mini'app'les newsletter
the minnesota apple computer users' group, inc.

June Meetings

To the right is a list of mini'app'les meetings for June 2009. The information was compiled as this newsletter was being assembled and is subject to change. As always, confirm the Special Interest Group (SIG) date, time, and location with the cognizant SIG Leader or the mini'app'les website (http://www.miniapples.org).

June 2009			
Monday	June 1	7:00 pm	Board of Directors Meeting
Tuesday	June 2	7:00 pm	Mac OS X SIG
Wednesday	June 3	6:30 pm	iWork/AppleWorks SIG
Wednesday	June 10	7:00 pm	VectorWorks SIG*
Wednesday	June 10	7:00 pm	TC Photoshop User Group*
Thursday	June 18	7:00 am	Macintosh Consultants SIG
Monday	June 22	7:00 pm	Mac Q&A SIG
Thursday	June 25	7:00 pm	FileMaker Pro SIG

Meeting	Location	Leader
Board of Directors	Merriam Park Library, 1831 Marshall Ave, St Paul	Bruce Thompson, 763-546-1088
FileMaker Pro SIG	Partners, 2250 Terminal Rd, Roseville	Steve Wilmes, 651-458-1513
iWork/AppleWorks SIG	Penn Lake Library, 8800 Penn Ave. S., Bloomington	John Hunkins Sr, 651-457-8949
Mac OS X SIG	The Foundation, 311 7th Ave N, Minneapolis	Bob Demeules, 763-559-1124
Mac Q&A SIG	Merriam Park Library, 1831 Marshall Ave, St Paul	Les Anderson, 651-735-3953
Macintosh Consultants SIG	Good Day Café, 5410 Wayzata Blvd, Golden Valley	Bob Demeules, 763-559-1124
Multi-SIG Meeting	St. Charles School, 2727 Stinson Blvd, Minneapolis	Tom Gates, 612-789-1713
TC Photoshop User Group*	Minneapolis College of Art & Design, Auditorium 150, 2501 Stevens Ave S, Minneapolis	Jeff Tranberry, phone number not available
VectorWorks SIG*	CJR Office, 4441 Claremore Dr, Edina	Charles Radloff, 952-941-1667

Looking Ahead to July

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July 2009			
Wednesday	July 1	6:30 pm	iWork/AppleWorks SIG
Tuesday	July 7	7:00 pm	Mac OS X SIG
Wednesday	July 8	7:00 pm	VectorWorks SIG*
Thursday	July 16	7:00 am	Macintosh Consultants SIG
Thursday	July 23	7:00 pm	FileMaker Pro SIG
Monday	July 27	7:00 pm	Mac Q&A SIG

* This SIG is NOT sponsored by mini'app'les; the listing is provided as a service to members

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Membership Coordinator	Erik Knopp

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Questions — Members with technical questions should refer to the Members Helping Members section or bring their questions to an appropriate SIG meeting. Please direct other questions to an appropriate board member.

Dealers — mini'app'les does not endorse specific dealers. The club promotes distribution of information that may help members identify best buys and service. The club itself does not participate in bulk purchases of media, software, hardware, and publications. Members may organize such activities on behalf of other members.

Newsletter Contributions — We welcome contributions from our members. Please send contributions directly to our post office box (mini'app'les, PO Box 796, Hopkins MN 55343) or email them to miniapples@mac.com, or email them to the newsletter editor at ronheck@comcast.net

Deadline for material for the next newsletter is the fifteenth of the month. An article will be printed when space permits and, if in the opinion of the Newsletter Editor or Publications Director, it constitutes material suitable for publication.

Newsletter Staff this month: Ron Heck

The layout of this newsletter was done using Apple's Pages word processor.

mini'app'les forums:	http://miniapples.7.forumer.com
mini'app'les website:	http://www.miniapples.org
mini'app'les email:	miniapples@mac.com

CHANGE OF ADDRESS
Moving? Going to be away from home and leaving a forwarding address with the Post Office? Changing to a better email provider? Please send us a Change of Address when you are informing others. By using a moment of your time, you ensure you receive a notice when your club membership is expiring and you get your newsletter email notification delivered promptly. Change of Address should be sent to the club's mailing address (mini'app'les, Attn: Membership Director, Box 796, Hopkins MN 55343) or to the club's email address (miniapples@mac.com).

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK
by Ron Heck

It seems all the buzz lately surrounds what products Apple may be unveiling this summer. The third iteration of the iPhone is anticipated to be announced at Apple's Worldwide Developers Conference during the week of June 8. The next Mac OS, called "Snow Leopard," will also be released at some point. The changes will be major and will cause the second digit of the OS to increment from the

However, the most secretive and rumors continue to abound that Apple is working on a product that has been called a "netbook," mini-laptop, "touch-book," and iPhone Pro, among other names. I have spotted these smaller devices in coffee shops lately, mostly in the form of a model from Acer called Aspire.

A netbook (or whatever you'd prefer to call it) is essentially a small laptop computer that has reduced features that allow it to be extremely portable and browse the Internet. It has a less powerful processor, smaller screen, smaller form factor, smaller hard disk, and less RAM than a full-size laptop. All of this reduction translates into a less expensive product that can be easily slipped into a purse or handbag.

Of course, Apple is maintaing their usual secrecy surrounding the details of the purported Mac Netbook, and it is not 100% certain that Apple is even working on such a device. However, the rumors on the Web continue to fly. Apple's plans should become clear during the second week of June at the WWDC.

Submissions

We welcome newsletter submissions from members. Perhaps you're using new software that you just can't live without. Or maybe you've got a new piece of hardware that you find extremely useful and of high quality. On the other hand, you might be struggling with problematic software or hardware.

Why not share your experience with other members by writing a product review? Doing so may steer others towards quality products or help them avoid the problems you may be having.

You can E-mail your submissions to ronheck@comcast.com. I am happy to help clean up any articles submitted for publication in this newsletter.

SIG Reports

If you don't see a report from your favorite Special Interest Group (SIG) in this issue of the newsletter, please take a few minutes to provide a summary of the next meeting for the next newsletter.

Hopefully, understanding what material and what level of material is being discussed at the different SIG meetings will encourage more people to attend SIG meetings and to join the mini'app'les.

Thanks for your help.

Members Helping Members

Need Help? Have a question the manual doesn't answer? Members Helping Members is a group of volunteers who have generously agreed to help. They are just a phone call or an email away. Please call only during the appropriate times, and **only if you are a current mini'app'les member** and own the software in question.

Apple II / IIGS Software & Hardware 1, 2
AppleWorks / ClarisWorks 3, 4
Classic Macs
Cross-Platform File Transfer....................2, 3
FileMaker Pro
Intel Based Macs
iMacs
iPhoto 3
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Mac OS Classic.......................................3
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Microsoft Excel.......................................2, 5, 8
Microsoft Word 2, 8
MYOB...5
Networks
New Users 1
PhotoShop
QuarkXPress 8
Quicken 5
QuickBooks and QuickBooks Pro 5
VectorWorks..6

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2. Tom Ostertag	651-488-9979	tostertag@usfamily.net	EW
3. Bruce Thompson	763-546-1088	bthompson@Macconnect.com	EW
4. Pam Lienke	651-457-6026	plienke@aol.com	DEW
5. Ardie Predweshny	612-978-9774		DEW
6. Charles Radloff	952-941-1667		D
7. **Your Name Here**			
8. Ron Heck	651-774-9151	ronheck@comcast.net	DEW

D: Days, generally 9 am to 5 pm
E: Evenings, generally 5 pm to 9 pm
W: Weekends, generally 1 pm to 9 pm

Please call at reasonable hours and ask if it is a convenient time for helping you. By the way, many of these volunteers can also be contacted on our forums. We appreciate your cooperation.

mini'app'les needs more volunteers for Members Helping Members — If you are willing to be a Members Helping Member volunteer, please send an email message to Membership Director Chuck Hauge or contact him on our forums with your name, telephone number, contact hours, and the software and hardware areas you are willing to support.

And The Winner Is …
by Harry Lienke

The votes cast in the great mini'app'les Board of Directors (BOD) election are in. Our intrepid election committee, Bert Persson and John Hunkins, Sr., verified and counted the ballots at the May 6 iWork meeting. There were fourteen ballots cast; eleven ballots were cast electronically and three ballots were delivered via hard copy. One of the ballots was disqualified for lack of a membership number (the elections instructions clearly required that each ballot contain a member's name and membership number). The election results are as follows:

President: Bruce Thompson — 12 votes; Harry Lienke — 1 vote

Vice President: Tim Drenk — 12; Harry Lienke — 1

Secretary: Harry Lienke — 11; Andre Benassi — 1; Pam Lienke — 1

Treasurer: Dave Lundin — 12; Harry Lienke — 1

Membership Director: Les Anderson — 12; Harry Lienke — 1

Publications Director: Ron Heck — 11; Harry Lienke — 1

SIG Director: Kevin Strysik — 12; Harry Lienke — 1

Congratulations to all the BOD members!

Yes, the tally shown above is correct; one of the ballots contained votes for Harry Lienke for all offices except Secretary.

iWork/AppleWorks SIG of May 2009
by Harry Lienke

A small crew of faithful attendees met at the Penn Lake Library to discuss and learn about iWork and AppleWorks. Our Special Interest Group (SIG) leader, John Hunkins, Sr., informed us that the June and July meetings are scheduled to be held at Penn Lake Library and the August meeting is scheduled at the Southdale Library.

At the meetings we try to cover iWork and AppleWorks in a fashion that is of interest to folks with varying levels of expertise. Except for questions attendees ask about AppleWorks, we spend our time on various aspects of iWork. Our friendly facilitator, Pam Lienke, presents items she has gleaned from her personal usage of the "Works." She also has Apple's Training Series books on iWork '09, Computer App Training's video tutorials on iWork '09, and iWork '09: The Missing Manual at her disposal to provide the latest and greatest information on iWork.

We need to have more people attend these meetings. Please let us know what we need to do to make the meetings more attractive so you will not be able to spend the first Wednesday of the month anywhere other than the iWork/AppleWorks SIG meeting. Do we need to change the meeting night, time, or location? If so, what day, time, and/or location would convince you to be part of the SIG meetings? What topics interest you? What level of information are you in need of? What format do you think we should be using? What other things could be done to entice you to come to a meeting? Please let us know what you think. You can contact us via telephone (651-457-6026), email (miniapples@mac.com or plienke@aol.com), or the mini'app'les forums (http://miniapples.7.forumer.com).

The ballots from the Board of Directors election were presented by Bert Persson and John Hunkins. The results are covered in a separate article in this newsletter.

Since there were no AppleWorks questions, we started our iWork discussion with Pages. Pam showed us a video tutorial on "Working with Word Files." We saw how to open Word (.doc) files in Pages and various methods to save documents in Word format. After the tutorial we explored working with Word files. Pam pointed out the triangles at the

bottom of the Pages window; she showed these triangles can be used to scroll through the document by pages, sections, and so forth.

We watched a Pages tutorial on "Full-screen View" and then explored thumbnails, scroll bar, the formatting bar, and the background color. After a tutorial on the "Template Chooser," we observed first-hand how scrolling across a template shows the pages of a multi-page template one at a time. Pam showed how the Sections button on the Toolbar can be used to insert the various pages of a template into a document as you work with that document.

We now watched Excel tutorials on "Working with Excel Files" and "Sheets" and then explored some of the things we saw in the video.

Pam used one of her Pages documents to demonstrate use of Sections and Page Thumbnails. She showed how the thumbnails can be used to re-organize a document using Drag-and-Drop.

The next iWork/AppleWorks meeting will be held at the Penn Lake Library, 8800 Penn Ave. S. The meeting will commence on June 3, 2009, at 6:30 pm and will conclude about 8:00 pm.

Beware Facebook Phishing Attack!
by Adam C. Engst

I don't use Facebook much, so replying to Facebook messages (which appear in my email) are the main thing that prompts me to log in. However, a message last week, from someone I knew in high school but haven't otherwise spoken to in 25 years, was a bit different from the norm. The message merely said, "Look at this!" and gave a link to "fbstarter.com".

I was suspicious already, since it seemed a bit unlikely that this person would have sent me a message, and the message itself was inexplicable. But, I'm on a Mac, and I have good backups, so I decided to visit the URL. It displayed what looked like a normal Facebook login page, but Firefox hadn't pre-filled my login credentials, and the domain was indeed fbstarter.com, which was just strange. Warning bells were going off in my head, so I immediately closed the page.

After a quick Google search, I discovered that Facebook is being used to send phishing attacks. Neither the fbstarter.com domain nor another domain being used, fbaction.net, is dangerous, but both will try to steal your login credentials so your account

can be used to launch future attacks. If you use the same login credentials on other sites, I strongly encourage you to change your passwords on those sites as well.

I suspect that the initial attack vector was purely through forged email, but once accounts had been compromised, the attacks were launched through Facebook itself; the one I received certainly came through Facebook.

Facebook has released a statement saying that they're blocking the fbaction.net domain from being shared on the site (I couldn't use that domain in a comment to the sender of the message), removing referring content, and resetting passwords of senders so the attackers can no longer access those accounts. None of the initial coverage I saw mentioned the fbstarter.com domain, so it appears that the attackers can easily tweak the attack. Now the entire situation may devolve into a game of whack-a-mole, as the attackers come up with new phishing attempts and Facebook blocks them.

The moral of the story? Be very suspicious of messages you receive on Facebook or from Facebook via email. If they contain links that are at all generic or dubious, verify the message with the sender before clicking the links. And if you follow any links that display a Facebook login page but do not have the http://www.facebook.com/ domain in the address bar, do not log in.

Protect Yourself from the Mac OS X Java Vulnerability
by Rich Mogull

One of the great things about Macs is how Apple has included a wealth of free and open source tools in Mac OS X. This collection includes both major portions of the operating system (much of Mac OS X's Unix core) and numerous additional applications and components. Windows file sharing, printing, and even Safari are all based on open source tools also used on other platforms. While this provides us with immeasurable benefits, it does present some potential liabilities on the security front. Like all software, these open source components occasionally suffer from security vulnerabilities, but since Apple doesn't control them, Apple can't necessarily make code fixes quickly, if at all.

This disconnect can result in a major security issue for Macs (and iPhones) when the vulnerability is patched for other platforms, but Apple fails to provide a fix. Apple has an unfortunate history of leaving some of these vulnerabilities unpatched for months, as is the case with a five-month-old vulnerability in Java.

As reported by researcher Landon Fuller [1], Mac OS X is vulnerable to a Java flaw that could allow an attacker to execute arbitrary code under the logged-in user's account. While perhaps not as bad as full administrative access, it still allows an attacker plenty of latitude to perform all sorts of nefarious activity on your system.

While an attacker could technically trick you into downloading and running a malicious program written in Java, it's far easier for them to trick you into visiting a malicious Web site and take over your system when your browser automatically runs their "bad" Java applet. Attackers have developed ways to sneak these onto even trusted Web sites, so merely sticking with known, safe sites isn't sufficient to stay secure. Landon includes a demonstration exploit on his site, which clearly shows how an attacker could take over your system.

The best way to protect yourself is to turn off Java in your Web browser. This will break some Web sites, but until Apple provides a fix it's the only way to protect yourself.

To disable Java in Safari, go into Preferences and disable "Open safe files after downloading." Then click on the Security tab, and uncheck "Enable Java."
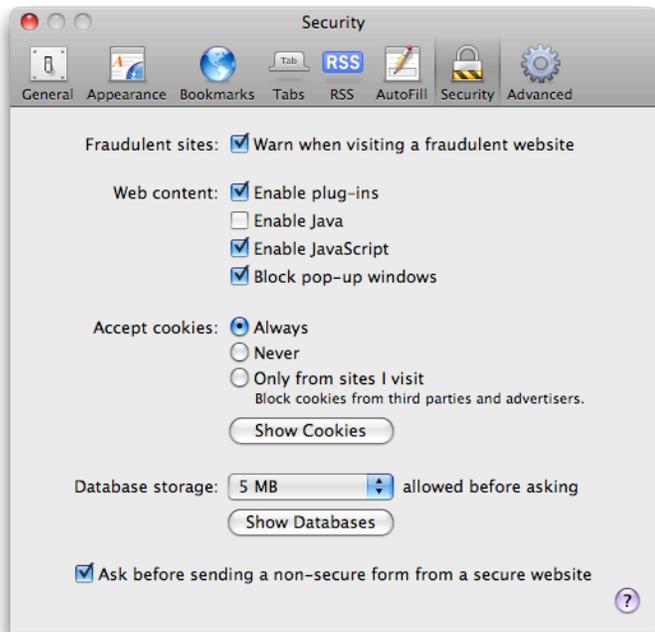
To disable Java in Firefox, select Preferences and then the Content tab. As with Safari, uncheck "Enable Java."
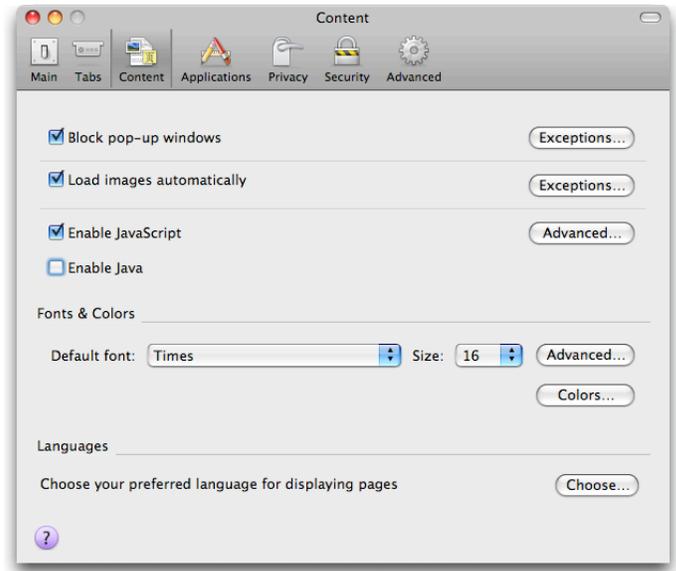
Hopefully Apple will fix this soon, and stop leaving Mac users vulnerable to security flaws already fixed on other platforms.

[1]: http://landonf.bikemonkey.org/code/macosx/CVE-2008-5353.20090519.html

Why Snow Leopard Should Be (Almost) Free
by Adam C. Engst

At some point in the next two to six months, Apple will unleash their latest big cat: Mac OS X Snow Leopard [1]. It's no secret – Apple has been talking about Snow Leopard for ages, with particular emphasis on how Snow Leopard will focus on performance, efficiency, and "core innovation" rather than user-focused features.

Specific improvements promised for Snow Leopard include support for up to 16 TB of RAM; improved multi-core support for applications; a next-generation version of QuickTime; out-of-the-box support for Microsoft Exchange in Mail, iCal, and Address Book; and support for OpenCL, which is designed to expose the computing power of modern graphics processing units. Other Snow Leopard promises have included a smaller memory and disk

footprint, a faster installation time, and a tweak to Stacks to allow subfolders.

Sound exciting? From a developer standpoint, absolutely. From a user standpoint, not so much. Based on everything Apple has said so far, Snow Leopard won't, on its own, bring any of the marquee features that could change the way you use your Mac, much as past releases of Mac OS X brought us Time Machine, Screen Sharing, Spotlight, Dashboard, Expose, Automator, Front Row, Spaces, Stacks, and more. So how much are you willing to pay for an operating system upgrade that does exactly what your current one does, but uses a little less RAM in the process?

Don't get me wrong. I applaud Apple for taking a break from the feature-based rat race to concentrate on the underpinnings of Mac OS X – along with all those slick features has come bloat. Mac OS X has grown portly, a change largely swept under the rug by increases in CPU performance and decreases in hard drive and RAM costs.

I suspect that some of the changes Apple promises in terms of reduced memory and hard disk footprint are related to the work done at the core of OS X for the iPhone. The world is moving to ever-more-mobile devices, and as a result, toward RAM-based storage that won't compete with rotating disk storage on a price-per-gigabyte basis for some time. If Apple is to be able to innovate in the hardware world - perhaps with much-rumored devices that fit between the iPhone and the Mac in size and capability - a leaner, more efficient operating system can only help.

All this leads to my main point: Assuming that Snow Leopard will indeed feature only the under-the-hood improvements promised so far, Apple should release it for free, instead of the $129 price of most releases. Although I say "free," I could easily be talked into the $29.95 charged for the Mac OS X Public Beta (which could be deducted from the cost of Mac OS X 10.0); Apple's standard $9.95 media cost for those who want to receive it in the mail on DVD also doesn't bother me at all. But it should become a no-brainer to upgrade to Snow Leopard, whether you're running Leopard or Tiger now.

I have no inside information here, and I am not arguing from an "information wants to be free" point of view. But based on what we currently know about Snow Leopard, I think Apple – and the Macintosh industry as a whole – stands to benefit more from making Snow Leopard free for anyone whose Mac

meets the hardware requirements than from charging for it. The reasons break down into two basic categories: the benefit of a coherent Macintosh platform and the difficulty of marketing purely under-the-hood changes.

One OS to Rule Them All — This is the crux of the matter. From a business standpoint, older versions of Mac OS X do nothing but create costs for Apple and for developers, but it's difficult to encourage users to upgrade without an incentive. With the bold move of making Snow Leopard free or very cheap, Apple would attract not just all Leopard users, but every user of Tiger (with compatible hardware) who had put off upgrading to Leopard because the new features weren't worth $129.

Apple wouldn't earn any money from getting laggard users to upgrade, of course, but with Snow Leopard as the sole target platform, users with Macs that were too old for Snow Leopard would have even more reason to buy a new Mac. Let's not forget that new Mac sales are still the core of Apple's business.

Why would this be worthwhile? Developers must continually decide how far back in the evolution of Mac OS X to aim their code. If Snow Leopard became nearly ubiquitous, developers could concentrate their efforts on it, rather than spending resources on Tiger and Leopard as well. That might result in faster development times, better applications, and more total applications, all of which benefit Mac users and Apple too. As more applications begin to require Snow Leopard, the pressure to upgrade would increase on those who had stuck with much older Macs.

The single coherent platform could have other benefits for Apple too. I'm going out on a speculative limb here, but if I were in charge of Snow Leopard, I'd put a lot of effort into improving Mac OS X's security architecture. Were that to happen, Apple might want Snow Leopard to be as widespread as possible to reduce the chance of a high-profile security exploit hurting Mac OS X's reputation for being relatively free of malware.

The final reason I think it makes sense for Apple to move the Macintosh to a single coherent operating system platform is that it has already worked once. Just look at the iPhone and iPod touch, which have sold a combined 37 million units so far. With them, Apple has made major operating system upgrades either free or inexpensive (iPod touch users have had to pay small fees for upgrades). As a result, there's a

single target for developers, and a better experience for users. As far as I'm aware, almost no one has passed on the iPhone software updates.

The alternative – charging the full $129 price for Snow Leopard – could have deleterious effects. Were Apple to charge a significant amount for Snow Leopard, a high proportion of users wouldn't upgrade, further fragmenting the installed base, and making it harder for developers to justify new Mac products that take advantage of Apple's latest technologies. This could also hurt the overall reputation of the Macintosh platform, much as the security problems plaguing Windows XP still count as a strike against Microsoft's reputation for security, even though Windows Vista offers much better security.

It's hard to know exactly how the Macintosh user base breaks down right now. The Omni Group tracks the version of Mac OS X reported by their Omni Software Update technology, and their stats show [2] that only in February 2009 did Leopard's installed base overtake Tiger's. (These stats are specific to The Omni Group's customers, of course, but other numbers, such as the 87.5 to 12.5 ratio of Intel to PowerPC processors, seem reasonable. Plus, since The Omni Group's applications are likely to be used by early adopters and power users, the stats would seem especially relevant to this discussion.) If Leopard, with all its user-focused features, managed to capture only half the installed base in 18 months, a full-price Snow Leopard would have even more trouble.

Selling Ice to Eskimos — On a more practical matter, I think marketing a Mac OS X release that doesn't offer significant user-focused features would be tricky at best. It's not that Apple couldn't describe the advantages of Snow Leopard – larger RAM ceilings, better multiprocessing support, QuickTime X, faster installation time, and so on – but that those improvements largely address problems most users don't have. When was the last time your average Mac user thought, "If only Mac OS X installed faster!" or "I sure wish I could put a terabyte of RAM in this Mac"?

The entire point of Snow Leopard is to focus on improvements that will make future innovation possible, but it's hard, especially in this economy, to sell something based entirely on deferred benefits.

Worse, if done poorly, pushing the under-the-hood features of Snow Leopard could conceivably undermine any benefit-based marketing Apple might want to use to promote the next version of Mac OS X. In particular, Apple could risk being seen as nickel-and-diming users, which could in turn hurt Snow Leopard's adoption rate.

Finally, although a strong case could be made for making Snow Leopard free for Leopard users and charging Tiger users the full $129 price that they would have paid for Leopard, I'd argue that if someone running Tiger hasn't upgraded to Leopard yet, they're not going to, unless Apple makes the upgrade compellingly cheap. Plus, many Tiger users are probably running on PowerPC-based Macs, and the scuttlebutt is that Snow Leopard will run only on Intel-based Macs (so the only possible way to get Snow Leopard would be to purchase a new Mac anyway). While splitting the upgrade path would avoid sour grapes on the part of those who purchased the Leopard upgrade, anyone who purchased Leopard receives the benefit of using it until Snow Leopard ships, so it's not like it was wasted money.

Arguments Against Free — There are a number of reasons why Apple might still choose to charge for Snow Leopard despite the arguments I've laid out above. And, to be clear, I wouldn't be upset if Apple charged just enough – somewhere between $10 and $30 – to cover the materials and distribution costs of a boxed product to the retail channel.

Some sort of a charge might be necessary if Snow Leopard proves too large to download. Also, for non-Apple retail stores, a high-enough price would be necessary for them to carry the box at all. A fee may even be necessary to meet accounting rules surrounding products like the Mac that are not accounted for on a subscription basis, like the iPhone and Apple TV.

We've also become accustomed to paying for major updates, and Apple may not want to break that habit, even if the price is somewhat lower than normal. Though of course, selling something for which people don't see the value could also break that habit and hurt Snow Leopard's adoption rate.

Lastly, although Apple has never released retail sales numbers for Mac OS X that I'm aware of, the company undoubtedly makes tens or even hundreds of millions of dollars on upgrade fees. Despite posting record profits in recent quarters, Apple may be unwilling to leave that money on the table, even if there's a chance such a strategy might not be in the long-term interests of the platform. It's also possible

that Apple's internal accounting requires upgrade revenue to pay off Snow Leopard's development costs.

Free the Snow Leopard — In the end, I believe that making Snow Leopard available for as little as is feasible – perhaps a free automatic-update download and a low-cost mailed media or retail box option – would help create a single coherent Macintosh platform that Apple and independent developers could build upon without worrying about supporting the past. Some short-term profit would be missed, of course, but it would offer numerous long-term advantages and put the Mac on a firmer competitive footing with the upcoming Windows 7, especially given Microsoft's recent cost-based advertising and recent announcement of an optional virtualized Windows XP for Windows 7 users (see "[Windows 7 Adds Optional Virtualized XP](#)," 2009-04-24).

Besides the simple benefit of a Mac that works better (in theory, of course), users would also gain from software that would take advantage of Snow Leopard's features and would be easier and faster to develop without support for legacy versions of Mac OS X. And anything that makes users and developers happy benefits Apple in the end, through the sales of ever more Macs.

[1]: http://www.apple.com/macosx/snowleopard/
[2]: http://update.omnigroup.com/

Why Apple's MobileMe Doesn't Work As a $100 Service

By [Wilson Rothman](#)

There's nothing majorly wrong with Apple's MobileMe service. All of its subsidiary pieces and parts—the email, the syncable calendar and contacts, the photo gallery, the online storage—do fine. So why doesn't it make sense?

Apple has every right to be proud of the fact that it got its act together, and everything that was [all herky jerky back in July 2008](#), when the $99-per-year MobileMe launched, is now working as billed. The push email shows up immediately, if you use your me.com account. Ditto for the push contacts and the push calendar, though you can't use web cals like

Google's or Yahoo's if you want to be super synced. The gallery works great; as a dad I upload tons of pictures and videos to the MobileMe gallery right from iPhoto, but with iPhoto '09, I can upload them to my free accounts at Facebook and Flickr too. There's even iDisk, a smoothly integrated 20GB cloud storage service, which now has a public drop box for file sharing, just like YouSendIt. And if you have a time capsule NAS/wireless access point, you can remotely access your disk using mobile me, as well as use back to my mac remote desktop control. (The service tracks the dynamic IPs of all your machines, so each machine can always keep track of the others.)

Maybe you're catching on to the real problem here. It's not just that you "free" junkies who read Gizmodo wouldn't be caught dead paying $100 for anything but a 50" flat-panel TV. It's that the service itself is made up of many pieces you already have. This presents a complicated economic argument: If you already have an online photo gallery and a free or company-given email account that you like and use, why would you pay to have those things twice, just to get contact syncing for your phone and a decent online storage system. Wouldn't you go find a less elegant online storage system for a lot less money, and content yourself with syncing your phone to your computer's address book every couple of days?

I said that the service worked as billed, and it does. My favorite component is the contact syncing, because anytime I add anything on my phone or my computer, the two are instantly in sync. But I'd achieve the same result, with less magic, if I remembered to sync my iPhone every so often.

I did have one problem with contact syncing, but I bring it up mainly to tell how easy it was to fix: I had imported a bunch of contacts from email accounts online, and some contacts got corrupted along the way. I had 18 contacts, out of 250 or so, that wouldn't sync from Mac to iPhone or MobileMe web portal. The fix was easy: Go in and change something about the entry, like adding the person's company name or a fax line, even their kid's name. As soon as you tweak the entry, boom, it gets uploaded.

Most other exchanges in MobileMe have been without incident, even exporting my Google Cals in a big bunch, then manually importing them into iCal from time to time. But the very fact that I use MobileMe for some services and free web apps for others, and the fact that I am in many cases the one making sure everything talks to everything else, underscores the point I'm making, that MobileMe is

a confederacy of programs that have nothing to do with each other.

In the end, even after it's working well, it's difficult to recommend for two reasons: The money, which I've sufficiently covered above—a hefty sum when contrasted to free web-based simulacra—and the compatibility, not with your device "ecosystem" but with everybody else. Who uses iCal or Me.com mail? Google wins those battles for sure. Even though I swear by MobileMe Gallery, most people I know prefer Flickr, or just Facebook.

There's a solution. Apple could offer some things for free, and some things cheap. Just bought iLife '09 or a new Mac? Guess what, you get to upload your photos to a MobileMe Gallery. Buying an iPhone? Syncing your contacts and calendar is a $2/month add-on. I think iDisk could easily be a success at $25/year, all by itself, as long capacity goes up each year automatically based on capability. It's not like these component parts have anything to do with one another anyway.

My mother-in-law recently switched to a Mac after eons on a PC. I looked over her shoulder as she was placing the order, and when we came to the part where she could get MobileMe at the low introductory price of $70, she asked me if she should. I thought for a second, and realized the answer was no. I may keep her grandkid's pics on MobileMe Gallery, but she's perfectly happy with Picasa, and there's a beta version of that for the Mac out now. For free.

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Expanding Password-Protected Archives
by Adam C. Engst

My aunt recently purchased a book on how to learn Spanish that came with a bunch of downloadable audio files. However, the files were compressed in Zip archives that used a simple password from the book itself. She knew the password, but when she downloaded the files using Safari, Mac OS X's Archive Utility sprang into action, tried to expand the Zip archives, and promptly threw a completely meaningless error dialog.
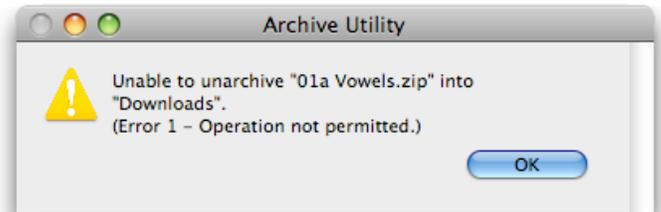
Stumped by the error dialog, my aunt asked me what to do. For someone like me who has been using the Mac for years, the solution was obvious: use a free copy of Smith Micro's StuffIt Expander to expand the file, since StuffIt Expander is perfectly capable of expanding password-protected archives. When I thought about it from her point of view, however, I could see how the problem would seem daunting, especially since the Web page that provided the downloads hadn't offered any suggestions for utilities to use.

Curious if there were other programs that would meet my aunt's needs as well, I poked around a bit and came across The Unarchiver, another free program that claims to expand many more formats that Mac OS X's built-in Archive Utility. When I tested it with a password-protected Zip archive, it too performed admirably.

I'm sure there are other options out there too, but how many free utilities do you need for the same simple task? Perhaps Snow Leopard will feature a slightly more capable Archive Utility that can handle more formats and password-protected archives, putting this minor confusion to rest once and for all.

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Five Tips for Reading Mac Security Stories
by Rich Mogull

Some days it seems the entire world is waiting with bated breath for the eventual fall from grace of the long-vaunted Macintosh security. From industry publications to the mainstream press, even the slightest Mac security hiccup spurs an onslaught of articles, debates, and even the occasional cable news headline. Some stories declare us invulnerable to attacks, while others give the impression that by the time you jump up from your armchair and rush to your Mac, it will already be infected and funneling

your life's savings and family photos to Nigerian spammers. For us Mac users it can be difficult to discern the lines between truth, hype, and outright fantasy.

As someone who spends most of his time reading, writing, and speaking about security, there are five things I tend to look for in Mac security news to cut to the heart of the story. After all the hype in recent days over the "Mac botnet," I thought it was time to share some of my tricks.

Is the Story Based on a Vendor Press Release? Many security vendors provide the computing community an invaluable service by releasing vulnerability and exploit information uncovered by their research and incident response teams. While this information is incredibly helpful in learning about and evaluating new security threats, it also comes with a dark side: Vendor marketing departments often see these discoveries as a great way to scare people into buying their products.

They issue press releases to draw as much attention to problems as possible, hoping they will bring more users to their products (since they can always, of course, protect against the new risk). These releases would fade into the ether if it weren't for a press hungry for readers. Everyone loves a good scare story, and it becomes the digital media equivalent of "if it bleeds, it leads."

When I read any story involving some new kind of security threat, the first thing I look for is the source of the story. If I see nothing but quotes from a security vendor, or a straight reprint of a press release (an all-too-common practice), my skepticism meter usually starts to peak. (For the record, I don't consider the vendors malicious or deceptive, but when you truly believe in your product it comes with a certain bias.)

Is the Story Really New? Security stories often percolate for months, or even years, in the industry press before breaking out into more mainstream publications. Even within the industry press, we sometimes see a small group of incidents constantly repurposed in new articles, typically with a healthy dose of additional hyperbole.

The Mac botnet story that flooded the press is a classic example of an old story experiencing an unjustified rebirth. The malicious software initially appeared back in January 2009, hidden inside pirated versions of iWork '09 and Adobe Photoshop CS4.

The story was revived as additional information came to light, but it was unfortunately misinterpreted by many as some new kind of attack. The malicious software was demonstrating some interesting behavior, but nothing in the story indicated any additional risk to users. A quick Google search will usually reveal the root of the story, and help determine if you face a new risk.

Is the Security Issue Really New? It's not uncommon to see a string of security stories that are all essentially about the same root problem. This happens regularly even in the security industry; once a new vulnerability or exploit becomes public there's a never-ending string of variants as different bad guys try to circumvent our security defenses. But these variants are typically different colors on the same body, and don't indicate any increased risk over the original.

For example, some Mac malware hides itself as a fake video player on adult Web sites, and we saw a few new versions appear last year. This social engineering trick – hiding malware inside an innocuous-looking application aimed at prurient interests – has been around nearly as long as people have been looking at digital pictures of other people who aren't wearing clothes. When I read stories that seem to spin old news, or describe a variant of a well-known problem, I start looking at them more skeptically.

I'm generally unimpressed by any story that involves tricking a user into manually installing malicious software. On occasion we see a particularly creative deception, and I might be concerned if the malicious software was hiding in a mainstream application, but getting someone to install something evil on their system is a fault with the human brain, not their operating system of choice.

What's the Mechanism of Action? With any security risk there has to be some sort of mechanism of action. Sometimes it's a new vulnerability in an operating system or software, other times it's a new method of attack. If the news story doesn't offer any details on the mechanism of action, I start hunting down sources to determine what's really going on. Once I do identify the mechanism, I can usually determine the level of risk.

For example, as we discussed above, I tend to be less concerned about software that requires manual installation, unless it's hidden itself in an extremely common source that affects a large portion of the

community. (Yes, you could argue hiding malware in an adult video player hits a large portion of the community, but that's not something we talk about in polite publications). If I see something that works only under a limited set of uncommon circumstances, the risk is usually low.

However, when I see something that allows an attacker to take over your system via an email message, by getting you to view a malicious Web page, or via a network attack on a common port or other common service, I become more concerned.

First ask yourself how it works (what's the mechanism of attack?), then how bad it is (what does it damage, or allow the attacker to do?), and then who it affects (any Mac user, or just those running some obscure software?). Admittedly, you need a bit of knowledge to make these interpretations, but you don't generally have to be a security expert to figure out many of the basics.

Going back to our Mac botnet story, it was mentioned, if not clear, in every article that the malicious software hid itself only inside pirated versions of iWork '09 and Photoshop CS4. Unless you downloaded those illegally, or grabbed a (possibly illegal) version from a friend, you were safe. End of story.

Does the Story Defend Mac Security Based Solely on History? We Mac users have it pretty good. We face only the smallest fraction of the security risk endured by our Windows brethren. But just because we live in a nicer neighborhood doesn't mean we are immune to risks. For many years Mac OS X did have an inherent security advantage over Windows, but to those who understand the technologies within the operating systems, those days are long past.

The latest version of Windows (Vista, not that most people use it) is provably more secure in the lab than the latest version of Mac OS X 10.5 Leopard. Leopard lacks proper implementation of the new anti-exploitation technologies included in Vista, and, based on the number of Apple security patches, experiences about as many vulnerabilities.

When I see articles that defend Mac OS X based on the lack of Mac-specific malicious software, and not on current technical capabilities, cybercrime dynamics, or attack methods, I tend to be dubious.

Mac OS X's Unix core was a powerful security defense for many years, especially the requirement to enter a password before installing most kinds of

software, but modern attack methods are able to circumvent that protection. On the upside, Apple started adding some of these technologies to Mac OS X in Leopard (albeit incompletely), and if they finish the implementation, and continue to add new security features, the odds are we will never face the same security risks as Windows users.

You Can Do It — The need for computer security long ago passed from a minor annoyance to something that could affect our personal and financial safety. Just as disasters, crime, and tales of tragedy tend to dominate the news, stories of information security failures never fail to grab the headlines. When it's a story with the potential to smear a media darling like Apple, you can bet the article will be right up there next to the latest celebrity embarrassment. But with a little consideration of these five tips, you can evaluate the reality level of any given security story.

Epson Scanner For Sale
by Harry Lienke

We have an Epson Perfection 4180 Photo flatbed scanner looking for a new home. This is a highly rated, high resolution scanner that can be used to turn all your old pictures, slides, and film strips into digital form. The package includes accessories for scanning slides and film strips. The scanner has a USB 2.0 interface so it works with either a Mac or a PC. The package also includes a copy of Adobe Photoshop Elements 6 for Mac on DVD. You can use Elements to make your converted pictures perfect. This package is yours for $60, less than the cost of one of the cheap, lower resolution scanners.

Contact Harry or Pam at the iWork/AppleWorks SIG or at 651-457-6026.

Hot Links of the Month
by Ron Heck

iPod touch, iPhone become military tools

Newsweek magazine has reported that members of the U.S. military are preferring to use Apple's iPhone and iPod Touch hand-held devices. The story is summarized by iLounge.com, and they provide a link to the original Newsweek article.
http://tinyurl.com/c9zkmc

Rumors persist about a possible Apple "netbook"

Gizmodo provides a summary of the rumors that are abounding that Apple may be working on a netbook or a tablet computer. Netbooks are becoming popular for their small size, and Acer models have been making their appearance at coffee shops.
http://tinyurl.com/qwed9z

Why Apple Succeeds, and Always Will

Independent computer industry analyst Joe Wilcox offers his take on what makes Apple successful and explains how it will continue to be successful in the future.
http://tinyurl.com/qxb9n3

Apple laptops shine in latest issue of Consumer Reports

A study by Consumer Reports has rated Apple products as highest in quality and customer satisfaction. The products include the iPhone and Apple's line of laptop computers.
http://tinyurl.com/cb2adv

Savvy GarageBand '09 Documentation Now Available

Tidbits.com provides information about some much-needed documentation for GarageBand '09.
http://db.tidbits.com/article/10238

On EyeTV, or, How Buggy Software Is Ruining Good Apple Hardware

iLounge.com provides an analysis of Elgato's EyeTV software that allows you to watch television on your Mac. Apparently, the software does not pass muster.
http://tinyurl.com/cqf4bn

The Complete Guide to iPhone OS 3.0 for iPhone and iPod touch

iLounge.com provides an in-depth look at iPhone OS 3.0 which is indevelopment. The story contains a wealth of screen shots, so if you're an iPhone user or you're looking to buy one, you'll find this story very interesting.
http://tinyurl.com/cxzh44

New Gear from Apple and Verizon Wireless?

News is surfacing that Apple and Verizon are in discussions to develop an iPhone-like product for Verizon's wireless network. This change would mean customers would not be forced to choose AT&T as their provider, as is the case now.
http://tinyurl.com/dd5sgw

Benefits of mini'app'les Membership

- Access to the mini'app'les online forums. Post questions and/or answers about issues, trouble shooting, products, buying and selling, special events, discounts, and news about Apple and the mini'app'les club.

- Access to our Members Helping Members network of professional and advanced users of Apple technologies. These members volunteer their time to help other members with software, hardware, and other Apple related issues.

- A variety of Mac Special Interest Groups (SIGs) that meet each month.

- Multi-SIG meetings and workshops to help members with computer problems. You can bring your equipment to these events and receive support from knowledgeable Mac users to help diagnose your problem(s).

- Participation in drawings for computer hardware, software, and other computer related materials.

- Discounts from vendors and manufacturers. Refer to the on-line forums for current offers.

Membership Application and Renewal Form

Name: _____

Company (if mailed to): _____

Address: _____

_____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone # (home): _____

Phone # (work): _____

Phone # (cell): _____

Occupation (if applicable): _____

Membership ID # (if renewal): _____

Email: _____

Your email address will NOT be sold, shared, or distributed. It will be used only for official mini'app'les business such as distribution of the newsletter and membership renewal reminders.

_____ Check if this is a change of address notice

_____ Check if you want to volunteer

_____ Check if you want to be added to "Members Helping Members"

_____ Check if you were referred by a club member (if so, please give member's name)

Membership cost is $15.00 for one year. Please make your check payable to "mini'app'les".

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Thank you for your support!