

KeyMac Journal

Volume 10, Number 3

March, 2006

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Our seeming endless curiosity for improved technology, or the newest very neat gadget, makes many of us upgrade our computers, or get online to find the best price for another toy.

"I would really like a..." Whoa! Do I need it? Really?

"But, I deserve it." That excuse (rationalization?) has less importance now that I have been retired for a year – it especially has less impact since it is competing with trips, Clemson season tickets, and lots more dinners out with new friends.

So, maybe it's time to focus on what we need.

What makes our computing life better / easier / more productive / appear up-to-speed with our kids or friends? Two recent conversations are worth noting, both with PC-owning friends:

- "I have to buy a new computer because my memory is gone." (Well, mine is going too, but a new computer isn't going to help it!) What he meant was that storage of all the pictures his kids were sending had consumed his hard drive's empty space. Simple solution – a LaCie 250-megabyte external hard drive for \$155 (<http://www.smalldog.com/product/45403>). Faster than the hard drive in his computer, totally silent, and much cheaper.
- "I want to buy a Mac – now that I have time, I want to work with photos and edit my old movies. I hear a lot of the Mac software is free and it is so much easier on a Mac." So what could I possibly say? You need it!

What, then, do you need? Talk about it with Alan Houtzer at our meeting this week. And, next month Jacob Miller, will be our speaker and you can ask him also.

Gene



MONTHLY PROGRAMS

March 21: The monthly meeting of the KeyMac Club will be held from 10:00-12:00 noon with Paul Putnam from Keowee Key. He will do a show and tell on his seven years on eBay selling antiques and collectibles. His program will begin at 10 a.m. with the basics of eBay. Then he will list a few items and spend the rest of the hour answering questions and offering tips.

The second half of the meeting will feature KKPOA's own Alan Houtzer with "Tech Talk." Alan will answer your questions and address problems members have encountered.

April 18: Jacob Miller will help us understand the many specialized small programs nestled in the Utilities Folder. One is an easy way to transfer all your files from an old computer to a new replacement; there are many more that we would find very helpful.

Macintosh Training Classes

Jack Leitch and Gene Madill will continue their classes for Mac computer users from 9:00-12:00 noon in the Cherokee Room of the Keowee Key Activity Center. Please call or email Jack to register: 944.6255 or phyjac@mindspring.com.

April 20
May 25

Apple Works
Mail and Internet

MASTHEAD

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A BLURB ON BLOGS

Gladys Calhoun

What is a weblog, or blog, anyway? Generally speaking, a weB LOG (blog) is an online journal comprised of links and postings in reverse chronological order, meaning the most recent posting appears at the top of the page. Blogs typically link to other websites and blog postings, and many allow readers to comment on the original post, thereby allowing audience discussions.

The activity of updating a blog is "blogging" and someone who keeps a blog is a "blogger." Blogs are typically updated daily using software that allows people with little or no technical background to update and maintain the blog.

"Blogosphere" is the collective term encompassing all blogs as a community or social network. Many blogs are densely interconnected; bloggers read others' blogs, link to them, reference them in their own writing, and post comments on each others' blogs. Because of this, the interconnected blogs have grown their own culture. What differentiates blogs from webpages or forums is that blogs can be part of a shifting Internet-wide social network formed by two-way links between different blogs. There are sites that use the links made by bloggers to track the interconnections between bloggers.

Typically, blogs are published by individuals, and their style is personal and informal. Blogs first appeared in the mid-1990s, becoming popular as simple and free publishing tools became increasingly available, such as Pitas, Blogger and GrokSoup. By the end of 2005, there were more than 20 million blogs, and there are sites that track and index them. Since anyone with an Internet connection can publish his/her own blog, there is a great variety in the quality, content, and ambition of blogs. A blog may have anywhere from a handful to tens of thousands of daily readers.

The content and purposes of blogs vary greatly—from links and commentary about other web sites; to news about a company, person, idea; to diaries; photos; poetry; mini-essays; project updates; and even fiction. Subject matter: It may be a running commentary on current events in a specific arena. It may be a purely political tract, such as Joshua Micah Marshall's TalkingPointsMemo.com. It may be pointers to other people's work or products, such as Gizmodo (www.gizmodo.com), a site devoted to the latest and greatest gadgets. It may be a series of personal musings.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Balance February 9, 2006	\$1249.55
Deposit (dues)	105.00
Interest	.50
Balance March 7, 2006	\$1355.05



It wasn't too long afterwards, that Samantha started blogging someone else.

Or it may be a constantly updated “what's new” by a domain expert, such as Glenn Fleishman's WiFi news and commentary page. At the other extreme, the Slashdot blog, featuring news about technology and tech policy, is essentially written by its audience.

Many blogs are personal, "what's on my mind" type reflections. Others are collaborative efforts based on a specific topic or area of mutual interest. Blogs are also excellent team, department, company, and family communications tools. They help small groups communicate in a way that is simpler and easier to follow than email or discussion forums.

Most blogs use links generously, allowing readers to follow conversations between blogs by following links between entries on related topics. Readers may start at any point of a blog, seeing the most recent entry first, or arriving at an older post via a search engine or a link from another site, often another blog.

Blogs are serial and cumulative, and readers tend to read small amounts at a time, returning hours, days, or weeks later to read entries written since their last visit. Blogs are open-ended, finishing only when the writer tires of writing.

How to Start a Blog

1. Set up your blog by checking out a few of the main free blog sites, like Livejournal.com, Blogger.com, TheDiary.org or Blogdrive.com. All offer free accounts that come with a lot of features. Don't be put off because it sounds technical. It usually isn't.
2. Explore other blog sites that offer more features for a small fee, such as Typepad.com.
3. Decide on whether or not you want your blog to be private or personal: do you want any Internet visitor to be able to read your blog, or do you just want your friends and family to be able to read it? Most blog sites offer the ability to password-protect your published posts so only those whom you approve can view what you have written.
4. Decide on how you want your blog to look. You can pick a color scheme and layout. Most sites come with a set of predefined layouts and schemes that you can choose from, or you can edit your own.
5. After you have set up your blog, write a few posts to test it out, and make any adjustments to the layout or style that you see fit.
6. If you want to make your blog look more attractive, there are some sites that have helps that might make it l

look better. One example is blogskins.com, which also comes with Photoshop and HTML tutorials.

7. Publish your blog by sending the URL to your friends or publish the URL on your website. Add the URL to posts you make on other blogs.

Tips:

Determine a theme: Most bloggers take one of three approaches. Some write on whatever happens to interest them at the moment. In this sense, their blog is truly a "web journal." Others select a single theme and stick to it. Still others focus on a primary theme but occasionally deviate from it. If you want to develop a following of loyal readers, the latter two approaches are best. People who have similar interests will keep returning to your posts. If you update your blog frequently, more people will return on a regular basis to read it. Establishing a reader base will motivate you to write more and in turn more people will read your posts. Keep the posts interesting. Try to avoid focusing on things that most readers won't find worthwhile (such as "I went to Radio Shack today and saw Tom.")

Spellcheck your writing before posting.

Don't get discouraged if no one visits your site for the first few months. It will take some time for your blog to get noticed.

If your blog is open to anyone using the Internet, avoid posting anything on your blog that might be personal to other people. Use first names only at the very least, or use a pseudonym for that person.

Young People Fuel Blogging Boom

Youth are pouring their minds, if not their hearts, into cyberspace. They're doing it to clear their heads, stow their thoughts and get feedback from peers. Their blogs enable them to connect with friends old and current. Given their penchant for latching onto new technology, it's not surprising that young people also are blogging at a much higher rate than adults.

Parents and grandparents need to be aware of some of the pitfalls of blogging. Blogs may provide a creative outlet and an online forum for young people, but the Internet also is an easy hiding place for online predators, and it's all too easy for underage Internet users to lie about their age to bypass Web site age restrictions. The Internet safety group Wired-Safety offers blog guidelines for parents. For more information, check out www.wiredsafety.org □

macHome HOT TIPS Managing Your Widgets

There are hundreds of widgets available for download from the Apple website

(<http://www.apple.com/downloads/dashboard/>).

Unfortunately for the frequent widget downloader, your Widget Bar in Dashboard can quickly become cluttered with once-used widgets since you can't completely remove these unwanted widgets while in Dashboard.

To get rid of these unwanted widgets, you'll need to know a little about how and where widgets are installed. A widget can be installed in two ways, as a system-wide widget, available to every user on your Mac, or as a user-specific widget. To remove a system-wide widget, simply go to the Library>Widgets folder (accessible to you if you have Admin level access) and move the widget(s) to the trash. To remove a user-specific widget, go to yournamefolder>Library>Widgets and move the widget(s) to the trash. □

MORE HOT TIPS

Tech Tails, Small Dog Electronics
Newsletter

Apple Disk Utility 10.4 by Troy@smalldog.com

One of the features that I just discovered in the Disk Utility application of OS 10.4 is the erase option. I have always known that you could erase a hard drive from booting from a CD in Disk Utility, but now you have an option to erase the free space from the hard drive from which you have booted.

With Tiger, you can simply click on the name of your hard drive in disk utility and choose the erase option. From this window a new option button appears which allows you to erase the free space of your hard drive. From within this options button, you can zero out deleted files, do a 7-way or 35-way pass deletion - which will provide a high level of security against deleted data theft - as well as "test" the hard drive for disk failure. Combine this new erase function with the built in S.M.A.R.T. reporting status and you have several methods of detecting a failing hard drive and protecting yourself against confidential data recovery. Just one of the many advances of the Apple OS that I am discovering as I prepare to take the Apple Help desk Exam that is required of Apple Service providers every year. □

Isolating Issues in OS X by Troy@smalldog.com

AppleCare and the Apple limited warranty do not cover software issues. When people come into our shop with the spinning wheel of death or a blue screen hangup, they are disappointed when we boot their machine from an external hard drive and it works fine, and then we inform them that we can resolve their software issue but that it is not a covered warranty repair.

Having a few tricks to try before bringing in your machine can save you time, money, and hassle. I ran across this timely article in the Apple Knowledge Base (below) that is a great source of information and links to get you out of software jams. Combine that with a copy of DiskWarrior and an external drive and you should never have to call upon a software consultant again for OS issues!

<http://docs.info.apple.com/article.html?artnum=25392> □

Art's Widget of the Week by Art@smalldog.com

This week's fun Mac OS X 10.4 Tiger Widget relates to 80s movie lore. Titled 80s Moviebot, this funny little widget speaks random movie quotes from both popular and cult movie classics. The link for info on 80s Moviebot is here:

http://www.apple.com/downloads/dashboard/movie_tv/80smoviebot.html

The widget allows each movie quote to be linked to its corresponding page on one of my household's favorite websites, the IMDB or International Movie Database.

The submitters of this widget are Mindre Panda. Their other software downloads are available here:

<http://www.mindrepana.com/menu.php?num=3>

The 80s Moviebot speaks the quotes in one of two voices: "Zarvox," the original robot voice, and "Bruce," who is slighter faster and closer to how a human voice sounds.

To some extent, this widget is similar to playing an audio trivia game where you hear the quote and guess the movie before looking at the screen to confirm. Are you a movie nut? If so, you will want this widget on your Dashboard. □