iTunes Plus

Apple® launched iTunes® Plus—DRM-free music tracks featuring high quality 256 kbps AAC encoding for audio quality virtually indistinguishable from the original recordings—for just $1.29 per song. iTunes Plus is launching with EMI's digital catalog of outstanding recordings, including singles and albums from Coldplay, The Rolling Stones, Norah Jones, Frank Sinatra, Joss Stone, Pink Floyd, John Coltrane and more than a dozen of Paul McCartney's classic albums available on iTunes for the first time.

iTunes will continue to offer its entire catalog, currently over five million songs, in the same versions as today—128 kbps AAC encoding with DRM—at the same price of 99 cents per song, alongside the higher quality iTunes Plus versions when available. In addition, iTunes customers can now easily upgrade their library of previously purchased EMI content to iTunes Plus tracks for just 30 cents a song and $3.00 for most albums.

"Our customers are very excited about the freedom and amazing sound quality of iTunes Plus," said Steve Jobs, Apple's CEO. "We expect more than half of the songs on iTunes will be offered in iTunes Plus versions by the end of this year."

"This is a tremendous milestone for digital music," said Eric Nicoli, CEO of EMI Group. "Consumers are going to love listening to higher quality iTunes Plus tracks from their favorite EMI artists with no usage restrictions."

Coordinator's Corner
by John Buckley

The June meeting will be a celebration of our Twenty-third Anniversary. By request, we will be having a special meeting beginning at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 13th with a dinner at the Plum Blossom Restaurant.

Please note the change in location. GAAB will provide the dinner. Sign up has been through my e-mail address (**jbuckley@nycap.rr.com**). Please make sure you contact me as soon as possible so I can make reservations. This should prove to be a Grand Finale for our twenty-third year.

Below are directions to get to the Plum Blossom at 685 Hoosick Road (Route 7). The restaurant is about 7 minutes from where we have our regular meeting at Troy High School.

The following are directions from Route 7 and the Northway in Latham.

1. Start out going SOUTHEAST on NY-7/TROY SCHENECTADY RD
2. Merge onto I-87 N/NY-7 E via the ramp on the LEFT toward SARATOGA SPRINGS/TROY.
3. Merge onto NY-7 E via EXIT 7 toward TROY/ COHOES.
4. End at 685 Hoosick Rd
5. Troy, NY 12180-8818, US

Next GAAB Meeting
June 13, 2007

23rd Anniversary
6:00 p.m.

Plum Blossom Restaurant
685 Hoosick Road, 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

MS Office File Compatibility Problems

For those of us who use MS Office on the Mac, the great thing about it was that there was very little difficulty opening MS Office files from Windows versions of the Office Suite. With the new version of Office there are differences in the new default file format, which could cause problems until MS Office 2008 for the Mac comes out later this year.

Adam C. Engst at *tidbits.com* (www.tidbits.com) writes that if you find yourself needing to access Office Open XML documents created by Windows users in Word 2007, Microsoft now has a free beta converter that may help. The Microsoft Office Open XML File Format Converter for Mac 0.1b can convert .docx and .docm documents (the latter are Word macro-enabled documents) into RTF format, which can be opened in Word 2004 and Word X on the Mac. The converter provides both individual file and batch conversion.

In this beta release, macros and Visual Basic scripts are dropped from the converted file, and charts and SmartArt graphics are converted to pictures. Other problems that might crop up in the beta include resizing of graphics, loss of color fills and shading in tables, loss of certain document formatting and layout, loss of some Unicode characters and picture bullets, and font substitution. The conversion might fail entirely if the document contains a bibliography, citations, WordArt, or very large pictures, or if you use an SMB network volume as the destination. To summarize all that, most documents should convert fine, but some that use less-common features may have troubles. Nonetheless, it's great to see Microsoft's Mac Business Unit releasing this beta now; even though it's clearly not done, it will undoubtedly be useful to Mac users right away. Now if only they could give it a snappier name.

The Microsoft Office Open XML File Format Converter for Mac beta is a 24.9 MB download and expires on 31-Dec-07. It requires Mac OS X 10.4.8, and either at least Office 2004 11.3.4 or Office X 10.1.9 to open the converted documents. Free upgrades to both versions of Office are available from Microsoft's Mac Downloads page.

If you find yourself needing a conversion capability that this free beta doesn't support, it's worth taking a look at

Internet SIG

Going Online for Background Checks
by Kim Komando

Have you met a man who says he's a doctor out West? Wondering if your new business partner has a shady background? How about a job applicant who seems too good to be true? Fortunately, the Internet is loaded with helpful public-record databases. Many offer free information. You just need to know where to look.

If information is critical, you might still want to turn to an investigator. Online sites are improving, but they probably cannot substitute for a professional's experience. Searches still take some skill. Nonetheless, you can do a lot online.

Start with search sites

Search sites like Google, Yahoo! and Live.com are good places to start. You'll see what people have posted about the person on their Web sites. If the person is mentioned in news stories, you'll see those, too.

You may uncover previous employers and addresses. This will help you search targeted sites.

Search using individuals' names and their business' names. If a person's name is common, your search will be more difficult. Try variations of the name and include an occupation or location.

Look for personal blogs too. Google offers a specialized search tool that works.

Try social networking sites

Like many employers, I check MySpace to learn about potential hires. Professionals may not turn up on MySpace. But they may use business networking sites.

LinkedIn.com is the MySpace of business networking. But there are others like it. You might also want to check Xing, Ecademy and Ryze.

See what people claim about business affiliations, education and work history. You may find inconsistencies.

Public records

There have always been public records. But courthouse procedures can be intimidating. The Web eases things.

There are ton of courts around. Most have records online. The National Center for State Courts will help you find state and federal courts. GovEngine.com lists local courts.

Search using the individual's name and business. You'll need to visit various court sites, if the person has moved around.

You'll also find other public records online. But again, you'll need to do some work.

Begin by visiting your state's official Web site. You'll find the state's sex offender registry. You should be able to search it by name or address.

Depending on your state, more public records may be available online. You may be able to find property records. And don't forget to search for business filings.

State sites will also provide links to local government sites. Check these sites to see what information they offer.

Alumni associations

You may be able to use the Web to verify college degrees. Visit the school's alumni association. Many list their members and graduation dates.

If people aren't listed, that doesn't mean they lied. They may not belong to the alumni association. If someone is listed, it proves that they graduated from the school.

College registrar offices normally will confirm degrees. But, in my experience, that takes a phone call.

Licensing boards

Licensing records are typically available for professionals such as doctors and attorneys. Additionally, you'll find out about disciplinary actions.

Visit NASD.com's BrokerCheck to learn more about securities brokers and firms.

You'll need to visit statewide boards to check on doctors and attorneys. The American Medical Association lists links to state medical boards. FindLaw lists links to state bar associations.

Apple Announces iTunes U
on the iTunes Store

The following is from the *iTunes Store*, *AppleInsider* (http://www.appleinsider.com), and *The Chronicle* (http://chronicle.com/) and shows how the way in which people learn is rapidly changing. The great thing about this is that many of the courses are available free at the iTunes Store and can be played on your computer as well as an iPod.

Apple on Wednesday announced the launch of iTunes U, a dedicated area within the iTunes Store featuring free content such as course lectures, language lessons, lab demonstrations, sports highlights and campus tours provided by top US colleges and universities including Stanford University, UC Berkeley, Duke University and MIT.

Education evolves.

iTunes U has arrived, giving higher education institutions an ingenious way to get audio and video content out to their students. Presentations, performances, lectures, demonstrations, debates, tours, archival footage — school is about to become even more inspiring.

More of a very good thing.

Designed to be completely intuitive, iTunes U is based on the iTunes Store, where millions of people already get their music, movies, and TV shows. Now there's an area of the iTunes Store devoted entirely to education, where it's easy to search thousands of audio and video files from schools across the country.

Colleges and universities build their own iTunes U sites. Faculty post content they create for their classes. Students download what they need, and go. Learning isn't just for the classroom anymore. It's for anytime and anyplace you've got a Mac, a PC, or an iPod.

Just like the iTunes Store, the popularity of iTunes U has exploded. Already, more than half of the nation's top 500 schools use it to distribute their digital content to students — or to the world. Any school can open all or part of its site to the public, from alumni to parents to anyone with a love of learning. iTunes U is transforming the way people learn on campus, off campus, and where there's no campus at all.

Great minds think alike.

iTunes U was created in collaboration with colleges and universities that were looking for ways to expand and enrich their curricula with digital content. It's one of our proudest achievements in the 30 years we've been working with institutions, educators, associations, and students to realize their ambitions.

Launching an iTunes U site instantly puts a school at the forefront of technology in higher education. Yet one of the most remarkable things about iTunes U is that it's not IT–intensive. Once the site is up, it basically runs itself. iTunes U works seamlessly with the technology you already have in place, and it's so intuitive that faculty rarely need any help from IT.

Potential student body: 6 billion+.

iTunes U is also a serious competitive advantage that any higher–education institution in the U.S. or Canada can implement. Students love it. Professors love it. Even alums are excited to have a better connection to campus life. Interested in raising your school's profile? Make some — or all — of your iTunes U content public, and start reaching eager minds around the world.

"iTunes U makes it easy for anyone to access amazing educational material from many of the country's most respected colleges and universities," said Eddy Cue, Apple's vice president of iTunes. "Education is a lifelong pursuit and we're pleased to give everyone the ability to download lectures, speeches and other academic content for free."

Created in collaboration with colleges and universities, iTunes U makes it easier to extend learning, explore interests, learn more about a school and stay connected with an alma mater. Content from iTunes can be loaded onto an iPod with just one click and experienced on-the-go, anytime, making learning from a lecture just as simple as enjoying music.

"From its earliest days, Stanford has sought to serve the public by sharing the knowledge generated by our faculty and students," said Stanford Provost John Etchemendy. "Our partnership with Apple and iTunes U provides a creative and innovative way to engage millions of people with our teaching, learning and research and share the experience of intellectual exploration and discovery that defines our university."

Apple Releases Free 'iTunes U' Software to Colleges for Coursecasting

By JEFFREY R. YOUNG, *The Chronicle*

Apple Computer will allow any college or university to set up a customized portion of the iTunes Music Store to distribute course content and other audio and video material. The free service will let institutions limit use of some materials to certain people and make other content available to all.

The service, called iTunes U, will allow colleges to set up collections of materials that can be accessed using the free iTunes software, but that can be customized with the college's colors, logos, and photographs. The service was announced late Monday.

Colleges that participate will be given software tools that will make it easy for professors or students to upload content to iTunes, the company said in a statement about the service. The files themselves will be stored on servers run by Apple, but college administrators will have control over who can see the files. Colleges will be able to integrate the system with their existing network software so that students can log into the iTunes store using their campus user ID's and passwords.

The service's Web site notes that participating colleges "must enter into an iTunes U Service Agreement before being eligible to use the iTunes U service," and that "Apple reserves the right to determine eligibility." Apple officials could not be reached on Tuesday to provide details.

The company's offer is the latest indication of the popularity of "coursecasting" — making recordings of class lectures available online in a format that students can download to their portable music players (The Chronicle, October 28).

The idea is that students can use the recordings to review, and can do so while they walk around campus, work out, or engage in other activities away from their computers. Some professors, however, worry that the growing availability of course recordings will lead to empty classrooms as students skip lecture sessions and tune in later.

The move could help Apple maintain its dominance in portable music players on campuses. Though the iTunes software works on both Macs and PC's, the only portable players it connects to are iPods; it will not work with players made by other companies.

Over the past year, Apple has worked with six institutions to test the service: Brown, Duke, and Stanford Universities; the University of Michigan School of Dentistry, at Ann Arbor; the University of Missouri School of Journalism, at Columbia; and the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

At Michigan's dentistry school, the iTunes service is used to deliver recordings of most of the school's courses. Lynn Johnson, associate professor of dentistry and director of dental informatics, says the idea to offer recordings of lectures came from the students, who volunteered to help make the recordings. At first, the dental school set up its own Web site to distribute the recordings, but it recently switched to the iTunes service instead, says Ms. Johnson.

"They really needed and wanted the audio because they could be mobile with it," she says. She says that the project is a success, and that many students use it. Student volunteers are in charge of starting and stopping the recording process for each lecture, using a Macintosh computer that is tied into the classroom's sound system. "The fact that they keep recording more lectures — that just speaks for itself," she says.

Brian S. Brooks, associate dean of undergraduate studies and administration at University of Missouri's School of

Journalism, says that the school used the service for a few classes on a trial basis last fall, and that the system worked well.

"It makes a lot of sense to deliver course content to students in a medium they're all familiar with," he says, noting that many students already use iTunes, and many own iPods.

He says that the college is looking into putting materials on the iTunes service that would be available to anyone, with the hope that alumni and others interested in the university would tune in.

Both Mr. Brooks and Ms. Johnson say that their biggest concern in committing to the project was security, but that Apple officials persuaded them that the system is safe.

Apple Ambassador
Continued from page 2.

Panergy's $20 docXConverter, which promises to convert the majority of Word 2007 features to RTF as well.

Microsoft tells us that updates to the converter in a few months will include support for PowerPoint and Excel documents, and a version of it that provides read/write conversion will be integrated into Office 2004 six to eight weeks after the release of Office 2008 for Mac. For more about it, check out Geoff Price's post in the Mac Mojo blog.

The following is the description from the Microsoft website:

(h t t p : / / w w w . m i c r o s o f t . c o m / m a c / downloads.aspx?pid=download&location=/mac/download/ Office2004/ConverterBeta.xml)

Microsoft Office Open XML File Format Converter for Mac 0.1b (Beta)

With the Office Open XML Converter, you can convert Office Open XML files to a format that is compatible with Microsoft Office 2004 for Mac and Microsoft Office v. X for Mac. You can choose to convert and open one file, or convert a large number of files.

This version of the Office Open XML Converter can convert the following Office Open XML file formats:

- Word Document (*.docx)
- Word Macro-Enabled Document (*.docm)

These files are converted to Rich Text Format (RTF), which can be opened in Microsoft Word 2004 and Microsoft Word X.

The converter is a Beta release, and might be unable to convert all the data in Office Open XML files. After you convert a file, you should review the file carefully to make sure that it contains all of the information that you expect.

The following issues are known to exist in this Beta release:

- Macros and Visual Basic content are not included in the converted file.
- Charts and SmartArt graphics are converted to pictures.

The following issues might occur in this Beta release:

- Graphics and other objects in the document might appear with a different size.
- Color fills and shading in tables might not be preserved.
- Conversion might not succeed if the document contains a bibliography or citations.
- Conversion might not succeed if the document contains WordArt.
- Document layout and formatting might not be preserved.
- Some Unicode characters might not be preserved.
- Conversion might not succeed if the document contains very large pictures.
- Conversion might not succeed if you use an SMB network volume as the preferred destination for converted files.
- Picture bullets might not be preserved.
- Fonts might be substituted.

This Beta release expires on December 31, 2007.

Released: May 10, 2007
Microsoft Office Open XML File Format Converter in Beta

In addition, thanks to Jim Dewitt, who alerted tidbits that DataViz's venerable MacLinkPlus Deluxe, now at version 16, also includes read-only support for the file formats used by Word 2007 and Excel 2007 under Windows. So, if Microsoft's free beta converter doesn't work for you, and you want an alternative to Panergy's docXConverter, check out MacLinkPlus Deluxe.

DataViz deserves kudos for sticking with the conversion game for so long and with such a large list of file formats. My experience is that conversions are seldom perfect, but any automatic tool that brings you closer to the desired result is a good thing.
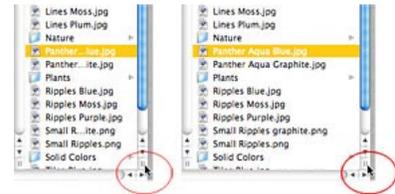
Mac Tips

One-Click Long-File-Name Fix

If you're working in a window set to Column view, you're going to run into this all the time — files with long names have the end of their names cut off from view, because the column isn't wide enough. That doesn't sound like that big of a problem, until you start working with more descriptive file names, and you can't see which file is "European Front End Silver Car" and which is "European Back End Silver Car" because everything from "European" to "Silver Car" is cut off.

Luckily, there's a quick fix — just double-click on the little tab at the bottom of the vertical column divider bar, and the column will expand just enough so you can see even the longest file name of any file in that column. Option-double-click on the tab, and every column expands to show the longest name in each column. Pretty darn sweet!

See Your File's Hidden Info

Want more info on your files than the standard icon view provides (after all, it just gives you the file's name in icon view)? Then turn on Show Item info. This adds an extra line of information below many files and folders that can be very useful. For example, now not only do you get a folder's name, but just below the name (in unobtrusive light-blue, 9-point type), you'll see how many items are in that folder.

If the file is an image, the Item Info shows you how big it is. MP3 files show how long the song is, etc. To turn on Item Info for your current Finder window, press Command-J to bring up its View Options. Then turn on the checkbox for Show Item Info. If you want to show the item info for every window (globally), then choose the All Windows button at the top of the dialog.

PDF: The Smaller PDF Secret Control

This is another one of those "secret, buried-in-a-vault" killer tips that addresses something Mac OS X users have complained about: The file sizes of PDFs that Mac OS X creates are sometimes too big (vs. Adobe's Acrobat PDFs). believe it or not, there's a way to get smaller PDFs. Here's how: launch TextEdit, then choose Print from the File menu. From the PDF pop-up menu in the bottom-left corner of the dialog, choose Compress PDF. That's it. It'll compress the PDF and call it a day.

However, if you're charging by the hour, and let's pretend you are, you have a wonderful time-consuming option: Choose Print from the File menu, and from the second Presets pop-up menu choose ColorSync. From the Quartz Filter menu that appears, choose Add Filters. Click on the three-oval icon in the top-left corner of the dialog that appears, click on the filter named Reduce File Size, and then click-and-hold on the arrow button to the right of the filter and choose Duplicate Filter. This creates an unlocked filter you can edit.

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