subscriptions on a variety of platforms, including Windows PCs, the iPhone, Blackberries, and Windows Mobile devices. Additionally, this form of multi-platform syncing was superior to the Bloglines integration introduced in version 2.0. Whereas the Bloglines integration required you to manage feeds using the Bloglines interface, NewsGator syncing lets you manage feeds from within NetNewsWire and have changes propagated to all your synced platforms. From a user perspective, it offered the functionality of .Mac or FTP syncing combined with Bloglines cross-aggregator support.

Support for NewsGator syncing has also improved with NetNewsWire 3.0. The primary difference is speed—syncing with the NewsGator service is now much faster than in previous releases. The first time I tried the new version, I was literally in awe of how fast my feeds were downloading. The other place where this speed boost is noticeable is when quitting the application. NetNewsWire attempts to perform a sync when you quit. That way, any changes made in Net-NewsWire since you last synced will be propagated out to NewsGator. Under the 2.1 releases, this sync would take several minutes. Sometimes, it was long enough to abort shutdown or logout attempts. That is no longer the case with NetNewsWire 3.0. I haven't

timed this process, but I think it is safe to say that this final sync takes under a minute to complete.

Another NewsGator feature supported by Net-NewsWire 3.0 is Clippings, which are essentially the NewsGator version of Flagged Items. You add an item to your Clippings and it gets saved until you remove it from your Clippings. Unlike Flagged Items, your Clippings are synced. Also, you can have subfolders within your Clippings, and you can share your Clippings via RSS. Previously, I subscribed to my own Clippings feed and used this feature to save items I found while using NewsGator Online. Once I was done with the particular clipping, though, I'd have to log back into NewsGator Online to delete the Clipping. Now that NetNewsWire has full Clipping support, though, I can manage the process without switching out of the application.

Personally, I feel like there is a bit of overlap between Clippings and Flagged Items, and I wish there were some way to merge the two. I realize I could always add all of the items I've flagged into my Clippings folder and hide the Flagged Items Subscription, but as far as I can tell there is no Clippings equivalent to either the Flag column or one-key ('f') flagging.

Although NewsGator syncing is now the primary form of syncing supported in NetNewsWire, Bloglines, .Mac, and FTP support still remain, though I do not believe any new features are planned for these options.

Plays Well With Others

NetNewsWire first introduced the idea of integrating with external applications in version 2.0, with the Post to Weblog feature. This integration was augmented in version 2.1 with addition of the Post to del.icio.us and Mail Link/Mail Contents commands.

NetNewsWire 3.0 continues this trend of integrating with external application with the addition of several new features. The first two are Send To... commands. Send To VoodooPad creates a new page in an open VoodooPad[5] document. If you have multiple documents open, VoodooPad asks which document should contain the newly-added page. Unfortunately, though, the command fails silently if you have no VoodooPad documents open. This is more of a VoodooPad issue than a NetNewsWire issue, but it reflects poorly on the feature when you select a menu item and nothing appears to happen.

The second Send To... command is the Send To Twitterrific command. Unlike the Send To

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[5]`http://flyingmeat.com/voodoopad/`

VoodooPad command, Send To Twitterrific creates a brief note in Twitterrific[6] containing the article name and URL so you can share what you are reading with your Twitter[7] followers.

For the most part, integration with external applications is focused on sharing or storing the articles you are reading. NetNewsWire's support for microformats[8], though, is something entirely different. Microformats are a way of marking up content to provide additional meaning. When viewing Web pages, NetNewsWire detects two types of microformats—contacts[9] and events[10]. If either of these microformats is present on a page, NetNewsWire displays the appropriate badge and allows you to import the contacts or events into Address Book and iCal, respectively.
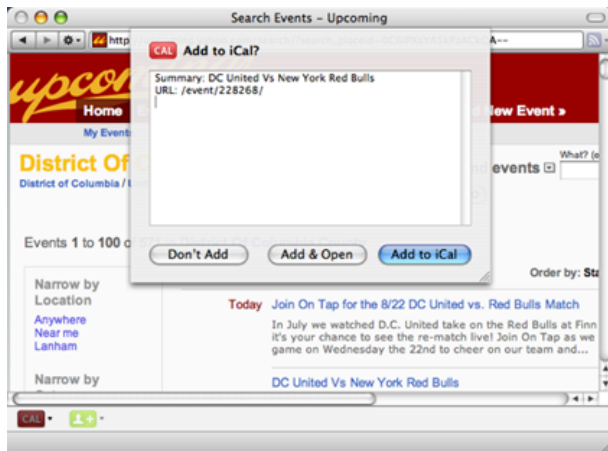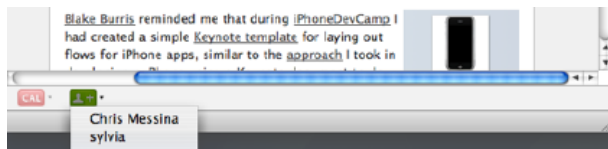
By recognizing microformats on Web pages, NetNewsWire is able to add an event to iCal.

Outside of NetNewsWire, you can now use Spotlight to search your News Items. Nobody is claiming that Spotlight is without rough edges, but this feature means that you can now run searches on your archive without tying up the application.

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[6]http://iconfactory.com/software/twitterrific/
[7]http://twitter.com
[8]http://microformats.org/about/
[9]http://microformats.org/wiki/hcard
[10]http://microformats.org/wiki/hcalendar

Follow-Up

In the NetNewsWire 2.0 review, I raised several points that I'd like to follow up on now that NetNewsWire 3.0 is available. In discussing the differences between the Traditional, Widescreen, and Combined Views, I commented that Combined View did not feel as fast as the other views. In version 3.0, both the performance and the user interface are much improved. I've noticed little to no lag when cycling through articles within a folder or subscription. Occasionally, when switching to a different group or subscription, there will be a lag in updating the screen with new content. I've also seen some random crashes while using this view, which I consider a real issue. Using the Hide Read Items feature seems to alleviate some of these issues, perhaps by decreasing the complexity of the view displayed. This is not an option if you need to reference an already-read read article, though. Performance issues aside, I can't recommend using this view given the stability concerns.
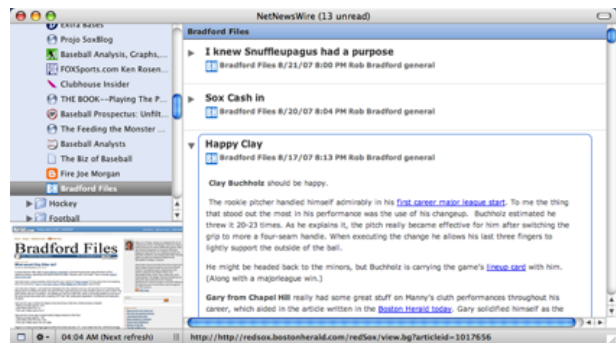
The appearance of the Combined View has been modified to increase usability.

In the previous review, I also expressed surprise at the fact that I couldn't specify a podcast genre on a feed-by-feed basis. That remains the case, but it appears to be something of a standard to apply the Podcast genre to all podcasts. At least, this is what iTunes does when subscribing to a podcast.

As has been the case with previous releases of NetNewsWire, a feature present in a past release has been removed from the new version of NetNewsWire. In this case, said feature is the subscription Sharing feature.

Aging Gracefully

Having spent a significant amount of time using the latest version, I feel like NetNewsWire 3.0 benefitted from the relative stability in the syndication market.

As far as I know, there were no major technological shifts that the application needed to support in this release. There was no post-acquisition work that needed to be done to bring NetNewsWire under the NewsGator umbrella. As a result, this release of NetNewsWire feels highly polished, focusing on usability improvements over radical reengineering.

The only major problems I've encountered with this release are the performance and crashing issues with the Combined View, which is what prevents me from giving NetNewsWire our highest ranking. Although I have yet to lose any data to a crash, I'm not comfortable with the idea of working in a scenario that has such known failure states.

Given that NetNewsWire 3.0 is a free upgrade for anybody with an active NewsGator Online Premium Package, I do not see any reason to avoid this release, unless you rely on the Combined View. If you fall into that latter group, you should hold out until an update addresses the issue. As far as I know, anybody who purchased NetNewsWire prior to its acquisition by NewsGator should still be within the period of the complimentary Premium Package they received as a NetNewsWire owner.

Those who do not qualify for the free upgrade but want a powerful RSS and Atom reader for the Mac should seriously consider NetNewsWire, particularly if you ever see a need or desire to access your feeds on multiple platforms. I truly feel that this is the best feed reading application I have used and well worth the money.

radioSHARK 2

Developer: Griffin Technology[1]
Price: $50
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.3, USB.
Universal: Yes
Trial: None

Griffin Technology has updated its popular radioSHARK time-shifting device to better mesh with Apple's "black is the new black" aesthetic. Unfortunately, that's about the only thing Griffin changed.

The biggest difference—other than a black case replacing the white one—is in the software. The hardware seems to be otherwise identical to the previous version, and with that come all the hardware-related drawbacks of the original radioSHARK[2], most notably poor FM reception and nearly non-existent AM reception.

In a nod to this major flaw in the previous version, the new radioSHARK ships with an external antenna that plugs into the 3.5-mm mini jack on the back of the device, but it seems to bring about no noticeable improvement in FM reception no matter how it's positioned, and can, in some cases, make FM reception worse. It has no effect at all on AM reception, which remains poor at best.

Listeners in very large radio markets with high-powered stations nearby will probably find the FM reception acceptable, but both FM and AM reception still has a long way to go before it matches up with a $10 Chinese-import clock/radio from any discount store. To my mind, that's a fatal flaw in a device that costs several times as much.

The best thing I can say about version 2 of the software is that it's different. It at least hasn't lost any major features from version one, but the overall appearance has moved even further away from Apple's standard user interface.

Most of the complaints previously voiced about the 1.x software still apply to version 2. You still can't jump from one favorite station to another easily in the main control interface; you have to use the menu (which works much like a Web browser's Bookmarks menu) to do it. This is fine if you only ever listen to one or two stations, but if you're a radio channel surfer, you're going to find this very annoying in short order.

The space bar now pauses the audio stream; the only way to mute the radio is now with a menu command or by clicking the speaker icon in the main window. Making the space bar pause the audio is in line with how iTunes works, so the consistency is arguably an improvement, but it was very nice to be able to mute the radio quickly without resorting to the mouse.

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[1]http://www.griffintechnology.com/products/radioshark2/

[2]http://www.atpm.com/11.02/radioshark.shtml

Another change to the 2.x software is that it now forces you to leave the application running in order for scheduled recordings to work. In 1.x, there was a background daemon that took care of the recording, so you could quit the radioSHARK application during a recording, and it didn't have to launch when it was time to record something. This could be an advantage or a disadvantage, depending on your perspective and usage patterns. I personally think it's nice because it means there's one less thing to uninstall later. But I detest the user interface so much that I do wish I could make it go away while the radioSHARK is recording something.

The biggest flaw in the 1.x software still isn't fixed: there is no way for the radioSHARK to wake a sleeping Mac to initiate a recording. If you happen to wake the computer yourself, the software will immediately begin to record, but this was a very widespread complaint with the original software and to see it remain unresolved is very disappointing.

Finally, pausing the radio stream and resuming it often results in very choppy audio or even complete audio dropout. This makes the time-shifting features nearly useless, which is sort of the whole point of the thing! I have occasionally been able to get this to happen when listening live after fifteen minutes or so as well; although quitting and relaunching the application fixes the live-stream problem every time. It appears that Griffin's software engineers were more concerned with implementing yet another non-standard user interface than fixing (or finding) serious flaws in the application.

Griffin has done such a great job with most of its other products that it's hard to watch it miss so badly with this one, especially after the widespread dissatisfaction with the earlier version. If you live in a major radio market, can live with average FM reception, don't need to listen to AM radio at all, and want to drop an additional $32 on Audio Hijack Pro[3] from Rogue Amoeba, this can be a very useful device. If you don't meet all of these criteria, however, you'll probably want to save your money for something else.

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[3]http://www.atpm.com/13.01/audio-hijack.shtml

Snapz Pro X 2.1.1

Developer: Ambrosia Software[1]
Price: $29 (basic version); $69 (with movie capture engine)
Requirements: Mac OS X 10.3.9
Universal: Yes
Trial: Fully-featured (watermarking after 15 days or 100 screen captures)

Command-Shift-3. A special key combination that all Mac users sooner or later learn. Press them together and you have a picture of the current screen placed on the Desktop. You have made yourself a screenshot. Should there be more to it? According to the developers of Snapz Pro X, yes, taking screenshots should be more than just making a static image.

Installation of Snapz Pro X (Snapz for short) is done with an Apple Installer package. While it is not as simple as dragging an icon from a disk image into the Applications folder, it is still a simple process to go through. You must register Snapz in order to use it properly. Unregistered, after 15 days or 100 captures, Snapz will place watermarks on all the images and movies made. A registration program is included in the Snapz folder.

Unlike programs that do not take into account the fact that one machine can have multiple accounts on it, the Snapz registration program provides, via a check box, the option to register for all users on the same machine. As someone who lately bought software that requires registration and found out that the program would work only for the account running the registration program, I welcome this thoughtful option. I share my Mac with my wife and my son, with me having administration rights. To allow my whole family to enjoy the Mac using their own accounts, with some games, I can get away with re-entering registration code; with others I have to go the extra mile and adjust folder permissions; and then there are some programs that would not work at all, even after I entered the registration code. I really wish all developers followed the example of Snapz Pro X.

During installation, Snapz is added as a login item, but only for the account that ran the installer. To add it to other accounts' startup, a visit to

the Account Preferences suffices. Snapz can also be launched manually, although this is not recommended, perhaps to maintain the non-intrusive nature of Command-Shift-3.

By default, Snapz's hotkey is Command-Shift-3. When invoked, Snapz appears and presents four ways to capture: entire screen, objects (such as menus and dialog boxes), selection, and movie.
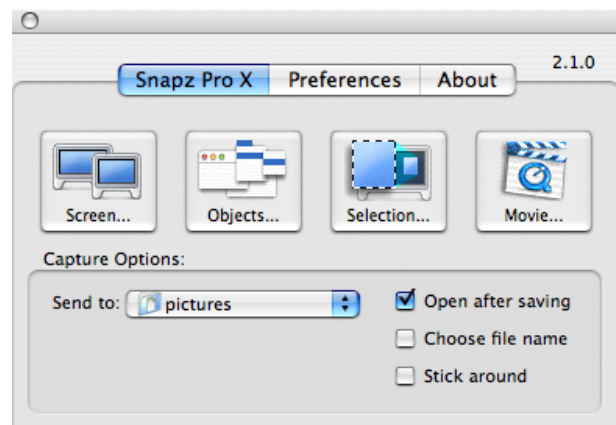

The main window.

At this point, the more observant reader may wonder, "If the $69 version includes the movie capture engine, then what does the $29 version give me beyond what Command-Shift-3, Command-Shift-4, and Command-Shift-4-Space provide for free?" It's a natural question, but there are compelling reasons to part with your money. First of all, Snapz lets you specify where to store the screenshots. You also have a say in the file format used. I like to keep my Desktop uncluttered and also want to use as little hard disk as possible, such that I prefer lossy formats like JPEG, so these two features got me sold.

Snapz offers many other improvements to the screen capture process. The names of the screenshots can be preceded with the name of the application. `FirefoxScreenSnapz001` sure is more meaningful than just Picture 2. When capturing a selection, the selection can be adjusted until it is exactly what you want. You make the selection using a

[1]http://www.ambrosiasw.com/utilities/snapzprox/

rectangular crop box much complete with control points. To move the crop box, just click inside the box and move it to the new place. In Object capture mode, you have the choice of hiding or showing the mouse pointer. The captured object can also have a border applied to it. Choices of border include hairline, rounded window, drop shadow, and fade to white. Last but not least, as long as your Dock is not set to auto-hide, Snapz can easily capture it in Object mode—something I cannot do with Command-Shift-3 or Grab.

The average Mac user may not care much about all the improvements Snapz offers over the built-in screen capture tool, but for those who often write documentation, Snapz is an indispensable tool. In addition to the various options to capture and manage static images, Snapz's movie capture ability is very useful for online tutorials. Instead of telling your reader to click this and that, a QuickTime movie showing the action to be taken is the best way to teach. After invoking Snapz, you need to define a rectangular region on the screen within which all movements will be captured. When you think you have recorded enough material for the movie, press the hotkey to bring up Snapz's movie save window.
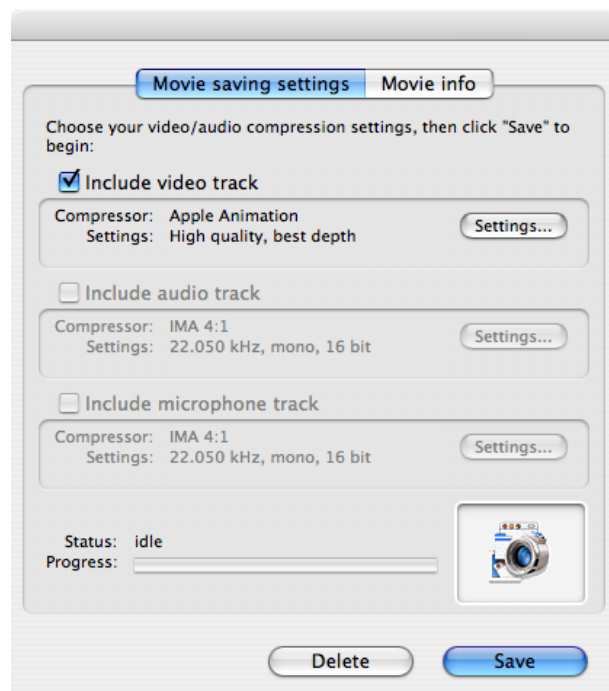

Movie ready to be saved.

Only if you decide to save the movie clip would you see a preview of it. The movie may take a long time to save, so I think the preview should be there as soon as the movie save window appears. What's more, while the movie is being recorded, there should be some indication that it is happening. Wiretap Pro, another product distributed by Ambrosia Software, has the feature. Without the visual cue, it is easy to forget that you are recording, and you can end up trying to save a very large movie later on.

One issue I have with Snapz is the way it handles overlapping windows when capturing Objects. Let's say I have two windows, one for my internal hard drive (PowerBook G4) and one for the LaCie external drive.
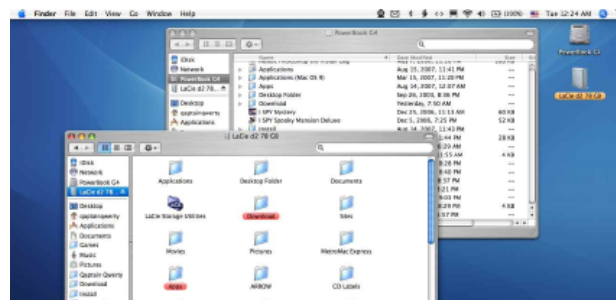
If I snap the PowerBook G4 window with Command-Shift-4 followed by the space bar, the resulting picture would correctly have just the PowerBook G4 window. With Snapz's Object capture, the back window would be properly detected and marqueed, but when actually captured the resulting image would include the foreground window.
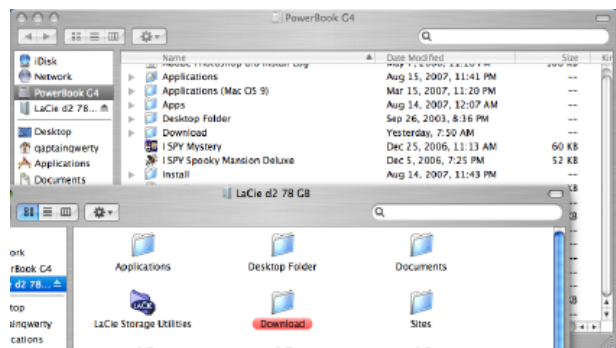
In my mind, software that tries to replace the no-frills utilities that come with the OS should do what the default commands do in the same way, but also offer improvements over them. Not automatically bringing the background window to the front

is a shortcoming. Still, I can work around the issue by manually bringing any windows in the background forward before invoking Snapz.

A more serious issue involves taking screenshots while the application is in full-screen mode. Recall that with Snapz you are supposed to invoke the Snapz window with the hotkey, then choose among the four options. However, when a game is in full-screen mode, i.e. you only see the game screen and nothing else, no Dock, no Desktop, the Snapz window won't appear atop the game screen.

The four Snapz buttons are assigned hotkeys, too, i.e. 1 is for screen, 2 for object, 3 for selection, and 4 for movie, so I thought I could force a screen capture by press 1 then blindly click anywhere in the screen. Unfortunately, it doesn't work that way. If Snapz is invoked while an application is in full-screen mode, although it doesn't come to the foreground, the Snapz window will be there when the application is closed, with whatever screen the application was at when Snapz was invoked. You can then capture the screen the usual way.

This means that if you want to make screenshots of, say, the first screens of the first five levels of a platform game, you would have to start and quit the game five times. It is tedious, but I can live with it, really. But no, that is not all there is. To really have the screen captured and saved to a file in the designated folder, you must select the Choose File Name option in the Snapz menu. With the option selected, each time you finalize a capture, you will have the choice to specify the name. With the option not chosen, click all you want, and no new image will appear in the designated folder.

I had the idea that perhaps if I freed up Command-Shift-3, by assigning the Snapz hotkey to some other key combination, then I could still use Command-Shift-3 to capture full-screens. Alas, my idea didn't fly. Once Snapz is running, there is no way to use Command-Shift-3 the old way anymore. The simplest thing to do would be to remove Snapz as a login item and add it back as the need arises. Another option is to use Activity Monitor to quit the Snapz process.

Overall, Snapz Pro X 2.1.1 is a good addition to any document writers' toolbox. Casual Mac users may make do with the OS' built-in screen capture method, but Snapz offers so many more enhancements for the professional writer. The movie recording option is definitely worthwhile to have, even if there is no visual guide to the recording's progress.

However, for all the bells and whistles Snapz Pro X adds on top of the simple Command-Shift-3, it fails to provide an easy way to capture in full-screen mode. Unless you really need the movie-making capability, love the other enhancements, and rarely need to capture game screens in full-screen mode, Snapz Pro X is not for you.

Stikkit

Developer: Values of N[1]
Price: free
Requirements: Web browser.

Stikkit has some great status messages. Someone clearly thought long and hard about them; even the verbiage—"You stukkit" appears when you save a new note—is really very smart.

That's Stikkit's initial selling point, too. Stikkit is a Web service for notes, to-do lists, appointments, and contacts, and what sets it apart from other notes programs is that it operates on its own smarts. It uses keywords and some simple (keyword-noun) processing as a subset of natural language to discern what you want out of each note. This can be a big advantage; rather than the specialized interfaces that iCal and Address Book have for entering new data, where you type in data into the "Title" field, the "Start Time" field, the "End Time" field, etc., you enter what I typed the other day:

> Meet with Todd on July 17 from 12 PM to 12:30 PM in the cafeteria at work.

Stikkit, which is owned by Portland, OR–based start-up Values of N, is smart enough to process that to mean "New appointment from 12 PM to 12:30 PM on Tuesday July 17." If I've got everything set up, it also links the appointment to my contact entry for Todd. iCal would have required me to enter all of the useful information in all of the right spots, so that I'd use the mouse or the Tab key a couple of times and make sure that the format was just right. This all works by using a handful of magic keywords[2].

Talk about amazing. The first time I did this, I thought, to myself, This is how this should be.

What's more impressive still is that Stikkit has a wide variety of uses. And that's why I'm here this month, to tell you about all of the various ways that you can make Stikkit part of your life: on your Mac and from your Web browser. I've gone from being a skeptic, even after I discovered how easy it is to create a new appointment or contact, to being a user, using Stikkit to store virtually everything digital.

There are a few preliminary details we need to talk about first, though. There are five basic types of Stikkit entries: notes, appointments, to-dos, contacts, and bookmarks. Stikkit, for reasons I don't entirely know, calls these "stikkits," "calendar," "to-do list," "peeps," and "bookmarks," respectively. I'll use Values of N's nomenclature for the rest of this review. A stikkit is the most generic of all of the types; any stikkit can contain three of the four more specialized items. A peep must stand alone in its own stikkit, with the first line reading "name." But a single stikkit could be a note, an appointment, a to-do list, or a URL. Each of these three secondary categories is really just metadata that can be applied to a stikkit, and it's been most helpful to me to think of them that way.

(An aside: Why not call them "notes" and "contacts"? I don't work at Values of N, which operates Stikkit, but if I did I would tell the developers that it's silly to change the names like that arbitrarily. Not to knock too much on my homeboys—a shout-out for Portlanders everywhere!)

There's other metadata associated with a stikkit. Each has an ID, which is part of its URL, and an a.k.a. You can refer from one stikkit to another anywhere in the text, just by putting curly braces around the other stikkit's a.k.a., and you can set a stikkit's a.k.a. if you like (or Stikkit will auto-generate one for you). Each also has an e-mail address, so that if you send e-mail to a stikkit, the text will be added as a comment; each can be set to notify you fifteen minutes in advance of an event time; each can be associated with a (theoretically) infinite number of peeps; and each can have an (also theoretically) infinite number of tags.
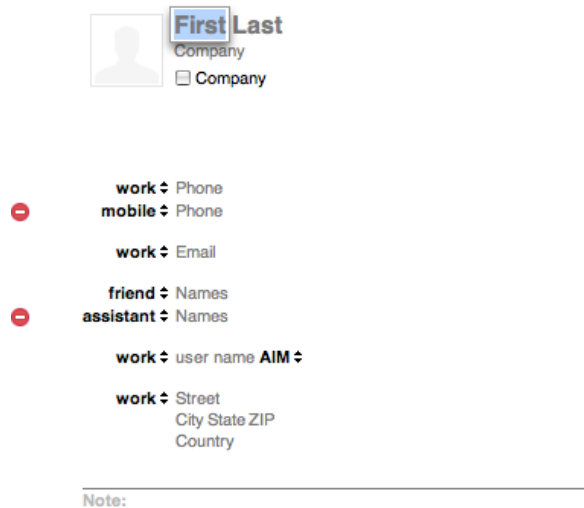
Several of these are basically free-form applications, and that's what's most useful. You can set an a.k.a. to whatever you want and use that to refer to a stikkit wherever you want in the text of another stikkit. Any time you refer to someone by full name in the text of a stikkit, Stikkit will automatically create a new peep by that name. And by starting a

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[1]http://www.stikkit.com
[2]http://www.43folders.com/2007/02/07/stikkit-introduction/

new line with an @, you can associate a stikkit with however many tags you want, including new ones.

What's beautiful about all of this is that even the most complex applications for Stikkit are still fairly simplistic. I've used a variety of complicated information-filing systems—Bare Bones' Yojimbo[3], my boss Michael Tsai's EagleFiler[4], Copernican's Boswell[5], Flying Meat's VoodooPad[6]...the list goes on and on. None of them was ever *at once* so easy to create a new, simple entry and so powerful at creating a complex entry.
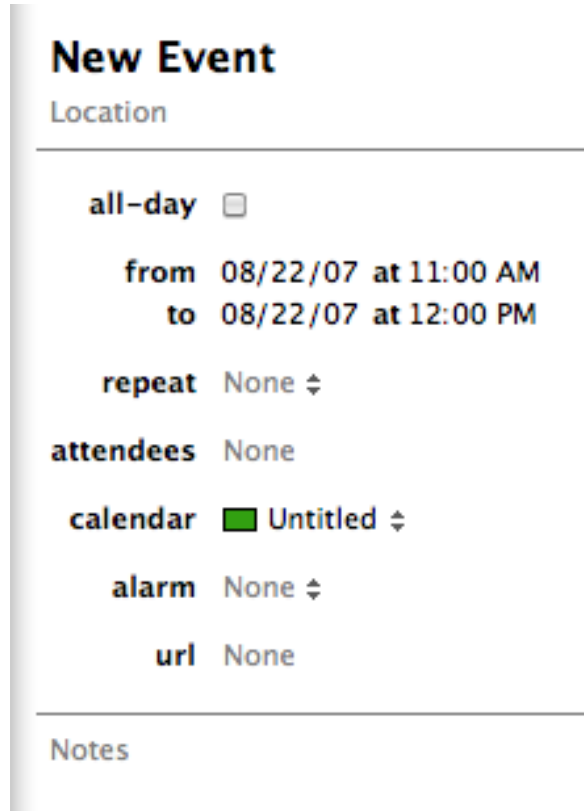
[3] http://www.atpm.com/12.06/yojimbo.shtml
[4] http://c-command.com/eaglefiler/
[5] http://www.atpm.com/11.08/boswell.shtml
[6] http://www.flyingmeat.com/voodoopad/

It's much easier to create a new stikkit than in either Address Book or iCal. Everything is free-form data in Stikkit, so there's no button-punching or tabbing.

Everything else in this part of the market is either not powerful enough for my needs or too focused on a particular kind of data. The worst offenders are the ones that have a particular fixed set of formats.

All you have to do to create a stikkit is to click the "New stikkit" button. There's also a

[Quicksilver plug-in](#)[7] that allows you to post single-line stikkits (or append new items to an existing stikkit) and an OS X Service to "post new stikkits." And Stikkit has an e-mail interface that creates a new stikkit out of any e-mail you send to it.

So now, I believe you know what you need to know about the way that Stikkit works. I could go on describing how to use Stikkit, but rather than tell you how to write notes like this one:

Even a comparatively complex stikkit has a very straight-forward format. I was even able to interleave a few notes in the date entry, and it still gets scheduled correctly.

I'd like to explain how you can leverage Stikkit to make life easier for yourself. I think you can figure out how to structure a stikkit. (If you're having trouble, check Merlin Mann's really great [Stikkit cheat sheet](#)[8].)

Pretty much everything in my life goes in Stikkit. A lot of it is very free-form, in a way that consciously mimics what I've long done with a Moleskine notebook. So, for instance, a typical stikkit would be a list of things that I need to do today, intermingled with notes on what I need to do with all of those things, and sometimes just random thoughts that occur to me throughout the day. I also input all of my appointments with specific times, including my work schedule (it's very complex). And I forward or Bcc most important e-mails to the service's e-mail address for creating new stikkits, so that they can be cross-referenced to other elements in the Stikkit database.

As long as everything has as many possible tags as I can think of—it's much easier to over-tag and remove one you don't need than to under-tag and need to add a new tag to a lot of items—you shouldn't have any trouble finding older items. When there's

anything you know you want to be able to access directly from one stikkit to another, link it together using curly braces and the a.k.a. of the item you're referring to, like {a.k.a.}. Most of the time, though, I get by just by browsing tag listings.

What you get when you browse through, for instance, my "ATPM" tag. Look, Ma, next month's *Bloggable* column!

Now all that's left is interfacing Stikkit with the rest of your life. In addition to keeping the main Stikkit page open in my Web browser, which gives me an agenda view of the next week or two, I have hammered out what I think is a considerable number of other uses for my Stikkit data.

- I subscribe to three feeds: one, my main Stikkit RSS feed; two, the feed of not-yet-done to-dos, which show me new and upcoming stikkits as updates become available; and three, an RSS version of the next week's upcoming events. I've tried to think of a way of fine-tuning this, so that each morning I could have a list of that day's appointments, but Stikkit insists on returning events on the next day even when you ask for a specific date. Anyway, here is a [main Stikkit RSS feed](#)[9], a [Stikkit to-do feed](#)[10], and a [calendar RSS feed](#)[11].

- I also have iCal subscribed to my [Stikkit iCal feed](#)[12]. That, plus [Missing Sync](#)[13], gives me my Stikkit calendar on my Smartphone and on my PDA.

- I've bookmarked certain tags that allow me to organize what I've got going on. So, for in-

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[7]http://www.tuaw.com/2007/04/11/how-to-stikkit-plug in-for-quicksilver/

[8]http://www.43folders.com/2007/02/07/stikkit-introd uction/

[9]http://www.stikkit.com/stikkits.atom

[10]http://www.stikkit.com/todos.atom?done=0

[11]http://api.stikkit.com/calendar.atom?dates=YYYY-MM -DD

[12]http://api.stikkit.com/calendar.ics

[13]http://www.atpm.com/8.09/missing-sync.shtml

stance, the "work" tag contains my work schedule, notes on work stuff, and any work-related appointments I have; and the "ATPM" tag contains a *ton* of notes and links and the like. That gives me very quick access to particular commonly used receptacles for data.

Stikkit has a few limitations, unfortunately. One of them is that if, like me, you have the dreadful habit of forgetting what a stikkit was called, it's going to be awfully hard to sift through your old stikkits, especially if the tags you remember are common ones. I've fantasized about an e-mail-like interface to stikkits, which would be awesome but also very difficult to do, since it would still have to go page by page of 25.

Another limitation is that stikkits are always sorted by their modification date. Alphabetical sort would be nice; so would creation date, which, oddly enough, you can *search* by but not sort by.

A third is that there's currently no way to input anything other than plain text into Stikkit. I'd pay $10 a month for the ability to attach files to Stikkits alone; how many times have I exclaimed, "Why can't I just attach this file to this?!" (Last count: 13, since I started keeping track. Probably a few before then.)

But these are not insurmountable hurdles. I think Stikkit has turned out to be a terrific way to organize my life—data entry is easy and free-form, and it gives me a good and easily sorted home from data in a format I can access at home, from work, on my phone, via e-mail, and with anything that can read RSS.

What could be wrong with that?

FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions

What Is *ATPM*?

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

Are You Looking for New Staff Members?

ATPM is looking to add more regular reviewers to our staff. Though all positions with *About This Particular Macintosh* are volunteer, reviewing is a great way to share your product knowledge and experience with fellow members of the Macintosh community. If you're interested, contact ATPM's Reviews Editor, Paul Fatula[1].

How Can I Subscribe to *ATPM*?

Visit the subscriptions page[2].

Which Format Is Best for Me?

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

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

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

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[1]`mailto:reviews@atpm.com`
[2]`http://www.atpm.com/subscribe`

Windows. PDFs may be magnified to any size and searched with ease.

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

How Can I Submit Cover Art?

We enjoy the opportunity to display new, original cover art every month. We're also very proud of the people who have come forward to offer us cover art for each issue. If you're a Macintosh artist and interested in preparing a cover for ATPM, please e-mail us. The way the process works is pretty simple. As soon as we have a topic or theme for the upcoming issue we let you know about it. Then, it's up to you. We do not pay for cover art but we are an international publication with a broad readership and we give appropriate credit alongside your work. There's space for an e-mail address and a Web page URL, too. Write to editor@atpm.com for more information.

How Can I Send a Letter to the Editor?

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

Do You Answer Technical Support Questions?

Of course (although we cannot promise to answer every inquiry). E-mail our Help Department at help@atpm.com.

How Can I Contribute to *ATPM*?

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

Segments: Slices from the Macintosh Life

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

Segments contributors have gone on to become ATPM columnists. Send your stuff to editor@atpm.com.

Hardware and Software Reviews

ATPM publishes hardware and software reviews. However, we do things in a rather unique way. Techno-jargon can be useful to engineers but is not always a help to most Mac users. We like reviews that inform our readers about how a particular piece of hardware or software will help their Macintosh lives. We want them to know what works, how it may help them in their work, and how strongly we recommend it. Please contact our reviews editor[3], before you begin writing, if you have a piece of hardware or software that you'd like to review.

Which Products Have You Reviewed?

Check our reviews index[4] for the complete list.

What is Your Rating Scale?

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

Will You Review My Product?

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

Where Can I Find Back Issues of *ATPM*?

Back issues[5] of ATPM, dating since April 1995, are available in DOCMaker stand-alone format and as PDF. In addition, all issues since ATPM 2.05 (May 1996) are available in HTML format.

What If My Question Isn't Answered Above?

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

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[3]mailto:reviews@atpm.com
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