



Washington Apple Pi eJournal

September – October 2009
Volume 31, No. 5



**WARNING:
DANGEROUS CATS INSIDE.
ENTER AT YOUR OWN RISK!**



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President Jay Castillo
president@wap.org
Treasurer Thomas Carlson
treasurer@wap.org
Secretary Gordon Nord
secretary@wap.org
Directors Len Adler
leonard.adler@wap.org
Richard Allen
richard.allen@wap.org
Jonathan Bernstein
jon.bernstein@wap.org
Neil Ferguson
neil.ferguson@wap.org
Ken Goldman
kenneth.goldman@wap.org
Bob Jarecke
robert.jarecke@wap.org
Larry Kerschberg
l.kerschberg@wap.org
Brent Malcolm
brent.malcolm@wap.org
Richard Orlin
richard.orlin@wap.org
Charles Reintzel
c.reintzel@wap.org
Mike Schnieble
mike.schnieble@wap.org
John White
john.white@wap.org

Managing Editor Bob Jarecke

editor@wap.org

Editor Lawrence I. Charters

maceditor@wap.org

Copy Editors Patsy Chick

patsychick@verizon.net

Jay Castillo

joseph.castillo@wap.org

Bill Bailey

william.bailey@wap.org

Design & Production Nora Korc

nora.korc@wap.org

Photo Editor Richard Sanderson

richard@sandersoncomputer.com

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Contacting Washington Apple Pi

Washington Apple Pi, Ltd.

12022 Parklawn Drive, Suite 201

Rockville, MD 20852

Business Office: 301/984-0300 [message]

Web address: <http://www.wap.org>

E-mail address: office@wap.org



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 Cover Photos: Snow Leopard desktop patterns

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Editor's Column

By Bob Jarecke

As most regular readers of the *Washington Apple Pi Journal* know, *Journal* content is provided exclusively by our members. It has been this way from time immemorial. It is difficult, though, to get members to provide written material. Invariably, we depend on a few stout souls to provide the bulk of the articles that you enjoy. I would like to improve on that situation.

I understand that some members are too busy to contribute. I suspect there are others, though, who feel they are not expert enough to write an article for the *Journal*. I understand this reluctance but I think it is misplaced. And so, I would like to offer a suggestion that might help get your creative juices flowing.

As you read this edition of the *eJournal*, if you think of something related to computing on your Mac, take a moment to jot it down. Then take another moment to think through the notion, and send me an email with your thoughts. We will work together to try and turn this into a real live article for the *eJournal*. This can be a learning experience for you, and the article an educational experience for someone else. Sharing content is a good thing.

This *eJournal's* theme — potpourri

As is generally the case, this edition of the *eJournal* has articles on a number of topics. There should be something for everyone. See if any of the following strikes your fancy.

Our *Journal* stalwart, Lawrence Charters, provides two compositions. In the cover story, he provides his take on installing Snow Leopard, and in the second writing, he takes a shot at explaining digital reading media. Both compositions are worthy of note.

David Harris provides a product review on a neat piece of equipment that marries up nicely with a Mac mini. Those of you with minis, take note!

Bill Bailey has written a short piece on staying connected to the outside world while roaming the southern plains and beyond. His confrontation with three tornados will have you on pins and needles.

Richard Orlin offers a review of another eBook in the "Take Control" series. The book is all about maintaining your passwords. Must reading for everyone!

As is customary, write-ups of recent General Meetings round out the issue. June, July and August may have long since passed, but still, the write-ups contain some golden nuggets of information. If you couldn't make the meetings, you can read about what you missed.

And there are a couple of other items to read, but I don't want to give away all the plot lines. The Publication Committee hopes you enjoy this edition of the *eJournal*. If you have any comments, positive or negative, please let us know at feedback@wap.org. Again, enjoy!



The Changing of the Seasons

By Jay Castillo

Summer is drawing to a close. Vacations, for those who could afford them, are just about done. Now we are settling into our fall routine, looking forward to less hectic times, and becoming alert to portents of change, and the first indications of the fall palette of color.

I hope that more Pi members will now put our monthly General Meeting on their calendar. Those who have been faithful through the summer have, I believe, enjoyed our meeting topics, and have benefited from joining like-minded people, sharing experiences, providing computing tips, and helping to trouble-shoot problems. We have had a modest but consistent attendance at our Clubhouse Saturday events, where we provide one-on-one help for hardware and software problems and upgrades, as well as tutorials and topical presentations. On behalf of the Pi, I salute the small band of volunteers who have faithfully staffed the Clubhouse Saturday events.

As we look ahead to the fall and winter general meetings, there is a lot to think about. Apple's Mac OS X 10.6 Snow Leopard is being released as we go to press. The Apple rumor mill forecasts a new iPod touch, and possibly an Apple tablet computer, with truly excellent capabilities (that no-one has any real inkling of). And maybe the Beatles catalogue will finally show up in the iTunes Music Store. Finally, lest we forget, Macworld 2010 is peeking over the horizon.

The Pi Management Committee plans the agenda for the monthly meetings. We try to generate interesting and

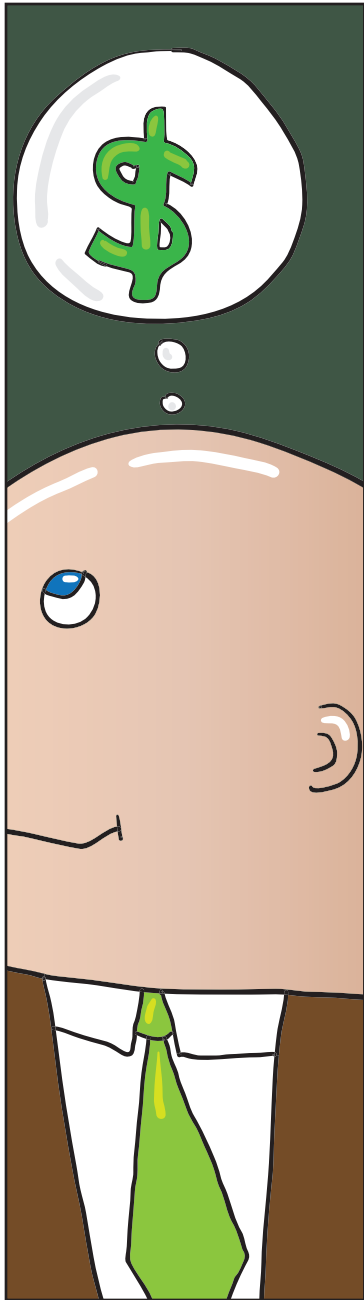
useful topics, but we can always use help. If you have a particular topic you want to hear about, or would like to share with our members, let us know via an email to feedback@wap.org. Even better, attend the General Meeting and tell us personally.

I said at the last General Meeting that the Pi depends on volunteers to accomplish its goals, and to render services to our membership. We are fortunate to have a core group of dedicated volunteers, but that group is relatively small, and often overworked. We need more volunteers. First, though, the Management Committee has to clearly define the volunteer skills and capabilities required for specific tasks. Then we can match the appropriate volunteer with the task, and ensure that time and energy are not wasted.

I raise the Clubhouse Saturday as an opportunity. We need volunteers who are familiar with the Mac operating systems (typically Mac OS X 10.3 to 10.5), and know how to: trouble-shoot basic system problems; upgrade the operating system; use and configure Mac OS X applications; configure and trouble-shoot home networks; and install memory and hard drives. We don't expect any one person to be an expert on all these topics. We hope to have enough people with different skills at the Clubhouse Saturday so that most problems can be addressed. Patience and a willingness to learn something yourself is a great additional asset. Even if you would like to just stand on the sidelines, watch and learn, and cheer when we solve someone's problem, you are welcome to attend. Please contact us if you want to help.

Help Wanted!

Bookkeeper



As you know, volunteers do the administrative work of running the Washington Apple Pi. This includes the club's bookkeeper, Brent Malcolm, who has been tending to the Pi's financial records for several years. Well, Brent needs a break and we need someone to learn the ropes and fill in as needed. Do you have some basic bookkeeping experience? Can we interest you in the job? The job is not overly time consuming, and can be done mostly in the comfort of your own home.

Backup Bookkeeper Position Description

No particular previous training is required. The Pi's bookkeeping is not complex, and as long as numbers don't overwhelm you, you can do it. All of the Pi's financial affairs are recorded using MYOB *Account Edge* software and a few Microsoft *Excel* spreadsheets. Copies of the required software will be provided if you do not already have it.

We hope to find someone who will learn the bookkeeper duties and be able to share the burden with Brent, and take charge if he is unavailable. We need to have someone in place before May 2010, when we know Brent will be unavailable for an extended period.

We anticipate that the backup bookkeeper will need to meet with Brent Malcolm for two to three hours every two weeks for three months, to observe and practice bookkeeping tasks. During that time, you will see every Pi bookkeeping transaction except for those required at the end of each calendar year and each fiscal year (May 31). In addition, we will provide a copy of our bookkeeper's guide, that documents the Pi's bookkeeping practices, and explains how to use *Account Edge* software to do the job.

When the training period is over, the plan is for the backup bookkeeper to do the required monthly bookkeeping entries every other month. And, of course, fill in when Brent is unavailable.

Are you game? Contact Brent directly at bookkeeper@wap.org.



Snow Leopard Upgrade: Spectacularly Boring

© 2009 Lawrence I. Charters

Like millions of others around the globe, I installed Snow Leopard (Mac OS X 10.6) almost as soon as it became available. Because I have several computers, I bought the Family Pack. And because I have several computers, I started with the machine that had the least amount of data on it. If something went wrong, I wanted to minimize the damage.

Do note that Snow Leopard requires an Intel-based Macintosh. All those old Mac user jokes that Intel means it is “less than half of intelligence” no longer apply; if you want to use Snow Leopard, you need one of Apple’s newer Macs with an Intel processor. You also need a gigabyte or more of memory, at least five gigabytes of free disk space (much more is always much better), and a DVD drive. Of course, virtually any Intel-equipped Mac has that.

If you are upgrading, you want to make sure that your Mac is in perfect health. Empty the Trash, launch Disk Utility, and use the First Aid tab to Verify Disk and make sure there are no directory problems. If you have a Mac laptop, make sure it is plugged in.

Insert the Snow Leopard DVD into the drive and you have three choices: the spiffy Snow Leopard install icon, a button entitled “Optional Installs,” and a button entitled “Instructions.” The Snow Leopard icon was the obvious thing to click. Once I launched the installer, the opening screen suggests you Continue if you wish to install Snow Leopard. There is also a button in the lower left corner called “Utilities.” That looked interesting, so I pressed it.

As expected, the Utilities button explained that I could restore my machine with Time Machine (everything was backed up, so this was not necessary), repair the disk using Disk Utility (already checked that, so this was not necessary either), or “perform other

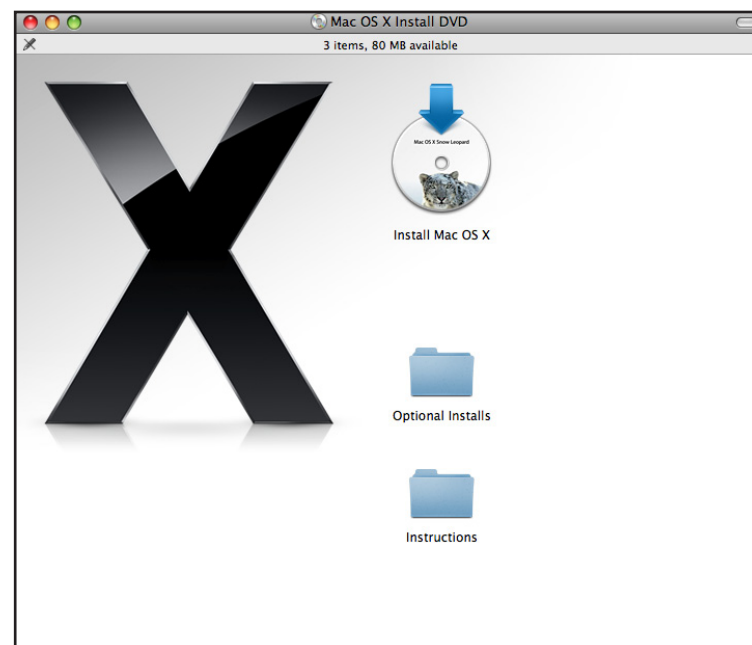


Figure 1. When you install the Snow Leopard disk, you see a typically stark screen with one obvious choice. Yes, I could have read the Instructions and I could have investigated the Optional Installs directory – but I didn’t.

tasks using utilities.” Nope, I wanted to install Snow Leopard — so I went back a screen and clicked “Continue.”

In my case, I wanted to install Snow Leopard on “Enterprise,” the name of the target machine (I’d just seen “Star Trek”). The installer not only confirmed that this was the next step, but

included the custom icon I'd pasted on the disk drive. Cool. It also gave me the choice of clicking on the "Install" button, or clicking on a "Customize" button in the lower left, to select the parts of Snow Leopard that I wished to install.

I'd recommend that you click the "Install" button and go with the standard installation. If, instead, you choose to press "Customize," you'll see a list of items that indicates which ones will be installed by default. If you insist on customizing your installation, I'd recommend unchecking X11 and checking Rosetta.

That's it. One last warning screen pops up to remind you that you are installing Snow Leopard, in case you forgot while clicking all the optional buttons. If you haven't clicked all the optional buttons, it takes less



Figure 2. The Snow Leopard installer gives you a screen confirming where it will install the operating system, complete with the volume name and icon, or custom icon, of the drive.

than a minute to get to this point. Click "Install" and then do something else for an hour.

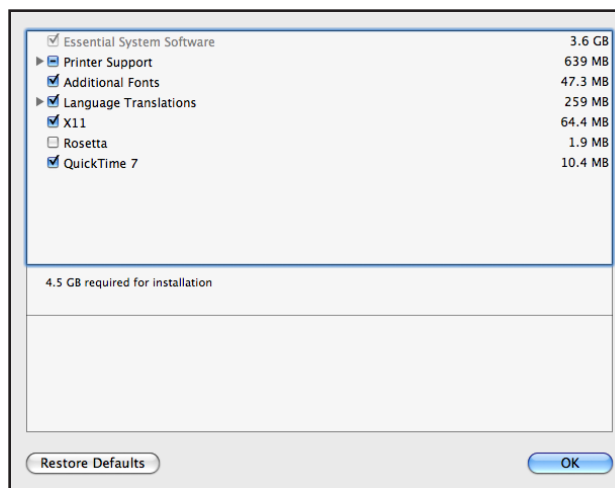


Figure 3. Snow Leopard installation defaults. Most users should just accept the defaults. While Snow Leopard installs QuickTime 10 by default, this screen shows that QuickTime 7 may be installed as an option in addition to QuickTime 10.

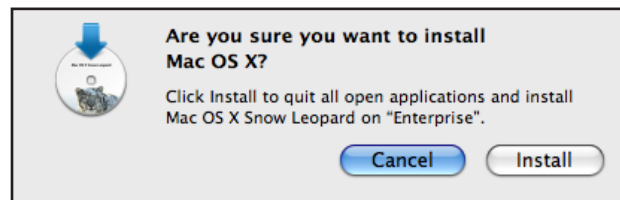


Figure 4. The Snow Leopard gives you one final warning before it installs the operating system. It also warns you that it will close all open applications before doing anything, so press Install and do something else.

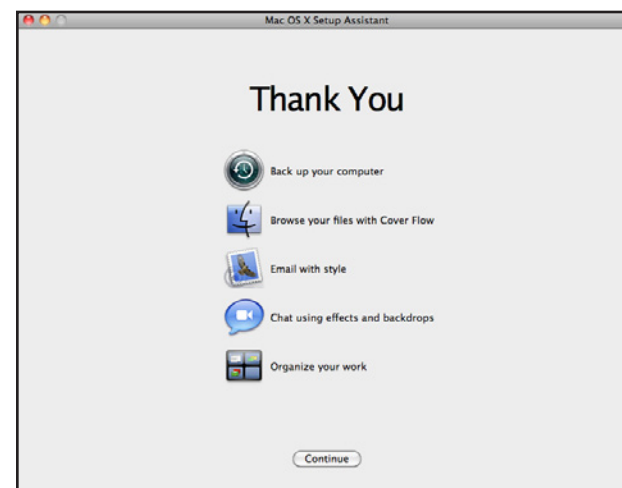


Figure 5. After installation and a welcoming video clip, this screen thanks you and suggests things you can do.

Snow Leopard spends a long time checking the DVD and making sure it isn't defective before installing anything. The time spent checking the DVD will vary with the speed of your optical disk drive: the faster the drive, the shorter the wait. In my case, the entire process — from taking Snow Leopard out of the box to booting up after it was installed — took less than an hour. Once installation is complete, Snow Leopard reboots the machine, plays a nice animation (virtually identical to that shown after a Mac OS X 10.5 installation), and presents a Thank You screen telling you that you can back up your computer, browse files, send E-mail, chat, or organize your work. Note that work, itself, is not listed as an option.

The very first thing I did after booting Snow Leopard was to launch *atMonitor*, a free utility that shows

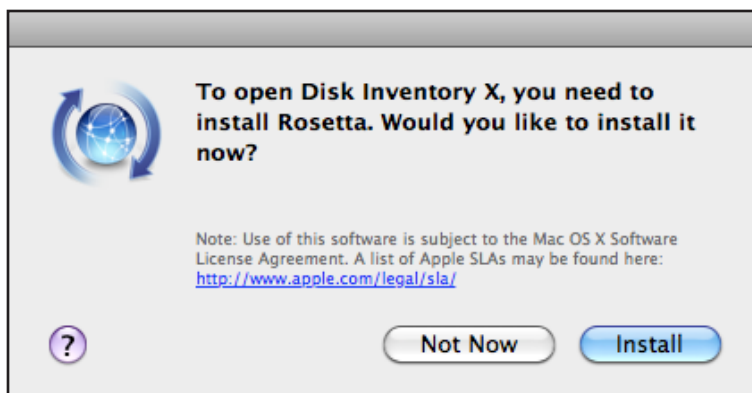


Figure 6. If you try to run a program written for PPC computers (i.e., Macs without Intel processors), this warning pops up and offers to download Rosetta. Since the Rosetta stone weighs about 1,700 pounds, you'll be amazed at how quickly it downloads to your Mac.

you the load being placed on your Mac's CPU, RAM, disk, network ports and graphics cards. As expected, Snow Leopard popped up with a warning that it needed to install Rosetta; would I like to do so?

You may recall that Rosetta was listed as an optional install for Snow Leopard. What is Rosetta? Aside from being a spectacular stone monolith in the British Museum in London, Rosetta is a software translator that allows Intel-based Macs to run programs originally created for PPC-based Macs. Apple probably decided to make this an optional install since new Mac users are likely to buy new programs that don't need Rosetta, or possibly because few Mac users need to translate between Egyptian hieroglyphs and ancient Greek.

I'd removed the Snow Leopard disk from the drive, but Snow Leopard quickly grabbed Rosetta from Apple's Web site, silently installed it, and launched *atMonitor*. And since Rosetta is now installed, it won't be necessary to do this again. It was all very elegant, quick, and civilized.

In fact, elegant, quick, and civilized is a good capsule synopsis of Snow Leopard. For the most part, it looks and acts just like Mac OS X 10.5 Leopard. But because it is optimized for the Intel processor, it takes up far less room on disk, it is significantly faster at almost all tasks, and it has small touches here and there that make it even easier to use.

So, why do I say that Snow Leopard is spectacularly boring? The installation involved no drama, no angst or anguish, no cliffhanger moments, and no effort on my part. Post-installation, the upgraded machine is faster, as promised, and the promised features work as advertised. There is a 73-page "Welcome to Snow Leopard" PDF on the install disk that I may get around to reading some day.

Maybe. But I'd rather play with my new kitty.

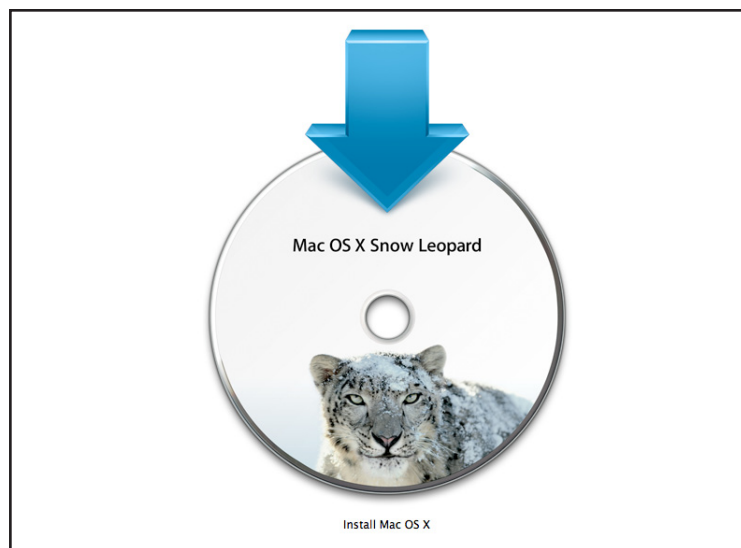


Figure 7. Snow Leopard icons can be much larger than in previous versions of Mac OS X. This is the full-size icon for the Snow Leopard installer; the detail is very impressive.



How Does Your Mac mini Stack Up?

By David Harris

Recently I upgraded my computer from a PowerMac G4 tower running Mac OS X 10.4.11 to an Intel Mac mini running Mac OS X 10.5 Leopard. For backup using Time Machine, I bought a Newer Technology miniStack Enclosure Kit from Other World Computing, for \$49.99. The idea was to put the 200 GB Seagate 7200 rpm ATA hard drive from my G4 into the miniStack enclosure.

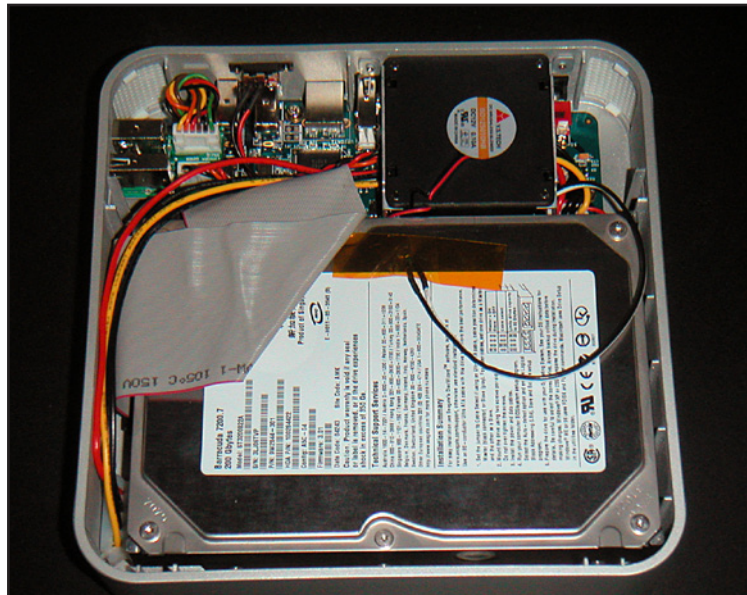
You can see a picture and description of the miniStack Enclosure Kit at:

<http://eshop.macsales.com/shop/ministack/>



Above:
MiniStack drive sits right under the Mac mini.

Right:
Tight quarters, including fan and temperature sensor.



The enclosure comes with both USB 2.0 and FireWire 400 ports to connect to the Mac mini, and with cables for the connections. The miniStack has the same footprint as the Mac mini, so it sits neatly right under the computer. It is powered by the usual power brick, which can be hidden from sight.

The miniStack looks almost like the Mac mini, but the case is made of plastic, not aluminum. Inside, there is a minimum amount of space for a hard drive, and a fan with a temperature sensor. The fan sits on top of the hard drive, and the sensor turns it on when needed. Installing the hard drive took a bit of effort, because the space is so tight. I tried to install it first using the screws that had been used to hold it in the G4, but the heads on those screws were too large; I couldn't put the plastic top of the miniStack on without it bulging. When I used the mounting screws that were included with the Enclosure Kit, though, I managed to solve the problem.

The Mac mini is so quiet that I cannot hear it at all, even though it is only about two feet from my head. When the external drive is first turned on, it is very quiet too, but when the fan in the miniStack comes on, it is noticeable — largely because there is no noise from the Mac mini. I am spoiled now, as the Mac mini is so much quieter than the old G4 tower with its variable-speed fan(s)!

If you have a Mac mini, or are thinking of getting one, and you already have an old ATA drive, the Newer Technology miniStack Enclosure Kit is a simple and elegant solution for backup. The miniStack can be used as a regular external drive as well as a dedicated Time Machine drive. Other miniStacks are available from Other World Computing, with different port configurations and for use with newer, serial ATA hard drives.

Some Thoughts on Electronic Media and the Written Word

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While most people have heard that the written word dates back to around 3000 BC and Mesopotamia, there is a growing body of evidence to suggest that it dates back even farther, to roughly 6000 BC in China. Whichever date you choose, writing has been with humanity for a long time, and until the last 50 years or so has always had a physical presence; the words were written on some tangible object.

Figure 1 shows you what Jay Castillo's letter from the July-August 2009 *eJournal* looks like on my Mac. Figure 2 shows the same letter, viewed on an iPod touch.

This changed with the advent of computers. IBM's invention of the hard drive in 1956 allowed written information to be stored magnetically. Letters, words, punctuation and such were not stored as scratches on stone or dye on papyrus, but as magnetic domains on the surface of a metal plate. Flash memory, developed by Toshiba in 1980, took this level of abstraction even farther, storing information in transistor gates. As a result, you can now carry around, in digital form on an inexpensive flash keychain drive, every single word of every known work from the Roman Empire, in both the original Latin and an English translation.

The compactness and portability of electronic media makes it not only convenient, but also more accessible. For example, a single

iPod can hold all the music recordings of every pre-20th century composer. For most of human history, music was limited to live performances, usually by close friends, relatives, and members of your village. Only royalty and the well-to-do could hear a symphony concert. Now you can own every symphony ever written, in your pocket, available at the touch of a button.

Kindle, anyone?

This same compactness and portability characterize the Kindle. The original model, which Amazon introduced in 2007, could hold the equivalent of 200 books. The Kindle 2, introduced in 2009, upped this to 1,500 books, and the Kindle DX, also introduced in 2009, to 3,500 books. These "books," however, are just text; illustrations, if any, are in black and white or shades of gray, and illustrations reduce the overall capacity of the Kindle.

Despite this limitation, the idea of carrying around a fairly large library in something about the size of a trade paperback is attractive. Amazon makes it easy to buy new books: you purchase new titles directly from the Kindle and pay by credit card, and Amazon delivers the book wirelessly to the Kindle. Amazon touts this as being not only easy, but fast, efficient, and inexpensive.



Figure 1



Figure 2

Figures 3 and 4 show the same introduction page from *Take Control of Easy Backups in Leopard*, published as an electronic book by TidBITS Publishing, one the full-size view on a Mac screen and the other the view on an iPod touch.

As a book lover (with thousands of books), I am intrigued by the possibilities, but unsure of how well, or how economically, the Kindle would work for me. The average Kindle title is \$9.99, which Amazon claims represents a savings of as much as 75% over the cost of a hardcover. Yet in an informal survey of the last 78 books I've purchased, only three were available on the Kindle, all for \$9.99. Significantly, two of the three were also available in paperback -- for less. "Kindle editions" tend to favor text-based best sellers and books in the public domain -- *i.e.*, books long out of copyright

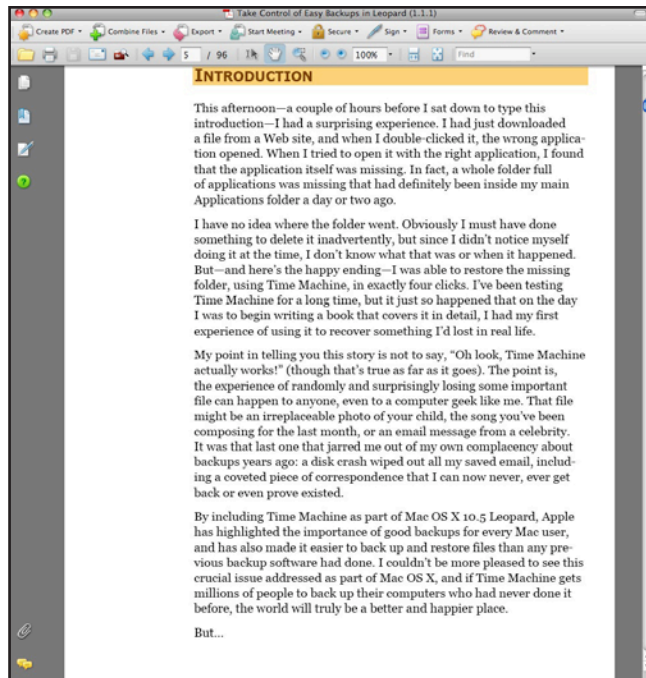


Figure 3

that cost nothing. If you want technical documentation (computer books, for example), or scholarly books, or books on obscure topics in history, or anything that requires extensive photos and graphics, the Kindle is a poor choice.

Amazon also touts the ability of the Kindle to download your newspaper and have it readily available in a nice, compact form, and at a lower subscription price than the paper version. This is attractive — much of our home recycling consists of old copies of *The Washington Post* — but the Kindle editions are not complete. For example, they do not include any tables, most photos and graphics, or the comics (the *comics*?).

A recent, lengthy, highly enlightening discussion on the Pi's forums, the TCS, revealed one great strength of the Kindle: you can load it up with PDF documents. Have a bunch of work documents you need to read, but don't



Figure 4

feel like carrying around a briefcase full of loose papers and notebooks? Convert the documents to PDF, and upload them to the Kindle. Most "work paperwork" is disposable, anyway; why kill a tree? Using a Kindle for ephemeral documents sounds like an ideal fit, even if it isn't what Amazon had in mind.

How about them iPhones and iPod touches?

When the iPod touch and iPhone were introduced, with those glorious, large (for an iPod) screens, one of the first things people tried to do was turn them into tiny Kindles. Apple's iTunes Store has thousands of entries in the Books category, including hundreds of free books, book readers, and other texts. Amazon created a (free) application, *Kindle for iPhone*, that has been on the App Store best-seller list since the day it was released. Just as with the Kindle, you can purchase and download entire books from Amazon and display them on the iPod touch or iPhone.

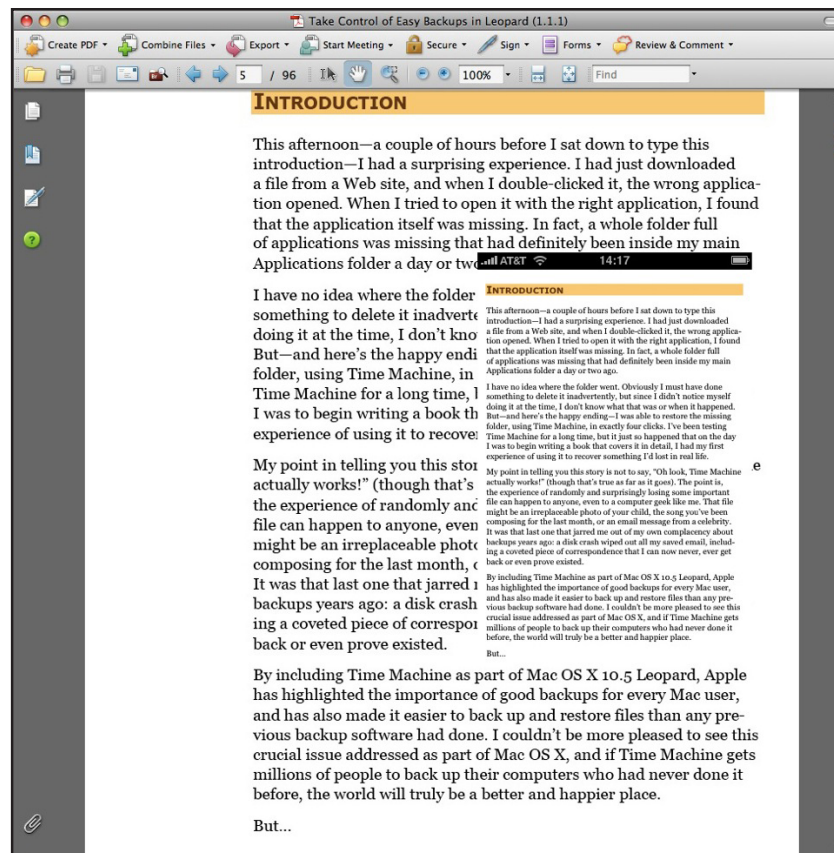
Given the memory capacity of the iPod touch and iPhone, you could potentially have an even larger library in your pocket than you can store on the Kindle DX, and in color, no less — except Kindle books are never in color. But the screen size is a problem: a page on the iPod touch is roughly a sixth of the size of a page on a Mac screen. If you enlarge the text to make it easier to read on the iPod, the number of words on the screen drops to just a paragraph or less. Reading a book on an iPod touch or iPhone is possible, but it is slow and painful work.

The long-rumored (the rumor is a decade old) Mac tablet computer might change this equation. For now, though, Apple doesn't have a device that can double as a handy portable electronic library.

Clay tablets, bits and bytes

So, are we ready to replace the paper book? Electronic books certainly can be convenient, as long as we have the technology we need to read them. But will they last the way the written word does?

Figure 5 shows you the two images together, with the iPod touch version superimposed on the Mac screen.



Clay tablets can last at least 5,000 years. Messages on tortoise shell can last at least 8,000 years. But in just the last 50 years, the computer industry has moved from punch cards to Mylar tape to 9-track magnetic tape to cassette tape to floppy disks to hard disks and, recently, to flash memory. Each advance has brought greatly increased storage capacity, but also greater technological dependence. An old paper printout from 50 years ago is still readable; a floppy disk from five years ago is probably thoroughly scrambled.

The movie and television industries offer some sobering lessons. Early movies were filmed on celluloid. Over time, the celluloid broke down, and became not just flammable, but explosive. Many early films literally went up in smoke, and no copies remain.

Early television, broadcast live, had no way of being preserved, unless someone filmed the broadcast. Later, technology became available to record the programs. Consumers wanting copies of movies or TV programs were encouraged to record them using, in turn, Beta or VHS tape, LaserDisc, several varieties of DVD, then HD, and now Blu Ray. As each new method became available, the prior technology was discarded. One friend of mine has a dozen copies of *Gone With the Wind*, but the technology to watch the copies has died away; only the most recent DVD version is viewable.

By contrast, the paper and cloth copy of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* that I purchased 40 years ago is still readable today. It requires no electricity, no complex infrastructure, and is highly portable. There is no reason to expect it to be less readable 40 years from now. Will an electronic book published in 2009 be readable in 2059? Or even 2012?

Longevity of information is a critical issue. I'm not persuaded that the electronic book is ready for prime time.

But I'd still kill for a Mac tablet computer.



Connectivity from an RV

By Bill Bailey



Top: Our 30-foot rented RV in the Flagstaff campground.

Bottom: The cyclonic storm.

This past July, my wife and I rented an RV to drive to Arizona and back. Our daughter was moving to Flagstaff, where she plans to resume her college studies after several interruptions for international travel and other distractions, and we were helping her move. So the three of us, along with our daughter's dog, our two dogs, and as much of our daughter's stuff as we could fit into the RV, headed west. And, of course, we took our laptops and iPhones.

On the way out we followed I-40 from Tennessee to Flagstaff, but we took a much more scenic route on the return trip. We headed north from Flagstaff, past Monument Valley, and into eastern Utah. From Moab we drove along the spectacular state route 128, that winds north along the banks of the Colorado River with sheer canyon walls on both sides, until we got to I-70. We took I-70 east through the Colorado Rockies (very scenic) and the ski resorts around Vail, and then on to Denver. From there we continued through eastern Colorado, Kansas, and Missouri, until we connected up with I-64 near St. Louis — and on to home. As you can imagine, it was quite a trip.

We stayed at campgrounds each night, and were delighted to find that every campground had Wi-Fi. This was a huge improvement since the last time we did this sort of thing in a rented RV. The places we stayed provided a signal that covered the entire campgrounds, probably using repeater antennae, and Wi-Fi access was free, except for one campground in Missouri.

In most cases Internet signal strength was quite adequate, although in Flagstaff the connection was iffy away from the main antenna. The campground claimed to have spent over

\$20,000 improving their system, which had to be configured to avoid interference from the mountain immediately behind the campground, but said that a Starbucks outside the campground was using the most favorable frequency. The high altitude, about 7000 feet, may also have increased signal dissipation. Still, there as well as everywhere else, we made quite a modern picture, my wife, my daughter, and I, each sitting with a laptop in canvas recliners outside our RV. Portable computers were pretty ubiquitous around the campgrounds; some people were apparently keeping up with work while nestled among the Ponderosa pines.

My iPhone turned out to be indispensable as well. On the outbound trip, while we were driving west in the Texas panhandle, I was monitoring the weather map on the iPhone. I was nervously watching three compact, but very intense, storms northwest of our position. Based on experience I initially thought they would continue west to east and pass north of us, but alas, as I observed their progress on the mobile device's weather map, I saw that they were moving to the Southeast and would likely cross our intended path. The weather alerts were ominous, with reports of hail and 60mph wind gusts and a tornado warning. To counter the threat, we increased our speed, and managed to get in front of all three storms — but only barely. We saw the tornado funnel of the third storm through the windows of the RV. This was a nervous few hours, that would have been really scary without the iPhone. We were quite happy to arrive at the Tucumcari, New Mexico campground without further incident.

All in all, it was a very memorable trip, made especially so by our Macs, our iPhone(s), and the Wi-Fi we enjoyed at all our campgrounds.

Take Control of Passwords in Mac OS X (Second Edition): A Book Review

By Richard Orlin

With their updated edition of “Take Control of Passwords in Mac OS X,” Joe Kissell and TidBITS Publishing, Inc. have once again made a difficult subject easier to understand. This book was written specifically for users of Mac OS X Leopard. If you use Leopard, then you need at least one password, just to use your operating system. If you’re anything like the average user, you regularly access a dozen or more Web sites that require usernames and passwords. If you are like me, and use the same username and password for everything except bank and brokerage accounts, I urge you to read this book.

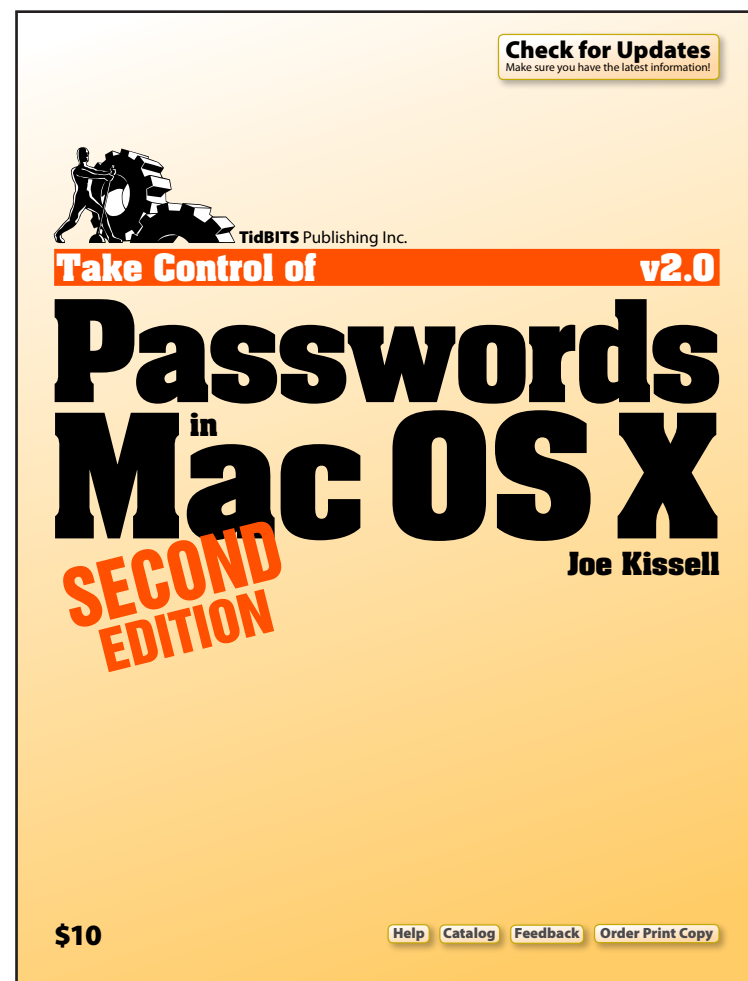
The author tells us in the Introduction that the book is cross-referenced so you can read only those sections you are interested in, and in any order, but he advises strenuously that everyone start by reading the first two sections: “Assess Your Password Needs,” and “Choose a Password Strategy.” First, what is your level of risk? If you have nothing on your computer but some innocuous emails and documents that would not cause you any harm if made public, your level of risk is very low. If, on the other hand, you keep any kind of personal information, or financial information, on your computer, then your

level of risk ratchets up considerably — and you have to take correspondingly greater care with your passwords.

Once you determine your level of risk, you have to choose a strategy for dealing with your passwords. Kissell tells us that there are essentially two approaches: you can rely on technology to generate, store, and enter passwords for you (Strategy A); or you can rely on your brain to do all those things (Strategy B). For those who choose to rely on their brains, the author suggests techniques you can use to create and remember passwords. But if your brain is like mine, I recommend that you go with Strategy A! For the record, so does Kissell.

If you opt for the technology approach, you will use an application that is designed to generate passwords for you. One option is *Password Assistant*, which comes with Mac OS X. There are a number of third-party password generators as well, which are covered in the book. *1Password* is the one that comes out on top — I use it and am very pleased with it, and it is the one that Kissell recommends.

Even if you go with Strategy A, keep in mind that some passwords cannot be entered automatically. For example, you will need to enter your login





password, your Keychain password, and your Mac's Firmware password, manually. Even with the best technology, you simply cannot get away from using your brain some of the time.

Other sections of the book deal with specific types of passwords. The author discusses the distinction between security passwords and identity passwords. He provides tips for how to set up and change Administrator passwords. He covers the Master Password, Root Password, Firmware Password, and the mysterious FileVault. File Vault is a security feature included in Mac OS X that encrypts the entire contents of your hard drive. Kissell doesn't recommend using FileVault — he thinks it's too easy for something to go wrong that would result in the loss of all your data — but he does recommend using the Master Password feature of your operating system that is a required before FileVault can be enabled.

Kissell covers the Keychain, and the utility application *Keychain Access*, in another chapter. I found the discussion of *Keychain Access* very interesting, because there is a lot more to using the application than just looking up a forgotten password. You can use *Keychain Access* to do a number of other things, including:

- Add new passwords manually or change existing passwords.
- Adjust the degree of access that applications have to individual keychain items.
- Change a keychain password.
- Modify keychain settings such as MobileMe synchronization and automatic locking.
- Add or delete an entire keychain.
- Create and view secure notes (such as credit card information).
- Repair damaged keychains.

- Manage certificates, which verify the identity of a person, company, Web site, or other resource.

Kissell also discusses using passwords on the Web and associated security. I mentioned in the opening paragraph that I tend to use the same username and password for all Web sites except financial ones — not something the author is enthusiastic about. He's not enthusiastic about the kind of verification questions sites often ask to verify your identity. A prime example is, "What is your mother's maiden name?" The problem is that this information is not secret; it is a matter of public record, and anyone can find it if they are willing to do a little research. Kissell recommends that you make up your own security questions, if allowed, and make sure the answers are obscure and not easily guessed.

The final two sections of the book cover a review of third-party password tools, and the author's personal recommendations on how to keep your passwords secure. Among other things, he recommends backing up your passwords and creating an emergency password plan. He also stresses that all good security is only as good as its weakest link. Even if you have carefully created an online banking password that is 21 random characters, if you store it within a keychain, and you keep the *Keychain Access* password in an unencrypted text file on your hard drive, that password is not very secure.

The last page of the book is a pleasant surprise: it contains a link to *1Password* and a 20% discount! Grab it - I highly recommend the program.

Take Control of Passwords in Mac OS X, Second Edition
by Joe Kissell
120 pages
Updated Jul 29 2009
ISBN: 193367167X
Price: eBook \$10; print \$20.99
Available at: www.takecontrolbooks.com



Catching up with McDonald's: TCS Forum passes the 100,000 mark

By Lawrence I. Charters

On Friday, July 24, 2009, Karen Ackoff posted the 100,000th message on the “new” TCS, a Web-based forum run by Washington Apple Pi. The TCS dates back to the very early 1980s, and was originally based on a single modem talking to a single Apple II; the current TCS is a 21st century creation with modern underpinnings.

From the very beginning, the TCS (which originally stood for “Tele Communications Systems,” but now stands for nothing except “TCS”) was a social networking community, even before the term “social networking” became popular. Bringing together, government workers, contractors and other members of Washington Apple Pi, all owners of Macintosh computers, the original modem-based system accepted over half-a-million telephone calls, keeping a small fleet of Apple II computers very busy for two decades.

The current version of the TCS is a single machine, which is connected to the Internet via the Web. Using nothing more than a Web browser, Pi members can log in to the TCS 24 hours a day and ask for, or provide, advice on hardware and software, job opportunities, or almost anything else they care to discuss. This single computer handles a much heavier load than the fleet of Apple IIs ever did, and far more reliably: on average, one Apple II or modem needed to be reset every week, and repairing accumulated damage and getting all the pieces working again could take days.

Karen Ackoff's posting was typical for the TCS. Karen was concerned about a security system she was installing in her

home. Two different sets of contractors were blaming one another for setup problems, and Karen asked if others had any experience that might prove valuable. This sparked a string of 30 messages over the next four days, as members discussed different ways to wire security systems, different issues the installers might encounter, how to deal with prickly neighbors when you do anything “modern” in a historic neighborhood, and similar topics. Some messages were posted in the morning, most in the afternoon; one was posted at midnight.

The “new” TCS, by the way, had its first posting on April 22, 2003 at, ahem, 3:39 a.m. On average, roughly 120 messages are read by members for every one posted; about the only quiet time is between 4 and 5 a.m.

Karen, by the way, lives in the Midwest, not in the DC-Baltimore metro area. The TCS has had members post messages from Europe, Asia, South America, and a few U.S. Navy ships in the Indian Ocean.

For nearly three decades, in any and every incarnation, the TCS has served as the Pi's 24-hour-a-day general meeting: a place where you can ask for help with a problem, give technical advice, wax lyrical about new restaurants or old movies, or share a pun or silly joke. It is the place to be if you or your Mac (or iPod, or iPhone, or Newton, or...) needs a friendly ear at noon, or closer to midnight.

Try it:
<http://tcs.wap.org/>



June 2009: Pi Widgets

By Tom Carlson

The June General Meeting held in George Mason University's Enterprise Hall kicked off the summer of '09. Attractions like picnics, day outings, and vacation trips took their toll; our audience was slightly smaller than average. Nonetheless, we soldiered on with an event that focused on upgrading Macs by increasing memory, installing a hard drive with a larger capacity, adding Blu-ray capability, and creating an Apple Pi Dashboard widget. Lastly, after a pizza break, the *iLife* SIG and *members helping members* sessions filled out the afternoon portion of the meeting.

The session started with the Apple Pi staple: a Q&A session.

Questions & Answers

With our regular Question & Answer man Lawrence Charters in travel status, we assembled a panel to answer questions. The panelists were Randy McMillan

of RMACS, Pat Fauquet of Bob LeVitus "Dr Mac" Consulting, and Macintosh aficionados Tim Childers and Robert "Bo" Huttinger. We also asked that questions be submitted beforehand (something new for the Q&A session), so the panel members could do some research beforehand if necessary.

Q: Has Apple Pi considered creating a listing matching its Hotline technical experts to the expert's E-mail address?

A: The volunteer Hotline list, which is on the Pi's Web site (accessible through the TCS Forums), has two tables: one maps volunteers to their area of expertise and phone number; the other lists areas of expertise, mapped to volunteer id codes. Using the two tables together, you can find a volunteer who can help you and a contact phone number. There are no plans to add the expert volunteer's E-mail address to the Hotlist, but it is an idea worth considering.

Q: I'm running Leopard 10.5.7. I have the firewall turned on to "Set access for specific services and applications." Even though I have several applications set up to "Allow incoming connections" I still periodically get a pop-up window when I open one of these programs asking something along the lines of, "Do you want Program X to accept incoming Internet connections?" at which point I need to enter my admin user name and password.

Any idea why this is happening and why sporadically? When it happens it is always when I first open the program, regardless of whether or not I am opening an existing file.

A: With Mac OS X 10.5.1, Apple changed its firewall control from opening and closing ports by number to application-specific security/access control. This type of control allows applications to be registered with Apple as authorized and authenticated. Initially these were Apple applications. Over time, more developers have incorporated the "hooks and handles" needed for the application to be pre-authorized and pre-authenticated.

A distinguished panel of experts (left to right: Randy, Tim, Pat, and Bo) masterfully handled the meeting's questions. The 45 minutes allotted wasn't enough as tangential discussions produced other educational material.



Many users, like our questioner, have additional software they add to the list of authorized/authenticated applications. Whenever there is a change in that software, whether to the application itself or to an operating system service or routine used by the application, you will see the question, “Do you want Program X to accept incoming Internet connections?” Think of it as the operating system asking you to reinstate pre-authorization and pre-authentication for the application. If there haven’t been any software upgrades recently, you should view the query with suspicion and deny the request.

Additional information on this topic is available from Apple Forums at:
<http://support.apple.com/kb/HT1810>

This Q&A sparked a fairly lengthy and wide-ranging discussion about software firewalls. There are third-party applications available for the Mac that do the same job as the Mac OS X firewall. One such product is *Integro*. Should you use one? The consensus was that you probably don’t need a second software firewall for in-home computing that does not use remote access services, but there is probably no harm in having one.

There was a difference of opinion, though, about whether a software firewall is sufficient. Randy reported that Apple engineers think the OS X software firewall creates a false sense of security, because no software firewall is as secure as a hardware firewall. He prefers Cisco hardware routers because they include a hardware firewall. Other panelists were of the view that OS X’s software firewall is more than adequate protection for the Mac you have at home.

Can you determine if your current OS X software firewall configuration is satisfactory? Pat recommends using:

<https://www.grc.com/x/ne.dll?bh0bkyd2>

This Web site will test your Mac’s performance and security, measuring file upload and download speeds, testing for unsecured/open ports, and evaluating the extent to which your Mac is stealthy, *i.e.*, generally hidden from other Internet users. For each test, it delivers a results summary, an explanation of findings, and advice on what actions you could take to tighten your computer’s security.

And while they were on the subject of computer security, the panelists reminded everybody that they should have a Standard Account for their ordinary, everyday activities — like word processing, E-mails, loading and editing photos, and browsing the Internet — that is separate from their Administrator account. If you are among the Apple Pi members who have only an Administrator account, you should create a new Administrator account, and downgrade the account you use now to a Standard account.

First, unless you use Leopard’s Time Machine, you should create a backup so you can return to your original state if necessary. Then, go to System Preferences>Accounts, and click on the “+” at the bottom of the Accounts column. Add a new Administrator account with a unique name and secure password different from your existing account, and change your everyday account to a Standard account.

Do you want to continue to install software from your everyday account? No problem. During the install you will be prompted to supply the administrator’s password,

showing that you are authorized to install software. But if you are planning to share the application among multiple Standard accounts, you should install it when logged onto the Administrator account.

Q: Can each Mac user account have a separate *iTunes* library?

A: Yes. Beginning with Mac OS X 10.5.7, an account/user may have as many *iTunes* (or *iPhoto*) libraries as you have space for, on your computer’s hard drive and any external drive(s). To choose which library to access, hold down the Option key when starting the application.

A word of caution: If you have a portable Mac and your home Wi-Fi is configured to share *iTunes* or *iPhoto* libraries, take care when you travel to restrict access to these libraries unless you want to share them with everyone on the hotel’s wireless network. One suggestion was to create a special library for travel — limit it to what you need for a few days on the road, and leave your personal collection at home.

Q: How can I uninstall *Norton Tools*?

A: First, check the Applications folder to see whether you got an uninstall application when you installed *Norton Tools*. If so, run it and see if that does it.

If you don’t find such an uninstaller, *or* if you do find it but it doesn’t get rid of *Norton Tools*, check the Norton Web site for an uninstall application. Download the uninstaller and run it. You may need to run it more than once.

Norton Tools can be removed. You just need to be persistent. You may need to remove the application

from Startup Items, or otherwise ensure that *Norton Tools* is not open/running when you start/restart your computer, in order for the uninstaller to work.

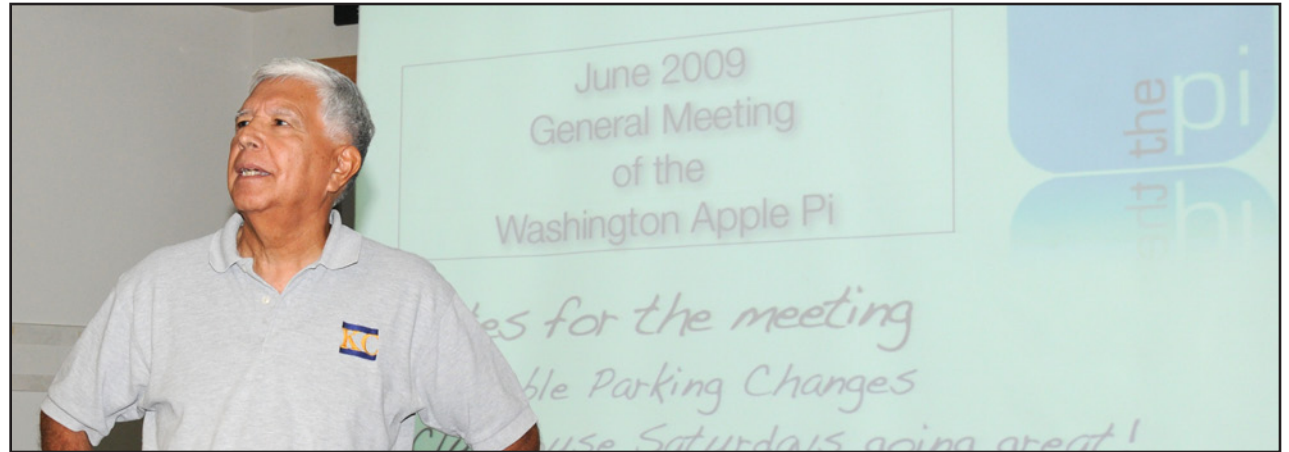
Q&A Wrap-Up

Was your question asked and answered? If yes, that's great. If not, we have three suggestions:

- Consult the TCS Forums to get advice from Pi members. Go to the Washington Apple Pi Web-site (<http://www.wap.org>) and click on the TCS Forums tab at the top of the page.
- Consult one of David Pogue's books — *The Leopard Missing Manual* or *The Tiger Missing Manual* — which are published by O'Reilly Press. Check the TCS Forums to see if O'Reilly is offering a discount for members of Mac user groups. If so, it may be better than Amazon's regular price.
- Submit a question to feedback@wap.org for another General Meeting Q&A session.

Club Business — The Changing of the Guard

After the Q&A Session, Bob Jarecke talked about a number of administrative topics, including the June Pi Fillings CD, the upcoming July *eJournal*, and parking options at George Mason. He also reminded everyone that the Clubhouse is available for Pi members to use (for free) as a meeting place for any group they belong to. Contact the Management Committee via email at office@wap.org to schedule your meeting. You will need to make arrangements to get keys to the office and parking lot, and learn how to use Clubhouse equipment and access the Internet. You can see the 600 square foot Clubhouse and all its amenities (the discussion lounge, flexible meeting/class room,



New Pi President, Jay Castillo, articulates his plans for leading our club for the next fiscal year.

tables/chairs, overhead projector and screen, and microwave) in the Clubhouse Open House video, at: <http://www.wap.org/events/jan2009/openhouse.html>

Bob turned then to a discussion of the June Board of Directors' Meeting, which saw the installation of a full panel of fifteen directors and the election of a new President. The Board re-appointed four former Board members (Len Adler, Tom Carlson, Jonathan Bernstein, and Gordon Nord) to vacancies, added Ken Goldman and John White to the Board, and elected Jay Castillo President.

Jay introduced himself and shared a few thoughts about how he plans to lead the Pi. He will listen to the membership and make changes as needed to continue the tradition of members helping members. He will continue promoting productive opportunities for the members to use their Macs and to enjoy each other's company. Jay also presented the FY

2010 budget, which the membership approved after discussion.

About Apple Pi's Special Interest Groups

Leaders of four, active Special Interest Groups (SIG) came forward to recap the focus of their SIG and invite Pi members to participate.

Pat Fauquet leads the *iLife* SIG, that focuses on the many applications within Apple's *iLife* suite. Recent SIG sessions have explored visual applications, particularly *iMovie* and *iPhoto*. Topics are selected based on member requests. The *iLife* SIG meets monthly on General Meeting Saturday afternoons in same room as the main meeting.

Tom Carlson heads up the Genealogy SIG, that explores the software available for the Mac to aid in learning about family relationships and history and sharing the information with family members. It meets quarterly and the next meeting is in September.

[Editor's Note: The September General Meeting program grew in size; therefore, SIG and other meetings were not held.]

Upcoming topics include how to reduce duplicate data in *Reunion*, *Reunion's* application for the iPhone/iPod touch, using DNA to find older family tree members, and a demonstration of the new Virtual Globe in *MacFamilyTree*.

Cheryl Lavoie is the leader of the Graphic Arts SIG, that focuses on a wide variety of graphic arts topics. Recent meetings included demonstrations of 3D software from Maya, using a robotic arm to sculpt in clay, lightening photography with white card and flash, and turning cell phone pictures into photo booklets. The group meets on the second Saturday of every month from 10 a.m. to noon at Macintosh Business Solutions in Gaithersburg.

Len Adler directs the Afternoon Learners SIG, The group has been on a summer break, but will restart on September 17th. It meets once a month on the third Thursday of the month at the Pi Clubhouse. Topics are chosen each month for the following meeting. In September Nancy Little will demonstrate how to convert VHS tapes to DVD.

Main Presentation — Pi Widgets

The main event at the June General Meeting was a series of presentations on options for upgrading your computer, to improve its performance and your productivity. Bob Jarecke led off with a short *Keynote* presentation, that talked about: (1) increasing memory (RAM); (2) upgrading your computer by replacing the hard drive with a new one that is large and faster; and (3) changing out your Mac's optical drive for one with

the latest, high-performance Blu-ray. He also revealed a most helpful Web site (<http://www.macsales.com>) for finding the correct RAM for a Mac, and talked about how to find the best price for the memory you need.

Robert "Bo" Huttinger came next, and focused on the how-to of upgrading. Using a G5 PowerMac, he showed us where the memory slots are located, and how to remove old RAM chips and install the newer, more capable ones. He observed the time-honored rule about wearing a grounding strap on one hand to avoid a static electric discharge, that could mess up the Mac. Although Bo was painstakingly thorough, it took only a few minutes to demonstrate how easy it is to take a Mac that lumbered along at a turtle's pace, and turn it into a speedy computing hare.

Once he had upgraded the RAM, Bo moved on to hard drives and optical drives. He showed us where these drives are located, and the technique for replacing them.

Next on stage was Tim Childers, who was intending to demonstrate how to change out a hard drive in a MacBook. Conveniently (or inconveniently depending on how you look at it), his son's MacBook had just had a hard disk drive failure; Tim undertook to do the repair at the General Meeting. Brave soul!

Tim had done his homework, and he brought the audience up to speed by showing a short, online video of the process. Tim's plan was to match the video step by step, but that didn't happen. The video made the process look easy — which it was. It also made it look fast — which it wasn't. With the video abbreviating the steps, and the time it takes to unscrew a screw,



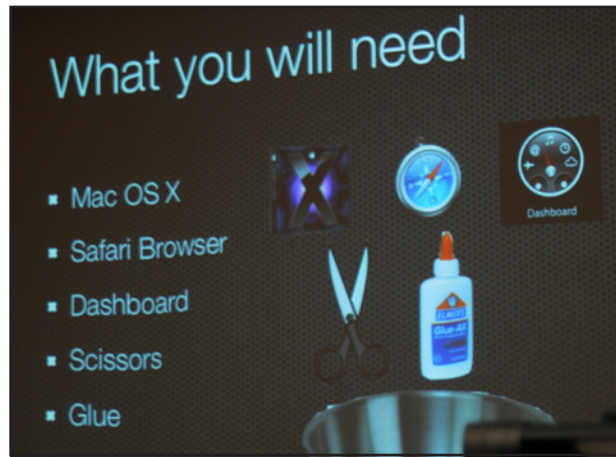
Bo Huttinger with a video camera in his steady hand captures the hard drive replacement action as Tim Childers works on his son's MacBook.

Tim fell behind. But he persevered, and soon a new hard drive was whirling away in the MacBook. Tim's demonstration showed us all that replacing a hard drive (and memory) in Apple's newest laptops is easy — and that the best laid plans of mice and men can go awry!

The presentation hit some other snags as well. We tried to shoot the action using a video camera and project it on the room's screen. We discovered that it is hard to capture close-up activities with an unfamiliar video camera. We also discovered that if you use *iChat* to show the live action, it inconveniently "times out"

after a few minutes, and the camera has to be reset to get the video flowing again to the main screen.

Oh, well, we got through the bulk of the planned presentation before the clock struck twelve and the pizza lunch arrived.



Left: Domino's delivers lunch. Note, the delivery guys is wearing iPod earphones. Above: Two slides from Larry Kerschberg's One More Thing presentation on how to make a Pi Widget.

One More Thing

The one thing we didn't get to before lunch was Larry Kerschberg's presentation on how to create a Dashboard Widget. We postponed this until after lunch because we ran out of time, and unfortunately several members were absent for it. Those of us who stayed learned the few, simple steps you can follow to create your own Washington Apple Pi Widget! Here it goes:

- Open Safari Browser to your favorite URL: <http://www.wap.org>
- Go to Safari's File Menu and click on: Open in Dashboard
- Safari will ask you to move the white box to select the part of the Web page you want to use in creating the widget.



- In this case, we select the part of the Web page that includes the Home, Calendar and other hyperlinked buttons.
- Click the Add Button on the right in the browser window.

That's it. You have created the Dashboard widget. You can now click on the Home, Calendar and other links, and Safari will take you the corresponding page at wap.org. You can use the widget to keep in touch with Pi activities, events and news.

Special Interest Groups and other events

One Special Interest Group — the *iLife* SIG — met after Larry's presentation. Pat kept the group spellbound with her coverage of Apple's *iPhoto* application. We also held the *member helping members* session, and a goodly number of folks showed up, some to get help and some to watch.

July 2009: Social Networking, Part I

By Lawrence I. Charters

Social networking is the latest rage. President Barack Obama won the presidency, in part, through adroit use of social networking. Former Governor Sarah Palin used social networking – specifically, Twitter – to announce that she was resigning from office. Opposition leaders in Iran used social networking to protest repression by the government. Over 200 million people worldwide use Facebook to join virtual communities praising *Serenity* (the movie), Boston (the band), Buddha (the philosopher), and Office Depot (the chain store).

But social networking existed long before Facebook or Twitter. The July General Meeting focused on Macintosh applications that were “social” when “social” wasn’t cool. But first, there were...

Questions & Answers

The promised Q&A Panel of Experts did not materialize due to gravitational flux anomalies in the transporter tubes. So we faked it.

Q: Are there classes where you can learn about social networking?

A: Are there ever! Because it has a high profile in the news, social networking has spawned a massive industry, with its own conferences, conventions, classes, seminars and workshops. Generally speaking, you should avoid all of them, unless they are free or under \$25. Most of these

classes, conferences, seminars and such can’t teach you, even for \$2500, anything you can’t teach yourself by playing with these tools for an hour or two.

Local community colleges and libraries often have classes that cover social networking tools and are free or low cost. But do take care not to spend more for a class than the social networking tool costs — and most social networking tools are free.

Q: What about Lynda.com classes?

A: Lynda.com has absolutely superb tutorials on a great many things. The tutorials are arranged in nicely digestible clumps, with excellent, focused video presentations. However, Lynda.com shows you how to use specific software packages; the site has no tutorials on social networking, which is at best a vague name for a type of online social structure, not a specific piece of software.



Lawrence Charters served as the opening act for the meeting as he handles question after question during the Question & Answer session. The small recorder on the chair to his left serves as his brain trust when it comes time to write up the what happened at the meeting.

Q: Are there any dangers to social networking?

A: Of course. Generally speaking, be very careful about the audience for any particular social networking tool, and be very careful about what you disclose about yourself and your family. A recent scandal in Britain involved social networking tools and the new head of the British intelligence service, MI6. Prior to his appointment, Sir John Sawers was known as a British diplomat, one of those faceless men in gray who try to keep nations from bashing one another. His spouse, a schoolteacher, posted the usual items on Facebook about family and friends. Then it was announced that Sawers would take over MI6 in November 2009, immediately making him and his family prime targets for terrorists everywhere, and these innocent postings became much more dangerous.

Generally speaking, do not disclose anything on a social networking site that can be used for identity theft. If you give your name, for example, there is no need to give an accurate birth date. If you give your home city, there is no need to reveal your street address. Omit gender or nationality if you can; those who know you should be familiar with both. Be general about your current employment, especially if you work for the government. “Department of Defense” is nicely vague; “First Sergeant, 832nd Ordnance Battalion” is far too specific.

If you have minor children, you might wish to be vague about their names, where they go to school, what their hobbies are, and pretty much anything and everything else. “Mother of three” should be enough to identify you without compromising the identity of your children.

One audience member noted that you should be general about your employment if you work for a private firm as well. A general industry you work in (IT consulting or just “consulting”) could be a safer choice than a specific company name. Providing a specific employer and years of seniority could allow someone to zero in on which unique “Brian Johnson” or “Beth Smith” you are. This same precaution, by the way, applies to on-line surveys, including those done by your employer. If you specify you are in finance and are male with 20 years’ experience, your “anonymous” survey may not be so anonymous.

Birth dates are important for identity theft, so: lie. Since many social networking sites work differently for those over 18, if you are an adult, make yourself much older. Born in 1955? Say you were born in 1918. Your friends should know better, but you’ll trip up a criminal attempting to take out loans in your name.

The most important security measure you can take is to pick a long password. It need not be hard to remember, but it should be: long. Twitter, for example, was hacked last year because the root password – the password controlling the entire site – was the word “awesome.” While some might think Twitter awesome, it was trivially easy to break in using a simple dictionary attack, one where the hackers tries every word in a dictionary until they get a hit. Since “awesome” happens to start with an “a,” presumably this didn’t take too long.

Long passwords, however, can be both memorable and very, very difficult to break. “AwesomeTwitterific” has the virtue of being memorable, of mixed case, not in any dictionary, and 18 characters long. It can’t be

broken using a dictionary attack, and a brute-force attack would take thousands of years.

Many corporations and government agencies advocate complex passwords, such as “Pre!Zhhu55” instead of “precious.” While the former is much harder to guess than the latter, it is still easier to break than “kittyisprecious,” simply because it is shorter. Complex passwords also have the drawback of being easily forgotten, so — aim for long, not complex.

Q: Why are Macs more expensive than PCs?

A: They aren’t, except perhaps in sales price. The initial cost might seem higher, but you have to add a great deal to your average Windows box to make it safe and productive. Macs, for example, don’t require disk management tools (Disk Utility does amazing things, and comes with Mac OS X), don’t require programs to combat viruses, don’t require extra security packages (though it would be nice if more Mac users simply turned on the Mac OS X firewall), don’t require add-on sound cards and drivers, video cards and drivers, etc.

Macs usually come with applications that people want and need, such as *iLife*, with its video, photo, DVD and sound editing tools. They also tend to last much longer (every General Meeting brings out at least a few Mac OS 9 fans from the 1990s), so the life cycle cost — the cost of a machine before it needs to be replaced — is lower.

Q: Are *Skype* and *iChat* secure?

A: The answer given in the General Meeting — that governments do, routinely, monitor calls to and

from foreign nations using either *Skype* or *iChat* — is entirely true. Both applications encrypt your log-in credentials. Beyond that...

After the meeting, this answer was challenged. Several people noted that *Skype* also claims to encrypt the conversation itself. True — but that doesn't mean the on-the-fly encryption of a conversation is secure from government snooping. *iChat* is encrypted only if you have gone into your account's Security setting and enabled encryption. And neither *Skype* nor *iChat* encryption works unless *all* parties to a conversation are encrypting their connection.

Since there are dozens of utilities to record *Skype* and *iChat* conversations, and store these conversations in nice, easy-to-transfer audio files, this is not the best medium for secrecy. So by all means encourage your terrorist and criminal friends to use either or both.

Q: I'm going to be moving from a Mac mini to an iMac. Should I let the Apple store migrate my files, let it happen "automatically" as part of the iMac's initialization process, or do it by hand, manually, after the fact?

A: Each works. One advantage of the Apple store is that someone with experience will do the job, and presumably do it right. The big advantage in doing it yourself is that you learn something, and learning is always good.

As for doing it "automatically" or "by hand," automatic is best, but not necessarily immediately after taking the new iMac out of the box. If you play with the new machine for an hour or two, and then use the Install disk to erase the machine and reinstall

everything, you'll not only learn if all the parts of your new machine are working, but also get to transfer your files from the Mac mini to the iMac as part of the initialization process after restoring the iMac. It doesn't cost anything except time.

Q: Are there any problems with *Mail* in moving from an older operating system to Leopard?

A: Before Tiger (Mac OS X 10.4), *Mail* stored everything in one giant file structure. Starting with Tiger, *Mail* stores each message as a separate file. This was done to allow easier access to individual messages with Spotlight. In Mac OS X 10.4, this was a definite improvement, but it really shines in Mac OS X 10.5; *Mail* and Spotlight work together extremely smoothly.

As for problems, if you have a lot of mail in Mac OS X 10.3 or earlier, it takes a *long* time to sort things out when you first move to Mac OS X 10.4 or 10.5. So do something else for a few hours; after the initial "out of one, many" conversion, everything works nicely.

Q: When should you partition a hard drive?

A: Generally speaking, never is a good time. Partitioning used to make sense in the Mac OS 8 and 9 days; the operating system got very sluggish when there were lots of files. But you can have literally hundreds of thousands of files in Mac OS X and not even be aware of the fact; the operating system doesn't care, and neither should you.

Partitioning also leads to problems if you guess wrong. The most common wrong guess: making the boot partition too small. If you leave only 32 GB for booting, and install a bunch of applications, you could

easily run out of room. And at that point, the only "solution" is to reformat the drive without partitions, which is not much of a solution.

The one exception is video editing. If you capture high-definition video directly to disk, having a dedicated partition is handy. But the easiest way to accomplish this is with a separate drive, ideally a FireWire drive. If the FireWire drive gets cluttered, it is easy enough to copy everything elsewhere and reformat the drive.

Q: What about disk drive defragmenting utilities?

A: If you reformat a drive, you defragment it. On the other hand, if you defrag a drive using a utility, you are betting that your file system is in perfect health, and that the utility will move everything around — perfectly — with perfect understanding of your file structures, permissions, and the power company's ability to provide perfect power. One wrong step at any point destroys everything on the drive, without hope of recovery.

Q: What kind of third-party utilities do you recommend?

A: Generally speaking, most users will never need any kind of special utility that doesn't already come with their Mac. Disk optimizer? No. Anti-virus? Not usually. Anti-spyware? Nope.

A classic case was a recent discussion at a meeting about *AppleJack*. *AppleJack* is a command-line utility for Mac OS X that does — well, the user wasn't sure, but had been told they needed it. The opposite is true. If it didn't come with your Mac, and you don't know what it does, you probably don't need it.

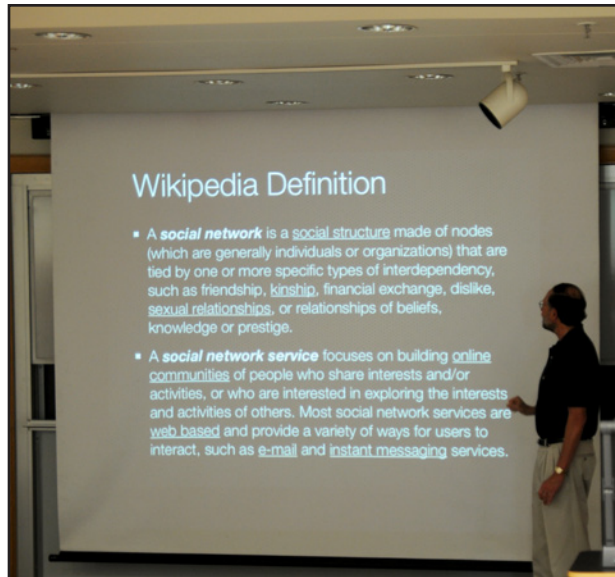
One exception to this rule is Tech Tool Deluxe. Tech Tool Deluxe is included when you buy AppleCare, and provides a nice suite of tools for checking your hard drive, video, memory, sound, etc. It is easy to understand, easy to use, and offers excellent technical explanations of what it is doing at any given time.

Q: I have problems plugging in FireWire drives. Shouldn't I be able to do that?

A: Plugging in a FireWire drive, if you have a FireWire port, should be easy. What is often difficult is daisy-chaining FireWire drives. Because of incompatible FireWire bridge chips, or overtaxed power supplies, or some combination of the two, daisy-chaining multiple FireWire devices can sometimes make all the devices seem unreliable. When in trouble, connect them one at a time and see if you can find the culprit.

LaCie, Iomega, and Western Digital enclosures seem to generate a large number of complaints when it comes to daisy-chaining, while Seagate, OWC, and NewerTech tend to get good reviews. But don't guess. If you are having problems, plug in one drive at a time until you identify the problem.

We also got a question about drive recommendations that was not part of the formal Q&A. When it comes to bare drives, Seagate drives have a five-year warranty, and are generally considered the industry standard. Western Digital's Caviar "green" drives are also getting good reviews, and use up to 40% less electricity than other similarly configured drives. Caution: Many vendors are selling "green" drives that are green only because some part of the case is colored green. Color is not an indicator of energy savings.



Professor Larry Kerschberg, who was instrumental in finding our current, great meeting location, starts his presentation with a definition of Social Networking.

Social Networking, Part I

July's main topic was social networking, which really isn't a topic at all but a constellation of topics. Trying to come up with a definition that suits everyone is difficult. At the meeting, this definition was offered:

A social structure made of individuals or organizations that are tied by one or more specific types of interdependency, such as kinship, friendship or work associations.

This isn't a bad definition of a social network, but it misses the element of technology that makes "social media" the phenomenon it is today. Social

media is a set of Web-based technologies that allow individuals to share and interact. Most Web sites do not offer any means of "sharing" anything or interacting. The Pi Web site, for example, is a one-to-many type of communications tool: the Pi (one) disseminates information out to the world (the many). On the other hand, the Pi's forums, the TCS, is a many-to-many communications tool: many people write messages, and many more respond, and an even larger number reads the result without writing anything.

The most important part of the social media phenomenon is the Web. Virtually every personal computer in the world is connected to the Internet, if not directly via a broadband connection then indirectly through a modem. Additionally, tens of millions of "smart phones" can connect to the Internet as well. And through just one part of the Internet – the World Wide Web – a couple of billion people, in every country in the world, can interact using nothing more than their computer and a Web browser.

The Mac has been in the social networking business since before "social networking" was a recognized term. AppleLink went online in 1985 as a means of sharing information among Apple employees and dealers, and eventually with user groups. While used mostly for E-mail, it had a pseudo-Mac "desktop" that allowed users to drag around files. AppleLink was used to send the first E-mail to outer space, sending a message to the crew of the STS-43 mission on the shuttle Atlantis in 1991. AppleLink gave way to eWorld, which lived for a few years before eventually being killed by the Internet and the World Wide Web.

After a few years, Apple returned to electronic services with the introduction of .Mac in January 2000. While it wasn't billed as social media, the service did allow you to have your own .Mac E-mail address, on-line storage, a Web site, and iCards that you could send out to family members, friends, enemies, and anybody else you wished.

The rise of *iTunes*, *iPhoto*, and *iWeb* turned .Mac into a major social media hub, as Mac users could create elaborate, elegant Web-based photo galleries as well as conventional Web sites. *iTunes*, of course, was not just a store for buying music, but a way of converting your CDs into files on your computer that you could then incorporate into slideshows or theme music for personal DVDs. The iTunes Store published celebrity playlists of what the rich and famous were listening to on their iPods, and you could rate and comment on songs purchased through the iTunes Store.

Social Networking with Apple Applications

Larry Kerschberg discussed social networking in the context of the Apple applications *Mail*, *iLife*, and *iChat*, and Apple's network service, MobileMe. Electronic mail is essentially a "social networking" tool; it is designed to bring people, projects and ideas together electronically. Apple *Mail*, with its strong tools for sorting, searching and filing messages, and showing message threads, is admirably suited to this task. If Apple *Mail* detects that a given user is online with *iChat*, it even flags this in Apple *Mail* with a green dot next to their name, allowing you to switch from text-based interchanges to free-form, interactive speech.

MobileMe, the revised .Mac service, has greatly expanded social networking tools. The Web-based versions of Apple *Mail*, *Address Book*, and *iCal* closely



The presentation on Apple applications applicable to the meeting's theme of social networking covered the applicability of Apple's Mobile Me service.

resemble the desktop applications, and integrate seamlessly. Sync services allow multiple Macs to have access to the same E-mail, the same contacts and the same calendar information. With the proper equipment and an agreeable ISP (Internet Service Provider), you can even remotely log in to your Mac at your home or office via Back to My Mac and MobileMe. Finally, Find My iPhone allows you to find your iPhone if it is lost around your house or office, or remotely wipe it if some ne'er-do-well absconded with it.

iTunes can also be used for playing music among several machines on a local area network, giving new meaning to "social networking." The iTunes Store

has been gradually building up iTunes University as a major educational force, with thousands of free courses offered by universities, non-profits and government agencies covering every topic imaginable.

Then there is the App Store, which in a little over two years has managed to confuse all the careful lines of demarcation between what you could do with a computer and what you could do with a phone, or an iPod. An iPhone either comes with, or can freely add, applications to update a MobileMe photo gallery, add a video to a MobileMe site, update your Facebook status, send or receive a tweet on Twitter, or do 60,000-odd

other things. You can even be old-fashioned and use it as a phone.

iPhoto galleries can be published with literally the press of a button. You can share these photos not only on your MobileMe Web site, but also on Flickr and Facebook. If you have relatives with modest online skills, you can also print out photo books, calendars and cards directly from *iPhoto*.

iWeb, part of *iWork*, is a full Web development application. You can use it to create not only complex Web sites, but also blogs, complete with RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds. It also offers some photo gallery options not present in *iPhoto*.

iChat, included as a standard part of Mac OS X since 10.3, can be used for talking to up to 10 users at once, using text, sound, video, or a combination of all three. You can also use it for transferring files and photos, and even sharing your desktop.

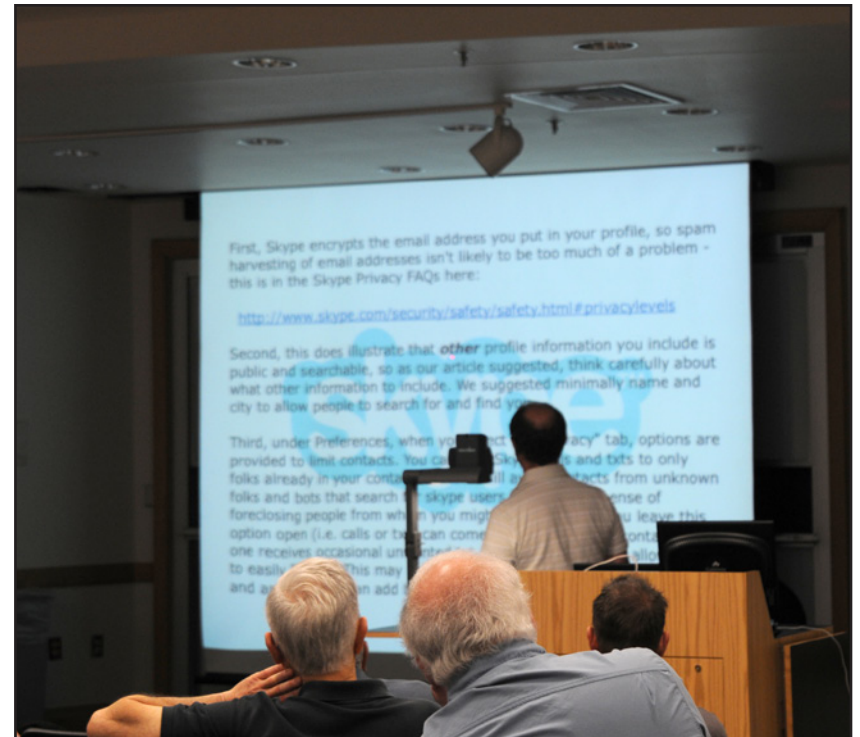
Even though most of these applications are not new, Larry's presentation was continually punctuated with questions and exclamations of "I didn't know that." The depth and breadth of Apple's everyday applications excited the audience; the many laptops in evidence were kept quite busy as users followed Larry's every move with experiments of their own.

Skype

Bob Jarecke talked a bit about *Skype*, which is similar to *iChat* (it is an instant messaging application that supports text, video, and sound), but is marketed as a telephone service. Developed by programmers from Estonia, it was incorporated as a Swedish company, headquartered in Luxembourg, and

established in offices around Europe. Eventually it was purchased by eBay, which so far hasn't found any great reason to keep it and has said it will spin it off into an independent company next year. Origins and company politics aside, *Skype* is a world-wide hit. Unlike *iChat*, *Skype* is available for Windows, Macs and Linux. The free version allows you to chat with anybody in the world who is online and also has a *Skype* account. If *Skype* is running on their computer but they are doing something else, an incoming *Skype* connection rings a bell that sounds like an old-fashioned telephone. You can talk for hours on end, for free.

Many people also opt for using *Skype* for regular phone service. The paid version of *Skype* will ring a regular telephone, wired or wireless. Generally speaking, international long distance calls, in particular, are much less expensive via *Skype* than via regular commercial telephone service. Since *Skype* runs over Internet connections, there are occasional strange pauses and dropouts due to network saturation, and sometimes you can get an audio-only connection instead of audio and video. But despite its limitations, *Skype* is undeniably a great service, and without much fanfare has become one of the largest "phone companies" in the world.



Presenter Bob Jarecke covered Skype's contribution to the meeting's social networking topic, and this is about the point when he said (or, at least, thought), "Man, that's a busy slide." Note Lawrence in the foreground trying to read around the obstructions.

Next Month: Part II

The meeting did not run out of steam, but it did run out of time. Even though the presentation was limited to just Apple applications and *Skype*, the level of interest was so great that sometimes the avalanche of questions threatened to derail the presentations. So in August there will be a Part II, focusing on Facebook and Twitter.

August 2009: Social Networking, Part II

By Lawrence I. Charters

The August 2009 General Meeting was a continuation of our July discussion of social networking. This time, though, instead of Apple applications the focus was on popular Web-based social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, with brief excursions into LinkedIn and GovLoop, and a finale of YouTube. But first came questions and answers.

Questions and Answers

Q: Do certain Apple stores have better Geniuses than others?

A: This is an awkward question, since the obvious answer is “of course.” But in general, the larger stores have larger staffs, so can accommodate a larger and more diverse set of customers. More usefully, Apple stores tend to be busy on nights and weekends, and relatively sane on weekdays. So if you want personal attention, going in during the workday often gets a

faster response and more attention than during a mad-busy weekend or evening.

Q: Updating to Mac OS X 10.5.8, I couldn’t complete the update even though I was logged in as an admin user.

A: Interesting problem! Obviously, this shouldn’t happen, but if it does, you might fire up Disk Utility and use the First Aid tab to Check Permissions. It probably won’t find anything entertaining, but it is free.

Another useful exercise: go into your Utilities folder and launch *Keychain Access*. Once open, go into the *Keychain Access* menu, select Keychain First Aid and, after typing in an admin name and password, have *Keychain Access* verify your Keychain database. (Keychain is the Mac OS X service that manages passwords.)

Q: Mail doesn’t show up in Apple *Mail* but does show up in Web mail. How come?

A: There are a number of possible reasons, but two common ones are (1) You somehow have *Mail* set up to filter messages, and it is busy filtering things, filing them away and you can’t find them; (2) The local index for your mail is corrupted. In the former case, check on your mail filters (under Preferences > Rules); in the latter, consider rebuilding your mailbox (Mailbox > Rebuild). Rebuilding the mailbox rebuilds the local directory of your mail.

Q: *Mail* automatically enters addresses when I write to people. The problem is: the addresses are wrong.

A: Normally, auto-completion is quite handy: type part of an address, and *Mail* fills in the rest. But if you made a typo at some point, or someone changed their E-mail address, it can be frustrating. Go to the Window menu (yes, Window menu), select Previous Recipients, and prune out addresses you don’t want. Note that deleting addresses from Previous Recipients does not delete anything from your Address Book, so feel free to be ruthless.

Q: When I click on some files on the desktop, the wrong application opens. Why?

A: “Why” is not an easy question to answer, so let’s worry about a fix. Select such a file, select Get Info (File menu, Get Info), click on Open With, and pick the



A presenter's view. There were many familiar faces in the audience and a few new ones, too. The good news, no one was dozing off!

application you want to open this type of file. If you are absolutely certain of your choice, press the Change All button.

[Editor's note: A quicker way to open the file in another application is to click on the file with the Control key depressed (right click with mouse or use a two finger tap with laptop) and select the Open With option.]

Q: How do you open E-mail messages and have them display in a larger font size?

A: In Apple *Mail*, go into Preferences > Fonts and Colors and select the fonts and font sizes you want *Mail* to use.

Another useful method of temporarily increasing the font size — and the size of everything on the screen — is to use Apple's assistive technologies. Go into System Preferences > Universal Access > Seeing and click on Zoom. With Zoom turned on, Command-Option + (you need not press the Shift key for the +) makes things larger, and Command-Option - (you need not press Shift for the minus, either) makes things smaller. This trick works with anything, not just *Mail*.

Another technique: while reading a message in *Mail*, Command + (plus) makes text larger, Command - (minus) makes text smaller.

[Editor's note: Another method, for individual E-mails, is to place the font sizing tool in the top tool bar. This can be done by going to View in the menu and selecting Customize Toolbar. A window will drop down. Simply drag the "Smaller Bigger" tool (and any others you might need) to the top toolbar.]

Q: Sometimes I get messages in microscopic type. What can I do about that?

A: These are almost invariably sent by confused Windows users. One easy, quick way to fix the problem: reply to the message. The font will switch to your normal font, and the microscopic print should be much larger. You don't have to *send* a reply, of course.

Q: My Windows friends send me messages that have attachments called Win.dat. What are these?

A: Microsoft Outlook sent an E-mail message that didn't follow E-mail standards, and the extra junk (usually formatting) is in the Win.dat file. You can't read it; just delete it. Do note that some viruses may also be attached to Win.dat files. The viruses can't hurt your Mac, but they *could* hurt other Windows users so: just delete them.

Pi Business

Pi President Jay Castillo then addressed the audience, mentioning, among other things, parking. In September, George Mason will be back in session, and parking will be more constrained as the university awakens from the summer slumber.

The September General Meeting will also be different in that it will involve not only Washington Apple Pi but the George Mason University Mac computer club, which has been not all that active. Larry Kerschberg, a Pi Board member and a GMU professor in computer science, will deliver the main presentation, talking about cloud computing. It sounds heavenly. Check the Pi Web site for details.



Pi President, Jay Castillo, reacting to someone's humorous quip. Just after the picture was snapped, the wise guy was sent to the dean's office!

Jay mentioned that Snow Leopard should be out by September [he was correct; Apple released it for sale on August 28], so there will probably be some time set aside for discussion of this frosty feline.

Social Networking Part II

The scheduled speakers could not attend, so Lawrence Charters filled in, giving him another opportunity to write about himself in the meeting notes in the third person. And why not? Social Networking is all about — me.

To illustrate, the TCS, the Pi's famous computer-based forums (<http://tcs.wap.org/>), are message based. You can search for individuals, but the organization of the TCS is based on broad subject categories. The main subject categories — Macintosh computers, iPhones and iPods — have been pre-selected through

membership in Washington Apple Pi. Since the very beginning, Apple hardware and software has been the glue that holds the Pi together.

Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/>), in contrast, is all about the individual. You put your digital face, so to speak, on the World Wide Web, creating pages that show your photograph, give your birthday, where you live, where you went to school, what you are reading, who you are dating, photos of your latest vacation or most recent traffic accident — anything and everything you might wish to tell the rest of the world. The service is free, and essentially without restraint; you can post pretty much anything about yourself, no matter how unwise or how true or false.

If this doesn't strike you as a useful service, consider: there are over 250 million active users of Facebook, worldwide. If Facebook were a country, it would be the fourth largest on the planet, behind China, India, and the U.S. You will probably discover, if you look, that a large number of your family members, regardless of age, and a large number of your coworkers, neighbors, church members, and virtually every other group you associate with is already on Facebook. Lawrence learned, for example, that the Pi has a Facebook account; search for "Washington Apple Pi" (and then join the group, of course).

Facebook started out life focusing on colleges and college students, who built up social networks according to their college and additionally by their dorm, sorority or fraternity, campus activities (band, football, etc.), or academic major. This gradually expanded, due to job hunting needs, into the corporate world, and major and minor businesses added their own Facebook pages. Facebook entered

the mainstream in the 2008 Presidential Election when Obama's campaign created the most active Facebook account and used it as a platform for organizing local and regional campaign efforts. By 2009, state and federal government agencies were joining Facebook, too.

Similar in nature but more focused is LinkedIn (<http://linkedin.com/>), a social networking community aimed at professionals. It is heavily used by recruiting firms to find people looking for work, or by professionals looking for jobs. There are discussion groups for almost everything, including a number of Mac discussion groups. Unfortunately, there are also public relations representatives, and they have a bad habit of spamming the discussion groups with press releases and overblown hype.

Even more focused is GovLoop (<http://www.govloop.com/>), a social network for federal, state, local and international government workers, government consultants and contractors, and students and professors of public policy. There are discussion groups on acquisitions, communications, best practices, human resources, E-government, and pretty much any other kind of government topic you can imagine. One group that Lawrence is quite fond of, mainly because of the splendid irony, is "Ancient Media," a group that talks about — books.

The last social media service covered was Twitter (<http://www.twitter.com/>). Twitter is a service that is easily mocked since it has, as its sole purpose, sending and receiving "tweets," short messages of no more than 140 characters. The limit is imposed by SMS (Short Message Service) technology used in smart phones for text messaging, since these are also limited



Lawrence Charters in a trance as he formulates another slashing, witty remark about the pitfalls of using Windows.

to 140 characters. Using Twitter and a Web browser, you can send out short messages to anybody and everybody who subscribes to your account. (These subscribers are called "followers" on Twitter).

Tweets can be sent to smart phones, such as the iPhone, or to E-mail accounts, and can also be sucked into a Web page via RSS feeds. Useful applications include notifying followers of updates to a Web site, or coordinating a conference, or sending out emergency notices of problems in a neighborhood or region. The usual uses, unfortunately, are inane postings by

people with nothing to do. Examples: “Going out for pizza,” “Using the restroom,” “Thinking of cutting the grass,” and the ever-popular “Not doing much of anything.”

Despite the inanities, it is worth getting a Twitter account (they are free) simply to follow some individual or group of interest. The Smithsonian sends out tweets notifying followers of changes in exhibits, of IMAX movie schedules, and of times of presentations. The pandas at the National Zoo have their own Twitter accounts. Barack Obama has a Twitter account, with over two million followers.

YouTube

If Facebook is big, YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com>) is bigger. While not usually considered a “social networking” site, YouTube is immensely influential. Each day, more original video content is posted to YouTube than is produced by all the television networks, worldwide, in a year. Companies, governments, and private individuals can all post material, and hundreds of millions of visitors get to rate the video, share the video, add the video to their own private YouTube playlists, post comments on the video, argue with other comments on the video...

Robert “Bo” Huttinger had intended to be at the meeting, but life, as it often does, decided otherwise. So Bo was represented virtually, via a Keynote presentation that talked about YouTube, explained why it is important, and why it is dangerous (“a monumental time suck”). The presentation also reviewed how to embed YouTube video into a Web page, how to subscribe to YouTube channels, how to mark YouTube favorites, and how to create your own channel, if you feel ambitious.



Pat Fauquet leads her *iLife* SIG faithful during their post lunch session. In the bottom image, Cheryl Lavoie poses with the lunch fare — Domino's Pizza.

As a finale, the presentation provided a live demonstration of YouTube. The video honored was “Arlington: The Rap,”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4T1RMuoQnKo>

which left the audience howling with laughter. It is hard to imagine this video becoming so popular so quickly via any other means.

Other Stuff

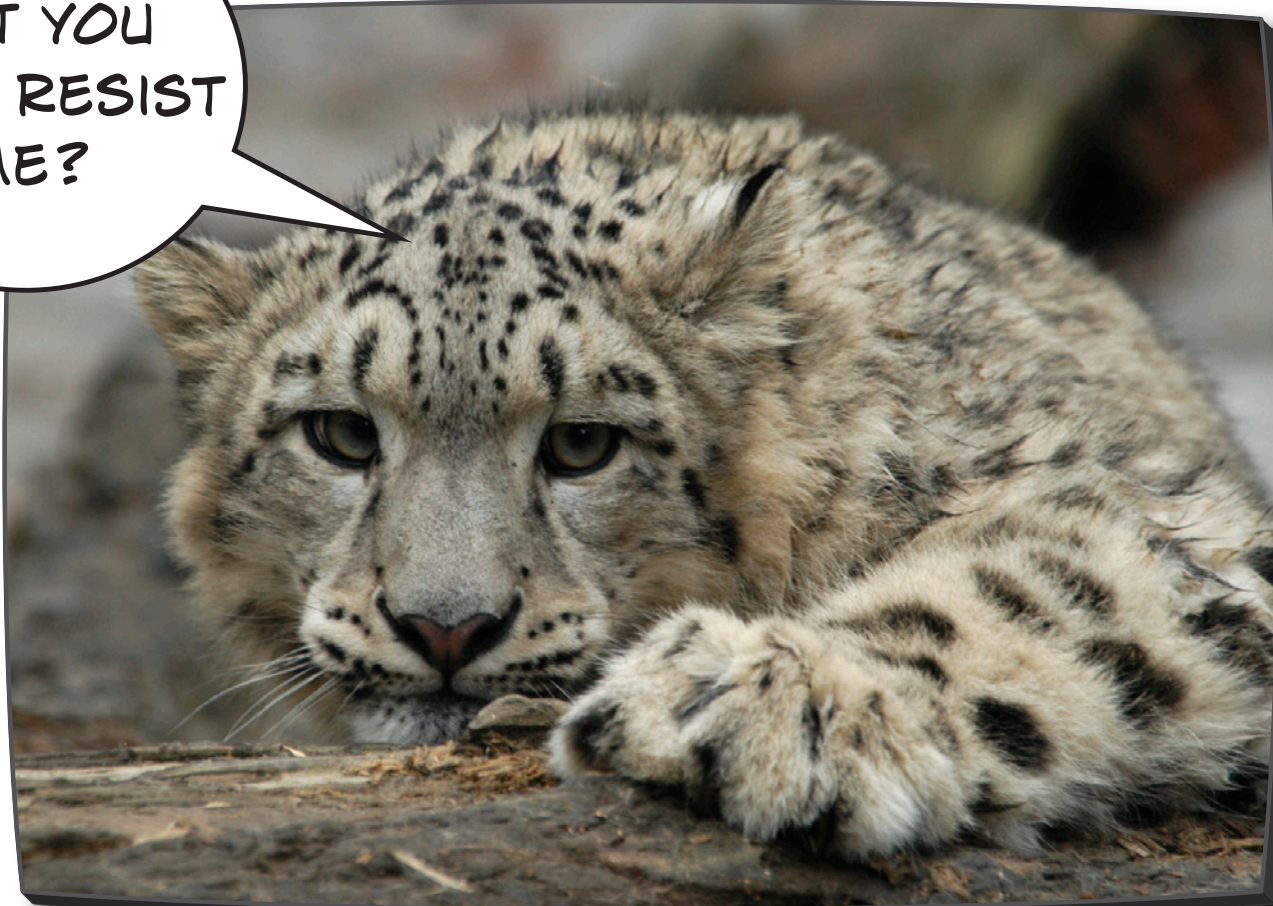
After the main presentation, we had a short break for Domino’s pizza, followed by an *iLife* SIG session conducted by Pat Fauquet, and a simultaneous *members helping members* session where people could get one-on-one help. Both were well attended.

All-in-all, it was another great monthly meeting under our belts. See everyone in September.



Pi Puddly Cat

BET YOU
CAN'T RESIST
ME?



Washington Apple Pi Meetings

Cloud Computing and Snow Leopard

September 26, 9:30 a.m., George Mason University

The September 26 General Meeting will be a double-header event. The main presentation for the morning session will address having your data anywhere, anytime on any device. Pi member, Professor Larry Kerschberg is our guest lecturer. Just think; your Mac, iPhone or iPod touch all singing from the same sheet of music!

The afternoon session will focus on the best of the recently released Mac OS X Snow Leopard operating system. An Apple GMU Student Rep, Clay Ellington, will advise on installation techniques and other important nuances of this Mac OS X upgrade. Bring your notebooks to class; your pencils will be working overtime taking copious notes!

Also, the Pi will be hosting the George Mason University Mac User Group at this meeting. Come meet more Mac enthusiasts! There will be the usual pizza lunch but no SIGs or formal help session.



Cloud Computing – Part II

October 24, 9:30 a.m., George Mason University

This General Meeting will feature additional information on cloud computing, picking up where the previous month's topic ended. Professor Larry Kerschberg will again be at the lectern, and taking attendance. Come prepared to learn!

Here are some of the topics to be covered at the September and October meetings:

Billions and billions of servers, *e.g.*, Apple, Google, Microsoft, Yahoo, Amazon, etc.

Me and the Cloud — having your data anywhere all the time

Services for iPhone and Macs — MobileMe synchronization, email, *iDisk*, Web hosting, photo galleries, Find my iPhone.

Files backups to the Cloud — *iDisk*, *SugarSync*, *Dropbox*, etc.

Both months' meetings will be held in Enterprise Hall at George Mason University. Directions are available on the GMU and Pi Web sites where you can check for parking details. The below link will take you to the Pi News article with graphic about the free parking available.

<http://www.wap.org/news/558f4.html>

As always, check the [Pi Web site](http://www.wap.org) for additional, updated details on these meetings.

Washington Apple Pi



the pi
Members
helping
Members