



The GAB'er

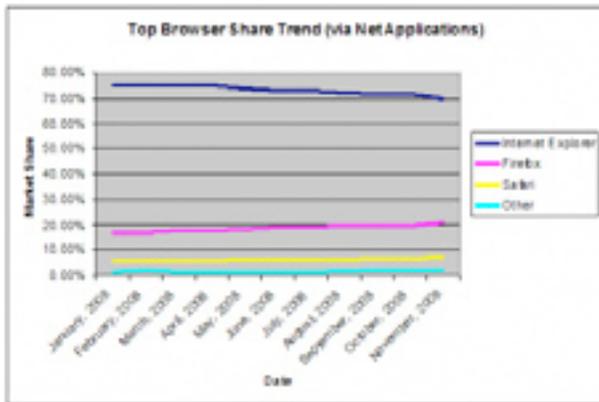
The Newsletter of the Greater Albany Apple Byters

Volume 25, Number 4 - December 2008

Safari Stats

Apple's Safari web browser has crested 7% of worldwide browser market share according to online research firm Net Applications.

While Safari's accomplishment is significant the biggest winner is clearly Mozilla's Firefox which crested 20% market share and climbed nearly an entire percentage point in one month. Meanwhile, Internet Explorer continues to bleed market share and now sits below 70%, a 1.5% decline from October 2008.



The news is similar for Microsoft and Apple's respective operating systems, with Microsoft Windows falling below 90% market share for the first time according to Net Applications and Apple's Mac OS X approaching 9%.



Coordinator's Corner

by John Buckley

Our November meeting proved very useful and entertaining with a podcast by Terry White from Adobe. I am sure he created great interest in Photoshop Elements 6.0.



Utilities

This month we will check out a lot of free utilities that come with your Mac. You will be surprised at what you have and what they can do for you. There is nothing like something free for the holidays.

To find out what's happening, GAAB is the place to be. So be sure to be at our December meeting and every meeting to find out the best information about the Mac.

The December meeting will be held at Troy High School in room 212 on Wednesday, December 10, 2008. The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. Troy High School is located at 1950 Burdett Avenue two blocks south of Samaritan Hospital. From the Northway, take exit 7 to Alternate Route 7. Follow Alternate Route 7 to Troy. Route 7 becomes Hoosick Street in Troy. Travel east on Hoosick Street to the first light past a liquor store. This is Burdett Avenue. Turn right and travel past Samaritan Hospital for about two blocks. Troy High School will be the second school on your left. The name is on the front of the building. You can park in the front lot. Come in the main entrance, go up the main stairway to the second floor, turn left and go to room 212. There is an elevator in the main lobby if needed. Usually, a custodian will provide access.

Next GAAB Meeting
December 10, 2008
Free Mac Utilities

7:00 p.m.
Room 212
Troy High School

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Serving the Apple Computer User Community Since May 1984

The Greater Albany Apple Byters is an Apple Computer User Group. Meetings are held the second Wednesday of each month (except July and August) in Room 212 of Troy High School, located on Burdett Avenue, Troy, NY.

Annual membership fee is \$10.00. Membership privileges include this newsletter, access to a large public domain software and video/audio tape library, local vendor discounts, special interest groups, and other special offers.

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Apple Ambassador

by John Buckley

Pro Tips

Apple's Pro Tips (<http://www.apple.com/pro/tips/>) provides a wealth of information about using your Mac. Here are two samples of the latest tips. You can sign-up to receive these in your e-mail. If you are using the Mac's Mail program, you are probably already signed-up if you get Apple Hot News mail items.

All About Audio Chats

iChat is a great way to communicate and share files in real time with friends and colleagues, whether they're across the hall or around the globe. With iChat, you can conduct text chats with anyone who has a MobileMe, AIM, Jabber, or Google Talk account. And if your Mac is equipped with a built-in iSight camera (or an external iSight or other FireWire camera) you can conduct video chats with up to three buddies at once.

But there's another way to chat: via audio. You can invite as many as nine buddies to an audio chat, which makes it great for group communication. As with video chats, you can record audio chats with permission from the participants. Audio chats are especially useful for interviews, long-distance business meetings, family conferences, and other situations when you'd like to communicate verbally with more than a few people at once, or save an audio record of your conversation.

Audio chats require a built-in microphone or an external mic connected to the audio input port of your computer. If a telephone or camera icon appears beside a name in your buddy list, it means they too have the software and hardware needed for an audio chat. (A "stacked" telephone or camera icon indicates that your buddy's computer has enough power to participate in a multiple-person chat.)

Audio Chat

To start an audio chat, open iChat and select the buddy or buddies you want to chat with. To choose multiple buddies, hold down the Command key as you click on their names. Then click on the telephone icon at the bottom of your buddy list, or select Invite to Audio Chat under the Buddies menu.

When they receive your invitation, your buddies simply click the Accept button to join the audio chat. All audio chat participants are listed in the chat window along with their

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Many of us won't be traveling on vacation anytime soon. After all, tough times call for tough measures. But, that doesn't mean you can't spend the holidays with your family. Start planning now, and you can save a bundle. The Web makes it easy for anyone to plan and book travel. It also makes it easy for you to reduce travel costs. Here are some handy tips for getting the best deal.

Start early

Flight rates fluctuate with demand. The holiday season is one of the busiest travel times. So, book your flights well in advance. Last-minute deals will be scarce or non-existent. Book three weeks in advance, minimum. Fares will increase after that. You may not get seats on a chosen flight. The day you book flights also matters. This is less true than with last-minute flights. But, Tuesday evening through Wednesday is best for advance purchases.

Be flexible

A little flexibility in your plans can save you big bucks. You want to fly off-peak. For example, the Wednesday before and the Sunday after Thanksgiving are peak times. Instead, consider flying the Tuesday and Saturday. Early morning or late night flights are also often cheaper. Consider changing the departing and arriving airports. You'll need to arrange for ground transportation. But your savings will probably outweigh the cost of ground transportation. There are many variables here. Fortunately, most travel sites do the work for you. Look for an option that lets you compare prices at nearby airports and dates.

Comparison shop

As with any purchase, comparison shopping is important. No site lists all airfares. That doesn't mean you must check each airline individually. Start with aggregator sites like Kayak and Yahoo! Travel. These scan many major airlines and even sites like Orbitz. Each aggregator site searches

different airlines. So, visit several before buying tickets. And remember, Southwest flights are only available online at its Web site. When you find a deal, check the airline's site directly. The airline may have a special available only on its site. For a list of all airlines' Web-only deals, visit Airfare Watchdog.

Jump on a deal

If you see a good price on a ticket, book it fast. Prices will probably only go up with demand. How do you know if you're getting a good deal? Check the historical prices of tickets on FareCompare. You'll know whether to keep shopping. Farecast also uses historical data. It makes predictions about whether a fare will rise or fall. Keep in mind that airfares have increased in the past year. Prices will be higher in general.

Keep watching prices

It is unlikely, but flight prices could decrease after you book tickets. So, keep an eye on price drops. Some sites like Orbitz offer price guarantees. If a fare drops, you get a refund. Make sure you research these guarantees. Some sites offer automatic refunds. Others do not. Coverage may differ, too. You should also track your flight on Yapta. It tracks prices after you buy. It also helps you get a refund from the airline.

Save on more than flights

You'll find rental cars and hotel rooms online, too. Check travel sites for package deals. You'll often get steeper discounts than booking each individually. Economy parking will be crowded during the holiday season. So, consider parking off-site. You can reserve a parking spot in advance. There's no worry about missing a flight! AirportParkingReservations.com and ParkRideFlyUSA.com will help you find off-site parking.





Education SIG

Ed-Tech Leaders Employ Creative Tactics to Cut IT Costs and Save Money

by Michelle R. Davis

Education Week's Digital Directions

District technology director Jared P. Mader is looking to pinch pennies and save dollars wherever he can. He's not clipping coupons or planning to turn the thermostat down as winter approaches, but he's getting creative about how to cut costs—large and small—from his IT budget.

Last year, he outsourced the building of two computer servers to a group of students in his 5,700-student Red Lion Area School District in Pennsylvania. The high school seniors taking a Cisco technology-certification class built two servers from the ground up, set up a network, and maintained it. It gave the students real-life experience in the field, and Mader estimates he saved several thousand dollars by employing the students rather than hiring a company to do the work.

Like many other district information-technology directors across the country, Mader is facing pressure to cut his technology budget without shortchanging services as a faltering economy, rising fuel and food prices, and other factors are putting the squeeze on school budgets.

"I think we're all in this same boat," Mader says of his fellow tech directors. "In a school district budget, there are so many things that are fixed items and not negotiable. It puts technology in the spotlight as one primary area to be able to save funding."

So what's a school IT director to do?

One of the best ways for districts to save money this school year will be to take advantage of the range of free, open-source technology options available. For example, in the 32,000-student Forsyth County schools in Cumming, Ga., Bailey F. Mitchell, the district's chief of technology and information, is saving \$300,000 by replacing Microsoft Office with Open Office, free software available online that does much the same thing. "The Microsoft people are about to have a duck," he says. "It's a huge chunk of change [we're saving], it's compatible [with Microsoft products], and we're not paying for it."

Mitchell also reviewed all his district's software subscriptions to see whether some were duplicative or not being used. A middle school math-simulation program contained many of the same tools as a K-12 math program the district already had, so it was let go, saving \$55,000.

"You really cringe when it's a piece of instructional software you can't renew, because typically you try to support that at all costs," Mitchell says.

In Maryland's 132,000-student Prince George's County school system outside Washington, the IT department is still grappling with a \$4 million, or 10 percent, cut in funding for the department for the 2007-08 school year. As a consequence, the department is not filling open jobs during this school year and not replacing some broken equipment, says Lisa Spencer, the district's director of technology, training, and support.

To cut costs, the district is also swapping its Microsoft Exchange e-mail for free Gmail from Google, saving more than a million dollars, she says. "When we go to Gmail, we'll have bigger mail capacity, and we don't need to concern ourselves with the cost of Microsoft products," she says.

In a small district such as Pennsylvania's Red Lion schools, even a few thousand dollars can make a difference. Mader used an open-source product to build a portal for teachers and other staff members to be able to see their files at home. "We were looking at \$4,000 for that, but I don't have \$4,000 to spend on that," he says. "We looked around more and found open-source options. Now we have a fully functional service that cost us nothing."

Lenny J. Schad, the chief information officer for the 55,000-student Katy Independent School District in Texas, says the 2007-08 school year was the first time in his five-year tenure that he was asked to make significant cuts to his budget—roughly 10 percent from his general operating fund.

He's put off training and travel he had planned for his employees and is looking at local, free professional-development options. He's also exploring the use of virtual technology for a tactic called "virtualization," which allows him to divide the power of one host server to run 30 others. The annual savings his department will see from using that approach will be close to \$400,000.

"It's a huge cost savings and a savings on power," he says.

In many districts, new technology projects are financed by bond issues approved by local voters.



Ed Zaiontz, the executive director of information services for the 40,000-student Round Rock Independent School District near Austin, Texas, says his district relies on bond money to pay for major technology initiatives, such as building a network connecting all schools and purchasing ceiling-mounted data projectors for every high school classroom. In 2006, voters approved a bond issue that included \$23 million for technology initiatives, but Zaiontz says he worries that future support may waver if economic troubles persist.

Re-examining regular IT routines can also make a difference. For example, slight alterations to maintenance and “refresh” schedules could add up to significant savings.

Bob Moore, the executive director of information technology services for the 20,000-student Blue Valley public schools in Overland Park, Kan., says even though his district typically has supported technology funding, he’s started thinking of ways to cut costs because of the prospect of tighter budgets down the road. Currently, the district replaces computers after four years and can spend \$3 million a year just buying new machines. Now, Moore may replace them as needed or every five years.

“You can see very quickly a significant savings,” he says. “It’s really about questioning everything we do.”

The trend toward methods of “green computing”—which encompasses everything from using computer technology to aid energy efficiency to buying recycled computer parts—can also save money, says Ann Flynn, the director of educational technology for the Alexandria, Va.-based National School Boards Association. Schools are using new technologies to centralize HVAC systems, for example, or shutting down all district computers nightly from a central location to save on energy costs.

“There are some places to look for resources where technology can be the underlying support,” Flynn says.

In tandem with cutting costs, ed-tech leaders are also searching for new money and other resources to bolster whittled-down budgets. Some are exploring grants from big technology companies or foundations, but Flynn of the NSBA cautions that a reliance on grant money can backfire.

“The grant opportunity is always attractive to folks, but a lot of grants are for unique projects, and they’re not generally designed for long-term sustainability for your IT programs,” she says.

Some districts are setting up their own foundations specifically for technology or for general education spending, to which local residents and businesses can make contributions. Mader’s Red Lion district has its own local education foundation that provides \$20,000 in technology grants through the district each year, mostly for classroom-based projects.

“It’s nice to have that option, and then typically we’re not competing with everyone else in the country,” Mader says.

Other districts are forming partnerships with local employers—sometimes technology companies—to help supplement IT projects. In Pennsylvania’s 2,500-student Northern Lebanon district, a local bank last year donated \$15,000 for textbooks for a technology program, and the superintendent has started a districtwide foundation for funding other programs, including technology.

But school district IT managers can also take a closer look at money they already have, says Scott Weston, the director of communications for Funds For Learning, a for-profit company that consults with schools on the federal E-rate program. The \$2.25 billion-a-year program offers school districts discounts on some telephone, video, and technology costs, including long-distance telephone service and the Internet. Assistance is based on the number of students who qualify for the federal free and reduced-price lunch program.

What districts often don’t realize is that sometimes it may take only a handful of extra students qualifying for free or reduced-price lunches to bump a district from an 80 percent E-rate discount to a 90 percent level, Weston says.

“Sometimes a district can pinpoint that they only need 10 more eligible students at a school to get to 90 percent,” he says. And many students who qualify for subsidized meals don’t sign up, so there are often plenty of additional candidates.

In addition, districts often pay their technology costs upfront and get reimbursed through the E-rate program later. The program does not stipulate the reimbursement must go back to the district’s general fund, Weston says. “We know some tech directors who have been able to claim that reimbursed money and use it to fund IT projects,” he says.

Money from other federal programs can also be applied to technology projects. The National Science Foundation, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and other grant sources have money available for technology projects.

Tips

1. Consider open-source technology for everything from word processing to e-mail.
2. Review software subscriptions to make sure they are not duplicative.
3. Consider new technology practices such as virtualization to save hardware and energy costs.
4. Use environmentally friendly technological approaches to save money on everything from lighting to heating.
5. Examine the funds you receive from the federal E-rate program to make sure your district is receiving all the money it is entitled to.
6. Use existing district resources in new ways, such as having students build a computer server as part of a school project or tapping existing district foundation money for technology expenditures.



Apple Ambassador

Continued from page 2.

buddy pictures. Each participant also has an individual sound level meter, which makes it easier to tell who is talking.

Audio Chat3

To enable recording in an audio iChat, select Record Chat under the Video menu. A message is sent to all participants asking for their permission to record the chat. To grant audio recording rights for this chat, your buddies click on the Allow button. When participants want to leave the chat, they just close the chat window. Recording stops when the person who initiated the recording exits the chat.

Recorded audio chats are saved by default in the iChats folder in your user's Documents folder. You can change this default location under the General tab of iChat Preferences, and search for saved chats by date or title using Spotlight. You can also play your saved audio (and video) iChats in iTunes.

Find Files Faster with Keywords



Savvy web surfers know that web pages, blog entries, and images posted online are often tagged with keywords: terms that help identify and locate relevant content via web searches. These keywords might not even appear in the text or file names—they're simply attached as metadata, so search engines can "see" them.

In a similar sense, you can use keywords on your Mac to help you find any file when conducting searches via Spotlight. In Mac OS X Leopard, you can add your own keywords to text documents, audio files, images, or any other type of file.

For example, let's say you've received a PDF of the latest company newsletter, which features an amusing photo of your boss, Mo, and the CEO, Bill. You've saved the newsletter on your computer, and you'd like to be able to locate this document in future using a Spotlight search. But the names Mo and Bill don't appear anywhere in the newsletter—instead, the two men are identified in the photo as Mauricio and William.

Fortunately, you can easily add the keywords "Mo" and "Bill" to the document yourself. Select the document in the Finder and choose Get Info from the File menu, or just type Command-I. At the top of the Get Info window that appears, there's a blank field titled Spotlight Comments. (Click the disclosure triangle to reveal the data field if it's not already visible.) Simply type your desired keywords here, separating

the terms with commas, then close the Get Info window.

Now when you search for these keywords in Spotlight, your newly tagged file will appear.

Spotlight Keywords Screenshot Spotlight Keywords Screenshot

From Scott Kelby's "Mac OS X Tiger Killer Tips," packed with cool inside secrets, slick workarounds, undocumented shortcuts, and sneaky tricks to help you use Mac OS X.

Searchin' Safari

Safari's search features are more powerful than ever in Mac OS X Leopard.

To search a web page for text, type Command-f, which opens the Find banner near the top of the browser window. Type your search term. (No need to press Return.)

Safari instantly tells you how many times the term appears on the page. The first occurrence is indicated in your highlight color, and all subsequent ones are framed in white. The remainder of the page dims to gray.



You can advance from one occurrence to the next by pressing the Return key (or typing Command-g). Holding Shift while pressing return (or typing Command-Shift-g) steps you backwards between occurrences. When you're finished, press the Done button next to the search field, closing the Find Banner.

For Google searches, just type Command-Option-f. This jumps your cursor to the main Search field, ready for you to type a search phrase.

It's easy to revisit your Google search results. Each time you enter a new search, Safari remembers the search results page. Click through to as many pages as you like — if you want to snap back to the Search results, simply click the orange arrow to the right of the Search field.

Look for a new Pro Tip every Wednesday on the Apple Pro site (<http://www.apple.com/pro/tips/>).



Mac Tips

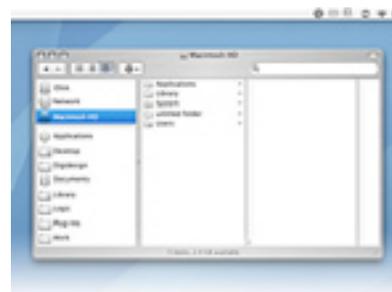
The Immaculate Desktop

Are you the sort of neat-freak who abhors Desktop clutter? Who keeps all apps and docs in carefully organized folders? Consider diving deeper into onscreen clean by making your mounted drives and discs disappear from the Desktop and accessing them instead via Finder windows.

Here's how to try it: From the Finder, pull down the Finder menu and select Preferences — or just press Command-comma from within the Finder. Click the General tab and uncheck Hard disks; CDs, DVDs, and iPods; and Connected servers.

Next, click the Sidebar tab and check the boxes next to all the items you unchecked under the General tab.

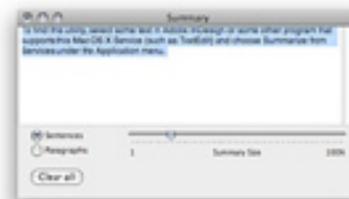
When you want to access a drive, disk, or server, just open a Finder window by pressing Command-n from within the Finder. And when you close the Finder windows, your desktop will be spotless. (Remember, Command-w closes a Finder window, and Command-Option-w closes all Finder windows at once.



Summarize Your Stories

When laying out a long story in a newsletter or magazine, it's often helpful to summarize a story, or a section of a story in a pull-quote or abstract. But how to find the best quote when you're on a deadline and need it fast? Fortunately, Mac OS X offers a great tool that almost no one knows about: Summary Service.

To find this utility, select some text in Adobe InDesign or some other program that supports this Mac OS X Service (such as TextEdit) and choose Summarize from Services under the Application menu. You can adjust how long you want your summary (in number of sentences or paragraphs) in the Summary dialog box. Drag the Summary Size slider to the left to get a more focused summary; for a pull-quote a one- or two-sentence summary is best.

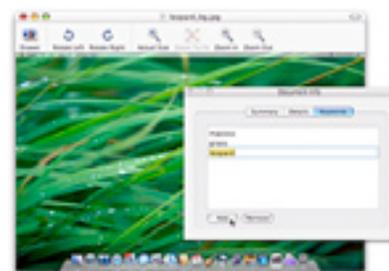


You wouldn't expect a computer to be able to analyze some text and provide a good summary but Summary Service is surprisingly good. Try it!

Giving Your Photos Keywords

If you're using Preview to sort your digital camera images, here's another helpful feature — the ability to add keywords to your photos. These keywords will even show up in Spotlight, so if you want to search your hard disk for images using keywords, you can.

Here's how it works: When you have an image onscreen that you want to rate, just go under Preview's Tools menu and choose Get info. Click on the Keywords tab, then click the Add button to add a field. Enter your keyword in the highlighted field, click in the white space to finalize your keyword, and you're done.



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To start or renew your GAAB membership, see Cecilia MacDonald or send your fees payable to her at the following address:

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