The *GAB'er*

The Newsletter of the Greater Albany Apple Byters

2009 iPhone Expected to Be Announced at WWDC on June 8

from MacOSRumors.com

There has been some debate in recent days as to whether all four (or more!) 2009 iDevices which have been hinted at with multiple references in the code of iPhone OS 3.0 as well as countless published rumor-mongering reports and our own conversations with sources, will actually be announced — no less ship — at the World Wide Developer Conference next month.

There is plenty of room for debate on the larger question, but when it comes to at least two distinct 2009 iPhone models ($99 8GB entry-level and $199/$299 16/32GB high-end models?), Rumors is very confident that we'll be seeing them during the keynote address on June 8th.

Normally Mac OS Rumors is not in the business of making completely firm predictions even when based on the most reliable and fact-based "insider" information…too much

Coordinator's Corner
by John Buckley

We are clebrating our 25th Anniversary as a Mac User Group. Members should set aside June 10th for our 25th Anniversary Dinner. Feedback from the membership chose the Plum Blossom for this years dinner. Sorry, the two guys pictured won't be there, but you should be.

As usual, there will be plenty of discussion about the direction Apple is taking and what is new for the Mac.

The Greater Albany AppleByters is where you can find out all things Mac, so be at the June meeting and bring your questions and appetite.

The meeting is at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 10, 2009 at the Plum Blossom (see map on page 9). See you then. Please send an RSVP to jbuckley@applebyters.com by June 9, 2009.

Next GAAB Meeting
June 10, 2009

25th Anniversary Dinner
6:00 p.m.

The Plum Blossom
685 Hoosick Road, Troy

Serving the Apple Computer User Community Since May 1984

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Apple Ambassador

by John Buckley

This month's column has something you might want to play with over the summer to make your work easier. The article by Sharon Machlis gives you some idea as to the usefulness of AppleScript. You can go to the original article at Computerworld.com (http://cwflyris.computerworld. com/t/5091775/153869498/192721/0/) and see some of the author's AppleScripts.

Apple's Highly Useful Scripting Language Is One of the Mac's Hidden Gems.
by Sharon Machlis

Why, when people were trying to get me to switch from Windows to a Mac, did no one tell me about AppleScript?

Sure, a stable OS with Unix shell access and a sophisticated UI are nice. But a scripting language that lets me automate tedious tasks and hike my creativity-to-boredom ratio? How come I never heard about that?

"It's the hidden secret," said Sal Soghoian, co-author of *Apple Training Series: AppleScript 1-2-3* and Apple's product manager for automation technology. "Apple never talks about it."

AppleScript's appeal is that it can control both your operating system and your applications, easily passing information among them. Soghoian estimates that four out of five "top-tier" Apple customers use AppleScript for serious automation -- his examples include *The New York Times* generating daily stock charts and software developers testing applications. Even Microsoft uses it, he says (for work on developing Office for Macintosh).

But AppleScript is also well suited for the desktop. You can use it to set your system to boot up with certain apps open in a particular way, right down to the size, location and content of each window. You can batch process files, rename and resize multiple images, or fetch Web pages and manipulate the results. You can connect to network servers and even create a simple database.

Internet SIG

Five Ways to Earn Money by Blogging
by Kim Komando

Many people dream of getting paid to blog. This is fueled by stories of bloggers earning big bucks. You can earn money by blogging—if you're dedicated.

According to Technorati, the average American blogger earns $6,000 yearly. The top 1 percent earn $200,000 or more.

Blogging is hard work and requires long hours. So, pick a subject about which you're passionate.

Avoid topics like photography, politics, gadgets and celebrity gossip. Competition will be stiff. Instead, choose a niche topic. For example, write about coin collecting, if it's your passion.

To earn money from a blog, it must be well-written. Grammatical and spelling errors are a no-no. Find a proofreader, if necessary.

Here are some of the best ways to earn money from your blog.

Advertising

The most obvious way to make money blogging is with advertising. Advertisers pay a few cents when an ad is clicked. Or, they may pay a certain rate for each 1,000 page views.

Google's AdSense is perhaps the most popular advertising program. It places contextual ads on your site. Anyone can register for AdSense, regardless of traffic.

AdBrite, AdGenta and BidVertiser also help you display ads on your blog. Additionally, you can contact advertisers directly. Skip this unless you have a large readership or are well-known.

It's easy to get ads on your site, but difficult to earn from them. You'll need thousands of visitors each month.

Affiliate programs

Affiliate programs are similar to advertising. You place a banner ad or a text ad on your site. Or, put affiliate links inside blog posts.

You may get paid when a visitor clicks an affiliate link. But usually, visitors must make a purchase from the affiliate. Earning money from affiliate programs is more difficult. However, the rewards are greater. You could earn 10 percent or more per sale.

Amazon pioneered the affiliate program. Check to see if your favorite retailers have programs. Or, find programs through Commission Junction, LinkShare or ClickBank.

Pay-per-post

Some companies will pay you to write about their products and services. Your pay will vary depending on your site. Traffic is a major factor.

You can't get started with pay-per-post programs immediately. Some require you to blog for a month are more before enrolling. Or, you may need a specific number of posts or site visitors.

Approach pay-per-post programs cautiously. Paid posts should be clearly identified for ethical reasons. Some programs even require it. But some readers may be put off.

Pay-per-post programs pay handsomely. Some will pay up to $1,000 per post! Expect to earn much less--$10 to $20 per post.

PayPerPost, SponsoredReviews and Blogvertise offer pay-per-post programs.

Employment

Blogs are increasingly important to businesses. Businesses often use blogs to reach out to customers. You may find work as a paid blogger with a company. This will take considerable dedication.

You must show companies why they should hire you. That means you need to blog for awhile. Your posts should be impeccable. Grammar, accuracy and a pleasant voice are paramount.

Education SIG

Learning Without Limits
How the Rise of Online Instruction Is Changing the Nature of Schooling
by Christine VanDusen (eSchoolNews)

Zach Bonner is a smart kid, but he's a bit confused to hear that some adults still assume students in online schools are somehow worse off and spend all day chained to a computer, never learning to socialize in the real world.

Though he may be a full-time Florida fifth-grader whose classwork is completed in his family's Valrico kitchen, less than a quarter of his time is spent in front of a computer screen. More often Zach is doing science experiments, taking field trips, bike-riding with friends from his neighborhood, reading White Fang, playing tennis--on real courts, not on a Wii--and running the Little Red Wagon Foundation, a nonprofit he founded at age 8.

He's been enrolled in the Florida Virtual Academy, a school that uses curriculum from online-learning provider K12 Inc., since kindergarten, and every year he gets fewer questions and quizzical looks from grown-ups who don't get how it works. Kids, he says, have never treated him differently for going to an online school.

"People ask me a lot about my school; they're usually very interested. So I explain it to them," says Zach, now 11. "But a lot of them seem to understand now."

Says Laurie Bonner, his mother: "Online schooling is a lot more acceptable now than it was 10 years ago."

Where once virtual schooling for grades K through 12 was unusual--and perhaps only the domain of disabled children, home-schooled students, young movie stars, and school-age Olympic athletes in training--now thousands of brick-and-mortar schools in the U.S. are using online learning to augment their curriculum, aid in credit recovery, and give students the opportunity to move at their own pace. Full-time virtual schools are gaining steam, too; about 44 states offer such programs through their public education systems. (See "Report: Online learning a 'lifeline' for rural schools.")

"The acceptance has grown," says Susan Patrick, president and chief executive of the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL). "More and more parents

and students are aware that we live in the internet age, and they want access to educational opportunities, whether they're offered over the internet or not."

Some of the online-learning programs in the U.S. are state-led; others are charter schools. Some take place on school-supplied computers in the home and require a parent to be present; others are conducted in brick-and-mortar school computer labs. Most are administered by outside providers, such as K12 Inc. and Connections Academy, that tailor their course offerings and approach to the needs of a school district; other programs are looking to offer online classes a la carte.

Across the board, course registrations have grown more than 50 percent since 2007. But challenges persist.

Some states and school systems continue to grapple with outdated "seat-time" requirements, funding hurdles, teacher licensing reciprocity, and accountability concerns. Programs in Colorado, Idaho, and Kansas have come under scrutiny, facing questioned about quality and oversight. And many parents, educators, administrators, and legislators--schooled the traditional way over the last four or so decades--remain unsure that virtual education will give children the academic and social skills needed to survive and thrive in the real world.

"There are so many elements of education policy and funding that don't take into account online learning," says John Watson, founder of Evergreen Consulting Associates, a leading researcher on the topic of virtual schooling. "A lot of people still don't understand what online learning is. But that's changing."

The way Patrick would begin to address the lingering confusion is by explaining what online learning is not: It's not about sitting in front of a computer all day, staring at static documents and filling out minimally interactive multiple-choice quizzes. It's not about watching a lecture on video. And it's not about taking traditional teaching methods and somehow putting them on a computer.

"What we're talking about is interaction with the teacher and peers, and group work and collaboration, and making education more engaging," Patrick says.

A chemistry class, for example, would involve intricate experiments conducted with school-issued lab equipment, sent to the home. A student might play a maze game as a way to understand Cartesian coordinates or make a model of the ocean floor using a baking pan, clay, and water. An algebra student could move ahead during a lesson or linger on a particularly difficult math problem as needed. For physical education, the student could go to a local gym and keep track of his heart rate while he goes through a set number of pushups, squats, and biceps curls. A Portuguese language class would likely include students from Portugal, working with U.S. students on group projects coordinated through web-based discussion boards and chats.

In most cases, the student also is participating in team sports, volunteer work, field trips, and other in-person social activity. Still, it's true that a good portion of the actual communication in virtual schooling does take place via computer and not face-to-face. But advocates of online education say this is a plus--it prepares students for a world where life is not structured in class periods and adults increasingly communicate electronically, work remotely, and meet virtually.

"When you get out into real life, you can't just walk into a volleyball gym and play for an hour, and leave when the bell rings. You have to figure out a routine and get it to fit into your schedule," Patrick says. "Online learning teaches the students how to do that."

Today's tech-savvy student can toggle between the virtual world and the real world with ease, says Watson: "Whether parents like it or not, kids do a lot of socializing online. But they can balance that with face-to-face communication. Students don't see the divide there, the way that some parents do."

Laurie Bonner believes her son is actually getting more in-person socialization as an online student than he would if he'd enrolled in a traditional school.

"In a brick-and-mortar school, there are so many more restrictions on their time," she says. "When I went to school, we got three recess periods a day. Now, some schools only give them 30 minutes. Zach can work at his own pace and build in time to go outside, do Cub Scouts, activities at the Y, and go camping."

Zach Bonner fits the profile of one kind of online student: the gifted achiever whose pace of learning exceeds that of many of his peers, and who would be bored and might stagnate in a traditional class setting. Virtual schooling also works for slower learners, kids in need of credit recovery, and students with medical and emotional issues. A child with severe diabetes, for example, might struggle to manage his blood-sugar levels in a traditional classroom. He might need to eat snacks in class when other children aren't allowed to, or leave class at inconvenient intervals to give himself injections. Online learning also works for children who have been mercilessly bullied and whose fear keeps them from focusing on their studies.

Addressing the needs of all these different kinds of students and tailoring a teaching approach for each would be incredibly difficult in a traditional school, where budgets are repeatedly slashed and teachers are overworked and underpaid. Online schooling is a cost-effective alternative, Patrick says. There's less overhead, so the per-child cost or special state appropriation is smaller than with brick-and-mortar schooling. "It's a way for using money more efficiently in school districts during tight times," she says.

Funding, however, is one of the biggest obstacles to the growth of online education. A survey of program administrators found that 66 percent of those who would like to see faster growth cite lack of funding as the main hindrance. Connecticut and Delaware, for example, established state-led online programs in 2007-08, but because of budget cuts, they didn't grow, according to Evergreen's Keeping Pace with K-12 Online Learning: A Review of State-Level Policy and Practice.

Idaho Digital Learning Academy (IDLA), on the other hand, saw its annual appropriation rise from $450,000 in 2003-04 to $1.1 million in 2006-07 and saw its enrollments grow at an "extraordinarily fast rate." For the 2007-08 school year, IDLA was given $3.2 million and had 6,619 enrollments.

Many states limit funding to a "usual course load," according to the Keeping Pace report, though some make more funding available for accelerated students. Kansas and Colorado, for example, have established a standard level of funding for all online students, regardless of where the student lives and where the online school is situated.

"State budgets are tight, and it's always a challenge to do more with less," says Kim Ross, superintendent of Houston Schools in Minnesota, a 450-student district that started an online program in 2002 and now has 1,650 students enrolled from all over the state. (Two of the largest programs are the Pennsylvania Cyber Charter School, with 7,798 students, and the Ohio Virtual Academy, with 5,225

students. Nearly two-thirds of online programs have fewer than 1,000 students.)

The variety in size, budget, and approach owes in large part to the state legislatures and what rules and regulations they require for supplemental and full-time online learning programs.

Florida passed a law requiring its school districts to provide online learning opportunities, with the goal of offering full-time virtual education to students in grades K-8 who want to take advantage of it by the 2009-10 school year, according to Keeping Pace. Michigan in 2006 was the first state to mandate an online learning experience before graduation; Alabama followed with its own online learning requirement. Hawaii and Wyoming have established task forces to research options, and South Carolina recently opened its first online charter schools. New Jersey initially instituted an online-education requirement but backed away, owing to cost concerns, in favor of making virtual classes available but optional.

"In the state of California, they only fund 240 minutes of instruction. Divide 240 minutes by a 50-minute period, and you're only talking about 4.8 classes a day--you've already filled up the school day," Patrick says. "So if a student wants to take a sixth period, California doesn't have a way to pay for it."

The current legislative session is still young, so it's possible some states will make more moves to encourage, expand, and fund online education. "A number of states are looking at options; there's a lot of activity out there," Watson says. "There's really good evidence from many of the states that have extensive online learning opportunities that online learning works. Online learning certainly isn't for everybody; it's a matter of making it an option."

Expediting that process are companies like K12, which was founded in 1999 and has grown by 50 percent every year. It now serves more than 55,000 students in 21 states.

In the earlier days, K12 met some resistance from school districts that saw the company as a competitor for their students. Now, according to founder and chief executive officer Ron Packard, the schools are coming to view K12 as a partner in helping to deliver online instruction and meet the needs of kids who aren't finding the right fit in the traditional school setting.

And while it has taken some time to sway school administrators in this direction, resistance from teachers has been scattered and short-lived.

When Ross' program--a partnership with K12--started up in Minnesota, the teachers' union filed suit against the state education department in an effort to decertify the online school. Since then, though, the teachers in the district have come to see the online school as a good complement to the brick-and-mortar system.

Overall, K12 hasn't felt much resistance from teachers, Packard says. The company now employs 1,600 educators. "We've been flooded with teachers who want to teach with us," he says. "They've seemed really ready to embrace this. It's younger teachers, but also retired teachers."

The same benefits that students derive from online learning--such as a more flexible schedule, and the chance to delve more deeply into topics of particular interest--also apply to teachers, he explains.

Allison J. Dracha became a virtual teacher in August 2003, and though she often teaches from her home, she still sees similarities between the traditional learning environment and virtual schooling.

"We are a public school and are held to the same mandates by our state's department of education as the brick-and-mortar schools," says Dracha, who teaches elementary and middle school science and mathematics for Agora Cyber Charter School in Pennsylvania. "And I feel just as, or more, connected to the students, because I take the time to get to know who the child is. I often ask them why they chose our school; this helps me understand who they are and the path they took to get here. Many parents have told me they know more about me than any other teacher their child had in a brick-and-mortar school."

Debbie Wotring became involved in online education when she enrolled her own children in K12's program at the Ohio Virtual Academy. She is now a lead teacher there, overseeing 12 teachers and 28 students.

"In any one grade level or class, you will have many different levels of abilities. In an online environment, each student is able to work at their own pace and at their own level within set guidelines," she says. "In an online environment, students are able to select the way in which they would like to learn a concept. They may decide to write a speech, create a poster, or take a written assessment to show that they have mastered a concept."

Like Dracha and Wotring, all of K12's teachers are certified to teach in their individual states. At this point, most programs are not open to students across state lines--though this can vary on a case-by-case basis, because the decision is generally up to the specific school district.

"In most cases, when students take an online course from a state virtual school, the local and physical school is granting the credit," Watson says. "The national Virtual High School works this way as well, with local schools granting the credit."

He adds: "Most of the national organizations and companies are working through organizations at the state or district level to grant credit, and in most cases to secure funding. There are a couple of national online schools, but they are private and tuition-based, so their student numbers are low, at least so far."

The credits do, however, typically transfer if a student moves to a new district. And they are being recognized by colleges. Institutions of higher education--which were the first to try out and embrace online learning--don't view online high schoolers as weaker candidates, says Mickey Revenaugh, who co-founded virtual-schooling company Connections Academy in 2002.

"There may have been a point 10 years ago that a college might look askance at a diploma from a charter school, but that's all gone by the wayside. Charter schools are now just as recognized as private schools. The same thing is true of the virtual-school experience," she says. "What we're hearing from colleges is that our students are better suited to online learning at colleges and that they've developed good time management and self direction through online learning."

Zach Bonner, for one, believes his online schooling is preparing him well for the future. It's given him time to work on his foundation and plan a 625-mile charity walk from Atlanta to Washington, D.C., to raise awareness about the plight of homeless kids. He collected 27 truckloads of sundry items for people left homeless after Hurricane Katrina and won the Alexandra Scott Butterfly Award in 2008, given to "an exceptional child hero." He's met Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush and been featured on Good Morning America.

He wants to go to Harvard University and eventually become a prosecuting attorney, and he doesn't worry at all that his online schooling will somehow stand in the way. He expects that more and more kids will join schools like his--and adults will become more and more comfortable with the idea, too.

"I have lots of flexibility," Zach says. "I really enjoy it. It's right for me."

Apple Ambassador
Continued from page 2.

After a few months on a Mac, I wrote a script that copies data from a weekly report I get as a PDF, and formats it for insertion into a spreadsheet. This saves a boatload of tedious cutting and pasting.

It's also extremely easy to share AppleScripts with colleagues who use Macs -- a bit more elegant than, say, trying to share Perl scripts with Windows users who don't have Perl (and the required add-on modules) already installed.

While other languages offer some similar capabilities to AppleScript, "there's simply nothing like it in Windows," declares David Pogue in his book *Switching to the Mac: The Missing Manual, Leopard Edition*. "It's a programming language that's both very simple and very powerful, because it lets Mac programs send instructions or data to each other." And it does so using commands that are closer to plain English than most other scripting options.

A few caveats

AppleScript's use of (relatively) natural language for its commands is a mixed blessing. While it's popular among non-IT power users, even Soghoian admits that the syntax can frustrate those who regularly work in a PM language like Perl or Java. I lost count of how many errors I got because I'd write something like "x = 4" instead of the AppleScript-approved "set x to 4." And I don't program full time.

Although I've become an AppleScript enthusiast, I will caution that "natural language" doesn't always mean "intuitive and easy." While there are usually multiple ways to express something in AppleScript, quite a number of other syntaxes that might make sense won't work in a script.

Fortunately, though, some highly scriptable applications allow you to record activities in the AppleScript editor, very much like a macro recorder which translates your actions into (editable) AppleScript commands. This was very handy when I couldn't figure out on my own the proper AppleScript for TextWrangler's search and replace. For example, I use an AppleScript snippet to delete all percentages in a report that are formatted with a space followed by one or two digits followed by a period followed by one digit followed by a percent sign -- as in *5.3% or 23.8%*.

A final warning: AppleScript is not particularly well suited for a lot of text manipulation. There's no built-in support for regular expressions; there's not even a simple search-and-replace function as part of core AppleScript.

The good news here is that you can get some decent support for regular expressions by installing a free add-on from Satimage or, for smaller amounts of text, dumping it into an app like TextWrangler, which has such support. AppleScript can also incorporate more powerful commands from Perl, Ruby, Unix or anything else that can be accessed via a shell script, and then assign the results to a variable. For more on that, check out Apple's technical note called "do shell script in AppleScript."

Despite its drawbacks -- and what language doesn't have any? -- I've found AppleScript to be a great tool for parsing drudgework out of my workday.

If you want scripts that will search for terms in your clipboard at other sites, MacScripter has AppleScript versions posted for searching highlighted text on Google and Wikipedia (within Safari only). Download and install in your Scripts folder.

Targeted backups

Although Time Machine will do automated backups for those with modern versions of OS X, some readers might want an easy way to, say, keep all files related to a critical project together for an additional "in case of catastrophe" backup, or perhaps for something that could be easily downloaded to a USB drive.

It's pretty intuitive to select files to back up by name or date. For example, take this line
Apple offers a sample script for download, which you set up after you enter source and destination folders; it then continues to run in the background.

Check your IP address

A simple IP utility from ScriptBuilders (accessible from the Scriptbuilders site) lets you quickly check your external IP address and copy it to your clipboard for tasks such as setting up a VPN or supporting a remote access connection.

Add lyrics to iTunes

There are hundreds of iTunes AppleScripts out there on sites such as Doug's AppleScripts for iTunes. For example, you can make tracks "bookmarkable" so they resume

playing wherever they left off or pick items on an iPod so they're copied into an iTunes folder.

One of the more amusing is a script that automatically searches a database on the Web and adds a text version of a song's lyrics into iTunes. Not all songs work properly, but when a match is found, you get to see full lyrics downloaded into iTunes.

iTunes volume fade-in and fade-out

For audiophiles who prefer that their music fade in when starting up and fade out when a tune is paused or restarted manually in mid-play, O'Reilly's MacDevCenter site offers several iTunes scripts that do just that, either with or without dialog boxes.

Quick image manipulation

I'd wager that a fair number of AppleScript users would be surprised to learn that they don't need an app like Photoshop in order to script things like rotating or resizing an image. Instead a script from the book *Apple Training Series: AppleScript 1-2-3* resizes an image to 50% of the original.

Of course, Photoshop gives you much more control over how images are sized, so this isn't a great technique to size images for printing or publication. However, for a quick e-mail attachment, it should be fine. There are also versions on the same Web page to size for maximum width or height, with user input setting the parameters.

AppleScript resources

Web

You can find more image scripts and explanation of code from *AppleScript 1-2-3* posted on Apple's main AppleScript site.

Macscripter.net. A community focused specifically on AppleScript and other Apple automation tasks, Macscripter features a very helpful series of AppleScript tutorials as well as links to downloadable scripts and other resources.

Apple's site features a section on learning AppleScript, including sample code, essential subroutines and some text and video tutorials.

Mactopia -- from Microsoft of all places -- has a site specifically for those interested in scripting Office for the Mac, including a VBA to AppleScript migration guide.

Books

AppleScript 1-2-3: A self-paced guide to learning ApppleScript, by Sal Soghoian and Bill Cheeseman (Peachpit Press). At 800+ pages, this isn't meant to be read cover to cover.

AppleScript: The Comprehensive Guide to Scripting and Automation on Mac OS X, Second Edition by Hanaan Rosenthal (Apress).

Free books or book excerpts

There are two AppleScript 1-2-3 chapters available free online at apple.com: The First Step and Image Events.

You can download the first chapter of AppleScript for Dummies, A Cannonball Dive into the Scripting Pool, from the "For Dummies" store (PDF format).

AppleScript for Absolute Starters is available as a free PDF download.

Add-ons

Satimage osax 3.4.0. This free download offers additional capabilities to native AppleScript, including regular expressions, finding and replacing literal search terms, and some mathematical functions like absolute values, sines, cosines and square roots. The Satimage osax 3.4.0 dictionary details all the new functionality.

Using AppleScript in other languages

appscript is a "high-level, user-friendly Apple event bridge that allows you to control scriptable Mac OS X applications from Python, Ruby and Objective-C.

Mac::AppleScript::Glue is a CPAN module that "allows you to write Perl code in object-oriented syntax to control Mac applications," by translating Perl to AppleScript

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Internet SIG
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Businesses could come calling if you make a name for yourself. But you'll probably need to do some cold calling. Approach it as you would any job search.

Sponsorship

You may be able to land a corporate sponsorship. This works much like an advertising deal. However, your entire site will carry the company's branding.

With a sponsorship, you'll make concessions. For example, you may be forbidden from mentioning competitors' products and services.

Landing a sponsorship probably won't be easier than finding a paid position. And remember that you will need to make a name for yourself first.

Map to the Plum Blossom Restaurant
Continued from page 1.
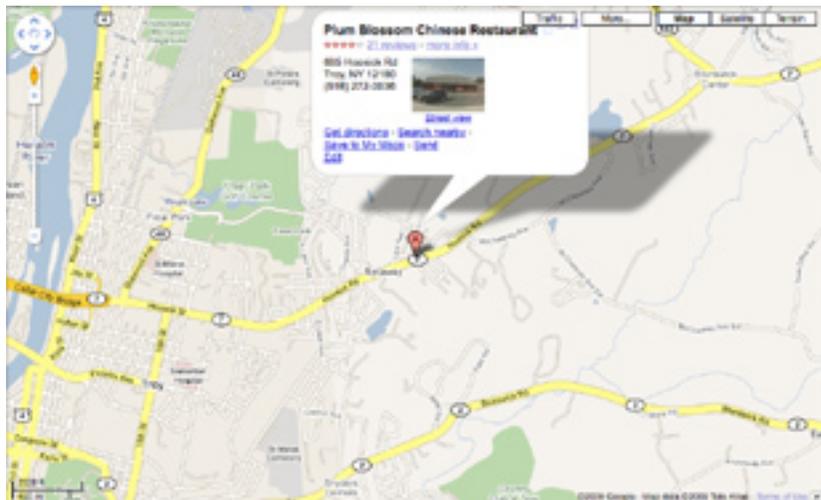
Apple's Answer to the "Netbook:" Smaller Macbook Air, Larger iDevices
from MacOSRumors.com

In recent days, Apple has internally revised/updated considerable portions of its hardware and software roadmaps as it periodically does; some of the new release targets on the software end relate to Mac OS X 10.6 "Snow Leopard" being pushed out to the very end of summer (late Aug./mid Sept)…while on the hardware end of things, to which Rumors has also been privy, one of the most notable changes is a convergence of the projects intended to address the "Netbook" ultra-portable laptop market.

We'll be talking much more about these new roadmaps in the days ahead, but for now two of the projects most interesting to us both relate to Infinite Loop's efforts in the market segment presently dominated by ultracompact, low-cost "netbooks."

As more than one Apple executive has said in recent months, Cupertino is not interested in competing directly in this space which it considers to be full of inferior laptops that are downright uninspired.

Rather, the company is working on a multi-pronged approach that revamps existing platforms — in these two cases, the Multi-Touch iDevice platform (ARM) and the Macbook Air (Intel) — to reach into that marketplace and turn mit on its ear in much the same ways that iPhone & iPod Touch did for their respective markets.

Specifically, in the instance of the Mac platform, we expect to see a considerably less expensive entry level Macbook Air with an approximately 10-inch display sporting significantly higher resolutions than most netbooks (1152×768 or 1280×854).

A second, even less expensive (sub-$500) 10-inch Mac laptop could come in the form of an entry level Macbook with a bare-bones spec sheet: display resolution in the ballpark of 1024×720, low-end Core 2 Duo mobile CPU (a single-core model has been considered, apparently, but is very unlikely to ship according to sources), and quite possibly a minimal amount of DDR2-667 memory (all current Macbooks other than the "white plastic" model use nVIDIA chipsets that support DDR3-1066), plus a small internal hard drive which will most likely be 4200RPM with 2MB of cache memory.

Although these proposed entry-level laptops would be very similar to traditional Windows/Linux "netbooks" in some ways, they will have essentially full-sized keyboards and several other things that will set them apart quite distinctly from being merely 'me too' netbooks running Mac OS X — notably, the Multi-Touch Trackpad and high-quality stereo speakers cleverly placed along the sides of the body, doubling as ventilation grilles….

The primary project intended to compete with Netbooks is not a Mac at all — it's a family of iDevice prototypes that have been under develpment at Infinite Loop almost as long as the iPhone itself.

Rumors believes that despite the continued existence of multiple distinct prototypes, there will be only one such iDevice actually shipping later this year (possibly as soon as WWDC on June 8th, but more likely not arriving until later in the Summer once Steve Jobs has returned to the captain's chair in Cupertino). For all intents and purposes, we can assign this the popular label of "iTablet" though many of the proposed designs are quite different from traditional Tablet Computer designs or even the Axiotron "ModBook" available through Other World Computing.

The "iTablet" will have upgraded, but generally similar, specs (centering around an ARM processor) as compared with smaller iDevices such as the iPhone and iPod Touch. Unlike most other tablet devices/PCs, it will be powered by Multi-Touch and have no "pen" stylus device. Extremely thin and with a relatively high display resolution for its size (approximately 10 inches, in the ballpark of 1280×854) — this will be the real "Netbook killer."

Just the right size to take almost anywhere and with tremendous battery life (upwards of 10 hours depending on the type of usage), other tech specs include:

- ARM processor, definitely faster than the 412MHz (iPhone) or 532MHz (iPod Touch 2G) ARM11 chips in current iDevices; possibly a dual-core CPU designed by Apple's new in-house ARM chip fabricator, formerly known as PA Semiconductor.

- At least 256MB of DDR SDRAM memory; possibly up to 512MB on high-end configurations (there are most likely going to be two configs, though three is not out of the realm of possibility — as with iPhones & iPods, the main difference between models will be Flash memory storage size).

- Up to 128GB of NAND Flash memory storage, though the most popular model(s) will probably be in the 32-64GB range.

- 802.11n (300Mbps) Wi-Fi supporting both 2.4GHz & 5GHz frequencies

- Bluetooth 3.0 (adds capability to operate using the Wi-Fi radio, improving range and bandwidth considerably, but also supporting fall-back to standard Bluetooth radio to conserve battery life when the additional bandwidth isn't necessary)

- If Apple elects to use Broadcom's new integrated wireless (802.11n + Bluetooth 3.0) chip, this will also bring an FM Radio tuner on-board.

    *Optional 3G cellular data connectivity — models without this capability will definitely be available direct from Apple, but it may be that the 3G-equipped version will only be available if purchased as part of a data plan from AT&T (or others; this isn't covered by Apple's existing iPhone contract, so the ongoing negotiations between Apple, AT&T, Verizon and Sprint will have considerable bearing on how this plays out).

- "Enhanced" GPS chip with superior accuracy and signal strength (far fewer problems acquiring satellite signals in large buildings or in tunnels, for example) over the version in today's iPhones.

- Magnetometer (digital compass) allowing the "iTablet" to sense not just its location but its orientation (which direction it is 'facing').

- Built-in high resolution CMOS imaging sensor, most likely with a higher resolution than the new 3.2 Megapixel camera expected as part of many if not all other 2009 iDevices — though it will probably support the same basic 720P HD video capabilities as the other iDevices of its generation.

- Dual 'tilt' sensors similar to those in today's iPhone & iPod Touch.

The real question at the moment is not if, but when we'll see such an iDevice hit the market. While many sources have suggested it could be ready later this summer, the grapevine consensus at this time is that it probably won't be seen at Apple's World Wide Developer Conference (WWDC) next month…late summer, after Steve Jobs returns to the helm, seems more likely.

Others, including several prominent analysts (whose track records generally aren't any better than the grapevine at large, and are often significantly worse), have speculated that such an "iTablet" won't reach the market in an actual shipping form until some time next year.

At this time, between indications in the source code of iPhone OS 3.0 itself as well as Rumors' most reliable source reports, we believe that at least four distinct iDevices will ship before the end of the summer, and that iTablet will be one of them.

But given the nature of the business and this uncertain economy, even Apple itself may not have made the final call on this as yet. It's not unusual for Infinite Loop to be shifting roadmaps up until a few days or even hours ahead of an announcement event; we'll be watching this particular rumor very closely as it has been a moving target all year long.

New iPhone
Continued from page 1.

can, and often does, happen between the prototype stages we're privy to and the actual announcement day.

For example, our predictions of first-generation Macbook Air models with CPUs clocked at upwards of 2.0GHz were based on the numerous prototypes (Steve Jobs once publicly stated there were over one hundred [!] distinct Macbook Air prototypes with widely diverging specifications) and only after the announcement did it become clear such prototypes would have been unstable at the higher operating temperatures of those faster Core 2 mobile processors with the Air's limited cooling hardware. Not to mention uncomfortably hot to the touch!

Similar issues affect the ability of any rumor-monger, no matter how good their sources, to accurately predict release dates or exact final specifications.

Nonetheless, for a number of reasons — not the least of which being the same ones that compelled Apple to announce the 2007 and 2008 iPhones at the respective WWDC events those years, notably the need for developers to tailor apps/updates to the new hardware — we are very confident on this specific point: the 2009 iPhones, if not all of the other new iDevices, will be announced on June 8th and almost certainly ship within a few weeks of that date.

Yes, the Web Is Changing Your Brain

by Kim Solex, MD (www.internetrevolution.com)

More than a year ago on ThinkerNet, I described a new kind of human intelligence particularly suited for the digital age It involves strong multitasking ability, rapid switching between tasks, logical statements, and an ability to identify and take advantage of potential connections, to separate information into transformable chunks, and to reassemble these chunks for new purposes.

Today, my question is whether digital intelligence, and intelligence in general, is something innate and determined by our genes -- or whether, as some suggest, Internet stimuli and other aspects of our environment actually change the wiring in our brains to increase or decrease intelligence.

Put another way, will there be more geniuses, more Renaissance men and women, more big conceptual breakthroughs, because of easier access to information and knowledge via the Internet? Or is mankind limited by the number of people with high IQs, which will not change until our biology changes via genetic evolution?

To begin with, the idea of measuring IQ may be misleading. New forms of intelligence require new types of intelligence tests. The original assertion by Nicholas Carr in last summer's Atlantic that the Internet is making us stupid just reflects the fact we may be testing the wrong thing, thinking the wrong way about brain functioning.

As new intelligences suited for this new age we live in evolve, performance on old-fashioned IQ tests may decrease exactly because of distraction and task switching, which are disadvantageous for the old IQ test but advantageous in everyday life in 2009 and beyond.

We also tend to view the Internet's effects negatively. The Internet is changing us, but the changes are positive: Use of the Internet makes our brains more active, with more neurons firing. It stimulates parts of the brain that control decision-making and complex reasoning. It is hard to imagine that that is a bad thing!

In a study in which people's brains were observed reading a book vs. searching the Web, language and visual centers were stimulated in both, but decision making and complex reasoning centers were stimulated only in the Web group and not in the reading group.

At the same time, thinking deeply, while still of value, is needed less in day-to-day living.

When a common situation was a lack of information and no possibility of getting more, then deep contemplation of the limited knowledge we had seemed reasonable. Now we are more likely to find an answer and move on.

It is not that we have lost the ability to read War and Peace, it is just that in the modern world we would seldom opt to spend a long period reading one book. It is more practical to carry out other, shorter tasks, to divide things up, and that is what we mostly choose to do.

There have always been attempts to resist the inevitable pace of progress and human evolution. Recent books like Enough and In Praise of Slowness are two examples. But we cannot really slow the pace of evolution of our species -- nor should we want to!

As I observed in an earlier blog, it was probably always man's destiny to have the kinds of communication devices we have now and the even better ones we will have in the future as extensions of ourselves. It is not predominantly a shifting of cognitive responsibility from our biological brains to the silicon extension of those brains, but rather an augmentation of overall cognitive capacity.

We are indeed getting smarter. Further, it has been suggested that the data deluge now available via the Internet makes the scientific method obsolete and reduces enormously our dependence on models versus the real, measurable world.

So yes, the Internet does make us smarter. We just need to pause every now and then to contemplate and enjoy it!

— Kim Solez, MD, Director of NKF cyberNephrology at the University of Alberta
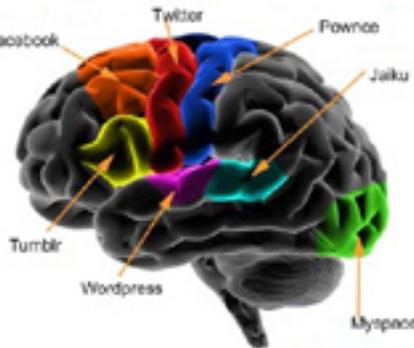
E-Mail Security Alerts

Phishing Scam Alert

New York State Police has been notified of several email "Phishing" attacks. The following examples detail two such phishing attacks:

"Please Read Important" - An email which may indicate that the user's "mailbox has exceeded the storage limit set by your administrator". These emails claim to be from the "WebMail Helpdesk".

Users should be aware that these emails are not legitimate. They are designed to entice a user to reply with their user name and password. Doing so would send this information to an unauthorized party who could then use it to compromise our system.

US-CERT has issued an alert which contains information regarding spear phishing email activity involving PDF attachments that reference recent reports of the Swine Flu outbreak.

"Swine Flu" - attempting to capitalize on the media coverage and public interest in the recent "Swine Flu" outbreak. The emails contain subject lines that reference the "Swine Flu" and may appear to be sent from health, media or governmental organizations.

These emails are designed to entice an unsuspecting user to click links or open attachments that appear to offer information about the flu. Clicking the links or opening the attachments will cause the execution of malicious code.

As always, please do not open unsolicited email from people you don't know, especially those with the subject line or content listed above. Please delete these messages immediately without opening them.
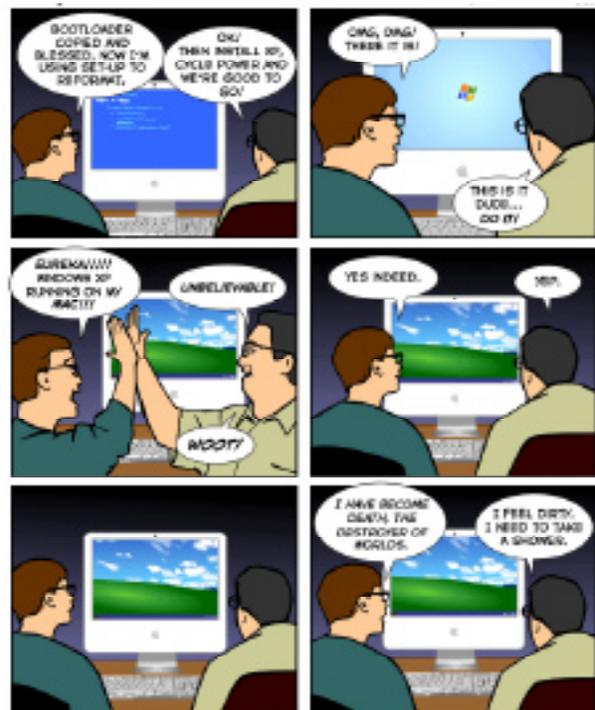
Mac Tips

Sharing Contacts with vCards

Electronic versions of old-fashioned Rolodex cards, vCards provide the fastest way to import contacts into your own Address Book or to share your Address Book contacts with friends, family, or colleagues.

Much like their physical predecessors, vCards contain basic contact information (such as name, address, phone, and email). But you can easily add information to enhance their value, including URLs, photos, or logos. And since the vCard format works cross-platform with many contacts programs, including Microsoft Outlook, you can exchange contacts with people who don't use Address Book in Mac OS X Leopard.

To export a vCard from Address Book on your Mac, just highlight the contact and drag it to your desktop or directly into an email. (The file icon even looks like a Rolodex card.) To import a vCard into Address Book, drag the card-shaped icon into your open Address Book application or onto the Address Book icon in your Dock or Applications folder. Address Book opens (if not already open) and asks you to verify the import. Click Import to have Mac OS X store the vCard's contact information in Address Book.

Share contacts by dragging vCards to and from Address Book.

Want to export more than one contact from Address Book? Just Command-click to select multiple contacts, and drag them to the desktop or into an email. This method collects all the highlighted contacts in a single vCard file. (Note that although Address Book allows you to export multiple contacts in a single file, Microsoft Outlook only lets you import a single contact per file.)

When you drag this combined vCard into Address Book, all the contacts are added at once as separate Address Book contacts. So with vCards and Address Book, it's as easy to share a large group of names as it is to share a single contact.

Really Empty the Trash

It's simple to delete unwanted files using Mac OS X Leopard: Just drag the files onto the Trash icon in the Dock (or select them and type Command-Delete), then choose Empty Trash in the Finder menu (or type Command-Shift-Delete). Alternately, you can double-click on the Trash icon to open it, then click on the Empty button.

Emptying the Trash in this manner clears room on your Mac for other files. But the data hasn't actually been removed from your computer — the space occupied by these files is simply available to be overwritten by new information. Until this happens, it may be possible for someone to use data recovery software to restore your "deleted" files. And if this information is sensitive or confidential, it could potentially end up in the wrong hands.

That's why Mac OS X Leopard provides another option for deleting data: the Secure Empty Trash command. Meant for those occasions when you want to permanently and immediately delete files, Secure Empty Trash overwrites your data with digital gibberish, ensuring that your deleted data is gone for good. It may take a few moments longer, but it's a good choice for deleting data you're sure you don't need — and don't want anyone else to see.
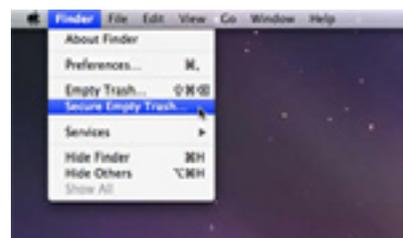
To delete your Trash securely, go to the Finder menu and select Secure Empty Trash. A pop-up will ask you to confirm that you want to permanently erase the items in the Trash. Click OK, and these files will be gone forever.

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