

ATPM

- ▶ Contents
- ▶ April Showers
- ▶ Twilight Junction



About This Particular Macintosh™ 3.04: About the **personal** computing experience™

Volume 3, Number 4
April 29, 1997

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“April Showers”

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not necessarily those of this particular Macintosh. Product and company names and logos may be registered trademarks of their respective companies. *About This Particular Macintosh* is published with DOCMaker 4.7.5, and owes its existence to the program's author, Mark Wall. May his camels never have fleas. Thank you for reading this far, and we hope that the rest of the magazine is more interesting than this.

Thanks for reading *ATPM*.

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Welcome

April Showers

We didn't want to have an April Fool's issue. We try not to dwell on negative things. So, instead of dedicating this month's ATPM to the misguided folks who have recently chosen not to buy a Mac, we're dedicating this issue in glorious anticipation of the Macintosh rejuvenation. We don't wish to be "precipitous" as our claims, but we do think "April Showers" will bring May dollars.

The "Official" ATPM Statement on Milleniumism

As highly regarded members of the Internet journalism establishment, members of the ATPM staff believe it is our 1st Amendment privilege and responsibility to speak out about matters of dire consequence and other important issues to be addressed by the people.

Quite frankly, we are very distressed by [the](#) mass paranoia concerning computer software and the coming year 2000. We've read countless articles suggesting that the world economy may be placed in jeopardy because many current software applications cannot process dates later than 12/31/99. Further, there has been much speculation that the recent appearance of the Hale-Bopp comet may be a harbinger of strange and spectacular galactic events to come.

The ATPM staff urges everyone to ignore these rumors and treat them as nothing more than the rumblings of fringe groups and disenfranchised members of our society. It is appropriate at this time that we consider the truth as it has been revealed to our sources.

The facts are as follows: There will be no year 2000 crisis. By the end of this century, it is the master plan of computer hegemonists to control all time and date functions worldwide. Rather than busy software developers with the task of developing application updates to solve the year 2000 problem, the software master controllers will simply change the recording of time. There will be no year 2000. Plans are in the works for a new version of a prominent computer OS code named "1995 plus 6." It will do many things,

including resetting our clocks (critics claim it's designed to figuratively "clean our clocks.") and establishing the center of the known universe somewhere just north of Seattle. Consequently, theologians are urging buyers to be more cautious in their software purchases and they are recommending that people find alternative systems.

For the record, while many people may think we do all this for fun, the mission of the ATPM staff is to save the world and preserve history as we know it. Please do everything you can to help us promote the Macintosh mission. The world you save may be your own.

And Now A Word From Our Sponsors: “ ”

There's an old adage that silence is golden. But not when it comes to advertising. Between you and "we," we're looking for some Dinero to go with our Allegro. We'd like to expand ATPM's content and our worldwide readership. But before we can increase our outflow we need to do something positive for our cash inflow. We have an all-volunteer staff, so we're simply looking to shorten our "ends" or at least have them meet somewhere in the middle. We're also looking for a few (or one or two) of our readers to come forward to help us expand our advertising program. There are only two rules: Our subscriber list will never be sold, and the only thing "adult" about our stuff is that we're often up late working on our columns. Enough said.

Up, Up and Away In Our Beautiful Balloon

While many of us are learning how to use programs that render in three dimensions, we'll borrow a song from the "Fifth Dimension." It's been awhile, but we haven't heard much more from Oracle Corp.'s Larry Ellison about his "trial balloon" of an idea to buy Apple Computer. Regardless of the outcome (this is where a real Oracle would come in handy), we would like Apple's colors should continue to fly high above the crowd. However, we do hope this particular "balloon" is full of hot air.

Welcome To Twilight Junction

Our intermittent cover story writer, H.M. Fog, spends most of his days in a place called "Twilight Junction." As he puts it, "It's a small town nestled snugly between here and there, and a little more than halfway between the way things were and the way we would like them to be. It sits in the foothills of the nearby mountains, where the commuter rail ends, and the freight line begins. It's home to a little bit of yesterday, a fair amount of today, and a few glimpses of tomorrow."

Twilight Junction has its own Macintosh controversy that's about to unfold. Have a seat and take a scenic ride to this special destination as you journey inside this month's issue.

Please enjoy!





Email

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Ellison's Trial Balloon

I already passed my comments along to Mr. Ellison at Oracle and, in a separate post, to the San Jose Mercury News.

With lots of cash in the bank, the fastest laptop and desktop computers in the world, Steves Jobs/Wozniak back under the roof and the promise of a terrific new OS coming along, what does Mr. Ellison think he's offering? A network computer? Give us all a break!

Though I still firmly believe — and yell at every opportunity — that Apple's ad, marketing and public relations departments should be revamped from top to bottom and their ad agency fired, Amelio seems to be doing a good job. Letting people go and getting rid of pathways which were slowing down the company is only good business sense. That he has had to do so reflects poorly not on him, but on the earlier management which apparently had *no* idea of where they were going.

I'm content to wait it out. Between Apple and the clone companies, we're finally moving in the right direction. The competition is *not* between the MacOS and Intel, it's between Apple and the cloners to see who can put out the best, fastest and most stable computers...and sell them into the marketplace. Whoever wins, Apple's overall share of market will rise.

E. Barnes
eb@financier.com

...

But That's A Good Idea...

I would love to have Ellison take-over apple...finally leadership and vision.

Marc Grossman

publicadjust@earthlink.net

...

Apple Buyout

This is a copy of the letter I sent to Oracle. I think it speaks for itself.

“It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who errs, and comes short again and again (but)...who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory or defeat.”

- Theodore Roosevelt
(Paris, 1910)

Herb Schulsinger

herb@loop.com

...

Apple to the Core

By all means, Oracle should rescue Apple. The incredible genius of Larry Ellison combined with the equally remarkable phenomenon that is Apple should produce a synergy previously unseen in the post-industrial age.

Pieter le Meeg

DomainAgcy@aol.com

...

Praise for ATPM

I really enjoy your 'zine. I especially am glad that you haven't succumbed to the Adobe Acrobat trend. Docmaker is smaller and easier for us older-Mac-(68K '030 and '040)-with-less-than-a-zillion-GB-of- RAM-and-HD-space-users to use (whew!). It

takes no extensions; is one size fits all; and easily changed to text if I want to take it to work on my mere 180MB HD PowerBook 520.

I've been reading ATPM since its inception. I like the editorials and comment pages the best.

Keep up the good work.

Stu Bloom

sebloom@concentric.net

Thank you. ATPM will even run on a Mac Plus, and we work hard so each issue will fit on a single floppy disk.

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Thoughts on ATPM, Apple, and Macs

I have just finished reading my second copy of ATPM and want to express my thanks for all the effort you obviously expend in creating it. ATPM is certainly one, if not THE best, of the magazines on the web. And the feature that allows the reader to download the whole edition to his/her hard drive to read leisurely is absolutely terrific! Kudos to everyone involved.

Much has been made of the loyalty of Apple customers, especially during these trying times. One factor of this trait, which applies to me, and I'd wager, to many others has not been fully explored. Doing so just might be an appropriate theme for an advertising campaign.

I purchased my first Mac two years ago upon the advice of a friend who teaches Computer Science at a college where I taught before my retirement. I was totally computer ignorant and had steadfastly resisted any efforts to introduce me to them. When I decided to join the 20th century before it became the 21st, I asked my friend's advice and was told Macs were still the easiest to master. I can't compare from experience since I've never owned a Windoze machine, but I did teach myself (with the help of Macs for Dummies) to pretty much handle my Mac.

Recently I had occasion to ponder whether, when I made the decision to buy a computer, I would have purchased a Mac had there been as much negative press about Apple as there is at the present time. My answer may give you some insight as to why Apple users remain so loyal.

Personally, I like the idea that I dare to be a little different and refuse to follow like a lemming heading for the sea. It is somewhat of the same mind set that led me to purchasing a VW Beetle in the 50's. I liked not driving Detroit Iron! And I knew the VW was a better car. My philosophy is, if what everyone else is doing or using is not better, why not be different and express your individuality? In fact, I see much similarity in using a Mac today and driving a foreign car back in the 50's. It's a "US AGAINST THEM" thing. Just as one VW driver, back then, would stop to give assistance to another who was having a

problem, Mac users today go out of their way to help their cohorts. Look at how many MUGS there are.

Keep up the good work and fight the good fight!

H. Peter Blum

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We'd love to hear your thoughts about our publication. We always welcome your comments, criticisms, suggestions, and praise at <editor@atpm.com>. Or, if you have an opinion or announcement about the Macintosh platform in general, that's ok too.



FEATURE

April Showers

BY H.M. Fog, HMfog@atpm.com

Most of us have read the news. Once again Apple Computer is the subject of takeover speculation. Similar to the way many of us might talk about our favorite “dream team” of an actor and actress in a fantasy Hollywood movie, discussion of who would be best matched to run Apple Computer has become a popular pastime for Mac enthusiasts and industry watchers.

Whether the persons mentioned are Oracle Corp.’s Larry Ellison, Apple co-founder Steve Jobs, current chairman Gilbert Amelio or other computer industry luminary, everyone seems to have an opinion as to who would be best suited to restore Apple Computer to its former glory. No matter the person’s view on which person should head the company, everyone seems to agree that the multi-billion dollar global franchise that manufacturers the Mac can, like the legendary Phoenix, will rise again from its own ashes.

Apple Computer, once the darling of Wall Street, has become a company that many people love to hate. It’s also a company whose customer loyalty is as well known as its products. Mac users don’t give up. It’s one of the reasons so many people are captivated by the company. It may also be a reason so many people dislike Apple. Mac users are a stubborn lot!

No wonder there is so much talk about Apple. Who wouldn’t want to run a company that has millions of loyal consumers? Whether the speculation centers on Apple remaining an independent company or a significant division of a larger company, very few people talk about the demise of the Macintosh or the Macintosh technology. In many ways the company is both a paragon and a paradox.

The Macintosh technology and the ease-of use of Macintosh computers have established Apple as a paragon of the personal computer industry. The company’s problems and its seeming inability to easily determine precisely what Apple Computer should do, makes the company a paradox.

One of Apple’s recurring problems is determining whether it is a software company that also makes computer hardware or a computer hardware company that makes easy-to-use software. This ongoing debate within Apple’s corporate walls has probably caused more turmoil over the years than any other issue because it establishes the company’s direction and goals.

As of this writing Saudi Arabia's Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud has

also publicly stated that he believes the company has significant potential and that it offers investors a unique opportunity for financial gain. On the other hand, there seems to be pool of news writers who have taken a decidedly different view of things. Anyone who has read the “news” knows the patterned story:

Typical News Report About Apple

April 21, 1997 - Apple Computer, the financially troubled computer company that is struggling to wiggle itself free from beneath a mountain of financial red ink and a cavalcade of management missteps, has announced another series of desperate actions to try and return itself to profitability. This is the second round of drastic restructurings in the past twelve months under Chief Executive Gilbert Amelio, who is reportedly feeling heat from shareholders and customers about the lack of Apple’s progress in meeting its product release dates and financial goals.

In totally unrelated news, Apple Computer has announced the release of the world’s fastest laptop and among the world’s fastest desktop computers. It has also been reported that the market for Mac OS computers (computers that don’t run Windows) has increased significantly in the past several months. In addition, the company has stated that it’s on schedule for the release of the major upgrade to the Mac OS (code named “Rhapsody”) set for the summer of 1998. The new computers combined with Apple’s easy-to-use operating system may appeal to a broad range of buyers.

However, according to Sheldon Wellington, III of the investment house of Whither, Flync and Blarney, “Although it does appear that Apple Computer has superior products that are easier for people to use, we have serious reservations about the company’s financial condition and its ability to continue to compete in a market dominated by better capitalized companies. Even though the Mac OS dominates the market for Web authoring and other growth markets, we will be very cautious about Apple Computer until it quadruples its current market share and show what we think are real signs of market growth. ”

In other words, the issue here isn’t necessarily truth, it’s perception. To many, perception means momentum and momentum means money. It used to be said years ago that no one was ever fired for buying products made by IBM. Along came Apple. I’ve felt for a long time that people don’t like to look stupid much more than they mind being wrong. Apple gained their market share for Macintosh because, to a lot of people, it seemed silly to use something else. For the first time in a generation people questioned buying from IBM.

Several years ago Apple had a promising technology and a really cool product in development called the Newton. It was heavily touted by John Sculley, Apple’s chairman at that time. In my view, it was released to the public much too quickly. At first, It didn’t work as well as people thought it should and a globally syndicated cartoonist lampooned it. Apple’s prestige and reputation were badly tarnished. This was, by no means, the sole cause of Apple’s problems, but I do believe it was a turning point in public perception about the company. Again, the issue isn’t necessarily truth, but perception. Today, the Newton technology represents a promising path to increased product sales for Apple Computer. The technology itself isn’t the problem; instead, it was the timing of the product

release.

The theme for this month's issue is "April showers" and for good reason. Mac enthusiasts have "weathered" many, many trials over the past few years. The company's misfortunes and seemingly erratic approach to the market place have been patiently tolerated by Mac enthusiasts and many software developers. Fortunately, the Macintosh is loved by millions of users, including many talented professionals and select industry leaders.

The good news is that more people are taking notice that Apple Computer's stock price is very low compared to its historical performance over the past many years. Wealthy investors, such as Prince Alwaleed, have purchased large blocks of shares in the the company in response. These well-publicized acquisitions will help change the public's perception of Apple's financial future. Whether the stock is acquired because of rumored takeover speculation or based strictly on the company's fundamentals, the renewed interest should create more buyer enthusiasm. When a "turnaround" stock such as Apple begins to show activity, people take notice.

One concern a potential buyer might have about Apple Computer is, "Who would be best suited to run the company?" This isn't just a question of personnel. It's also a question of timing. Should that potential buyer decide it best to replace the current management, they would have to move quickly to avoid disrupting the company's existing recovery. It would also mean that a viable corporate plan would have to be in place prior to the acquisition. This can be difficult if the takeover is "hostile" (or, not desired by current management). This may be one reason that a potential buyer would want to have a new management team and a plan of action waiting in the wings at the time that a takeover offer is made. Avoiding disruption of recovery is also one reason many people would like Apple's current chairman, Gilbert Amelio, to have more time at the company's helm. He charted a new course for Apple and many people think the company's performance has begun to "set sail."

There are very few Mac enthusiasts without strong opinions about who would be best suited to run the company and exactly what course the company should take to return to long-term profitability. As a matter-of-fact, Mac users seem to be as opinionated on this issue as they are loyal to the Mac OS! No matter who leads Apple, the perception of the company's products in the enterprise or business markets must be changed. For example, WebObjects, acquired by Apple in the NeXT Software purchase, is one example of a much needed and highly popular product for the enterprise market. Apple needs to make the most of this opportunity by supporting WebObjects and working to extend Apple's presence in this important market.

Apple's recent release of Power Macintoshes that come bundled with a 166 MHz Pentium processor (targeted especially at individuals and small businesses who must have access to both platforms) marks a new approach in Apple's history. For many years Apple's hardware had lagged the competition in terms of performance. The benefits of the easy-to-use operating system more than made up for slower processor performance. However, when ease-of-use differences between Mac OS and its largest competitor became less "graphic," the Mac's slower performance became more of an issue for buyers.

Introducing the PowerPC significantly changed the performance ratios of Mac vs. Wintel personal computers. The 604e micro-processor has given the Mac OS market a performance edge in head-to-head comparisons with current Wintel products. The decision

to bundle Pentium processors into a new line of Macintosh machines allows Apple to claim the crown for personal computer performance. It also deflates any remaining arguments about problems with software or platform incompatibility. That's the truth. Now it's Apple's job to change the perception.

As Mac enthusiasts, we can do our part to change the perception of Apple Computer simply by continuing to talk about the Mac's advantages and continuing to recommend the Macintosh platform to friends, family and co-workers.

Apple Computer is truly a global franchise with millions of loyal customers. Whether the company continues as an independent organization or is merged with another technology leader is not the primary issue. No matter the organization's structure, the Mac OS market will continue to grow, change and advance.

Our "April Showers" will bring May flowers.

© 1997 H.M. Fog, HMFog@atpm.com. H.M. Fog is a west coast computer consultant who sometimes writes articles for ATPM.



ABOUT THIS PARTICULAR
OPINION

APPLES, KIDS AND ATTITUDE™, BY ROBERT PAUL LEITAO



What Goes Up...

It was a beautiful Spring day in Southern California. The sun had burned through the morning cloud cover, the air was clear and the wind was mild. It was a day that everyone should be outside. My kids and I had spent the morning doing crafts, making snacks and playing a few games. It was the weekend and we had lots of fun things to do and plenty of places to do them.

Because of the climate, many California communities have playgrounds that are busy all year-round. The irony to a New Englander like me is that the winter season in California is often more favorable for mid-day play than the hot afternoons of summer. This year, Spring time has been filled with days that satisfy all the senses: blue skies, light breezes, song birds singing in the trees and the sweet aroma of blooming flowers faintly filling the air.

After the kids and I exhausted many of the fun things to do at home, we headed for a nearby park to enjoy the day and for a little “kick ball” practice. My kids appear to have very good eye-hand coordination (at least it seems that way from the educational computer games they play). Eye-foot coordination is a different matter. I’ve spent time helping them learn how to kick a moving ball and how to “plant” one foot so that they can kick better with the other foot. It’s a time in their lives when they marvel at the things a father can do, whether it be kicking the ball well or catching it squarely in my arms.

It was a beautiful day for this father to be in his glory, basking in the “oohs and aahs” of his children as I showed them the best way to kick the ball. We were all caught up in the enthusiasm as I displayed my skills by kicking the yellow, rubbery ball straight up in the air. Time and time again the ball would rise vertically from my foot and be followed skyward by the bulging eyes and craning necks of my children. I’d grab the ball on its first bounce as my kids raced around the park trying in vain to catch the ball with their outstretched arms, only to have me kick it skyward again.

And then...it happened. It was a moment that seemed to last an eternity. Two kids and one adult staring skyward with bulging eyes, dropped chins and bodies frozen in motion.

Well-established Southern California parks have beautiful, mature trees that shoot forth from the ground and spread their expansive branches toward the sun like a child extends its arms after waking from a night-long slumber. Majestic trees with towering limbs are filled in Spring with lush new growth. These parks are natural settings that would inspire

But one tree, in particular, was a bit too novel. That's because it was now decorated with a rubbery yellow ball. This roundish man-made object sat perfectly in the "palm" of a very big limb, "captured" in flight by three of its finger-like branches.

Slowly but surely, I sheepishly gazed around the park to see if anyone had been witness to my errant kick. My two kids were still frozen in place with heads tilted and eyes focused upward, as if in disbelief. Matthew finally broke the silence as he gestured with his right arm and said in a puzzled tone "my ball?"

Inwardly I laughed, cried and giggled all within a minute. What could a father possibly say? There was no way to retrieve the ball and the spirit of lighthearted fun had quickly been replaced by a sense of bemusement and confusion. What could a father say? This father chose to say "let's get ice cream!" After all, I was feeling pretty lucky. No one, it appeared, had noticed my blunder and I had quickly convinced myself that it was an old, dirty ball that needed to be replaced anyway.

The three of us packed ourselves into the car and raced to the store as quickly as we could. The kids' concerns had already changed from thinking about the ball to who would sit where in the car: in the front seat with Dad or in the back seat alone. It's only a few miles from the park to the store but in many ways they are in two different worlds. At the park, kids can run around without concern. At the store, they hold Daddy's hand and look both ways before crossing the street. No birds are chirping, but cash registers are "dinging." There are no slides, but there are shopping carts.

Matthew likes to ride the cart by standing on the wheels in front. Jessica likes to push the cart while her brother browses the aisles from his vantage point. It's her idea of a good time and he enjoys "going along for the ride." I was in the dairy section and they had already moved one aisle over and were picking out pasta. I asked them to behave and to wait patiently. "Otherwise," I admonished them, "we won't be stopping in frozen foods." They took the hint well. Now, the question was, "Which flavor of Sorbet?" They each have a favorite. Since it was my errant kick that brought us to the store, I purchased both flavors. They were happy and a little of my guilt was alleviated.

We arrived at home and I unpacked the groceries. They started up their Mac. Each of my kids have their favorite "edutainment" CD-ROMs along with a few high-quality interactive games. Matthew has learned to play some games from beginning to end with his sister. He also plays some of the same games by himself. He's 4 years old and knows how to restart the Mac. He's learned a few of the menu bars and how to select various options, including how to print.

For awhile I had wanted to keep much of their learning centered around books. I'm not one for watching TV and I made every effort to have good books available at bed time. However, my children are learning in a different world than the one in which I was raised. Interactive multimedia, including computer-based resources, are a part of their total learning experience.

I've been amazed at how much they learn from computer-based resources. The interactive orientation of edutainment CD-ROMs and the manner in which they encourage children to explore and experiment have made them wonderful learning aids for my kids. It's helped them think more positively about learning things from other sources, such as books. I

think this is because they are more apt to see themselves as part of the story. It's become their idea to read books at night.

For Matthew and Jessica, using a Macintosh is enriching their world in many, many ways with one notable exception -- learning how to play "kick ball." At least for now, it stills requires a rubbery ball, moving legs and a little bit of open space. I draw some comfort in the fact that a few things haven't changed.

By the time they finished their computer game, dinner was ready to be served. The evening's menu at Dad's included their choice of pasta, sauce and a green vegetable. Since leaving the park, they had made only a couple of references to the lost ball. They did remind me to purchase a replacement quickly. There's no Sorbet unless they eat the spaghetti. The green stuff is sometimes negotiable.

I replaced the old ball several days ago. It was a pleasant surprise for Matthew and Jessica. The new ball is orange, made of heavier gauge material and constructed a little bit better than the old one. It will make for better kick ball practice at the park. I think that being a Mac owner is a lot like playing kick ball. No matter the level of skill and experience, anyone can have a good time. We've had a lot of fun over the years as we use our Macs to learn, play and play.

The old ball was lost while we were having fun. We got a little too excited and, just for a moment, lost track of the world around us. Perhaps Apple's recent history is analogous. Over the past eighteen months, I've been frozen in place on at least one occasion with my eyes focused upward as I muttered in a very puzzled tone, "Apple?" For awhile, they too lost track of the the world around them.

Today, many things about Apple Computer are new, including their release of the world's fastest laptop computer and a very impressive new line of Power Macintoshes. The results are encouraging: Better hardware, a new operating system under development and a leaner, more focused organization.

There's no doubt the Macintosh is allowing my kids the opportunity to learn together and to sometimes learn on their own. There is no other computer which allows a soon-to-be six year-old girl and her four year-old brother to play games, learn and explore with minimal parental interference. Sometimes I'll sit with them while they play. Sometimes they even allow me to have a turn. They love their Mac. They also like their brand new ball. Within moments of seeing the new ball, the heartache of losing the old ball was forgotten.

Maybe it's a bit of a stretch to compare Apple to a ball that's orange, but I do believe that what the company has lost in the short-term will be quickly forgotten when the new OS is released and the public has an opportunity to see the new generation of machines.

At the park on a windy Southern California day, I was curious as to whether or not the wind had rocked the ball from its spot. I looked, but the large "ball-eating" limb had been removed from the tree. It'll make it easier to avoid a similar mishap. Perhaps Apple's recent "pruning" will help it avoid a few mistakes, too. We'll see.

I'm looking forward to taking the kids and their new ball to the park for another round of kick ball. Maybe I'll kick the ball high in the sky again. I can already hear my daughter say in her drawn-out way, "Daddy, don't you remember what happened the last time you did

that?" "Sure," I'll say. "Don't worry, the ball-eating limb is no longer there." "But Daddy," she'll say, "what happens if the ball goes even higher?" "Not a problem," I'll tell her. "What goes up, must come down." But just in case it doesn't, I just might say, "By the way, what was that flavor of Sorbet you like so much? You know, the stuff we get at the store that looks like ice cream, but tastes like frozen fruit?" "Daddy, you're so silly," she'll say. "It's not time for desert, we haven't even had dinner! Can we play kick ball now?"

"Kick ball," I'll say to myself as I look up. "We only came here to play kick ball. Why do I need to make things so difficult?"

It's only child's play, isn't it?

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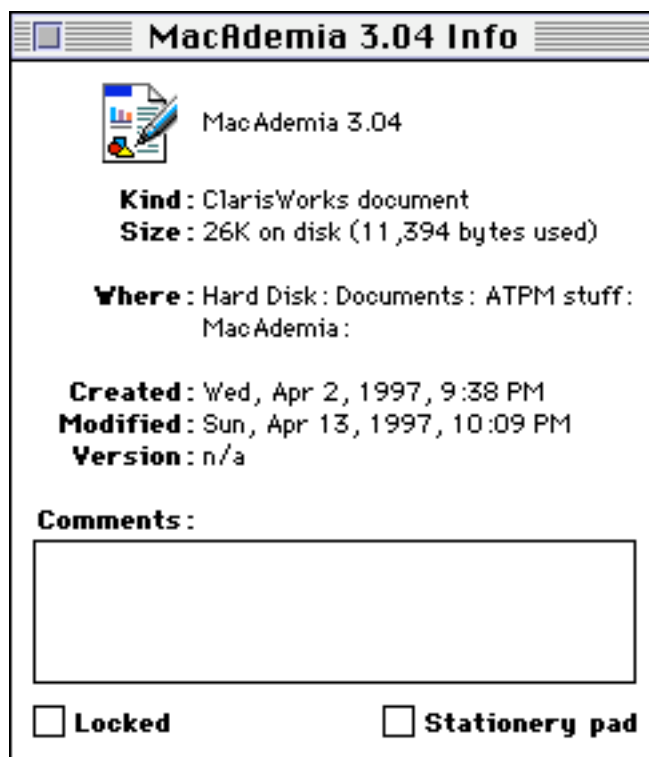
ABOUT THIS PARTICULAR
OPINION

MACADEMIA NUTS & BOLTS, BY BELINDA WAGNER



“Either GMTA (Great Minds Think Alike), Apple Computer has found a way to tap into my hard drive, or the problem is pervasive,” I thought.

Not wanting to be overly egotistical or paranoid, I opted for the last explanation as I skimmed the April 7 edition of the Macway digest. In it was a [plea](#) by Joanne Varni, of Apple Computer, to mobilize the Evangelistas for education. I wrote the majority of this column on April 2 (in case any readers are thinking that I’m just blowing smoke, I took a screen shot of the “Get Info” window of my file).



Ms. Varni was expressing alarm at a recent trend for parents and PTA boards to challenge school superintendents’ decisions to purchase Apple computers. I’m sure one origin of this trend was an article in March 14th’s Washington Post by Rajiv Chandrasekaran entitled, “Is School Out For Apple?”

Unfortunately, the article is no longer mounted on the Post’s site, so I can’t point you to it. However, I read it shortly after it appeared and was moved to respond. Ironically, when I looked for Mr. Chandrasekaran’s e-mail address. it was nowhere to be found (I SEARCHED

every avenue I knew, including WhoWhere's compendium of telephone books and e-mail address listings). So, I wrote to his editor instead. Apparently, I wasn't alone in my choice of action then, either (maybe it's just that I'm becoming more mainstream?). A reply came from this beleaguered soul saying that Mr. Chandrasekaran's e-mail address was "missing" because of some random administrative oversight and gave assurance that my message would be forwarded to him (I wouldn't bet the farm on that one).

Ms. Varni advocated a letter-writing campaign to tout the advantages of using Apple computers for teaching. My plea stems from similar concerns, but advocates a more personal style of action to preserve our choice of personal computer in our communities' classrooms. Here goes:

Staff Development — An 🍏 For Teacher?

"Professional days" or "teacher work days" are days when classes for students are suspended to give teachers time for planning, learning, meeting with other teachers, brainstorming; in short, developing. In our local school district, there are 1-2 professional days scheduled each month during the school year. Steven Covey, in his book, "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People," endorses setting aside time for such proactive endeavors as a non-urgent, yet highly important activity.

The terms "professional day" and "teachers' work day" conjure different meanings to teachers and parents. To teachers, these protected days are valuable time to regroup, refocus, and rejuvenate their curriculums. To many parents, professional days mean arranging for alternative child care, a disruption in the routine; in short, a hassle. This year, professional days are a bit more popular because they're scheduled on Fridays and Mondays instead of mid-week. As a parent, I deal with the frustration of arranging alternate child care for my daughter and it can be annoying. However, as an education partner, I am sensitive to teachers' need for protected time during the work week to learn new skills, hone those skills that are seldom used or just catch up on organizing.

A hot topic for professional days is learning how to use computers and the Internet. For most of the country, Internet access is a relatively new thing in schools. Most teachers were certified prior to the explosion of the Internet. Parents clamor for more integration of computers in the classroom, yet worry about kids surfing onto inappropriate sites. Many PTA Board members are trained Windows users because their business environment is Wintel-based. Yet Apple computers are the most common machine available to teachers. These conflicting goals and circumstances can sometimes overwhelm teachers and make it hard for them to effectively approach computers and use them in their teaching.

Many school districts are now requiring that teachers annually invest a minimum number of development hours on computer and Internet technology each year. For many teachers, this is a welcome endorsement to acquire new knowledge and implement new ideas in their classrooms. For other teachers, it is a frightening and daunting imposition.

Macintosh users, education is fertile ground for sharing your enthusiasm for your personal computer platform. If you have older versions of programs you no longer need or edutainment software your children have outgrown, consider donating these to a local school. But, I challenge you to go a step further. Donate some of your time as well. Help

teach teachers how to use the program(s) you've donated.

Who can help? YOU! If you're reading this, you definitely have something to offer. It doesn't matter if you're young or old, if you have a skill you can share, I promise there'll be a teacher who wants to learn.

Who to contact and **where** should you start? Phone up the central administration of your local school district. They should be able to put you in contact with the appropriate teacher or technology coordinator. These individuals can in turn do some polling to see who's interested and what curriculum objectives or projects are primed for technology integration. People have the highest motivation and learn most effectively when they have a goal. Public libraries, churches, youth programs, home-schooling groups are some other avenues to explore.

What can you do to help? If you use the Internet, be an e-mail partner with a teacher or a group of teachers. One very simple thing I did with my daughter's Kindergarten teacher was to surf for Web sites that were very visual and didn't require a lot of reading skills to enjoy. Teachers don't often have time to surf the Web.

Offer to teach a staff development course. It's not as difficult as it sounds. Many of us consider using one of the many search engines available to find resources on the Web an easy task. To many people, doing a search that brings up 150,000 matches is a daunting experience. Teachers are no exception. They don't have unlimited time to browse, sometimes less than an hour. In our school district, one of the most popular staff development courses is a simple tutorial in using search engines and advanced queries. I would venture to say that most of our readers could walk into such a course cold and teach it effectively. Simple courses like this sometimes make all the difference.

For those readers who want a bigger challenge, consider helping out with a class project. One caution here: please be sure to listen to students' and teachers' needs. The technology person in your district or local school will know what teachers are asking for. See if your interests mesh with those of a teacher or class. Then visit the class. See and hear the context of the project and get a feel for how teachers and students will interact with the software.

When is the best time to offer? Right now. Schools are winding up for the summer and planning for next year. Staff development needs are being assessed and courses to address those needs being designed and scheduled. If right now isn't right for you, do it whenever you can invest the time. It's an investment worth making, and besides, it's a way to share your enthusiasm for your most personal computer - your Mac.


Why is this important? Well, in the general population, Mac users number about 10% of all computer users. In U.S. schools, Apple is "by far the biggest manufacturer," says Mark DiCamillo, vice-president of San Francisco-based Field Research (see the [whole article](#)). Some are Apple II's but more and more are Macintosh. Budget crunches mean that schools and teachers are seeking partnerships with local businesses to achieve their technology goals. That could mean fewer and fewer Macs in classrooms if we don't step up to the plate and help teachers use Macintosh hardware and software in education.


How can you get needed funds, equipment and/or software? Many sources abound if you look at your community creatively. The local computer repair shop, Internet service

provider, or other local business may be willing to provide in-kind donations.

Another way to get money for a project is to write a grant. I've been told that the word "grant" tends to strike fear in the hearts of non-profits and volunteers, so I'll let the shock wear off and bring the subject up again next time.

Apple in Education highlights:

If any of you are planning to purchase (or know of anyone), please consider a visit to Sears. Sears and Apple have teamed up to provide local schools "points" towards Apple hardware for each Macintosh Performa 6360 bundle sold (includes a 15" MultiScan Display monitor and Color StyleWriter 1500). For more details, check out the [web site](#) or call your local Sears store or 1-800-YES-APPLE. Program ends May 15, 1997, so please hurry! 


Is your child isolated from his/her classmates and friends because of prolonged sickness or disability? Reconnect her/him with other kids via the [Convomania](#)  web site. "Convomania empowers kids with the opportunity to use the Internet to share their feelings and ideas in a cyber-community setting...Convomania is an alliance between Apple and several partner sites (leading children's hospitals, camps and organizations for kids with disabilities)...Apple is also working closely with the San Jose Children's Musical Theater and Clear Ink, Inc. in the development of the Convomania web site."

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Tuning Mac OS for the Future

More so than the software packages available or the power and value of Macintosh hardware, the consistency and elegance of Mac OS have been the reasons people choose it over the competition. Ironically, while Apple has continued to add new technologies such as QuickTime VR, QuickDraw 3D, and OpenTransport to Mac OS, the basic user interface has remained much the same. The Finder, in particular, has begun to show its age. Of course, the reason Apple — and Mac users — have allowed evolution of the Mac interface to stagnate is that it was, and is, the best in the business.

However, the competition has gained ground, and Mac OS's advantages are now less obvious than they once were. Apple's belated response to Windows '95 will come this July. Mac OS 8 (code-named Tempo) includes many enhancements to the Finder. These new features will once again make the Finder undeniably superior to the competition. In addition, Tempo will introduce contextual menus, similar to those found in OS/2, Windows '95, and X-Windows. However, the core of the Mac user interface will remain the same. For a screenshot of a beta version of Mac OS 8, see <http://www.macos.apple.com/macos8/index.html>. 

This month's column and subsequent ones will present some aspects of Mac OS that could stand improvement, in my opinion. Today's Mac OS has withstood the test of time; the only major changes required are currently being worked on by the "Rhapsody" team. Many of the improvements I'll suggest are details that don't radically change the operating system. However, attention to detail is what has always made Mac OS consistent and easy to learn and use. When hundreds of little details are added together, the end result is greater than the sum of its parts (no Symantec product pun intended).

Cleaning Up The Controls

Let's face it. The current control panel situation is a mess. How is a new user to know that the color depth is changed in the Monitors & Sound control panel and not in the Color one? Why isn't the window appearance set in the Views control panel? Why are there so many Apple control panels? The concept of a control panel is sound, but its implementation is not. For instance, Monitors & Sound are grouped together, but controls for mirroring a PowerBook's display are separate. There should be one control panel (perhaps called "Output") that includes all the options for monitors, speakers, MIDI, and video-out.

Likewise, a single "Appearance" panel would be an improved interface for customizing all aspects of desktop appearance (e.g., interface theme, font options, current Color control panel settings, and current General Controls settings). From the screenshots I've seen, it appears that the Mac OS 8 Appearance control panel will customize accent and selection

colors, but some of the other General Controls and Views remain segregated in their own panels. Hopefully, the Icon and List controls, currently found in Views, will be moved to the new Finder Preferences dialog (at the bottom of the Edit menu).

In addition, all the input control panels (such as Keyboard, Mouse, and Trackpad) should be grouped together. The resulting “Input” control panel should be extensible to make it easier for a user to configure third party add-ons such as a trackball, mouse (with extra buttons that need to be configured), or a tablet. Grouping these options with the Mouse controls makes sense from a common function standpoint - most users would expect to find them there.

Finally, the Map control panel is closely related to Date & Time, but from its appearance, Map looks more like a neat little Desk Accessory than the place to set the user’s time zone. These should be consolidated into one control panel. And yes, this is one idea Apple should pick up from the Windows ‘95 interface. Microsoft had the good sense to “borrow” many ideas from System 7. Apple should recognize a good idea when it sees one, too.

A Little Bit Of Organization Goes A Long Way

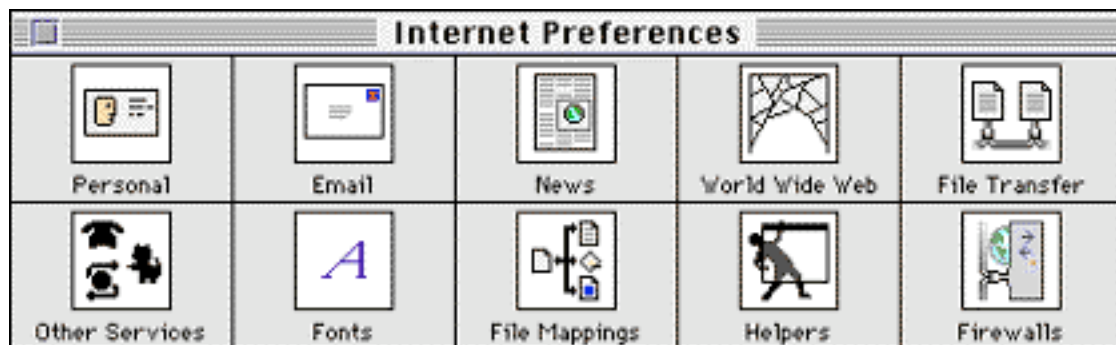
I’ve always thought that the System Folder (soon to be called Mac OS Folder) was a good idea. It just seemed to be an intuitive way of viewing (and changing) installed software — especially when compared to the command file approaches of DOS and UNIX. When the number of items in the System Folder became overwhelming, Apple gave us System 7, which introduced the Apple Menu Items, Control Panels, Extensions, and Preferences folders to facilitate organization. Over the years since then, the System Folder’s contents have grown to include the Fonts, Control Strip Modules, and Desktop Printers folders as well as the Disabled folders used by the Extensions Manager. It’s tough to imagine how we got by before these organizational folders, but we managed because most people didn’t use many extensions. Now, a vanilla install of System 7.6.1 brings with it enough extensions for an entire row of startup icons — on a 17-inch monitor.

For one thing, I believe this is bad interface practice. The original idea was that Extensions (or INITs, prior to System 7) were supposed to enhance the original system software, not to be part of it. Apple has decided that it’s better to modularize components of the system software. I agree that this is a good idea, however, Apple-standard extensions and control panels should not show icons during boot-up. Those icons should be reserved for informing the user of “extras” he or she has installed.

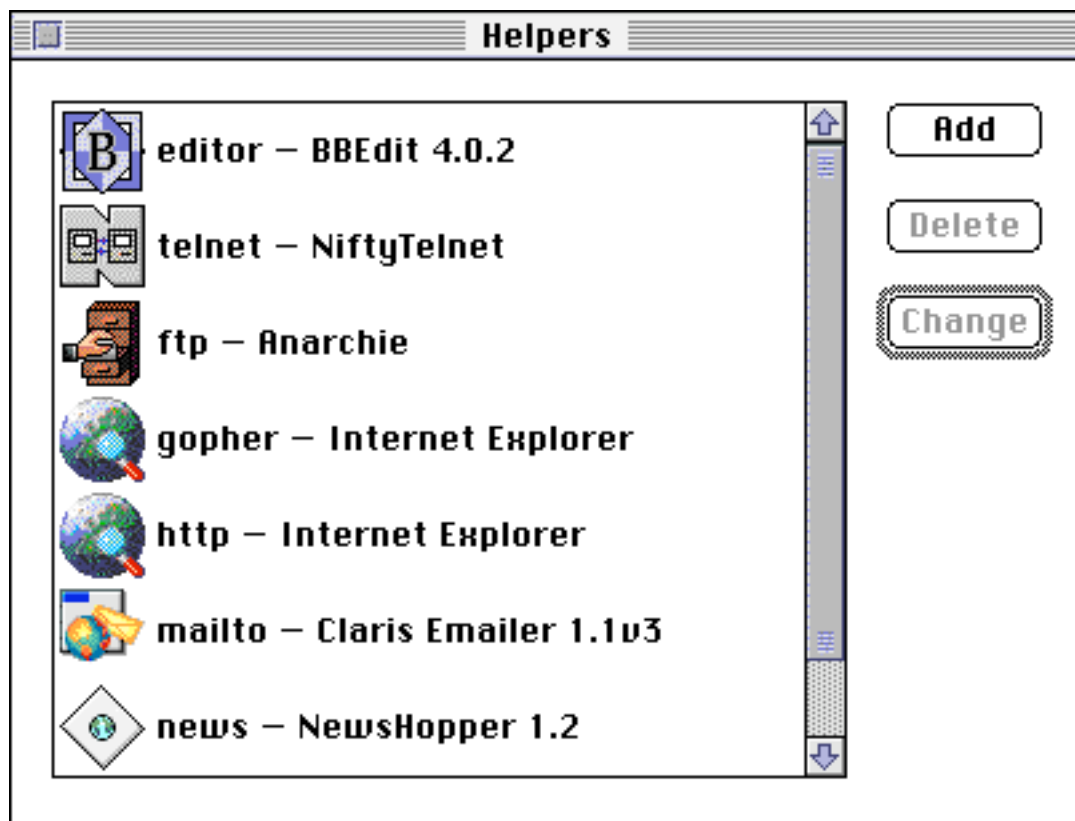
Secondly, there are just too many items in the typical Extensions folder now. Rumor has it that Mac OS 8 will include the following folders: Application Support, Contextual Menu Items, Help, Internet Plug-Ins, Printer Descriptions, Printer Drivers, Scripting Additions, Shared Libraries, and Voices. This is exactly what is needed, and has been for at least a year. In addition, I think Apple should give its extensions and control panels unique type codes so that parts of the standard system software are grouped when the user views by kind. This would make it easy to distinguish an “Apple Extension” or “Apple Shared Library” in a list view from a 3rd party “Extension.”

More Internet Support

Apple claims to have an internet strategy, but has very little to show for it. The recently-introduced Personal Web Sharing, which lets any Mac act as a simple web server is a step in the right direction, but long overdue. So was Open Transport PPP. What we desperately need now is an Internet control panel. Such a control panel would contain options similar to those in Peter Lewis and Quinn's InternetConfig such as email addresses, mail and news servers, and signature files.



It would also keep track of the user's preferred email, news, FTP, telnet, and web applications, and remember which helper applications are assigned to each file type.



Support for InternetConfig is almost ubiquitous now, so most applications can now import a user's internet settings from InternetConfig. However, not every user has InternetConfig or knows what it is, and it doesn't appear in the Control Panels folder — the most logical location for it. There's no reason why Apple couldn't include an OpenTransport savvy

Internet control panel with InternetConfig's features (or simply buy InternetConfig and modify it) in a future version of Mac OS. It could also support OpenTransport's Configurations and User Mode features so different users of the same Mac could each have their own preferences, and administrators could prevent users from changing important settings.

Another Internet aspect that begs for improved handling is URLs. Mac OS should understand what a URL is. If the user moves the pointer over a URL, such as <http://www.atpm.com>, that's in a document, he or she should be able to click on it (perhaps with a modifier key held down as in Peter Lewis' ICeTEe) it to open the URL in the appropriate application, set in the Internet control panel. Likewise, if a URL is dragged to the desktop, a special kind of

clippings file, perhaps called a URL Clipping should be created. Opening such a clipping would open the URL with the appropriate application. Getting info on the clipping would allow the user to view and change the URL, its title, and comments associated with it.



This approach makes sense because there is no universal bookmarking feature built into the current Mac OS, aside from the now-discontinued Cyberdog. The Finder is already a tool with which most users are comfortable, and it is excellent at sorting, displaying, and manipulating different file types. New installations of Mac OS could include a bookmark folder with URL clippings for preselected Mac sites such as www.apple.com, MacInTouch, and Info-Mac. The bookmark folder could have an alias in the Apple menu, for quick access anywhere, or could be viewed as buttons (a Mac OS 8 feature) allowing single-click access à la the Launcher.

Next Time

The ideas I have suggested in this column have dealt mainly with updating the organization of Mac OS for today's programs and for the internet. Next month, I'll focus more on user interface enhancements: windows and scrolling, application switching, and others. If you have any specific improvements you'd like see, don't hesitate bring them to my attention. If I mention them in this column, you'll receive appropriate credit.

"The Personal Computing Paradigm" is © 1997 by Michael Tsai, mtsai@atpm.com. Michael lives in Etna, NH — close enough to Marlowe, NH so that he receives his overnight MacConnection packages on the same day, and only 3 timezones away from LA so he can eChat with Rob at reasonable hours of the day.



ABOUT THIS PARTICULAR
OPINION

TWILIGHT JUNCTION, BY H. M. FOG

Welcome to Twilight Junction

Welcome to Twilight Junction. Population 8,005...according to the latest census. It's a small town nestled snugly between here and there and a little more than half-way between the way things were and the way we would like them to be. It sits in the foothills of the nearby mountains, where the commuter rail line ends and the freight line begins. It's home to a little bit of yesterday, a fair amount of today and a few glimpses of tomorrow.

Main Street in Twilight Junction is home to Johnson's General Store, also known as the "Federal Store." It's proudly owned and operated by the original Mr. Johnson's great-grandson. To the right of the general store sits Bea's Books, a nice place to stop-by and read a new book, browse the newest selections in fiction, non-fiction and children's stories, or just sit around and talk to Bea. To the left of Johnson's is Carney's Hardware and next to Carney's is Barson's Deli, purveyors of quality meats, groceries and produce. According to residents, the deli has the best sandwiches in the area, especially the hot corned beef on rye.

Johnson's General Store earned the nickname "Federal Store" because just over a generation ago it was the gathering place every April 15th for all the chain-smoking men in town as they hurried to complete their tax returns. It was an era before photocopiers became commonplace, so Johnson's was the place to get correction fluid, replacement tax forms and pencil erasers. It also had a U.S. Post Office window that Sam Johnson would officially tend until 11:59 p.m. on "tax day." Since then, the post office has moved to nearby Market Street. Johnson's is now known as the place where the commuters in town pick up a newspaper or magazine. It's where they stop in after grabbing a Cappuchino-to-go at Barson's Deli and before boarding the train to nearby Sobriquet City. Housewives with small children gather at Johnson's after their husbands head to the commuter train and before they head next door to talk to Bea.

Life is good in Twilight Junction. Everyone in town seems to know one another at least by sight and it's more common than not for local citizens to be involved in the community and the schools. Twilight Junction has three schools: Alexander Hamilton High School, Thoreau Middle School and Calvin Coolidge Elementary School. The primary school was named after the sitting president at the time it was originally dedicated. The town began as a sleepy hamlet for railroad workers and their families when the railroad line was extended to the foothills. The freight lines still employ many of Twilight Junction's residents and the town is the first and last stop on the commuter train each day. The "turnabout" is just a few hundred yards from the train station and from there the freight yard is just a stone's throw away.

The building that sits on the elementary school site today was constructed in 1963. It replaced the original school building that was damaged in the "great flood." In the early

part of that year the rain clouds pretty much backed-up against the mountains for days. There was so much water running from the mountains to the foothills that the old one-floor Calvin Coolidge Elementary School was flooded up to the window sills. Ironically, the biggest improvements made to the new building versus the older one weren't better flood controls, rather, better fire alarms and sprinklers. The high school and the middle school were constructed on slightly higher ground.

Like most small towns, Twilight Junction has its share of colorful residents, not the least of which is Henry Harriman. Mr. Harriman is vice-president of the local school board. His history with the school system is unique. He attended the original Calvin Coolidge Elementary School the year it was dedicated and was elected to the school board the year the new building opened its doors.

Mr. Harriman's views are considered a bit extreme, but since he owns the building where the school board meets and provides the refreshments for each meeting, no one really seems to mind. Besides, there aren't many controversial issues discussed at Twilight Junction's school board meetings other than an occasional complaint about a book in the high school library and the biannual need for new band uniforms. But tonight's meeting was destined to be different. On the agenda was a discussion about purchasing new computers and Internet hook-ups for all three schools.

As we enter the board meeting, Mr. Harriman is saying, "I don't understand the need for all these computers. In my day we learned math. We didn't have computers to give us the answers. That's the problem with kids today, they don't have to learn. They have too much time on their hands. Give a kid a slide rule and I'll show you a future mathematician or scientist. Give a kid a computer and I'll show you a juvenile delinquent-in-training. This country didn't get where it is today by having machines think for people. Now we have this Internet...the local stores can't find help. All the young people are trying to get in-line or on-line or whatever you want to call it. If you ask me it's ruining our economy and its ruining our kids." "Thank you, Mr. Harriman," said Beverly Reiser, president of the school board, as she pounded her gavel to end his tirade. "We don't have much time," she added.

Mrs. Reiser was born and raised in Twilight Junction. After graduating from Alexander Hamilton High School, she worked as a school crossing guard. Later she became a school bus driver. She retired a few years ago, but is still remembered as the hard working but gentle bus driver who cared deeply for each child on her route. She is very much loved by the students, parents and teachers of Twilight Junction. When she retired, Mrs. Reiser took college correspondence courses and quickly earned an Associate degree. Proud of her accomplishment, she wanted to put her education to use. Her life story is about a local girl who devoted herself to serving her community. She ran for school board president and won easily. Many people in town think she would have won easily elected even if her opponent was someone other than Mr. Harriman.

Tonight's meeting is very well attended by parents and teachers. For some, it's an opportunity to hear first hand about how the Internet and its graphic component, the World Wide Web, can help educate children. A few parents are concerned about student access to the Internet because of sensational stories in supermarket tabloids about child pornography on the Internet and sex-related Web sites. For others, the thought of bringing the schools "online" has an adventurous appeal. They, too have seen articles about the

Internet and want to learn more about the “wired classrooms of tomorrow” being developed today.

On the agenda is a proposal from a Internet Service Provider in Sobriquet City. It offers free Internet access accounts for the schools along and a few megabytes of free Web space for each school to construct a Web site. In return, the ISP wants the right to publicize the donation on its Web site and, to a more limited degree, in print advertising.

Charlie Dixon is chairman of the high school’s English department. He was selected by Mrs. Reiser and the school board to chair a task force for developing guidelines for Internet usage at the schools. Except for Mr. Harriman, most board members favor some form of Internet access for teachers and students. The task force’s recommendations will play an important role in the board’s deliberations.

Meanwhile, other events in Twilight Junction are taking place.

A block south of Main Street is Jefferson Street, home to the shoe store, the town’s only bakery and what might be described as the Twilight Junction version of an old-fashioned “five and dime,” Curly’s. Curly’s is taking on a whole new look under new management. Less than a year ago, Mark Schoengrun and his wife, Kimberly purchased the store. They consider themselves “refugees” from the region’s largest metropolis, Sobriquet City. They gave up more conventional careers and moved to Twilight Junction with hopes of raising their two daughters in an environment of peace, quiet and safety.

Mark and Kimberly first became interested in buying Curly’s after stopping there to buy some bug repellent and playing cards while traveling to the nearby mountains for a weekend camping trip. Mark remembered the beef jerky display, an old wooden Indian statue that, for years, had been used for cheap cigars. With the cigars removed, the chief’s right hand was a perfect holder for the long strips of dried, flavored beef. Kimberly recalled the old dome-style hair dryer she saw in the corner, just above jars of hair gel that she thought hadn’t been manufactured since “Bee Hive” hair-do’s were in vogue. They both liked its off-beat “charm,” and kept in contact with a local realtor, who informed them when the store was put up for sale.

In their short time as owners, Mark and Kimberly have worked hard to maintain Curly’s charm as they updated the store and its merchandise. They restored the old-style soda fountains that once were the town’s favorite. The soda shop is now open for a few hours after school everyday and on weekends. Patrons can walk over a refurbished black and white checkered floor to sit at red and white speckled tables trimmed in chrome. The new menu offers low-fat milkshakes, several different soda flavors and combinations and a small but appealing assortment of ice cream sundaes and floats.

Gone are the hundreds of cheap, overstocked items that overflowed the bins. The new Curly’s offers an orderly selection of greeting cards, personal items and various sundries, small gifts, arts and crafts supplies and an aisle of inexpensive things for kids. Mark set up a small hobby shop in one corner and pictures of important railroad events from Twilight Junction’s history now adorn the walls. The old taxidermy displays featuring the stuffed remains of Curly’s weekend hunting trips were among the first things that Kimberly removed. The old dime store Indian is prominently placed near the gum ball machines at the entrance to the soda shop. The wooden statue has been cleaned, repainted and polished. His right hand now offers a selection of complimentary mints to store

patrons.

Mark is closing the store by himself tonight because Kimberly is on her way to the school board meeting with their two daughters (Amy, age 8 and Rebecca, age 6. Amy, as unlikely as it may seem, is at the center of the school board's debate about computers. The three schools have used Apple computers almost exclusively for the past several years. Lately, however, there has been pressure from different groups to change to Wintel-based machines. Amy has been asked to share her experiences with the school's computers with the school board.

Back at the meeting, Mrs. Reiser is saying, "We have the recommendations of Mr. Dixon and the members of the task force. Does anyone on the board, other than Mr. Harriman, who has already spoken, object to the report or its contents?" With the exception of a few low murmurs in the audience, the room was silent. With no further comments Mrs. Reiser put the issue to vote.

The Next Episode: Amy's Macintosh and the Twilight Junction Computer Challenge.

"Twilight Junction" is ©1997 by H. M. Fog, HMFog@atpm.com.



SEGMENTS

SLICES FROM THE MACINTOSH LIFE

BY MARIUS POPE, marius@cityscape.co.uk



I found APTM on a disc (freebie?) issued with a Mac magazine here in the UK and liked what I saw. So I decided to subscribe and did the necessary correspondence. The next thing I saw was an attachment on my Eudora program which somehow had to be unstuffed (I think). I played around with my computer for awhile. After having it tell me repeatedly I was doing it wrong, I was delighted to see a page of "AFTM" come to life on my screen. Satisfied, I went to bed.

The next day I tried to retrieve "APTM," but could find it nowhere. I asked the Finder, but it couldn't find it either. I concluded that I had inadvertently trashed it (something I'm prone to do), and thought no more of it. Actually, I thought a lot about it, but the thoughts were mostly along the lines of "Man, am I stupid."

A bit of explanation: I'm using a new computer (Macintosh Performa 6320) that I bought when I thought I'd outgrown my previous Perfoma (a 400). My 6320 has a lot of new things on it which I'm just beginning to explore. In my searches for "APTM," (I couldn't remember what the initials stood for) I was referred frequently to the dialog box pointed toward the "Documents" folder on the desktop. Well, having nothing better to do, I explored it.

One list item was "About This Particular Mac 3.01" which I took to be just another informational document about the new features on the PowerPC. Nonetheless, I gave it a look and you can guess what I found....

The point I'm getting to, laboriously, is that learning doesn't come easily to the aged. I'm 76. It took yonks to come to terms with my first Mac, even though I had a son at the other end of the telephone who had been computer- and Internet-crazy for years and said he'd shoot me if I bought anything other than an Apple Macintosh machine. Mainly, I think, the difficulty is a lack of memory, (something I share with computers!) and an inborn resistance common among older people trying to come to terms with new technology.

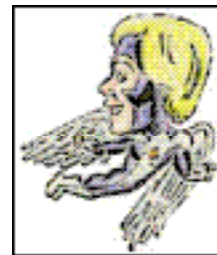
Anyway, thank you for an interesting read. If you are reviewing an application (or whatever) that you think would interest us "oldies," could you please flag it with a paragraph entitled, "A Word for the Simple-Minded?"

The Segments section is open to anyone. If you have something interesting to say about life with your Mac, write us.



ABOUT THIS PARTICULAR
OPINION

MACMAN TO THE RESCUE! BY MIKE SHIELDS



April 1st, 1997

I don't have to tell you, times are bad. Witness the following:

NEW YORK, March 5 (Reuter) — Sales of Macintosh-style computers in key business markets rose for only the second month in a row, according to a consumer research firm's study, the Wall Street Journal said in its Wednesday electronic edition.

The study by Computer Intelligence said Macintosh computers made by either Apple or licensed clone-makers constituted a mere 11.2 percent of the business-oriented, personal-computer market in January.

An analyst for Computer Intelligence also told the paper that growing clone sales indicate the death of the Apple, as sales made by clone makers Power Computing Corp, Umax Technologies Inc. and Motorola Inc. are being diverted from Apple, which will eventually squeeze it out of the market entirely.

Also, with the impending 2nd Quarter loss of approximately \$630 million, Apple might as well pack it in. I hear Larry Ellison is buying.

Adding insult to injury, I received this page today: Attention all Skytel Customers. We regret to inform you that due to the pending takeover by PageNet, We will cease operations at 6:00 PM, EST. Arrangements will be made for return of the leased receivers. We apologize for any inconvenience.

Well, there you have it. Furthermore, with the purchase of Huga by Raytheon, which will ultimately result in the shift to a single platform, part of the Houston conspiracy, (Hint: It's not the Mac), I'm probably going to have to be looking for a job soon. I hear Disney is hiring concession stand workers for their theme parks. Maybe a move to France is in order. From what I've read, the lines at EuroDisney are shorter.

On to the Questions

Dear Sir,

I recently purchased a PowerMac 7200/90, complete with CD-ROM drive. The problem is, everytime I shutdown, the CD tray pops out, and I have to push it back in again. What gives?

Richard Feder

Feder@jersey.net

Let me first congratulate you on your purchase. And I see where the confusion is coming from. That's not the CD tray, it's your coffee-mug holder, compliments of Apple. Take out the CD, and replace it with your cup o'java. The fine folks at Apple reasoned that since you'll be spending all day in front of your computer, you'll want to enjoy a fine beverage at the same time.

...

Editor:

I have a PB 3400/240 with the RAM maxed out. How do I configure this stupid machine. There are no .ini files, no .exe files, and I can't find the registry files. This is supposed th be the fastest, state of the art laptop there is?

Bill

billg@microsoft.com

You've obviously been PC afflicted too long. Take a deep breath, and install Insignia SoftWindows. You obviously know nothing about the Mac platform. It's questions like these that makes writing a chore.

...

So long ingrates, I quit.

Disclaimer: Mike asks that you check the date he wrote the above, and asks your forgiveness if anyone takes offense. Except for you, Bill. He may or may not be back next month to answer more of your user questions. MShields@atpm.com.





BY JAMAL GHANDOUR, jghandour@atpm.com

Reproducing Logos in Digital Format

Due to the overwhelming requests from friends and ATPM readers, I've decided to make this month's lesson about Vector graphics.

Vector vs. Bitmap

It is important to know the major differences between Vector graphics packages (i.e. Freehand, Illustrator, Canvas...) and Bitmap graphics packages (i.e. Photoshop, Xres, Color it!...). Here is a list illustrating the major differences:

Vector Images vs. Bitmap Ones



- i) Vector graphics files take up much less hard disk space and are less memory hungry.
 - ii) Vector graphics look sharper and "crisper."
 - iii) Vector graphics are layered (deleting an object will not affect underlying ones)
 - iv) Vector graphics are resolution and size independent (you can scale them to any size without losing resolution or sharpness)
- i) Bit map graphics can render more complex effects (i.e. soft shadows, transparency...)
 - ii) Bit map graphics are normally faster to print (generally speaking)
 - iii) With Bit map graphics, you can retouch scans and photographs
 - iv) Bit map graphics are better-suited for cross-platform file sharing

With that Sorted Out Let's Get Down to Work!

But before we begin, allow me to thank Dr. Belinda Wagner for her efforts at editing this section. Thank you, Belinda! [You're quite welcome, Jamal! —BW]

Here is the Scenario

You are stuck with a logo on a business card and were requested to print that logo to poster size! What will you do?

Reproducing Logos in Digital Format!

Since we dedicated this month's article to vector graphics, I will take for granted that you scanned the logo already and continue from there.

The software that will be used here is Macromedia's Freehand 7.0. However, the principles of all vector graphics programs are the same, so adapting this section to any vector graphics software should be easy (perhaps with minor revisions).

Tip: Since the "TIFF" format was invented by "Aldus" - the company which wrote "Freehand 1.0," I recommend you save all images you plan to import to Freehand in this format.

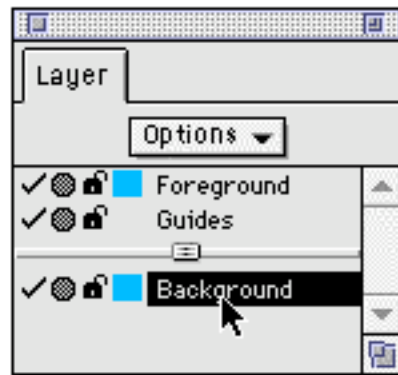
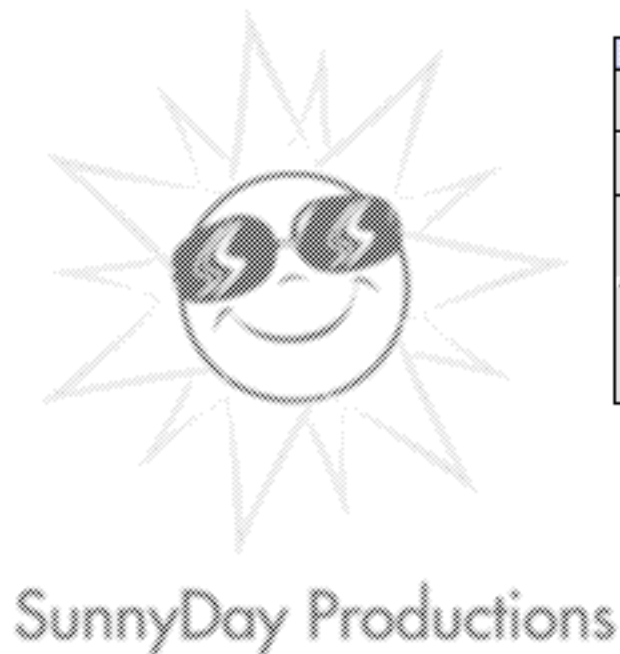
- 1) Start up "Freehand" and open a new document. (File>New)
- 2) Import the logo which I scanned earlier. (File>Import)



The Scanned Logo

Tip: Over the years, I found out that scanning logos in grey tone (high resolution) and colorizing them afterwards, is actually better than scanning them in color. By doing so, you avoid the bad scan casts acquired by scanning color images!

- 3) With the logo selected, go to the "Layers" window and clicked on "Background" (this moves the logo to the background).
- 4) Lock the background layer. The benefit here is to see the logo while tracing it in the next step.



Using the Layers Palette

5) Now, begin tracing. The trick is to look at the logo in parts and not as a whole (e.g., notice the sun is just a circle, glasses are rectangles, etc.)

6) Once the elements of the sun's face are finished, the tricky part is the sun's rays. Well, as I said, if we look at all the rays together, then it would seem more like "Mission Impossible." But, if we looked at only two rays we will definitely see the symmetry there. So, presto I used Freehand's "Power Duplicating" feature to automatically duplicate the rays in a circular motion.

7) Text is completely re-written using the "Text Tool." Never trace small text. No matter how good you are, you will fare much better with the Text Tool!

8) With that, one last thing remains...Colors! (I just love this part.)

9) I use Freehand's "Color Mixer" to combine colors, then just drag them over to my logo. And presto, the logo is finished!





SunnyDay Productions SunnyDay Productions

Which one do you prefer?

Please feel free to e-mail me with any questions, inquiries or comments at <jghandour@atpm.com>.

Copyright © 1997 Jamal Ghandour, jghandour@atpm.com. Jamal Ghandour, is a "Senior Graphic Designer" and "Computer Section Manager" at CSS&GREY(kuwait). He also works as "Creative Art Director" at Swiftel international communications.



ABOUT THIS STUFF



REVIEWED BY MIKE SHIELDS, mshields@atpm.com

DRAMATICA PRO®

Product Information

Published By: Screenplay Systems

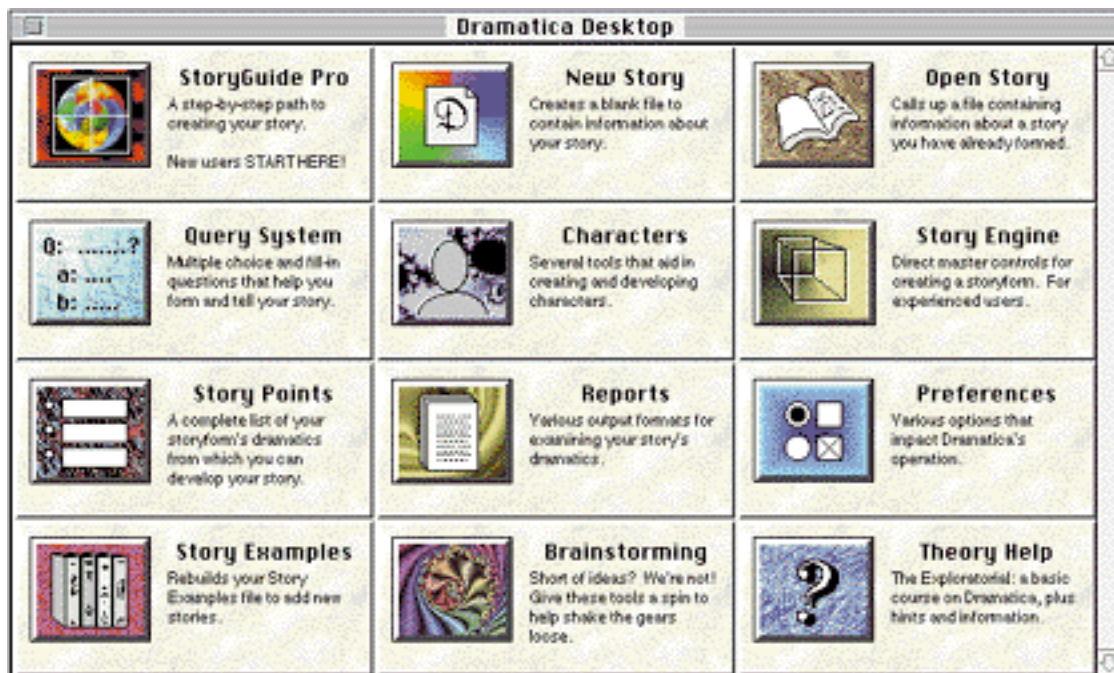
Web: <<http://www.dramatica.com>>

Retail Price: \$299

So, you want to write the Great American Novel? Screenplay? Grocery List? There are over 32,000 Storyforms in the naked city, one of them can be yours. As always, I followed my established routine for reviewing software. First, I opened the box.

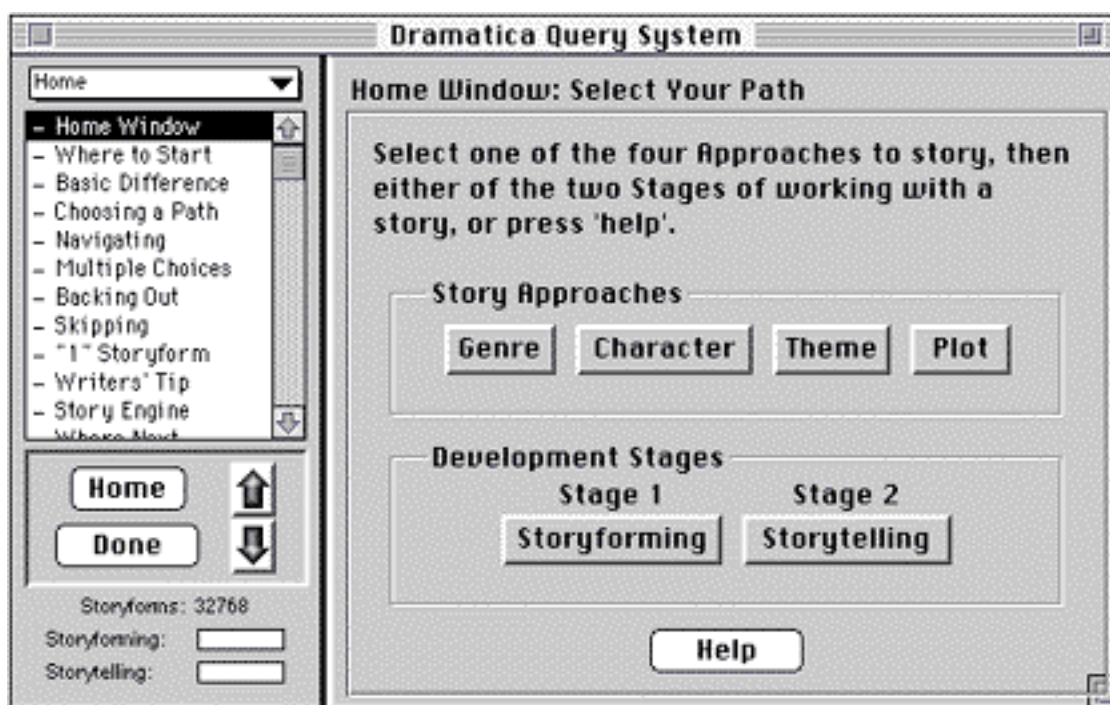
Installation proceeded smoothly. A key disk limits the number of installs. Therefore, make sure you do an uninstall before you do any maintenance to your hard drive, such as reformatting or optimizing.

I fired up Dramatica and was greeted with the Dramatica desktop:



Although I pride myself on my ability to learn things quickly, I actually needed to read the User's Manual to understand what I had gotten myself into. And the Theory Book. And The Story Guide. And The Story Book. Ok, I even attended a nine week course taught by one of the [co-creators](#). Words I never thought I'd use, especially in the same sentence, are "steep" and "learning curve." This is one piece of software that you can't use straight out of the box. However, the results are worth it.

Now, this being my first time, you'd think I'd start with the Story Guide Pro option, however, I was feeling rather good about myself, having been taught by an expert. So, I clicked on the Query System Box and was greeted with this:



Here's my definition of the word "story." A story is what happens to characters you care about (this is where Dramatica excels, more on that later). For now, I picked the character-driven approach and "Storyforming." Telling your story and forming your story are two different things. The heart of the Dramatica theory is that your story is the unique solution to the problem that you've set forward to solve when you begin to write. This is called a Grand Argument Story (Dramatica deals with this exclusively). This is not to say that there aren't other types of stories, it's just that all the ones I've encountered fit this theory quite nicely.

To get to one unique storyform, out of the possible 32,768 mentioned earlier, there are twelve essential questions that you must answer. Some are easy, others are hard. The hardest I had to come to grips with was choosing a "Mental Sex." Your character can either be a Male or Female Mental Sex, irregardless of their actual gender. I had problems with this because my tough-as-nails, hard-boiled private investigator is better off as a Female Mental Sex character. Why? Because Dramatica defines Male Mental Sex as solving problems linearly, while Female Mental Sex looks at the holistic, or relational view of a problem.

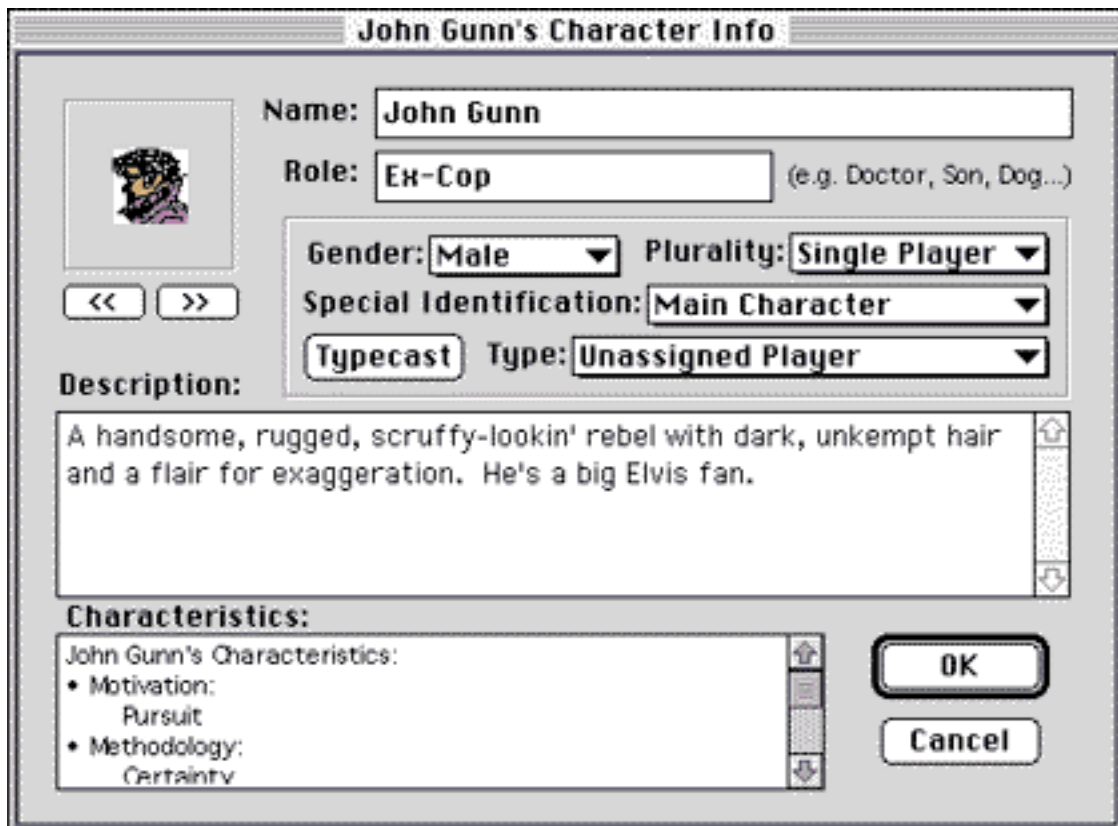
Story Encoding

Having arrived at a single storyform, I had the option of printing a four-page report. This, in addition to my earlier Xeroxing of the 88 page workbook, allowed me to proceed to the next step. Here's where the fun begins. A cursory glance at the report revealed that I'd answered one of the twelve essential questions incorrectly. So, I went back and fixed it, which wasn't as easy as I thought it would be. I had to "unanswer" a few questions to get back to the answer I needed to change, then re-answer the unanswered questions. This process didn't take long. I reprinted the report and moved on.

There are four Domains under which your story takes place. In addition to the Objective Story and Main Character Domains, with which you're probably all familiar, there's the Subjective Story and Obstacle Character Domains. These allow for a broader interpretation of your story. They also involve many fill in questions, as opposed to the bullet and menu choices I was making throughout the twelve steps. The goal here is to more fully define the Main and Obstacle Characters, and how they relate to your story.

Character Creation

To create a character in Dramatica, go to the "Character" section. After fiddling for awhile, I came up with this:



The screenshot shows a dialog box titled "John Gunn's Character Info". It contains the following fields and options:

- Name:** John Gunn
- Role:** Ex-Cop (e.g. Doctor, Son, Dog...)
- Gender:** Male (dropdown menu)
- Plurality:** Single Player (dropdown menu)
- Special Identification:** Main Character (dropdown menu)
- Typecast:** (checkbox, checked)
- Type:** Unassigned Player (dropdown menu)
- Description:** A handsome, rugged, scruffy-lookin' rebel with dark, unkempt hair and a flair for exaggeration. He's a big Elvis fan.
- Characteristics:** John Gunn's Characteristics:
 - Motivation: Pursuit
 - Methodology: Certainty

At the bottom right, there are "OK" and "Cancel" buttons.

Dramatica presupposes that there are eight character archetypes: Protagonist, Antagonist,

Sidekick, Skeptic, Emotion, Reason, Guardian, or Contagonist. They relate to each other in various ways. Now, you can change the relationships between them and even combine archetypes into complex characters!!! It's my belief that the best movies have one thing in common: Simple Stories & Complex Characters. OK, that's two things, but you get the idea. After creating individual characters, you can go to the "Build Characters" area and create the relationships between them. The possibilities are virtually endless. A feature I particularly liked was being able to put faces to the characters. Dramatica provides several PICT files, or you can import your own.

Plot Encoding

From the Story Guide: "Plot encoding creates a framework for the events that will take place in your story. Part of this framework consists of Story Points such as Goal and Requirements. The other part establishes a Timeline that indicates events that will be happening as your story progresses."

Now, as I'm sure you're aware, a story has a beginning, middle, and end. This is where we get our modern 3-Act structure, which dates back to before the time of Aristotle. Dramatica, however, proposes the 4-Act structure, as each Class has four Types in the level just below the class. Therefore, each act will explore one of these types in each of the various throughlines. The order in which the Types are explored determines the Progressive meaning of that throughline's evolution. (OK, I'll admit it. I stole that description from the class syllabus.) While these two theories may seem in conflict, they actually complement each other. The software refers to these as Signposts, and Journeys. You have four signposts, which relate to the types mentioned above. To get from one to the next, you take a journey. Starting at Signpost #1, and ending at #4, gives you three journeys, or acts. Similar, yet different. Plot encoding entails making these choices for the four throughlines. At this point, Dramatica invited me to print the Story Guide Plot Progression Report.

StoryWeaving

"StoryWeaving" is how Dramatica describes putting all the Signposts and Journeys in the proper order to tell your story. Now, you could simply shuffle the 28 "scenes" [(4 Signposts + 3 Journeys) * 4 Throughlines in mathematical format] and come up with "Pulp Fiction." Not having not seen the film, but simply having read the screenplay, I'm probably the only person who just doesn't get it. In fact, I think this is the film that proves the rule that Dramatica sets forth. All the Journey #1's and Signpost #1's, must come before the #2's, the #2's before the #3's, and so on, until you reach the fourth signpost for the four throughlines.

Report Generation

The goal of this software, is to get you to a place where you can write your high concept story. To accomplish this objective, Dramatica provides 48 different reports (everything from The Twelve Essential Questions Report to The Kitchen Sink Report, really). Now, all this output may seem undaunting to the first time user. However, to fully enjoy Dramatica,

you don't necessarily want or need to print them all. You can import them into a word processor and tweak them, if you'd like. Dramatica even comes with it's own glossary of terms (words that you've known for years have slightly different meanings here). I like the importing feature for that reason. I was able to reform the various reports in "my own image."

Tech Support

The fine folks at Screenplay Systems have an excellent tech support line, in case you have a simple question like, "How do I change one of my answers to the Twelve Essential Questions?" They also have a website! (Doesn't everybody?) Find it at: <http://www.dramatica.com>. Check out their really cool online comic book while you're there, too.



Conclusions

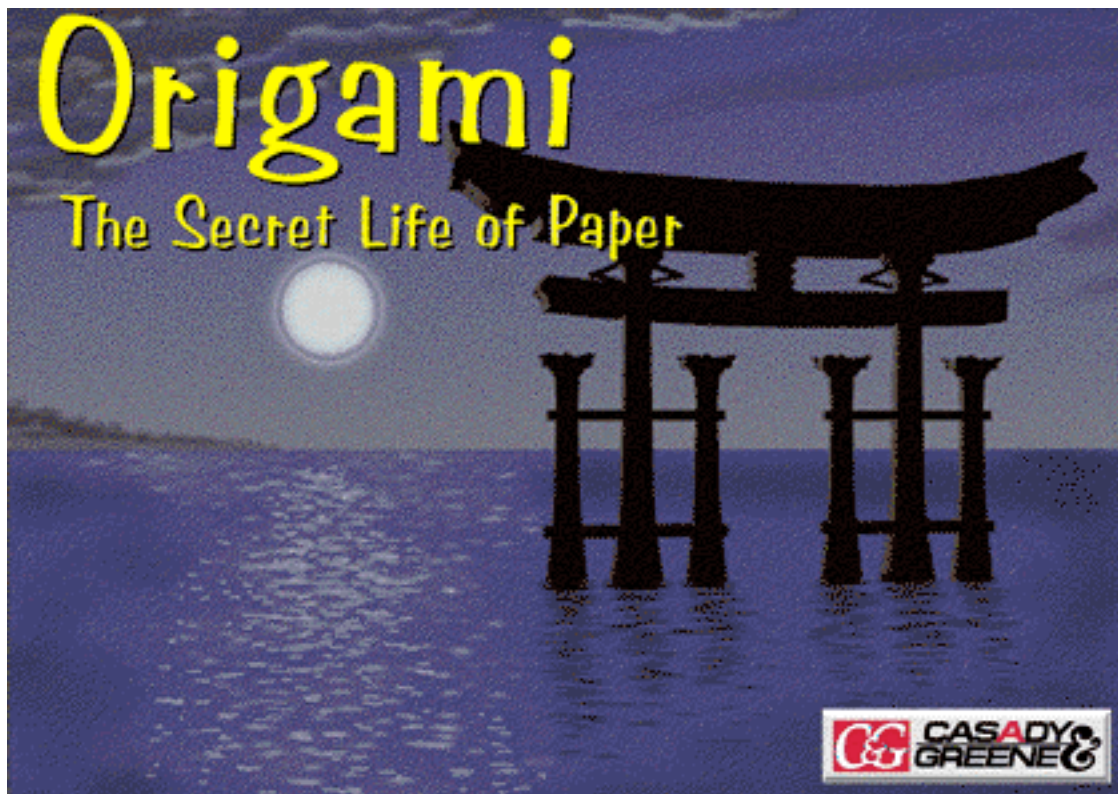
A lot of people would steer you away from this type of software by saying you can come up with your own ideas. This may be true. As for me, Dramatica functions better at the rewrite level. Others will want to follow the steps I outlined above. As you become more familiar with the program, you'll want to explore various aspects of the software that I've touched on only briefly here and develop your own unique style. Dramatica is not meant to be the place where you write your story. It's meant as a tool to help you know your story better **before** you write. By the way, Dramatica is also available in a Windows version for the "PC-afflicted" among our readers. Admittedly, it took me four months of working with Dramatica to get to a place where I'd feel comfortable writing a review that you'll read in two minutes or less. But if writing was easy, anybody could do it. So, Dramatica Pro 2.0 isn't for everyone. Just for those of us that want to write compelling stories.

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ABOUT THIS
STUFF

REVIEWED BY BELINDA WAGNER, bwagner@atpm.com



Product Information

Manufacturer: Casady & Greene

Web: <<http://www.casadyg.com>>

Price: \$39.95

What do structural engineering, fractals, map folding, and deploying a satellite's solar panel have in common? They can all be studied by folding squares of paper into kites, fish, birds, and frogs.

Origami, the Japanese art of folding paper squares, is an ancient tradition. It is an art form that arose from deep within Japanese agricultural and social history. I first encountered Origami as a child. My grandparents lived in Japan immediately after World War II. My father spent his early teen years in Japan. I grew up surrounded by the Japanese art they collected during those post-war years and through keeping up with friends.

Christmas was my grandmother's favorite holiday, so she was fascinated by the Japanese tradition of elaborate gift wrapping. In Japan, a gift's wrapping is an essential part of the gift itself. My grandmother adapted the elaborate, multi-layered coverings made from

handmade paper she saw in Japan to more Western traditions. She taught me the joy of giving through sharing her skill at gift wrapping. Just before my ninth Christmas, I found among her wrapping tools a fascinating book whose inner back cover contained a pocket stuffed with brightly-colored paper - perfect squares. The text was in Japanese, but had many pictures. It was an Origami textbook.

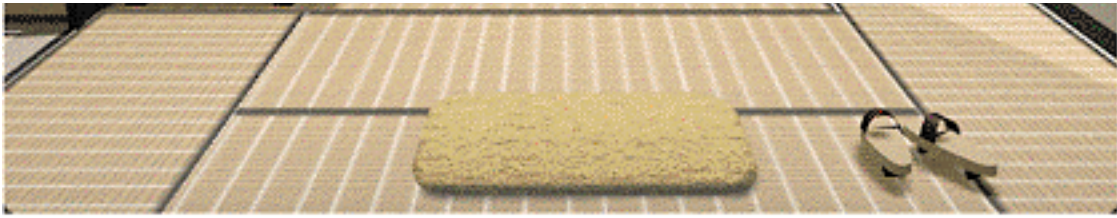
It took me months of failed attempts to fold a crane before I succeeded. I can still recall the triumph of that moment. Unconsciously, I learned the power of folds, creases and angles — the special properties of a square. Origami exercised and honed my abstract thinking skills.

It was not until college that I became aware of these skills. I know I earned an “A” in X-ray crystallography in large part because of Origami. My comprehension of space groups and deciphering X-ray diffraction patterns came only after I allowed myself to recall memories of folding paper into balls, boats, irises and cranes. You see, I am one of those people that needs to deconstruct things after I’ve constructed them. I often unfolded my Origami to see the elaborate patterns of creases. Unfolding projects that didn’t work was as illuminating as unfolding successful pieces. Errors became glaringly evident as an asymmetry in the crease pattern of the unfolded paper.

I have not folded paper other than to wrap gifts in decades. I welcomed the opportunity to re-aquaint myself with Origami and teach my daughter, who recently turned seven. She is an artistic and tactile child who creates wonderful designs with pen and paper and on the computer screen using Kid Pix. In my mind’s eye, I see her folding an original design into an Origami creature. Or maybe these are visions of wishes for myself. Either way, I opened the Cassady and Greene CD-ROM, “Origami: The Secret Life of Paper,” with anticipation.

Origami uses a two-dimensional medium — paper. However, it is incredibly difficult to learn using only two-dimensional instructions — diagrams and words. Origami’s appeal to me was the promise of Quicktime movie demonstrations of how to fold each project from beginning to end. I was not disappointed. Double-clicking the program icon after loading the CD led me through the splash screen into the foyer.





From here you can choose among 12 projects to fold. The foyer view doesn't provide difficulty ratings for projects. If you want to see the relative difficulty for each figure, choose the "New" submenu from the "File" menu. This displays a list of the figures along with difficulty ratings: 1 dot, easiest; 4 dots, hardest.



The setting for the CD is a traditional Japanese house. Several options are available for navigating through the CD. You can use menus, choose areas from a "House Map" icon (available from the "Explore" menu), or wander through full-screen windows with soundtracks of Japanese music. On each page are a pair of Japanese sandals. Clicking on these will take you back to the previous window. The only exception is in the "foyer," when clicking on the sandals will exit the program.

In addition to the Origami figure projects, the CD-ROM includes instructions for making your own Origami paper from junk mail, history of Origami, profiles of modern and past Origami artists from all over the world, and more. There is an extensive bibliography to more advanced subjects and a glossary of definitions to which words in the text are hot-linked.

Because of the heavy use of Quicktime movies in this CD-ROM, my journeys were very slow on my 68040 processor. Lack of speed took nothing away from viewing the instructional folding videos, but major transitions were quite lengthy. I kept the color options at 256 instead of thousands of colors because of speed considerations. Power Mac users will not have this limitation, I'm sure.

Given Origami's Eastern cultural orientation, I think speed is not the issue. Origami can be

a relaxing, rejuvenating pasttime. One should not feel rushed while folding paper or learning about Origami. I think a more important issue is the enrichment value of the CD's content (OK, I admit that my "educational editor" stripes are showing).

Origami: The Secret Life of Paper provides a good introductory selection of figures to fold. They range from easy to difficult and utilize all four of the traditional "bases" of Origami. This is important because if you choose to go on and learn more advanced figures, you'll probably be working from diagrams (at least until "Origami: The Sequel" is released). Origami takes this reality into account. The instructional videos occupy half of a 14" monitor screen. On the other half, the action is depicted in a series of diagrams, the traditional method by which we Westerners learn Origami.

I found the "History of Origami" and the "Origami and Math" segments to be very interesting. Again, the screen is divided into text and illustration. For younger artists, the CD takes advantage of Macintosh's MacinTalk technology (and provides a convenient copy of the software in case you haven't already downloaded it from Apple's web site or received it in a System Software update) and the text can be spoken as an option. Other CD-ROMs, such as "The Animals" by Mindscape International, Inc., have their own soundtracks which are of much higher sound quality, but the high graphics and video content of "Origami" probably leaves insufficient space for this feature.

A source of inspiration to create your own Origami designs comes from numerous art exhibits found in the Gallery. The Flying Beetle by Toshiyuki Meguro is shown in this figure. Red dots on a World Map illustrate just how widespread Origami has become and clicking on each dot will bring up a story about an artist from that country.



In summary, I think Casady & Greene's "Origami: The Secret Life of Paper" is a great educational and recreational addition to your software library. It is accessible for a fairly large age range, starting at about 7-9 years (depending on the reading skill and attention span of your child). I recommend clearing off a 2' x 2' folding space at your computer workstation before starting the program and using only the mouse for navigation.

Those readers with graphics programs and color printers will have the added fun of putting a design to paper, cutting out the square, and folding a figure. Start with simple patterns - stripes are very dramatic for seeing how Origami sculpts the two-dimensional surface into three. Another way to play with the mathematical spatial concepts of Origami is to put distinct shapes on center, diagonal or vertical axes, or even at some random place within the square. Make a game out of predicting where the shapes will appear on the completed figure. Try the same design with several figures that use different “bases” and see how the shape “moves around.”

Enjoy!

Copyright © 1997 Belinda Wagner, bwagner@atpm.com. Belinda J. Wagner, Ph.D. is a molecular biologist and a faculty member of Bowman Gray School of Medicine in North Carolina. She studies how cells respond to their environment during wound healing.



ABOUT THIS STUFF



REVIEWED BY ROBERT MADILL, rmadill@atpm.com

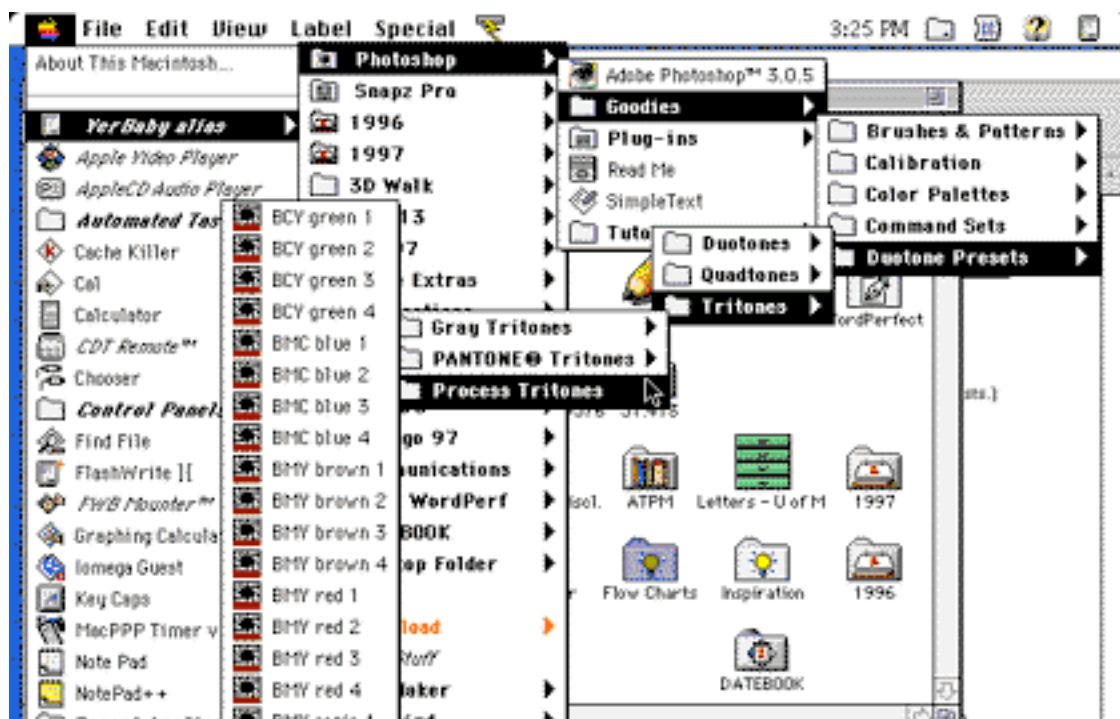
Product Information

Distributed By: ASD Software Inc.
4640 Arrow Highway
Suite E, Montclair, CA 91763
Phone: (909) 624-2594
Web: <<http://www.adsoft.com>>
List Price: \$30

Requirements:

Macintosh® Plus or above
System 7 or higher.

My computer technician, at work, is an absolute purist. He insists that I am not being a true computer environmentalist. He watches with some degree of disgust as the icons of various non-Macintosh extensions load across the bottom of my computer screen. "Conflicts and Crashes!" he warns. For years now, we have played out this game of "computer roulette." Sometimes he is right and sometimes...well, my refusal to stick to his dictate of maintaining a "clean" machine proves to me that third-party developers can often improve my Macintosh® operating system.

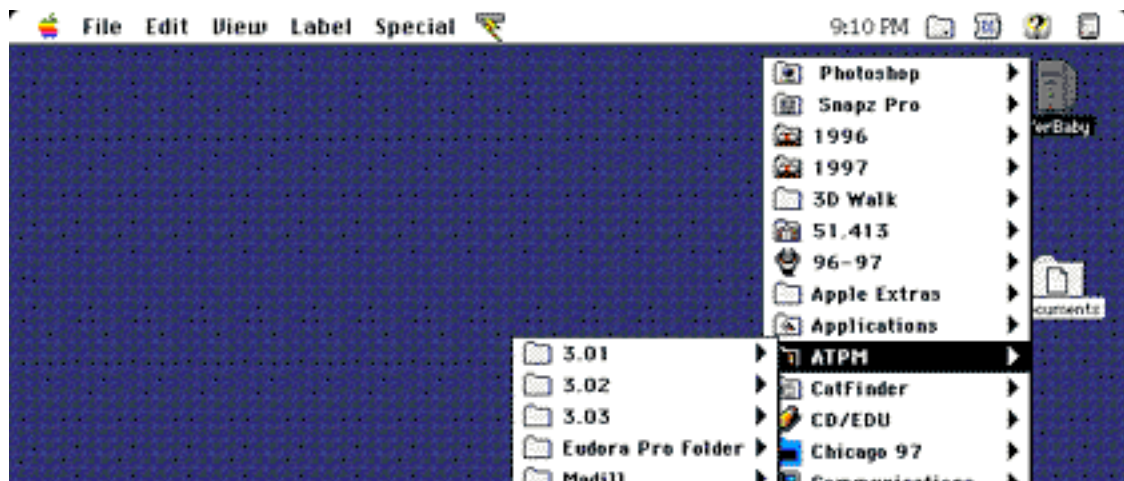


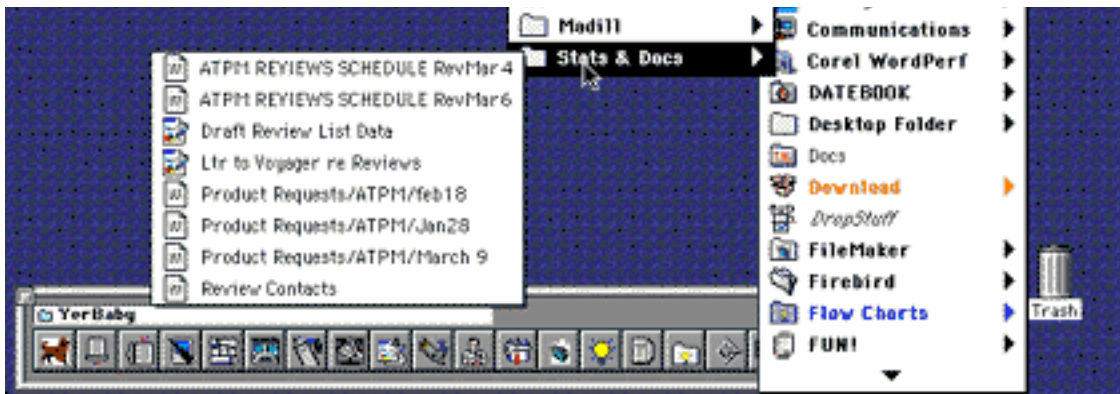


ASD Software Inc. is not far off when it advertises **PopupFolder™** as “The ultimate Finder navigator.” In actual fact, it is that and even more. PopupFolder has the main goal of giving you quick access to all folders, applications, and documents on your hard drive, any other active removable storage devices, or a CD-ROM you might have sitting in your CD-ROM drive. Initially, the product appears to offer the services of the “Extension Manager” native to the standard Macintosh operating system. Users of the shareware products such as “BeHierarchic” might suspect this utility might be just another variation on a theme. The most controversial remark that I might make is to compare PopupFolder to the similar module in Now Utilities™ 6.5, by Now Software, Inc. As a registered purchaser of the latter product, I feel that I do have a right to make observations concerning the merits of its module comparable to PopupFolder. Although I had been a regular purchaser of the Now Utilities package since version 4, I became increasingly bothered by a package that included more options and modules than I really needed. Not only did I not need the “Quickfiler” or “AutoType” modules in that system, but I began to run into system conflicts. Furthermore, I did not appreciate having to periodically check the Now Software Web site to update the package. I guess that having stepped into the realm of personal opinion this far, I must admit that I do prefer to use Conflict Catcher (Casady & Greene) as opposed to the Now Startup Manager offered in the Now Software Package. There goes another reason not to load the larger package.



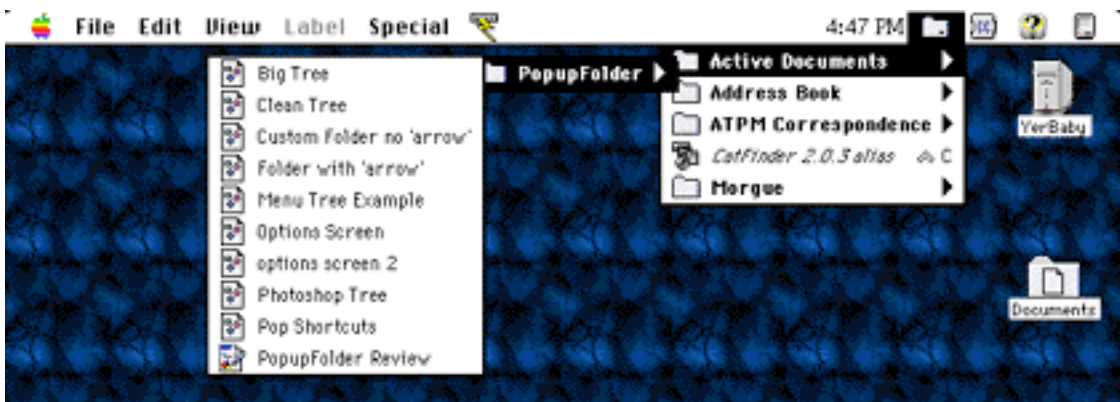
I might as well really get my feet wet and say that from an aesthetic point of view, I appreciate the fact that PopupFolder does not place its “flag” triangle on top of customized folder icons the way that the Now Utilities module does. The customized folder is left with a clean image, and generic folders are “flagged” with the marker in the lower right hand side of the folder, as opposed to “smack-dab” in the middle of a folder; customized or not. Having come this far, I feel obliged to mention that the electronic manual for Now Utilities did cost me over two hundred and thirty pages of printing credit at work. The tiny twenty-four page print-out for PopupFolder was well worth the printing credits and probably unnecessary in the final analysis.



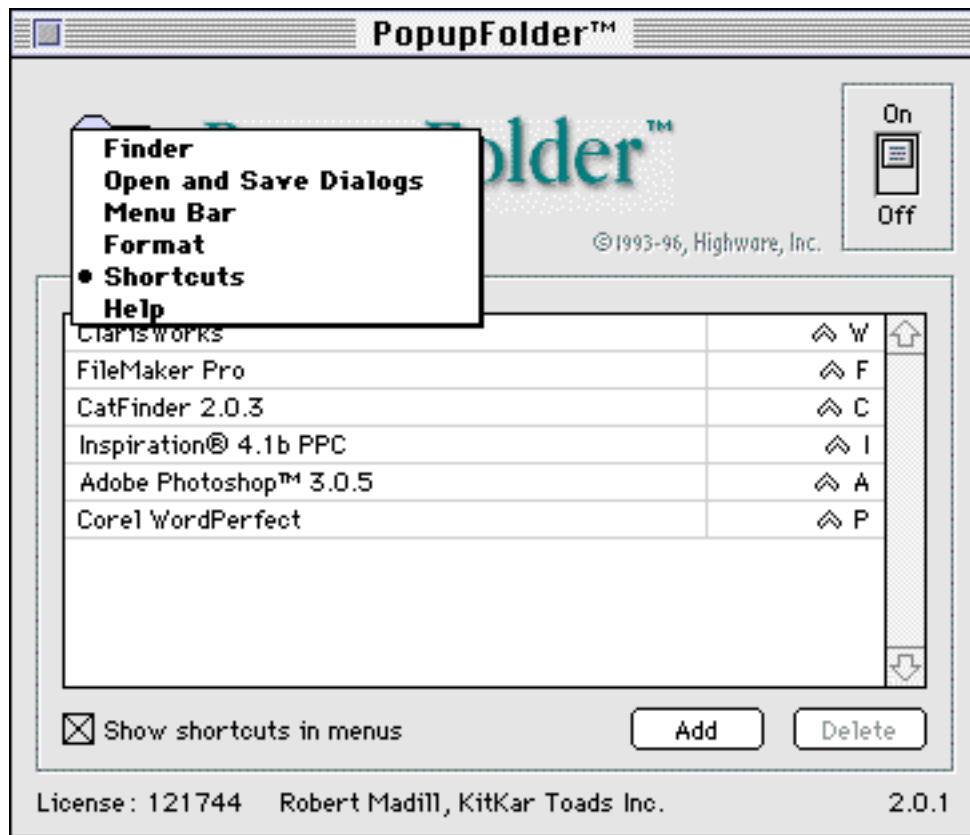


This utility has the kind of easy and intuitive interface that Macintosh users have come to expect! Clicking on a volume or folder displays a popup menu. Another click (or drag if you don't have click-drop menus turned on) on a folder displayed in the first menu gives you access to any further menu branch and so on down to the extent of 16 levels deep. The desired document or application, within this "tree," can then be directly opened from that on-screen display by releasing the mouse button. You can also "file" a file or folder by dragging it on to a folder or disk, waiting until the menu pops up, and selecting the desired destination folder. The 255K this control panel occupies on your hard drive is justified by the variety of features it offers. Its operations can be customized in a variety of ways.

Opening the control panel reveals the options available to the user. For example, the manner with which one can open a document can change depending upon whether or not you have chosen "Auto-Drop" from the menu bar option. In that case a simple mouse click is necessary to launch the desired item. I personally use "Auto-Drop" in my setup in order to develop the "Folder Tree" without having to hold down the mouse button. This does have a draw back. No matter where you go on your computer screen, if you inadvertently touch on any item in the menu bar, the contents of that item scroll down quicker than greased lightning! It's excellent proof of the speed of this utility, but sometimes this can be a minor annoyance when that was not where you intended to go!



While you are still experimenting with selections for the menu bar options, you will discover that you can place the PopupFolder menu on the right hand side of the menu bar. This folder can be used to display and activate frequently used folders, applications, and documents. In that location, it takes up absolutely no screen "real estate," as is the case with products such as PowerBar© (Dubl-Click Software Inc.) and OneClick™ (WestCode Software).



Admittedly, the PopupFolder menu does not offer all of the potential of the two previous applications, yet the basic operations are still there and are supplemented in the “Shortcuts” section. This utility allows the user to create keyboard shortcuts to frequently used applications and folders. Now if only I can remember all the keyboard combinations I selected for my favourite applications!

The fine tuning potential for this utility allows for a variety of functional and cosmetic changes. The user may choose whether or not to allow for custom icons, font sizes and types in the popup menus, and can choose the sizes of the “Open and Save” dialog boxes, among many other utility “tweaks.” Moving through items across your hard disk, and system navigation, in general, have never been easier.

As a final touch, the utility offers you the option as to whether or not to show the utility icon at startup. In keeping with my “computer pollution” battle with my purist technician, I keep the icon “off”, but I don’t think I’m fooling him!

Copyright ©1997 Robert Madill, rmadill@atpm.com. Mr. Madill is a Professor of Art and Architectural History on the faculty of Architecture at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Manitoba.



ABOUT THIS STUFF



REVIEWED BY A.T.Wong, atwong@xpressnet.com

Product Information

Published By: Kaetron Software Corp.
25211 Grogan's Mill Road, Suite 260
The Woodlands, Texas 77380
Email: sales@Kaetron.com
Web: <<http://www.Kaetron.com>>
Phone: (800) 938-8900
Fax: (281) 298-2520
Street Price: \$99



Kaetron Software Corp. claims Stencil It! v1.01c is the point-and-click graphics program for the artistically challenged. With over 600 stencils included, Stencil It! really does make graphics easy for those who need to create professional-looking business graphics with a minimum of work.

Product Description

Stencil It! is a program designed specifically to help a non-artist quickly create practical business graphics without the tediousness usually associated with generic drawing programs. Stencil It! is neither a vector graphics program nor a presentation program, so it cannot compete against the likes of Canvas or PowerPoint. Stencil It! excels in creating flow charts, family trees, network diagrams, organizational diagrams and many other types of business graphics.

Included is a collection of over 600 stencils that cover most commonly-used symbols from the standard ANSI flowchart symbols to traffic symbols and even the kitchen sink. If none of these Stencils are the graphic you want, you can always create your own or modify existing Stencils.

Graphics creation is simple: drag “intelligent” stencils from the palette onto the page. A Web converter is included to quickly convert your graphics into a format suitable for use with any browser.

Unlike a conventional draw program, Stencil It! provides several types of connecting lines that automatically connect objects as they are placed. Connecting lines will automatically follow the objects they connect, even if those objects are moved. By enabling the connecting lines feature, I was able to create a ten person organizational chart in under 10 minutes.

Stencils?

Stencil It! took simple clip art, added intelligence and created a Stencil. A Stencil is a graphic figure, much like an ink stamper, that is used to draw a graphic figure on the page. Stencils, both predefined and self-created, can be given attributes that define how they behave. For example, if a conference table Stencil is extended, additional chairs will magically appear. When a Stencil is composed of smaller objects, each of the component objects can be given their own attributes. For instance, you create a Stencil representing a phone sitting on top of a desk. Phone and desk object attributes can be assigned so that if the Stencil is resized, the desk size changes but the phone remains its original size.

Notecards (up to 32,000 characters) can be attached to most graphic objects to provide supporting information. Stencil It! even comes with a spelling checker that has a moderately large vocabulary (although I was surprised to discover that Microsoft was in the dictionary, but not Kaetron).

Lower level sub-charting lets you embed entire drawings inside a graphics object. Complex diagrams can be reduced to a simpler high level view by including details in lower level diagrams. An organizational chart for a large company can be composed of a few departments. Double-clicking a department will then bring up a new window with the lower level view of that department. There is no practical limit to the number of levels you can have in each drawing or object.

Other noteworthy features include: a large drawing size of 220x220 inches, publish and subscribe support, and linked files. The “linked files” feature allows you to link an external document or application to a graphics object. Double-clicking the object will cause Stencil It! to open the file or launch the application.

Web It!

Included with Stencil It! is the Web It! application. Web It! will convert every drawing and Notecard into a set of linked pages for use with a Web browser such as Netscape. Web It! has options to create JPEG or GIF files, to include server side or client side imagemaps, and file name convention. Appropriate use of these options will generate HTML files suitable for installation even on Unix or PC-based servers. Links to other Web sites can be easily embedded. For more advanced HTML work, you can embed your HTML code into Notecards before sending the drawing to Web It!. With Web It! almost anyone can mount a Web page on their Intranet or Internet server.

Hardware Requirements

Stencil It! requires a Mac Plus or better running System 7.0 or later. Although the manual states that 4 MB of RAM is required with 1.5 MB dedicated to Stencil It!, every time I tried to install Stencil It! on my 4 MB SE/30, the installer program stated that 5 MB RAM was required. Installing the program on a Quadra800 and then copying the files to the SE/30 worked. The small 512x342 screen of the SE/30 caused some minor cosmetic difficulties with certain windows and dialog boxes but Stencil It! ran at an acceptable pace. I would recommend a IIsi or better with at least 3 MB of RAM available for Stencil It!.

The Final Word

With over 600 stencils and the ability to design your own stencils, Stencil It! is eminently suited for personal and business use. Even graphics artists may find Stencil It! useful for small jobs that don't require highly detailed graphics. At a street price of \$99, it can perform virtually all of the common functions of it's competitor, Mainstay's MacFlow, at about half the price. The manual, for the most part, is well written. There are a few sections that may not be clear to a graphics program novice. Stencil It! is good as a first release version of the application and I highly recommend it. If you have doubts about its capabilities, download a demo version from their Web site.

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About This Particular Macintosh (ATPM) is, among other things, a monthly Internet magazine or "e-zine." It's published by Michael Tsai and Robert Paul Leitao (who are still looking for a cool logo for themselves that depicts their joint effort). ATPM was created to celebrate the personal computing experience. For us this means the most personal of all personal computers - the Apple Macintosh. About This Particular Macintosh is intended to be about your Macintosh, our Macintoshes, and the creative, personal ideas and experiences of everyone who uses a Mac. We hope that we will continue to be faithful to our mission.

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