The *GAB'er*

The Newsletter of the Greater Albany Apple Byters

Upcoming New iMacs to Go Quad-Core

In recent weeks, the grapevine has moved from speculating about new iMacs based on quad-core "Nehalem" Intel Core i7 processors to having near-total confidence in the broad strokes of the rumor, merely seeking confirmation of the details. Well, some of the finer details are still embargoed….but macosrumors.com has been able to confirm once & for all that the new iMacs will indeed have four-core Nehalem processors with the associated improved motherboards.

Recently, Apple acknowledged that a considerable majority of their desktop sales are iMacs; a minority are Minis, but only a relatively small number (around 10-12%) are Mac Pro sales.

At some points, Apple has considered high-end versions of the iMac which would offer four cores — either through twin dual-core chips or a single quad core chip. Because of cost considerations and potential cannibalization of the higher-margin Mac Pro sales, such a machine hasn't yet made it to market. However, the new "Nehalem" Core i7 platform from Intel turns this argument just about completely on its head.

Coordinator's Corner
by John Buckley

No matter what the Ground Hog says or even if he bites the Mayor of New York, you can always find a warm and friendly place for you and your Mac at GAAB.

January was a month of resolutions. Therefore, we looked at protecting ourselves and our Macs from the perils of the web. I hope you all made some resolutions to protect you computer and your data.

In February we will look at what is new from Apple in terms of productivity software. Just released is the latest version of **iWork 09** the combination word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation package from Apple that is beginning to look like a big contender for Microsoft Office at a very small price.

Next GAAB Meeting
February 11, 2009

iWork '09
7:00 p.m.

Room 212
Troy High School

Featured in this Issue

Serving the Apple Computer User Community Since May 1984

Officers & Special Interest Group Leaders

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Internet SIG
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Apple Ambassador

by John Buckley

The following article from the Washington Post shows where the new president stands as far as a Mac is concerned. What kind of a change would this be?

Staff Finds White House in the Technological Dark Ages

By Anne E. Kornblut
Washington Post Staff Writer
Thursday, January 22, 2009; A01
http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/01/21/AR2009012104249.html

*I*f the Obama campaign represented a sleek, new iPhone kind of future, the first day of the Obama administration looked more like the rotary-dial past.

Two years after launching the most technologically savvy presidential campaign in history, Obama officials ran smack into the constraints of the federal bureaucracy yesterday, encountering a jumble of disconnected phone lines, old computer software, and security regulations forbidding outside e-mail accounts.

What does that mean in 21st-century terms? No Facebook to communicate with supporters. No outside e-mail log-ins. No instant messaging. Hard adjustments for a staff that helped sweep Obama to power through, among other things, relentless online social networking.

Internet SIG

Online Filing Expedites Your Tax Refund
by Kim Komando
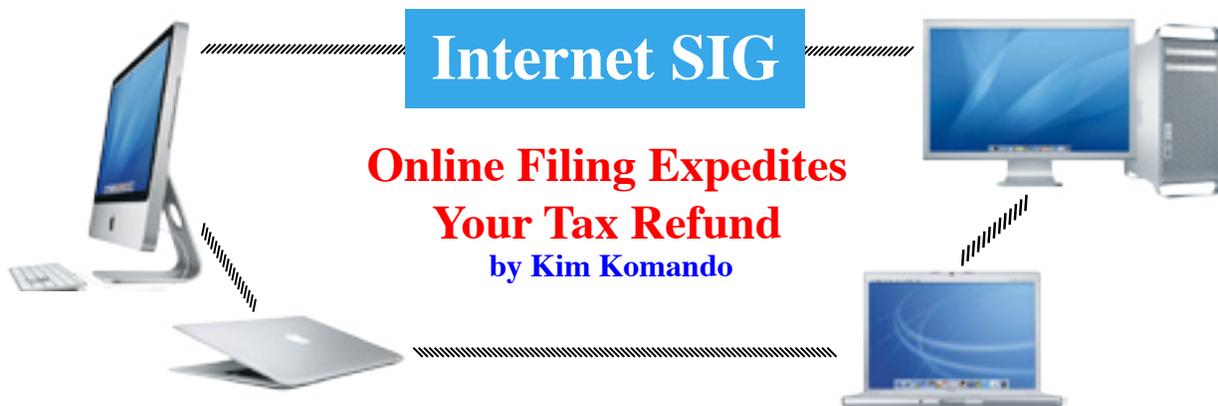
Tax season is here. And you may be getting a refund. So, gather up your W-2s and receipts. It's time to file your forms!

Last year's average tax refund was almost $2,500. Given the economy, you can probably use this money now. Fortunately, you can get your refund in less than two weeks. And filing your return has never been easier.

Get answers

A mistake on your taxes can be costly. And you could do without the hassle of an audit. That's why it's important to understand tax laws.

The IRS has plenty of information on its site. But this can be difficult to understand. Sites like Motley Fool, MSN Money, Kiplinger's and SmartMoney can help.

You can read postings from the tax experts written in plain English. Chances are, you'll find answers to your questions. You can also learn about commonly overlooked deductions. That means more money in your pocket.

There's more to taxes than deductions, though. If your situation is complex, you may want to hire a professional. The above sites will help you decide when it's time to call for help. Remember that paying a professional will be cheaper than an audit!

File electronically

In recent years, the IRS has encouraged taxpayers to file electronically. This year is no different. Anyone can file federal returns for free using the IRS's e-File option. With e-filing, you can get your refund in as few as 10 days. Your tax preparer can e-file for you. Or, you can e-file using tax-preparation software. E-filing is also available through the IRS's Free File Fillable Forms.

Software can help

I recommend using tax-preparation software to file your taxes. All you need are your financial papers. The software performs the calculations for you. And you don't need to worry about finding the correct forms.

TaxCut, TaxAct (one of my show's advertisers) and TurboTax are three of the most popular tax programs. Prices for personal versions range from free to $50. You may have to pay extra for your state returns.

Even though e-filing is free, many companies charge a fee for filing. This is usually about $10 each for federal and state. This year, though, many companies are waiving filing fees.

Know your free filing options

The IRS has partnered with software developers. It is offering free software to millions of Americans. The IRS says 70 percent of taxpayers qualify for free software. To qualify for Free File, your adjusted Gross Income for 2008 must be $56,000 or less.

Even if your AGI topped $56,000, you can still file for free. You won't get tax-preparation software, though. Instead, you can access the IRS's Free File Fillable Forms. You complete the forms as you would paper ones. However, you file them electronically.

These options are available only through IRS.gov. A company may provide free software through the IRS's site. But you may not get free software and filing on the developer's site.

Protect your information

Your tax return provides a treasure trove for would-be thieves. So, before you get started, make sure your security software is current. Then, scan your machine for any security threats.

Companies listed on the IRS's site transmit data securely. You don't have to worry about your return being intercepted. And your information won't be shared with third parties without consent.

Finally, watch out for the criminal element. Scammers love tax season almost as much as Christmas.

Ignore any e-mail purportedly from the IRS. Don't call any phone numbers or click any links in the messages. The IRS won't request information via e-mail. Nor will it send mass e-mail alerts.

Education SIG

Google Earth Fills its Watery Gap
### by Andrew C. Revkin, the New York Times, February 3, 2009

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/03/science/earth/03oceans.html?_r=1&ref=science

The following article from the New York Times describes the latest version of Google **Earth**. *The software now enables you to see the "Rest of the Story" which makes up most of our planet with a view of what is under all that water. This program has excellent features that can easily be used in the classroom.*

Two and a half years ago, the software engineers behind Google Earth, the searchable online replica of the planet, were poised to fill an enormous data gap, adding the two-thirds of the globe that is covered by water in reality and was blue, and blank, online.

But until then all of the existing features on Google Earth — mountains, valleys, cities, plains, ice sheets — were built through programming from an elevation of zero up.

"We had this arbitrary distinction that if it was below sea level it didn't count," recalled John Hanke, the Internet entrepreneur who co-created the progenitor of Google Earth, called Keyhole, and moved to Google when the company bought his company in 2004.
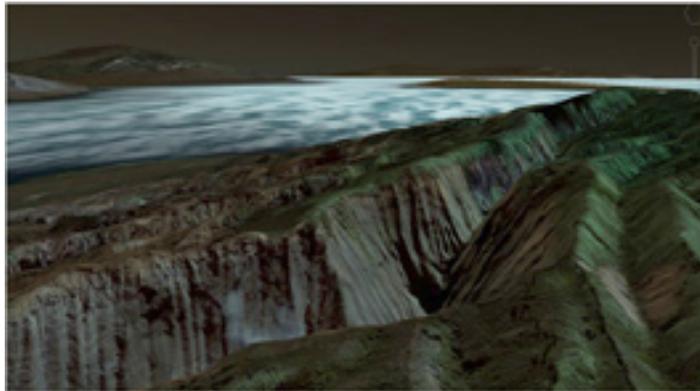
That oversight had to be fixed before the months and months of new programming and data collection could culminate in the creation of simulated oceans. On Monday, the ocean images will undergo the most significant of several upgrades to Google Earth, with the new version downloadable free at earth.google.com, according to the company.

Another feature, Historical Imagery, provides the ability to scroll back through decades of satellite images and watch the spread of suburbia or erosion of coasts.

Click a function called Touring and you can create narrated, illustrated tours, on land or above and below the sea surface, describing and showing things like a hike or scuba excursion, or even a research cruise on a deep-diving submarine.

The two-year push to fill in the giant blue blanks came through a chance encounter in March 2006. Mr. Hanke was poised to receive an award from the Geographical Society of Spain for his pioneering work building Web-based models of the planet.

But he was preceded at the dais by Sylvia Earle, a former chief scientist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration who was there to receive her own award for deep-sea exploration and popularizing ocean science.

She turned to him and said she loved the way Google Earth allowed users to see how one thing relates to another on the planet. But Dr. Earle bluntly added: "You've done a great job with the dirt. But what about the water?"

Since that time, Dr. Earle and Mr. Hanke have been partners in the long effort, as she explained, "to make sure the mountains don't end at the beach."

She assembled an advisory panel including Jane Lubchenco, the Oregon State University marine biologist since chosen by President Obama to head the oceanic and atmospheric agency.

"I've been struggling my whole life to figure out how to reach people and get them to understand they're connected to the ocean," Dr. Earle said.

"But I go to the supermarket and still see the United Nations of fish for sale," she said. "Marine sanctuaries are still not really protected. Google Earth gets all this information now and puts it in one place for the littlest kid and the stuffiest

grownup to see in a way that hasn't been possible in all preceding history."

By choosing among 20 buttons holding archives of information, called "layers" by Google, a visitor can read logs of oceanographic expeditions, see old film clips from the heyday of Jacques-Yves Cousteau and check daily Navy maps of sea temperatures.

The replicated seas have detailed topography reflecting what is known about the abyss and continental shelves — and rougher areas where little is known.

With only 5 percent of the ocean floor mapped in detail, and 1 percent of the oceans protected, Google executives and the marine scientists who helped build the digital oceans said they hoped the result would inspire the public to support more marine exploration and conservation.

During a recent test drive of the new features at Google's San Francisco office, I swooped in over Hawaii and dived beneath the undulating wave-dappled surface of the Pacific to explore canyons, reefs and other features that are now charted precisely everywhere that government data exist.

I also revisited Greenland, the North Pole and Alaska's North Slope. And, in less than a minute using the Touring feature, I created a rough narrated travelogue retracing reporting assignments in the Arctic, dropping in YouTube videos for any visitor to view on location.

By hovering over Galveston, Tex., clicking on a pointer and sliding it forward along a bar reflecting years of data, I was able to watch seaside communities expand and then abruptly wash away after Hurricane Ike.

The feature powerfully conveys the increasing interplay of humans and the environment, for better and worse, as populations grow and spread.

The addition of the oceans posed many technical hurdles, not the least being the aligning of disparate data sets so water meets land in precisely the right places, Google engineers said.

Other snags will almost certainly pop up as millions of users scour the new terrain.

But many of the ocean scientists who quietly worked with Google over the last two years to pull together vast data sets are elated at the prospect of the seas' getting new visibility, and respect.

"It's a way of raising awareness from thousands to billions overnight," said Richard W. Spinrad, the N.O.A.A. assistant administrator for research, who served on an advisory panel.

Barbara Block, a Stanford University biologist whose tagging projects have helped clarify the hidden lives of bluefin tuna, great white sharks and other depleted species, said the blue side of Google Earth could also increase public support for marine conservation.

"We cannot as a community conserve what we cannot see," Dr. Block said. "We've worked with the Monterey Bay Aquarium for years to put giant bluefin and white sharks on display, and if we're lucky two million people a year come and see the animals and discover their color, beauty of motion and form. With the Google oceans feature, we potentially can reach hundreds of millions." And, said Peter Birch, product manager for Google Earth, the presumption is that wherever lots of eyeballs and mouse clicks land, there is sure to be advertising revenue. In the three years since its public unveiling in 2005, Google Earth has become a mainstay of students, travelers, businesses and researchers seeking a one-stop place for posting or finding information about the world — on topics as diverse as hotels and hiking trails, species' ranges and climate data.

In that time, the software package has been downloaded on half a billion computers. Visitors spend one million hours a day perusing Google Earth and the related Google Maps.

Some commercial Web sites, including shipwreckcentral. com and wannasurf.com, have already been actively promoting ocean activities and will now enable divers or surfers to add their own narrated, illustrated "tours" of favorite reefs or beaches to Google Earth's layers.

Organizations seeking to reconnect people directly with nature expressed guarded optimism when the new features of Google Earth were described.

"Electronic images can boost awareness and sometimes even inspire, but there's no substitute for direct experience in nature," said Cheryl Charles, the president of Children and Nature Network, which seeks to end what it calls "nature deficit disorder" in modern plugged-in society. "Hopefully those exploring Google's virtual oceans, especially children, can still find the time to get wet, as well."

Apple Ambassador

"It is kind of like going from an Xbox to an Atari," Obama spokesman Bill Burton said of his new digs.

In many ways, the move into the White House resembled a first day at school: Advisers wandered the halls, looking for their offices. Aides spent hours in orientation, learning such things as government ethics rules as well as how their paychecks will be delivered. And everyone filled out a seemingly endless pile of paperwork.

There were plenty of first-day glitches, too, as calls to many lines in the West Wing were met with a busy signal all morning and those to the main White House switchboard were greeted by a recording, redirecting callers to the presidential Web site. A number of reporters were also shut out of the White House because of lost security clearance lists.

By late evening, the vaunted new White House Web site did not offer any updated posts about President Obama's busy first day on the job, which included an inaugural prayer service, an open house with the public, and meetings with his economic and national security teams.

Nor did the site reflect the transparency Obama promised to deliver. "The President has not yet issued any executive orders," it stated hours after Obama issued executive orders to tighten ethics rules, enhance Freedom of Information Act rules and freeze the salaries of White House officials who earn more than $100,000.

The site was updated for the first time last night, when information on the executive orders was added. But there were still no pool reports or blog entries.

No one could quite explain the problem -- but they swore it would be fixed.

One member of the White House new-media team came to work on Tuesday, right after the swearing-in ceremony, only to discover that it was impossible to know which programs could be updated, or even which computers could be used for which purposes. The team members, accustomed to working on Macintoshes, found computers outfitted with six-year-old versions of Microsoft software. Laptops were scarce, assigned to only a few people in the West Wing. The team was left struggling to put closed captions on online videos.

Senior advisers chafed at the new arrangements, which severely limit mobility -- partly by tradition but also for security reasons and to ensure that all official work is preserved under the Presidential Records Act.

"It is what it is," said a White House staff member, speaking on the condition of anonymity. "Nobody is being a blockade right now. It's just the system we need to go through."

The system has daunted past White House employees. David Almacy, who became President George W. Bush's Internet director in 2005, recalled having a week-long delay between his arrival at the White House and getting set up with a computer and a BlackBerry.

"The White House itself is an institution that transitions regardless of who the president is," he said. "The White House is not starting from scratch. Processes are already in place."

One White House official, who arrived breathless yesterday after being held up at the exterior gate, found he had no computer or telephone number. Recently called back from overseas duty, he ended up using his foreign cellphone.

Another White House official whose transition cellphone was disconnected left a message temporarily referring callers to his wife's phone.

Several people tried to route their e-mails through personal accounts.

But there were no missing letters from the computer keyboards, as Bush officials had complained of during their transition in 2001.

And officials in the press office were prepared: In addition to having their own cellphones, they set up Gmail accounts, with approval from the White House counsel, so they could send information in more than one way.

Staff writers Jose Antonio Vargas and Karen DeYoung contributed to this report.

New iMacs?
Continued from page 1.

More energy and thermal efficiency, hugely improved performance at both the CPU and motherboard levels, and a "QuickPath" architecture that removes many of the advantage from dual-frontside bus (FSB) designs in this range make Core i7 the perfect choice for taking the iMac to the next level.

Even at the highest 2.93GHz clock speed for the standard (non-Xeon) i7 desktop chips, Nehalem fits very comfortably in the iMac's compact design — and even helps reduce fan noise further, to virtually silent, over the current designs.

Rather impressive given that it will more than double performance across the board — a more efficient CPU with twice as many cores and a memory architecture that moves from the current iMacs' dual channel DDR2-800 to triple channel DDR3-1066.

Program Coordinator
Continued from page 1.

The February meeting will be held at Troy High School in room 212 on Wednesday, February 11, 2009. The meeting will begin at 7:00 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.

The iPhone Pro Looks Awesome, But Lose the Keyboard
by MG Siegler, venturebeat.com

Is the above image real? No. Does it look awesome? Yes. Would I want it? Of course.

Well, most of it at least.

While Gizmodo did a nice job creating a mock up of an "iPhone Pro," I have to take issue with their inclusion of a physical keyboard. While I know many of you BlackBerry lovers out there still insist that the iPhone needs a physical keyboard, I've got some bad news for you: It's not going to get one. Nor should it.

Adding that keyboard to the iPhone would create a whole bunch of issues, aside from simple technical feasibility. You see, creating a keyboard that is fixed on one side would lead to problems similar to what some applications built for the G1 Android phone have. That device, like the iPhone, can orient itself based on which way it's being held, but some apps, like Loopt, simply break when held the wrong way because of the keyboard. There are hundreds if not thousands of current iPhone apps that would have the same problem.

Of course, you might say that you would still have the virtual keyboard for those situations. But then, really, why add the physical keyboard in the first place? It's just more of a hassle. We're already seeing the Android team now building a virtual keyboard even though their device has a physical one, and the newest BlackBerry also lacks the physical keyboard. Sooner or later, it will be a thing of the past.

Does typing on the iPhone's keyboard take some getting used to? Sure. It took me a few days to get acclimated. But now, after using it for about a year and a half, I'm much faster with it than say, the G1's crappy keyboard.

And virtual keyboards are only going to get better. The BlackBerry Storm has a clickable keyboard that people either love or hate, but the more exciting technology will be haptic feedback, a mechanical simulation that makes your fingers feel like they are touching a physical object that isn't really there — like say, keys. You better believe that is coming to the iPhone.

So give me the larger screen, more storage and a better camera. But hold the keyboard, I'm fine with the virtual one — and one day you will be too.

Will New iDevice Feature (Flash, Background Tasking, etc.) Premiere First on iPhone/iPod Pro?
from macosrumors.com

Recently, Mac OS Rumors was among the first to report on references to an "iPhone 2,1 in last week's v2.2.1 iDevice OS firmware release, and suggest that this was almost certainly the forthcoming iPhone Pro. Now, along with emerging suggestions of a corresponding high-end iPod Touch, the grapevine is abuzz with rumors about background tasking, Adobe Flash and other features which may be tied to the powerful new "Pro" iDevice hardware.

These are fast-emerging & -developing rumors which we are monitoring around the clock with the help of our sources and the grapevine at large….so keep a close eye on this site for ongoing posts which will add detail and analysis to these early reports.

That said, in the wake of the exciting early iPhone "2.1 Pro rumors we have been able to talk to our oldest, most reliable sources who have shared with us significant new information.

Some of this will be under strict embargo for some time yet due to the extreme sensitivity of the information including some technical details of the hardware now in the late stages of field-testing by employees operating out of Infinite Loop….but among those tidbits we can release immediately is the probable fact that alongside or shortly following the release of an iPhone Pro with features similar to what we've described, there will almost certainly be an iPod "Touch Pro" based on a nearly identical core hardware platform: ARM Cortex A8 SoC (System-on-a-Chip) processor, powerful new GPU, more/faster system memory (256MB DDR?) and larger, improved flash-memory storage of 32GB or more at the high end.

Also, two key iDevice advancements which have been discussed with great excitement across the grapevine in the past few days — support for Adobe's ultra-popular Flash technology and the ability to run applications in the background — may be tied to that more powerful hardware platform, according to sources.

One, or quite possibly both, of these features as well as other significant advancements may be available only on the new "Pro" iPhone & iPod until manufacturing costs come down to the point where the standard entry-level iDevices can be updated with similar processing, graphics and system memory.

Another possibility mentioned by sources is that both of these features would ship exclusively on the new Pro iDevices initially, but that after a period of time (6-8 weeks, potentially) a further-optimized version of Flash with inferior but acceptable levels of performance would then be released for existing iDevices.

However, even in that instance, the performance impact of allowing background tasking on existing iDevices has been studied by Apple and despite many efforts at optimizing the operating system firmware to make it practical, the performance of foreground tasks can still be unacceptably affected on current-generation hardware (only 128MB SDRAM) and it is not practical to limit background tasks only to those things which would not cause slow-downs on said harware.

As a result, while Flash may end up being a non-Pro-exclusive feature for iDevices, at this time we are increasingly confident that when (not if) background tasking becomes a reality on the iDevice platform that it will be due to a considerable leap forward in the hardware that forms that platform's backbone.

Impressive New Details of Next-Gen Mac Pro Emerge
from macosrumors.com

It's been nearly three weeks since our last article on this topic, and a combination of expiring source embargoes with new reports has painted a particularly exciting — indeed, impressive — picture of what we might expect from the next-generation Mac Pro.

Macosrumors.com reported that the forthcoming 2009 Mac Pro lineup will be based around powerful new technology from Intel code-named Nehalem; better known through great public anticipation in the lead-up to its release as "Core i7."

Then they reported on a mid-stream prototype, placed inside an existing-generation "cheesegrater" tower enclosure, in that article which was built on early desktop Nehalem reference board chips

including a pair of quad-core, 2.93GHz Core i7 desktop CPUs.

Since then, sources have the opportunity to look under the hood of far more recent prototypes and a much clearer picture of the final Mac Pro has begun to emerge.

One of the first questions readers asked after the initial article was posted was whether the Nehalem Mac Pro will employ those standard desktop CPUs which currently tap out just below 3GHz and have been on the market for a few weeks now….or if it will sport Xeon-class i7 chips that offer higher clock rates, more cores, and numerous other advantages over their standard desktop cousins.

Although that detail had been embargoed by our sources at the time and we had not yet actually seen with our own eyes such a machine….

….we were able to confirm last week in web comments and conversations on Twitter, AIM, et cetera that yes, in fact the new Mac Pro would continue to be based around Xeons.

That fact alone means that the Mac Pro will be a significantly different machine than it might have been otherwise.

And whatever else it might have been…. the Pro that we've had the opportunity to examine is three things for damn sure: extremely sexy, extremely energy-efficient, and extremely fast.

Mac Tips

Super-Clean Screenshots

In Mac OS X Leopard, you can capture an image of your entire screen by typing Command-Shift-3. Typing Command-Shift-4 lets you choose a specific part of your screen to save as a screenshot: Click and hold to place the small cross-hair cursor at one edge of the area you want to capture, then drag horizontally and/or vertically to select. When you release the cursor, the screenshot is saved to your desktop.

But creating screenshots this way often means you need to crop or clean up the edges of the image later. That's especially true if you're planning to use it as a graphic element in a document or presentation. Fortunately, Mac OS X Leopard offers a way to save clean screenshots of individual elements on your desktop — such as Finder windows, menus, icons, or the visible portion of an open document — without capturing anything else in the background.

Hold down the Command, Shift, and 4 keys, then press the Spacebar. Instead of a cross-hair cursor, a small camera icon appears. When you move this camera icon over the element you'd like to capture, that element is highlighted. Click your mouse or trackpad, and you've captured a screenshot of just that element — no further cleanup required.

Using Mac OS X Zoom for Demos

If you're a trainer or you need to demo a technique in front of a group of people, there is nothing worse than losing your audience because they can't see your cursor or the detail you're pointing at. Fortunately, Mac OS X has a built-in solution for this problem: screen zoom.

To enable screen zooming, open System Preferences, click on Universal Access, and click On in the Zoom area. You are immediately ready to zoom: Press Command-Option-= to zoom in and Command-Option-hyphen to zoom out. If you click the Options button in Universal Access, you can fine-tune how Mac OS X displays the zooming effect – for example, you can set how far the screen should zoom in.

Zooming in and out is a great way to draw your audience's attention to just what you want them to see.

While Zoom was originally designed for visually impaired users, it is also very useful for people who need to demonstrate Mac OS X applications.

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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