The *GAB'er*

The Newsletter of the Greater Albany Apple Byters

iWeb '08 Widgets

With iWeb, it's easy to add live content from other websites — like videos, stock tickers, and news headlines — directly into your web pages. So you can create pages that are informative, interesting, or just plain fun.
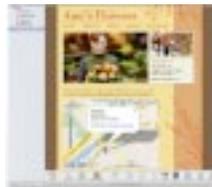iWeb Widgets

A world of possibilities.
A web widget is a snippet of live content on another website that you can add to your own blog or website. A growing number of sites offer embeddable web widgets. So if you see a YouTube video, stock ticker, weather report, or any other cool widget you want to add to your website, iWeb makes it easy.

Easy as cut and paste.
If you've ever cut and pasted text, you can add a web widget to your iWeb site. Just copy the widget from the web and paste it right onto your web page via the HTML Snippet window in iWeb. Then place it anywhere on your page, as you would any other canvas object.

Live previews.
Once you paste a web widget into your web page, it's instantly "live." You'll see it in action before you publish your site, so you'll know exactly how it will look to your visitors.

Always up to date.
Once published, a web widget remains linked to its source, so it updates automatically. Your web pages stay up-to-the-second without any effort.

Coordinator's Corner
by John Buckley

Last month we took a quick look a Flip Video and the new version of iPhoto '08, which was be presented by Linda Rackliffe. This was the last meeting for Linda because as she is moving away. We will surely miss her and wish her good luck in her new job.

For April we will look at iWeb'08 and how to also make web slides using Keynote. This allows you to add some addition content to your website.

As with all meetings, we will have a good Open Question period during the first hour. In addition, as always, Apple has some news for us and we will check it out. This meeting is for all those new Mac owners out there who are not exactly sure how things are supposed to work. Those of us who have had a Mac for a while will also most likely learn something new. Also be aware that our website is available at http://www.applebyters.com.

The April 2008 meeting will be held at Troy High School in room 212 on Wednesday, April 9, 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 on your right. 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.

Next GAAB Meeting
April 9, 2008

**iWeb '08
7:00 p.m.**

**Troy High School
1950 Burdett Avenue, Troy**

Featured in this Issue

Serving the Apple Computer User Community Since May 1984

Officers & Special Interest Group Leaders

Program Coordinator
John Buckley
272-7128

Membership Director
Cecilia MacDonald
872-0823

Treasurer
Cecilia MacDonald
872-0823

Public Domain Librarian
Bill Shuff
393-9753

Newsletter Editor
Roger Mazula
466-7492

Education SIG
John Buckley
272-7128

Internet SIG
Lou Wozniak
465-2873

Apple Ambassador

PC Spending Heads South

The following gives an indication of how the PC market is changing. The ChangeWave blog below shows how Apple continues to do well in the market place.

Latest ChangeWave Surveys Show Slowdown in Personal Computer Sales by Paul Carton

PCs ain't selling like they used to.

That's the conclusion drawn from two recent ChangeWave surveys which show the economic slowdown is knocking back demand for personal computers. And our February surveys of consumers and businesses clearly show deteriorating PC sales going forward.

Over The Next 90 Days...

Only 8% of the 4,427 consumers surveyed by ChangeWave in late February say they'll be buying a laptop in the next 90 days - the lowest level of consumer laptop demand in the past 12 months.

The same trend was seen in desktop PC purchases, with just 6% saying they'll be buying one - also a low for the year.

Things weren't any better on the corporate side, where PC buying has also slowed precipitously. In February, only 73% of 2,204 corporate respondents said their company plans on buying laptops in the next quarter - down 4-pts from a year ago. It's the same pattern for desktops, with corporate purchases down 5-pts.

Given such big declines, which computer manufacturers will be hurt most?

Apple Still Relatively Strong

Despite the slowing PC environment, planned purchases of Apple Macs remain relatively strong.

Internet SIG

Catch Your Favorite TV Shows on the Web

by Kim Komando

How'd you like to watch The Simpsons, Saturday Night Live or even a full length movie on your schedule? New sites allow you to do just this and the number of shows offered is steadily increasing. Like television, the shows online are advertiser-supported and free to the viewer.

There are drawbacks. You'll watch the shows on your computer's monitor. While there are ways to stream what's on your computer to your TV, most of us won't want to go through technical hoops to do it. And, in most cases, you can't download the shows.

Cornucopia sites

Unlike television whereby programming is limited by network affiliation, several sites have deals to offer shows from different networks. For example, Joost features more than 20,000 shows.

You'll find prime time and sports broadcasts, along with documentaries and music. There are shows from Comedy Central, CBS and MTV. Sony and Showtime also offer videos. Most are full-length shows. Others are clips or extras.

Browse by channel or category to find a show. Or, use the site's search.

You must download the Joost viewer to watch shows. It works on Windows and Macs. Expect to see about three minutes of advertising per hour, although this may increase. Joost also uses annoying pop-up advertisements.

Hulu is similar to Joost. You'll find full-length shows and clips from NBC, Fox, Bravo and Oxygen, among other networks. Some movies are available. Browse alphabetically, by genre or by network. There's also a search box.

No software is needed for Hulu. Just click and watch online. You see about one-quarter the number of advertisements on Hulu as on television.

In2TV features a wide selection of classic shows. You'll find comedy, drama, Sci-Fi and other genres.

But In2TV isn't limited to the classics. It has partnered with major networks, mostly through Hulu, to offer recent videos. In2TV plays about two minutes of commercials per half-hour episode.

Individual networks

Major networks have also launched their own video sites.

ABC lets you watch many of its shows online. However, its full archive is not available. Rather, select, recently aired episodes are offered.

You can watch full episodes with commercial interruptions. There is no software to download. You'll see two ad breaks during a half-hour show and three during hour-long shows.

Similarly, CBS offers clips and full episodes of recently aired shows. The shows are supported by advertising. There is no software to download. CBS shows four ads per half-hour video. The ads are 15 or 30 seconds.

NBC also offers full-length, advertising-supported episodes of its shows. No software is needed to watch shows on NBC's site. NBC's advertising breaks are similar to those on television. However, only one 15- or 30-second commercial is played during a break.

However, some shows are downloadable. Software is needed to view these videos. The software currently supports Windows.

FOX's offerings are more limited. Full-length episodes are available in select markets. These include New York, Washington, Los Angeles, Dallas and Boston. In other areas, clips from recent shows can be viewed.

Also check your favorite television station or network's site. Many have similar offerings.

Some sites require a browser plug-in. You'll be prompted to install it if needed.

A final warning

Remember, not all television shows are family friendly. Exercise caution when watching videos online with your children. I wouldn't let the kids loose on these sites without looking over their shoulders.

Education SIG

Hands on with a Web-based SIS
by Christopher Dawson

As an educator and a person who was in charge of a school district information system, I know the problems you can have with data, especially now with the number of reports a district has to provide to comply with the No Child Left Behind program. Therefore, I am very interested in Student Information Management Systems, especially when I see what appears to be a successful transition from one program to another. Such is the article below from Christopher Dawson at ZDNet Education.

I've talked a fair amount about Web-based vs. client-server student information systems. Both have their advantages and disadvantages, but as regular readers know, we made the move to the Web- based X2 Aspen SIS about a year and a half ago, after a miserable experience with Chancery's (now Pearson School Systems') SMS (also Web-based). Prior to that, we'd had great luck with WinSchool and MacSchool, the client-server based predecessors to SMS.

Internal vs. Hosting

As a quick note, for those of you less familiar with student information systems, client-server systems are generally hosted onsite and consist of at least a single application server. Special client software runs on individual user computers to allow them to access the server and the data it contains. While this tends to give users a very speedy, richly-featured interface with multiple windows, client-server SIS tend to be limited to Windows (and Mac if you're lucky) and are only accessible onsite. VPNs and Terminal Services can mitigate this limitation to some extent, but obviously require additional administration.

Web-based SIS, on the other hand, are accessible anytime, anywhere, assuming that your hosting is set up to handle that (some districts still choose to only allow access from within their network due to bandwidth and security considerations). They generally consist of an application server and a web server, but can scale up to use multiple web servers for load balancing, dedicated reporting servers, database servers, etc. As with any website, they tend to require a bit more clicking back and forth than a client-server system which can allow multiple windows to interface with a server at the same time. However, as AJAX and other rich Internet application technologies mature, the gap in look and feel between the two types of systems shrinks.

We ultimately chose X2 Aspen because it did the best job of balancing web-based accessibility with speed and functionality more often associated with a client-server SIS (their extremely competitive price also helped the decision). X2's extensive use of AJAX (which has increased significantly with recent updates) makes many of their pages feel more like Google Docs than basic HTML forms.

About X2 Development Corporation (From X2 Development Website)

X2 Development Corporation is shaking up K-12 education. With our innovative service model, we provide exceptional software as simply one component of the X2 service.

At X2, our vision is integration. Our mission is to help schools integrate K-12 applications into one secure, customizable, web-based information system. We recognize the diverse challenges of today's school systems. Scalable software and tailored reports are some ways that X2 helps to overcome those challenges. At X2, the possibilities are endless. Our unparalleled technical support, extraordinary service, and exceptional software are just a few of the reasons why X2 is topping the charts!

X2 does more than develop software for K-12 schools. We deliver state of the art technologies as well as comprehensive user support for your entire enterprise. X2 has built key applications into one single solution. Let us help you to integrate your entire suite of student and staff information systems.

The X2 software is an extremely robust and functional tool that is centrally managed, yet tailored to suit your needs. X2 empowers you with the flexibility to customize your screens, reports, and procedures so you may access information in formats that are familiar and efficient to you. The X2 software architecture and design bring impressive depth and flexibility. The technology is solid. The interface is intuitive. Combined, these result in a program that is simple, consistent and easy to learn.

The X2 core SIS is comprehensive and customizable to work the way your school works.
The X2 software is an extremely robust and functional tool that is centrally managed, yet tailored to suit your needs. X2 empowers you with the flexibility to customize your screens, reports, and procedures so you may access information in formats that are familiar and efficient to you. The X2 software architecture and design bring impressive depth and flexibility. The technology is solid. The interface is intuitive. Combined, these result in a program that is simple, consistent and easy to learn.

Security

Define security roles to meet the specific needs of your district. Users access exactly the information they need. Nothing more, nothing less.

Flexibility: X2 allows you to customize your screens, reports and procedures so you can do things your way.

Scalability: X2 is just as effective in a school with 100 students as it is in a larger district with 100,000 students.

Reports: X2 accommodates even the most complex state and federal reporting requirements. X2 provides over 200 standard reports to get you started and empowers your users with the ability to customize and create the unique reports to suit their everyday needs.

Accessibility: X2 is a web-based solution built on open standards. Access your information from anywhere, anytime.

Maintainence: Let X2 host your SIS at our state of the art data center. X2 maintains the servers and network allowing you to focus on student achievement. X2 offers both hosted and non-hosted solutions.

Integrated Modules

Classroom management: More than just a gradebook. Empowering teachers to do their jobs. With tools for attendance, curriculum and assessment. Sharing lesson plans brings the level of education up in every classroom.

Special Education: Bringing Imps into the mainstream teacher's gradebook, workflow technology and reporting.

Personnel: Tracking courses, certificates and credentials, staff demographics, leave of absences, FTE, activities for teacher coaches, advisors and others. Allowing data collection and updates at the school level.

Family Portal: Getting everyone on board with the education process. Giving teachers, parents and students an arena to communicate openly. Highlighting issues throughout the term so they can be addressed before they become serious.

Professional Development Tracking: Manage, schedule and register for courses, track credits.
Health: Brings health alerts, such as allergies and asthma into the teacher gradebook.

The Process

Although X2 supports districts that host the system internally, the best bang for your buck comes from letting the company host Aspen for you in their data center. They handle backups (including offsite), security certificates, physical security, etc., allowing district staff to focus on database administration instead of running web, database, and application servers.

The Web-based nature of Aspen, like other online student information systems, also facilitates X2's outstanding customer service. Any time users call in with a problem, X2 staff can log in and see precisely what users are seeing and can often resolve the problem on the spot.

So what kinds of problems have we had? Overall, not too many. The worst have related to data conversion, largely because the data that came out of SMS were such a disaster. Now, the majority of our support calls relate to how to complete uncommon tasks or tweaks we need for various reports. All of the reports are written in Java and XML, by the way, so are completely editable by users; however, for now, it's a lot faster to have X2 make the changes.

Issues

While the system is generally well-liked by teachers and staff, there are a few issues. One is noted in the gallery, but, essentially, there are places where you would expect to be able to use snapshots (pre-selected groups of

students), but can't. This is largely a front office complaint since they often need to work with groups of students on field trips, in sports teams, clubs, etc.

The second relates to speed. As already noted, this is a trade-off with any web-based SIS. The folks who complain the most about lag were the ones who loved our old client-server systems and were accustomed to nearly instantaneous data access. This is not to say users spend a lot of time waiting after each click. However, when someone has to enter a lot transactions every day (those in charge of attendance, for example) that can't be completed through so-called "mass updates" (i.e., they must be handled individually), then any delay between click and response can grow tiresome. This is obviously something that must be considered internally; for us, the speed issue was far outweighed by accessibility, but the same may not be the case at your school.

For any of you considering a new SIS, try the latest release of X2 Aspen (they just rolled out Version 2.6 last week). It includes the features I like and use the most, as well as the few niggles I have with the Web-based system. The screenshots are all taken in Firefox on my MacBook, but the web pages all function without any issues across browsers and platforms, including Linux.
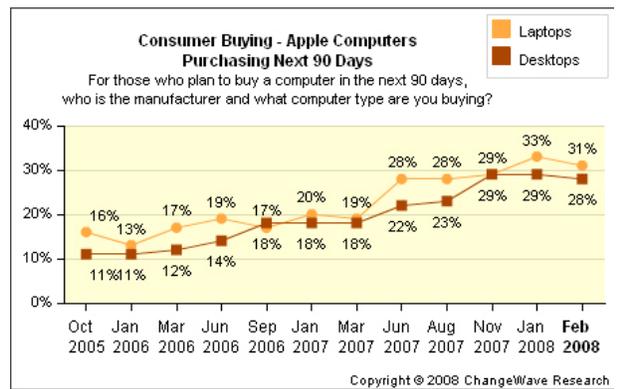
Christopher Dawson is a teacher and IT administrator for Athol, MA High School. See his full profile and disclosure of his industry affiliations.

Apple Ambassador
Continued from page 2.

Looking at the next three months, Apple remains the leader among consumers who plan to buy a laptop (31%) - down


just 2-pts from the all-time high recorded in our previous survey. Apple planned desktop purchases (28%; down 1-pt) are also near record levels.

Importantly, Apple's numbers are up more than 50% from a year ago.

Corporate planned Mac purchases are also at or near record highs, as laptops (7%) were unchanged from previously, while desktops (6%) fell just 1-pt.

And in a clear sign PC buyers like what Apple is doing, our survey showed the company continues to set the standard for customer satisfaction.
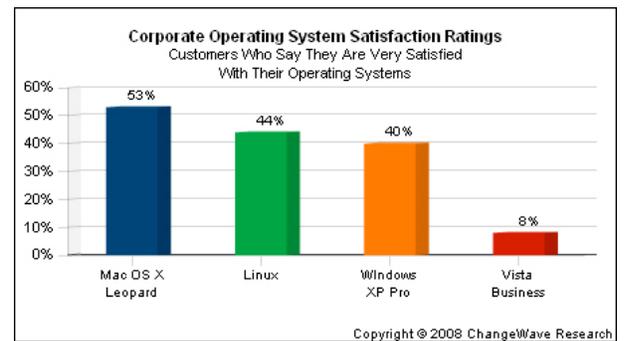
Among corporate respondents using the Leopard operating system, over half (53%) report they are *Very Satisfied*. This compares to a 40% *Very Satisfied* rating for Windows XP Pro users, and a dismal 8% *Very Satisfied* rating for Microsoft Vista Business (8%).

Clearly, the Leopard OS is a crowd pleaser.

Dell: Back To The Future

Dell's fortunes going forward are far different than Apple's.

Our previous consumer PC survey showed Dell with a small uptick in planned consumer buying, but that rise appears short lived - they are once again losing traction going forward. Planned purchases of Dell laptops (28%; down 2-pts) and especially desktops (32%; down 4-pts) are considerably weaker than in our previous survey.

Dell is also plagued by a downturn in planned corporate PC buying for next quarter, with desktop (32%; down 3-pts) and laptop (32%; down 1-pt) purchases falling to new lows.

"It's like déjà vu, all over again," Yogi Berra famously said, and that's what it looks like as Dell once again resumes its market share slide.

Mac Tips

Annotating PDFs in Preview

You may already know that Preview is a terrific application for viewing PDF files. But did you realize it's also great for annotating PDFs? It's a fast and efficient way to share comments when collaborating on group projects.

Under Preview's Tools menu, you'll find the options Mark Up and Annotate. Mark Up lets you highlight, strike through, or underline selected text within a PDF. Annotate allows you to draw circles and rectangles around parts of a PDF, append Stickies-style notes, and add hyperlinks.

To use Mark Up, choose the Text tool from Preview's Toolbar. Select your target text with the cursor, and then choose a Mark Up option from the Tools menu (the choices are Highlight Text, Strike Through Text, and Underline Text).

To add shapes, links or comments, select a command from the Tools menu's Annotate list (the options are Add Oval, Add Rectangle, Add Note, and Add Link).

If you've selected Add Note, simply click anywhere on the PDF. A colored tag appears in the left margin alongside the spot where you clicked. Its default text consists of your user name and the date, though you can alter or add to this by double-clicking on the note. To move notes, double-click their icons (those little cartoon-style balloons) and then drag them. When you double-click a note icon, you can also specify the note's color and other attributes. To remove a note, double-click its icon and press Delete.

All Mark Up and Annotate tools can be summoned via key command. Also, if you use these tools frequently, you may want to add them to Preview's Toolbar. (By default, they are not shown.) To add them, select the View menu's Customize Toolbar command, then drag the tools you want from the pop-up onto the Toolbar.
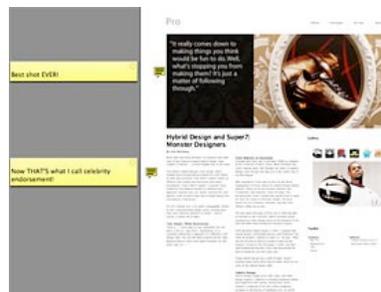
Exposé Show-Off Trick #1

Showing off Exposé to a friend or co-worker who uses a PC is more than a blast, it's your duty, because even Windows XP still has nothing like it. But if you really want to be a major hambone, before you press F9 to invoke Exposé, start a QuickTime movie clip, have a DVD playing, or have iTunes playing a song and click on the Visualizer (heck, have all three going at once). When you press F9, the QuickTime clip (DVD, iTunes, etc.) keeps playing even when miniaturized. It's fun to watch their face as it changes from "Cool!" to "Why doesn't Windows have that?"

Make the Most of Quick Look

One of the biggest time-savers in Mac OS X Leopard is the Quick Look, which gives you an instant preview of any file. It's great for finding the right document, image, or mp3 when you're not sure which is which, or choosing the correct version from a series of files with similar names.

To use Quick Look, simply select an item in the Finder and press the Space bar, or type Command-Y. An image of the selected item appears. (In the case of mp3s, the sound file also plays.) You don't even need to open the document's usual application. If it's a photo, for example, you can see it without waiting for iPhoto or Preview to open.

To close the Quick Look preview, simply press the Space bar again, or click the x in the preview window's upper-left corner. Alternately, you can type Command-Y or Command-W to close the image.

A few more tips to help you get the most from this amazing feature:

- If you want to preview additional items, don't close the preview window. Just highlight a new file in the Finder, and the open preview window displays the newly selected object.
- IQuick Look lets you view multiple-page documents. For longer files, a navigation scroll bar appears along the preview window's right margin. It even works with PDFs and Keynote presentations.
- IYou can preview multiple items simultaneously. Just select several items in the Finder by lassoing them with your cursor. Or open one item in Quick Look, then use the up- and down-arrow keys to display other files in the same folder.
- IYou can combine searches and Quick Look. Simply type keywords into a Finder window's Search Box to reveal files whose names or contents match the search terms. Select some or all of the results, open Quick Look via space bar or Command-Y, and use your up- and down-arrow keys to switch between the selected previews.

Apple Ambassador
Continued from page 6.

H-P Weak, But There's a Twist

Hewlett-Packard also wasn't spared in our surveys, as they are experiencing weaker PC sales going forward - led by a big drop in consumer planned buying of desktops (18%; down 5-pts) and laptops (19%; down 2-pts).

On the corporate side, planned purchases for H-P desktops fell 1-pt to 17%, while laptops dipped 2-pts to 14%.

One thing in H-P's favor, however, is their strong sales overseas (nearly 70% of their total sales) - where the current slowdown is likely having less of an impact. Note that our ChangeWave surveys focus mainly on the U.S. market.

When we did ask respondents living outside the U.S. about Hewlett-Packard planned purchases, H-P registered higher market share numbers for consumer desktops (22%), corporate desktops (20%) and corporate laptops (17%).

But despite the couple of bright spots in our surveys, it's clear that overall visibility in both consumer and corporate PC purchasing is on the decline.

GAAB Internet Addresses

Names	E-Mail Addresses
Gary Blizzard	gmblizzard@aol.com
Steve Bradley	ssbradley@adelphia.net
John Buckley	jbuckley@nycap.rr.com
Anthony Eldering	tonye11@verizon.net
Harold Flax	hflax1@nycap.rr.com
Lilajane Frascarelli	afrascar@nycap.rr.com
Les Goldstein	lgoldst1@nycap.rr.com
Richard Hester	hesterFP@capital.net
Bruce Hodsoll	bhodsoll@nycap.rr.com
George Johnsen	gjohnsen@sprynet.com
Judy and David Kaskel	jak@nycap.rr.com
Cecilia MacDonald	cecilia@midtel.net
Stella Zuris Mallon	SunnyStela@adelphia.net
Mike Mannarino.	rfd230@nycap.rr.com
Roger Mazula	aluzam@aol.com
Roger Mazula	rmazula1@nycap.rr.com
Brendan O'Hara	bohara1@nycap.rr.com
Linda Rackliffe	revmutt@mac.com
Jen Rice	jrice001@nycap.rr.com
Eric/Lee Rieker	Erieker@aol.com
Judith Schwartz	jfschwartz2@earthlink.net
Bill Shuff	wjs206@earthlink.net
Ellie Smith	eas715@aol.com
Ernie Tetrault	ernie@global2000.net
Edward Walsh	ewalsh@nycap.rr.com
Shelly Weiner	olliedawg@yahoo.com
Lou Wozniak	louw@nycap.rr.com

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

Cecilia MacDonald
260 Sever Road
Delanson, NY 12053

Visit GAAB on the Internet at http://homepage.mac.com/applebyters