

KeyMac Journal

Volume 11, Number 2

<http://www.keymug.com>

February, 2007

President's Message

Your guest speaker this month is Bobby Morrison, Apple's Greenville-based Solutions Consultant. He is fresh from San Francisco's MacWorld held last month, so there will be lots of neat topics for him to share with us.

He often sends me emails about things happening in his world, nearly all of which we forward on to you. Last week he sent this along:

*Gene, here is the link to the Greenville Apple Shop website that I have created in iWeb and I am hosting through my .Mac membership >>>
<http://web.mac.com/compusa594/iWeb/Site/Welcome.html>*

Please forward to the KeyMac folks and anyone who would like to add me to their iCal calendar. I will do a brief overview of adding my iCal to their calendar when I come down. There is a link @ the bottom of the homepage of my Apple Shop site that has my calendar of events for February—see you soon. Bobby

It would be great to have a large turnout to thank him for making the trip—he is always entertaining. And, be sure to bring your questions. I want to know about the new Apple TV.

Quick reminders...if you haven't paid your dues, Arlene would love to hear from you, and...if you plan to attend one of the three classes Jack is holding soon, let him know quickly.

Thanks. I really hope we see you Tuesday.

Gene



MONTHLY PROGRAMS

February 20: Bobby Morrison, the Apple representative from Comp USA, will present the highlights of MacWorld.

March 20: Gerry Holzman and Wayne Walker will discuss and demonstrate the use of iPhoto and iTunes.

April 20: TBD

OS X DISCUSSION GROUP

Informal gatherings where members help members

March 6 10 a.m. to noon

April 3 10 a.m. to noon

May 1 10 a.m. to noon

Editor's note: The KeyMac Club's web address is now located on the heading of the *Journal*. Members are asked to register and should visit the site often for updates.

MASTHEAD

Published by the KeyMac Computer Club

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Message Board Hi-lites

*Spotlighting notable posts
from our own message boards*

Managing Preference Files

Posted by: Wayne Walker (macishman)
Posted on: 07 February 2007
In the Software Help Forum

Macintosh preferences files can become corrupted. This leads to unexpected behavior in programs. Corrupted preferences can be the cause of application crashes and/or of settings being lost between launches of a particular program. Sometimes, if I'm having a problem with the Mac, I fix preference files just as a matter of course in the process of troubleshooting to eliminate that issue as a potential cause.

Fixing these type of problems is easy, but takes a bit of digging around on your system's hard drive. Preference files are automatically recreated by a program when they are not found, so our goal is to first take note of our settings, then delete the files so we can start over with a brand new set of uncorrupted preference files. This post will explain how to go about doing just that.

1. Open the program you are having problems with. For this example, I will talk about resetting preferences in Apple's Mail program. These solutions apply to almost any program, just keep in mind that when I say 'Mail' you'll have to substitute the name of the program you are having problems with instead.

With the program running, open the preferences for that particular program. This is often found under the first menu choice to the right of the little Apple icon and is usually the name of the program itself. In fixing preferences for Mail, the menu choice labeled mail contains a selection entitled "Preferences..." Select Preferences.

With preferences open, review your settings. If you have anything complicated here, you may want to take notes of what that setting is. For instance in Mail, it might be a good idea to write down the data under accounts so that when you have to set them back up after deleting the preferences, everything goes smoothly.

You should also take note of any other settings you have in preferences. These will all set back to default once you delete the preferences file.

Treasurer's Report

Balance Jan. 12, 2007	\$630.97
Deposits: dues paid	420.00
Interest:	.47
Balance Feb. 12, 2007	\$1051.44

ANNUAL TRAINING CLASSES

Basic Mac Thursday, March 15 9-12 a.m.

AppleWorks Thursday, April 12 9-12 a.m.
(Word Processing and some basic Spreadsheets, if there is enough interest)

Mail and Internet Thursday, May 10 9-12 a.m.

These classes will be given only if there is sufficient interest. They will all be held in the Cherokee Room which is limited to 15 persons.

Please notify Jack Leitch (phyjac@mindspring.com or 944.6255) ASAP which ones you will be attending. Each class is complete in itself, so you may choose to attend one or all.

2. Now we can delete the preference files themselves. On the Macintosh, preferences are found in different areas depending on how the program was set up and what its functions are. The two main locations are Hard Drive-->Library-->Preferences (this is shorthand for open your hard drive, then open your Library folder, then in that open your Preferences folder) and Hard Drive--><user name>-->Library-->Preferences.

In each folder you want to find the file that has the name of your program embedded in it. In this case of fixing the preference file for Mail, we would look for a file called com.apple.mail.plist. Find this file in both or either location depending on how your Mac is set up and drag it to the trash. Empty the trash.

Note that if we were fixing a program with a more unusual name (e.g., Zazen or AppZapper), we could use the built-in search tool Spotlight (that little magnification icon in the upper right of the menu bar) to do the searching work for us, but Mail is too generic of a term and would return so many hits that it becomes more trouble rather than less to use Spotlight.

3. Once the trash is emptied, reboot your computer. Launch the program you were trying to fix, and restore any settings you took note of in step 1.

That's it. If the problem goes away, it was your preferences file and it's now fixed. If not, the problem was not the preferences file and you'll have to search for other solutions.

A Tip for Burning CD's and DVD's from Mike Wall

If you have several CD's or DVD's you want to burn in one session, this tip may save you some frustration. I recently tried to burn four audio CD's, one after the other, on my iBook. The first two came out fine, the third just quit burning about halfway through and the fourth quit near the beginning. Thinking about it, I concluded that perhaps the read/write head was overheating, which does happen. So I then tried again with third and fourth, this time allowing some cool down time, and everything was fine. Looks like it is okay to do two one after the other, but then you should pause awhile. I'm sure the same would apply to DVD's.

CLEAR AWAY THE CLUTTER Simple Strategies That Help You Get Organized and Stay That Way (by Joe Kissell, excerpted from *Macworld*, March 2007)

The more you use your Mac, the more "stuff" you accumulate—email messages, downloaded files, personal photos, work documents, to-do items—and they all have to go somewhere. Unless you have a good system for managing this "stuff", you can quickly find yourself buried in clutter.

Clutter not only slows you down by making it harder to find the files you need, but if left unchecked, it can also slow down your Mac's performance.

It's hard to recommend one clutter-management system that will work for everyone. Some people rely on elaborate filing systems to instill order, while others think that filing is a waste of time and instead focus energy on improving their search skills. With that in mind, I've broken the clutter-control tips into two categories: one for the organizer, and the other for the searcher. In fact, you may be best served by a combination of these approaches.

The Organizer's Strategy: Go Deep, Use Shortcuts

If you're the type of person who likes to have an assigned place for everything, this strategy will work for you. With a well-conceived filing system in place, you will not have to spend time searching for the files you need; you will be able to jump right to the correct folder.

No matter how you set up your system, do not let any folder get too crowded; the more items one contains, the harder it is to find something inside. Instead, create a system of subfolders to keep things manageable. If you are spending too much time clicking through multiple levels to get to the folders you work with regularly, there are a few ways to bring them within easier reach.

Take a Shortcut: Drag folders for active projects to the left sidebar of any Finder window (if you don't see the sidebar, drag the left edge of the Finder window to the right). This adds folder aliases to the sidebar. You will then be able to access these folders not only from any Finder windows, but also from Open and Save dialog boxes. When you finish a project simply remove the folder's alias by dragging it out of the sidebar.

If you need quick access to more items than comfortably fit in the sidebar (or if you prefer to keep

the sidebar hidden), you can place aliases of active folders on your desktop instead. Of course, for this system to work, you will need to keep your desktop relatively tidy.

Carve Out Your Own Space in the Documents Folder: Apple strongly recommends storing personal files in your user folder's Documents folder. Unfortunately, some programs place their own folders in there—including Microsoft programs, Quicken, and iChat—making it harder to find your files. One way around the problem is to create a new folder within Documents for just your "stuff." To make this folder easy to spot, place a space at the beginning of the folder's name; this will force the folder to the top of the list when you look at Finder windows in List view.

Use Color: In OS X 10.4, another easy way to keep track of current projects without having to constantly click through your folder system is to use color labels in conjunction with smart folders. As documents come in or are created, you can categorize them with appropriate label colors. Just select an item and choose File: Color Label. (To give each label color a descriptive name, choose Finder: Preferences and then click on the Labels tab.)

Now you can create a smart folder that collects any files marked with a certain color, regardless of where they live in your folder hierarchy. To set up the smart folder, go to the Finder and choose File: New Smart Folder. Set the first pull-down menu to Color Label and select the label color. Click on the Save button and give your smart folder a name. Be sure the Add To Sidebar option is selected so you can easily access your smart folder from any Finder window, and then click on Save. When a file is completed or when its status changes, change the file's label color (or remove it completely), and the file will disappear from that smart folder.

Keep it Current: Once a year—or more often if you work with a lot of files—move older files from each of your top-level folders into an archive folder, so you can more easily see recent documents.

To quickly locate older files, switch the Finder window to List view, click on the Date Modified column to sort by date, and then move all the files from the past month or year into a new folder.

The Searcher's Strategy: Use Fewer Folders, Smarter Searches

If you prefer a less-structured approach to managing your files, or if you find that you are having trouble

locating the files you need within your current file structure, you may get better results by channeling your energy into developing smart search strategies than by setting up an elaborate folder structure.

Spotlight, OS X 10.4's built-in search feature, has some kinks—most notably, slow performance and a lack of advanced features—which Apple has promised to fix in OS X 10.5, scheduled to be released this spring. Use the following additional steps to improve your search results.

Use Keywords in File Names: When you save a file, take a moment to think about what words you might use to search for that file later, and then be sure to use those keywords in the file's name. For example, a file named Julia Child's Fried Chicken Balls (actually, there would never be such a thing from Julia) will be easier to track down than a file named Fried Chicken Balls 2. This suggestion also applies to creating folder names; use a different set of keywords that add context to the files within. This will help you distinguish between similarly named files on your Mac when you search.

Add Metadata to Your files: *Editor's note: what is metadata? According to Wikipedia, it is "data about data." It can generally be thought of as information that describes, or supplements, the central data. That said, we move along:*

Another way to help Spotlight track down a file is to add keywords directly to the file's metadata, using the Spotlight Comments pane. To access this pane, click on the file in the Finder and choose File: Get Info (or press Command-I) to bring up its Info window. Click on the small triangle next to the Spotlight Comments header to open the pane (if it is not already visible), and then enter keywords such as *spicy*, *appetizer*, and *favorite*. Later, you can use these terms in a Spotlight search to find spicy appetizers that you like.

Similarly, if most of your documents originate in Microsoft Word, you can set the program to prompt you for keywords every time you save a new file. These keywords will not appear in the Spotlight Comments pane; however, Spotlight will find them when performing a search.

To set up this feature, choose Word: Preferences and select Save from the left column. Select the Prompt For Document Properties option, and click on OK. Now when you save a document for the first time or select the Save As command, the Properties dialog box will appear and give you the option of entering keywords. To revise these keywords later, or to add new keywords, open the Word document and choose File: Properties.

Show Spotlight Results in Finder: One frustrating thing about Spotlight: the Search Results window that drops down from the menu bar after pressing the Command-spacebar shortcut. Selecting an item in the results list opens it, but there's no obvious way to show its location in the Finder. This is inconvenient in many circumstances; for instance, you might have multiple copies of a document saved on multiple disks, and you want to make sure that you open the proper one.

There is a simple solution: hold down the Command key when you click on an entry in the Search Results window. A new Finder window will open to the folder containing the item you selected. This method will not work with Apple Mail, bookmarks, and Apple iCal events, but it seems to work well for everything else—even Address Book contacts.

Replace Spotlight: If you would like to avoid using Spotlight completely or if you are using an earlier version of OS X that does not include Spotlight, there are several third-party programs, such as CTM Development's Foxtrot Personal Search, that you can purchase. However, your editor, the eternal optimist, holds out hope for a new, improved Spotlight to be presented in OS X 10.5.

Rediscover Your Desktop

Far too often, the OS X desktop becomes an all-purpose dumping ground for random downloads, files, and anything else we don't know what to do with. But when you have dozens or even hundreds of icons there, locating just what you are looking for becomes a challenge. To make matters worse, OS X allocates memory for each desktop icon as though it were a window, so having a lot of "stuff" on your desktop increases your Mac's RAM usage.

If you keep your desk top relatively free of clutter, you can use it to keep track of files that need to be dealt with or to hold shortcuts to important files or folders. Use the following strategies to combat the common causes of desktop clutter.

Create a Folder for Downloads: If your Web browser downloads files directly to your desktop, change your default download destination to a folder. First create a new folder named Downloads on your desktop. If you use Safari, choose Safari: Preferences, click on General, and choose Other from the Save Downloaded Files To pop-up menu; then select your new Downloads folder and click on Select.

Designate a Place for Junk: The desktop can also end up as the storage place for files we don't know what to do with. Instead of storing these miscellaneous files on the desktop itself, create a special folder for these items and put that folder (or an alias to the folder) on the desktop. Once a week, move unclassifiable "stuff" off the desktop and into this folder. Your files will still be handy, but you will have less visual clutter.

To keep track of files that have been hanging around for a while, consider keeping files on your desktop arranged by date. Click on the desktop, and then choose View: Show View Options. Select the Keep Arranged By option, and choose Date Modified from the pop-up menu.

Wipe it Clean: You can also turn off the display of icons for your hard disks, iDisk, and network volumes by opening the Finder's General preference pane and deselecting the first three items. You can still access these items from the sidebar of any Finder window or through the Finder's Go menu.

FYI

from Mike Wall

Many of us were quite put out last year when the magazine *MacHome Journal* suddenly went out of business, as we had found it the best of the Mac magazines for our typical levels of interest and expertise. Happily, it looks like there may now be a pretty good substitute. *MacAddict*, which has been around for some time but seemed a bit of a lightweight, has just re-invented itself and changed its name to *Mac / Life*. I'm reading the first issue and think they have borrowed a number of ideas, features and the "feel" from *MacHome*, and have turned it into an altogether more interesting and substantial product. A one year (12 issues) subscription is \$19.95. They have a website at www.maclife.com where you can get a good feel for the magazine, and can subscribe if you wish.

ANNUAL DUES

The annual dues are now payable. The dues are \$15 for an individual or couple. Please mail your check to Arlene Stanicek, 13 Windlass Court, Salem, SC 29676, or bring your check to the meeting.