

South Australian Apple Users' Club

AppleSauce

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SOUTH AUSTRALIAN
APPLE USERS' CLUB



Phishing

End of an era...

Instant messaging

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Cover Picture: Comet McNaught, by James Crompton, who used a Canon Canon PowerShot G2 at Mount Osmond at about 21:50 on Tuesday 23 January

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SAAUC’s database is maintained with FileMaker Pro

Prescript...

AppleSauce this month



Peter Carter

Alas. It seems that the longer the period between issues the smaller the next edition becomes.

This one is only 30 pages, and most of it has come from other sources.

The cover image is of something unexpected, Comet McNaught, photographed by member James Crompton. A spectacular sight, and thanks to James for the picture.

One of the topics discussed by the committee in the past month or so has been the Google Groups mailing list and the standard of postings on it. There was even a suggestion that it be moderated. Ours is not the only list to have occasional difficulties, and I've included in this issue a posting from the AUGD list which sets out some reasonable standards. You'll need to interpret a couple of things for our list, but the rest of it is valid.

You no doubt receive message purporting to come from a bank or other financial institution. If you

have no account or dealings with that business there's obviously something amiss, but if it appears to come from your own bank, what do you do? The general answer is that you trash the message. You certainly never respond to it. Why not? Because someone is after your money. Fred Showker takes a message apart in this issue so that you can see how to distinguish phishing messages from the genuine. A look at the source usually reveals all.

Fred also has a few thoughts on what to do with the old hardware and software (and otherware) that collects over the years. Unless you have your own museum it all has to go, somehow. It's a growing problem, and manufacturers like Dell and Apple now have return and recycling schemes and governments are beginning to impose rules on computer disposal. I'm not sure how serious Fred is with his final suggestion...

Other media have been full of news from Macworld (iPhone, anyone?), but perhaps the youngest person


to comment on the event was Tristan Engst, the 8-year old son of Adam and Tonya. His view of Google Earth is in these pages. A few years older is Dan Pourhadi, who wrote an account of instant messaging for TidBITS. Even if you're not a grandparent you should find it an interesting overview. You may be inspired to join other SAAUC members using iChat or the Club's iVisit room.

John Collins has some views about how best to buy and display that new Macintosh.

A couple of regular items are missing from this issue, but we do have some new URLs on 'The Web page' to explore.

One member pointed out that there were typos in the last issue: 'requested' and 'these' on page 4, 'products' on page 7, and Engelbart's use of 'es-conced' in place of the more usual 'ensconced'. InDesign's spell check has been put to work on these pages.

Since February is a short month, perhaps the inverse relationship between the time between issues and the amount of local content will hold true, and the March issue will be bigger. I hope so.

The February meeting is SIGs, and the committee decided that there would be a word processing/page layout SIG, so there will be a group looking at setting up templates in Pages. 

Presidential keyboard



John Bohmer

Welcome to the first edition of **AppleSauce** for 2007.

I trust you have all had a relaxing start to the new year. I look forward to another year of information sharing between existing members, encouraging new members to join our club, and the Mac OS X 10.5 that is planned to be released sometime this year: not to lose sight of new model Macs that inevitability get introduced each year.

This month's Friday meeting will be featuring SIGs and information from the recent Macworld keynote address. I've also heard ongoing positive comments from the daytime meeting attendees where members get together, who for one reason or another, either cannot get to the evening meetings or enjoy a second opportunity to talk all things Macintosh.

Don't forget the club's upcoming AGM in March as we're always after fresh ideas that come with new committee members. A few of our existing committee members will be standing down so 'new blood' is always welcome. For those of you who would like to

know more about these roles I include a brief explanation of the tasks that are undertaken between meetings that keep the SAAUC rolling ;-)

Email me via <info@saauc.org.au> if you wish to seek any clarification, or would like to suggest yourself or another member as a possible nominee for any of the tasks listed.

At meetings

- Conduct meetings

- Convene SIGs

- Accept subscriptions and other moneys

- Arrange projectors, screens and furniture, and stow afterwards

- Prepare supper

- Set out library materials, conduct borrowing and returns, return materials afterwards

- Set up and supervise updates machine

Between meetings

- Secretarial tasks: prepare minutes, attend to correspondence and enquiries, maintain membership database, send renewal notices...

Maintain mailing list
Financial tasks: banking, pay accounts, maintain
financial records
Maintain Web site
Prepare **AppleSauce**
Liaise with resellers, other groups, Salvation
Army...



Speaker at our December meeting, Greg Egan, with a Mac remote control

Defining...



Word of the month

Template

1 A master pattern from which copies made be taken to simplify the task of creating a new document or other object. Since copying and editing digital data is so easy, templates are widely employed throughout computing, from word processing to programming.

2 In word processors...templates are complete business documents (for example, letters complete with letterhead/logo, or invoices) with space left for the user to add specific content. They may also include fields which, when filled in by the user, activate a macro (for example to automatically compute the invoice total). When creating a new document, the user is offered a list of templates as an alternative to starting from a blank document.

3 In programming, templates are routines and data structures that have been defined in a generic way so that they will work on many different data types, and which programmers can adapt to the details of a specific project by making relatively few simple edits.

The New Penguin Dictionary of Computing

A 'blank' Microsoft Word document is based on the Normal template, which contains definitions of styles, page margins, etc. A 'blank' document in AppleWorks is also based on a template, with predefined styles, page dimensions, etc. Apple Pages comes with a large set of templates for various types of document, and which can be used as is or modified as required.



Netiquette...

Making the most of mailing lists



ListMom: Rules refresher

Trish Huffman

Thanks for your observations and comments about the direction/mission of this list that Apple so generously hosts for our benefit. ‘Our’ is being used to represent any subscriber to this email list. Subscribers might be leaders, members-at-large, or potential leaders/members. This includes new groups — even new-to-the-Mac groups — whose leaders and members are seeking direction and advice for themselves or for one of their group’s members. This might mean that we get a little off topic every now and then. It might mean that every topic is not pertinent to every person or every user group. Normally these threads run their course and we get back to bouncing good ideas around.

That said, I think a reminder about rules is appropriate.

First, this is not a rule but has been a suggestion for many moons. Please sign your email followed by your group’s name and location and/or URL. Like this:

Trish (last name optional)

Triangle Macintosh Users Group :
www.tmug.org

Research Triangle Area, NC

Rarely you may see a topic beginning: ListMom (subject line). Before posting again, it would be a good idea to read that post as it will contain information about current threads including, but not limited to, the closing of a thread.

This email list is intended for user group members and leaders but not for communication with Apple.

Remember that this is the AUGD — Apple User Group Discussions — list. Please post topics that leaders and the user group community at large will find useful. There are a multitude of sites out there with discussion boards for ideas that do not necessarily impact user groups. This is an important guideline.

Keep your messages short — succinct is good. Long and rambling is not.

Edit included messages in replies to minimize the amount of text. The more you surround your words with included text in a message, the less likely people will find and read them.

Make sure your subject line is accurate. The number one complaint we get these days are people who are subscribed to the digest and reply to a message without changing the subject line which leaves the generic digest subject as the message subject. Please don't do this — take a couple of seconds to change the subject to be concise, descriptive, and relevant.

All messages, especially those with differing views and opinions, should be written in a constructive manner. Resist the temptation to 'flame' others on the list. Remember that these discussions are 'public' and meant for constructive exchanges. Hasty, angry words create more problems than they solve. Treat the others on the list as you would want them to treat you — in a room full of people. Should you and another person have problems that should be aired privately, take it off list. Please.

When in doubt about the intent of a post, please consider the positive angle first. When answering a post of questionable intent, write the email, save it in your outbox, send only after reading 24 hours later — especially if your intent could be viewed as questionable as well.

Be careful with humor and sarcasm. Without voice inflection and body language in communications, it is easy for words to be misinterpreted. Indicate to readers that you are trying to be funny. :-) If you don't choose to do this, your ListMom just might not get it either. ;)

Help me keep this list a fun and informative place for discussing user group issues by obeying these simple rules which will make my job easier and your experience far more rewarding.



Online safety...



Don't take the bait

Recognising phishing

Fred Showker

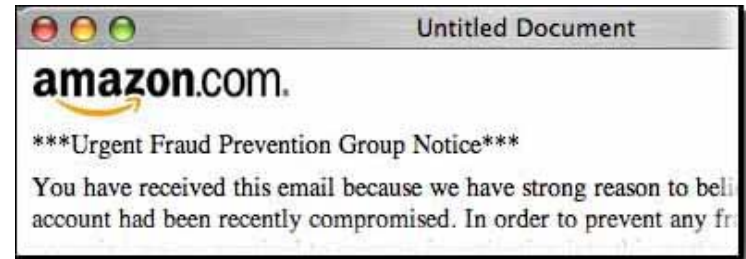
In the past three weeks our spam traps have reported an 800% increase in Phishing attempts. This characterises any heavy shopping season such as the holidays, so you should double your guard against suspicious email. Aside from 'breach attempt' notices, we've also seen a 2000% increase in phishing attempts that use 'Confirmation of Order' subject lines to fool you into thinking you've made an online purchase.

Anti-phishing method the pros use

While the browser and security industry beefs up and brags about their fool-proof anti-phishing devices, you can be sure that organized crime has hired the very best programmers in the world to break those devices. There's really only one way to truly protect yourself and trap the phisher: using the technique the pros use.

Below you see a small section of a typical phishing

spoof. Yes, it looks real. Yes, our spam traps, which monitor four online email addresses, have been receiving an average of six of these a day for the past week.



Recognise phishing:

- Looks real, even uses familiar logos
- Tries to persuade you to 'click'
- sends a convincing notice 'why' you should enter data

In this diagram of a typical Amazon.com spoof you will see, as in most phishing attempts, a 'real' looking link appears, and you're urged to click it. This

link appears to be an actual Amazon link that all Amazon users are familiar with. **But don't click it.**

Expose the criminal

Unfortunately 99% of browser users are not aware of the truth because the browsers actually hide the very tools the criminals use to hijack personal identity information. Now, we're going to open that code and show you how to expose the crime in progress.

```
<body>
<p></p>
<p>***Urgent Fraud Prevention Group Notice</p>
<p></p><p></p>
<p>You have received this email because we have strong reason to believe that your Amazon account had been recently compromised. In order to prevent any fraudulent activity from occurring we are required to open an investigation into this matter. To speed up this process, you are required to verify your Amazon Fraud Link link below. </p>
<a href="http://dfinity.com/www.amazon.com/exec.php?cmd=sign-in">
https://s1.amazon.com/exec/varzea/register/login/103-4581464-2644632</a>
(To complete the verification process you must fill in all the required fields)
</p><p><br>Please Note: If your account information was not updated within the next 12 hours, then we will assume this Link you see - looks "official" and will be suspended. We apologize for this inconvenience, but the purpose of this verification is to ensure that your Amazon account has not been fraudulently used and to combat fraud.</p><p>
```

This is the actual HTML code behind the fraudulent link.

- View source: by viewing the 'source' of the email you can quickly see the actual HTML link for the phishing attack. (With Apple Mail, View > Message > Raw Source (Command-Option-U).)
- Find href—spam trackers will use the browser's

find command to locate the text href—that's the actual hyper reference that makes the link work.

- The secure server link: After the href you'll usually find the string: `http://`. Here's the first clue: reputable Web sites like eBay, Amazon, and your online bank will use a secure server, and the link will use `https://`—the `s` indicates it's a secure server. Phishing sites never use a secure server. So, the absence of the `s` is a blatant warning NOT to click.
- The fraud link: now, observe what follows the two slashes. The site between the two slashes and the next single slash tell you where the link will actually take you. This example clearly leads to `dfinity.com`—**not** the `amazon.com` you thought it was. Note also, the slime put `www.amazon.com` after the slash thinking it would fool you. This turns out to be a criminal in Canada.

As a clear example of who you can trust: this link was freely provided to the criminals by Yahoo.com.

Expose the fool, or be the fool

It's as simple as that. If you override your browser's configuration to hide this information from you, and you actually expose the criminal fools: you'll avoid being the fool yourself. It's easy, there's noth-

ing magic about it, and we guarantee, if you use the above methods, you will never fall prey to online criminal phishing attacks.

While writing this article, the spam trap identified four new phishing attacks. All of them directed the prey to servers in foreign countries, hosted by and propagated by renegade registrars. Two of them took us to servers located in Arab countries. Think about it. Consider who you'll be helping if you fall prey to this growing online criminal threat!



This old mouse...



So you've no room left?

End of an era...

Fred Showker

For the past three years, one comment frequently popping up in the InfoManager posting form asks us about old, outdated computer stuff—software, hardware, media and so forth. Over those years, my stock reply has been : “find someone who can use it and donate it.” However, these days, that response is no longer valid. Oh, the anguish of ending an era.

Yesterday I got this post from long-time reader, Jim Pollock. Jim writes to ask:

I have a lot of old software and manuals including some User Group Technical Manuals in ring binders that Apple sent out to user groups in the late 80s. I have had a Mac since 1986 and have a lot of memorabilia collected, need to get rid of it but seems a shame to send it to the junk.

Any ideas?

To Jim and all those others out there now facing the same dilemma—yes it is truly a shame—but don't

feel bad, I'm wrestling with the very same problem.

Covered up in antiquity

Being a visible character in the computer world as well as the user group field, I have accumulated more than a share of stuff. I literally have closets filled with everything from books to software to gimmicks and giveaways. I have a footlocker trunk dedicated to t-shirts 80% of which are from software or hardware vendors. I have eight years of tote bags and t-shirts that say ‘Macworld Faculty’ from my years of conducting sessions at Macworld— as well as Adobe t-shirts and totes from some 15 years of Adobe breakfasts, NAUGs and NAUGSAW conferences.

As book reviewer for Amazon, UGN and the Design Bookshelf, I've accumulated well over 1,000 books on software and hardware. Most of those now so dreadfully outdated I can't even give them away. And, that's the problem.

The computer and the internet have established their own 'product life' far different from most other products you buy. We used to say 'Donate your computer to someone who can use it.' But today, even the computer organizations providing computers to the needy around the world say 'Nothing beige.' If it's not Internet savvy, and able to support today's browsers, then no one wants it. The 'value' of a computer is no longer judged by computing power — but rather whether or not it can surf today's media-rich web.

So what to do?

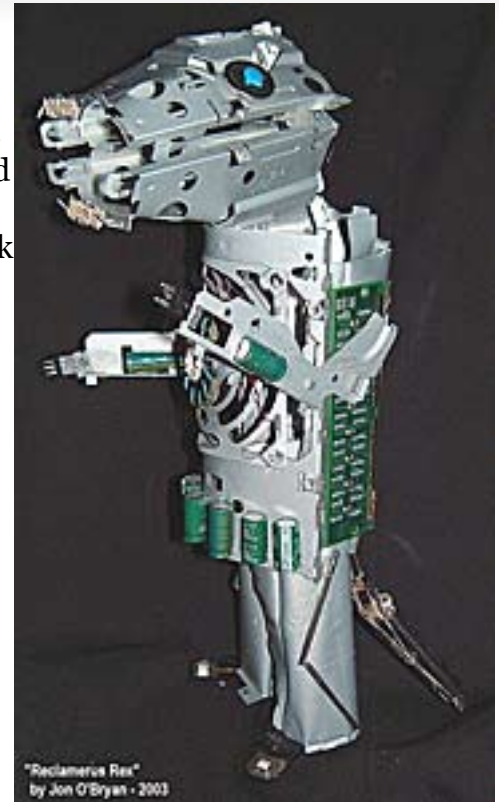
The bottom line is — somehow, make it go away in the most humane, environmentally sane way you can — but get rid of it.

What to do with dead computers: I rented a dumpster which occupies a car-space on our parking lot. Every other Wednesday morning at 6 am a guy in a truck comes and dumps it. I'm now being punished for never throwing anything away — slowly working through and trashing 30 years of accumulated junk. Last month, the City of Harrisonburg banned disposal of computers, monitors and other related hardware. Now, such stuff requires a rather expensive permit to get rid of. I considered digging

a big hole at the back of the farm property for a permanent grave. But I couldn't find a backhoe operator willing to work at night.

At one point, I was cutting old computers up, utilizing the interesting looking parts in making award sculptures for user groups. This worked for a while, but then the user groups stopped even showing up to

receive their awards. So, why bother? I know one fellow who makes toys out of the parts: www.graphic-design.com/Gallery/obryan/index.html. Others make lamps, flower planters, aquariums, wall hangings, mobiles or furniture from



them. But that just seems like too much trouble.

You can't give computers away and you can't bury them either. I know a company out west who will grind them up for you. They separate the plastics from the metals and recycle the powder. But you have to pick up the shipping charges. You can't win. If you have an idea that doesn't cost an arm and a leg, I'd really like to hear it.

Software: If it doesn't run on today's computers, and you can't find anyone using yesterday's computer, then forget it. You see a lot of older versions of software on eBay. Yes, you could try that. But seriously — you'll spend more time setting up and getting it on eBay than the sales. What's your time worth, anyway? I had considered making a list and posting it to the Web site for anyone to have for free. But then reconsidered because of the time involved in that process. Just not worth it.

Collectibles? You probably have something you think is really collectible, right? Chances are, it's not. Nothing is collectible until you find someone who wants to collect it — because you don't. I saw original, framed, eWorld installation diskettes going on eBay for around \$50 each. Business was brisk. But then, there are idiots out there who will buy the junk. I had an original 'Mac Watch' in its original

packaging. I was offered \$100 for that — which I immediately grabbed. He sold it on eBay for \$150. So, if you think it's collectible, then give eBay a shot. You're probably better off to store it away so your children, or your children's children can sell it on eBay.

Diskettes: What do you do with these? I recently put all mine in several large boxes — an estimated 2,000 of them. There were over 500 of them in the SMUG library alone. The Publishers' Warehouse had over 600 in inventory when they were eclipsed by CDs. I can't even believe they still sell diskettes, but they do. I can't find anyone interested in erasing them — and most computers today don't even have a disk drive. You can't recycle them — so just store them in the landfill for several hundred years.

You could always make art from them. Sculptures? I recently saw where someone had completely covered their entire car with diskettes. I considered roofing a building with them. They would make superb shingles — if they weren't just so tiny — as shingles go!

CD-ROMs: Beware and don't necessarily just load just any legacy CD you find. I made that mistake, and even though the 10-year old CD was loaded with great clip art, it spun and spun in the drive and then


locked up the system. The only way I could get it out was to unplug the PowerBook and remove the battery. I've heard worse stories.

Again, you could always shingle your garage with them. They're waterproof, and as long as you overlap them enough to cover the hole, they're weatherproof. Build a sun reflector to light and heat your pool. Cut them up for glittering jewelry creations. Give them to friends and relatives as 'coaster' gifts. String them on lines in your garden... they make perfect scare-crows in reflective motion. String them between light poles on your used car lot — or, on the house for the holidays. One Christmas, old CDs became tree decorations. I'm working on a sculpture with mine — several hundred of them. Wish me luck.

I've now put up a 1.2 by 2.5 metre sign-board on the wall in the back studio. As I start cleaning up 25

years of software storage I'll clip an interesting piece of the packaging or manual and paste it to that sign-board. I know I'll have enough to fill it up. Perhaps even twice. Once it's full, I'll photograph it and post it on the site. The sign-board itself will some day probably be considered art.

At the end of the day there's really nothing to do but get rid of all of it. Strip out all the paper goods, cardboard, boxes, etc., and have the recycling center pick it up. Same goes for books. Separate the plastics and metals for other recycling.

Gather up everything left over; and in the dead of night, drive it down to the local shopping center. Give it a good heave into their dumpster. Cross your fingers and hope there's no security video cameras watching. 

Exploring...

'You can fly to anywhere on the globe that Google Earth knows about'

How to Google Earth

Tristan Engst

In Google Earth, you can fly from San Diego (in the United States) to Portsmouth (in the United Kingdom) in two seconds! In fact, you can fly to anywhere on the globe that Google Earth knows about. If you want to see the Great Wall of China, you can! Google Earth works on newer Macintoshes and Windows computers, and the Google Earth Downloads page gives the details for what you need:

[<http://earth.google.com/>](http://earth.google.com/)

[<http://earth.google.com/download-earth.html>](http://earth.google.com/download-earth.html)

Once you download, install, and run Google Earth, type a place where you want to go in the Search box. Spell it correctly and hit Return. Once you're at your destination, to navigate, notice the controls at the upper right. The vertical bar with the plus and the minus is where you click to zoom in and out. The circle with the N on it is a compass: click one of its four arrows to move in a direction. I suppose you

know your directions, but if not, the arrow pointing towards the N is north. The one pointing at the plus and minus is east. The one pointing away from the N is south. And the fourth arrow is west.

I like Google Earth for looking at special landmarks like the *USS Constitution* in Boston, but I don't think it is reliable, because it often doesn't understand my spelling, and I had trouble finding the *HMS Victory* because Google Earth doesn't have a way for me to say that I am looking for a ship:

[<http://www.ussconstitution.navy.mil/>](http://www.ussconstitution.navy.mil/)

[<http://www.hms-victory.com/>](http://www.hms-victory.com/)

Tristan Engst, TidBITS 863

[Tristan, age 8, wrote this piece the weekend after returning from San Francisco, where he attended Macworld Expo with me for a morning. It's by no means the first time he has been mentioned in TidBITS, but it is his first byline! – Tonya]



“You’re talking to all of them? Right now?”

Younger than thou: instant messaging

Dan Pourhadi

[Adam here. I recently turned 39, and as much as I don’t feel old physically, there are times when reading about how teenagers use technology — the stuff I’ve been writing about for 17 years! — make me feel simply ancient. Oh, I understand how the technology works; I just don’t always get why these people — all of whom are much younger than I am — find it so compelling, to the point where a recent study found that teens use electronic media for more than 72 hours per week. I don’t think I spend 72 hours per week doing anything short of breathing.

Rather than curmudgeonly harumph around about the good old days of scouring BITNET for joke files and extracting 400K floppies from Mac Pluses, I’ve instead recruited an actual teenager, college freshman Dan Pourhadi, to write about how and why teenagers use the technology they do. Dan last wrote about choosing a Mac to take to college on a \$2,000 budget, an assignment he carried off with aplomb, so I figured he was the perfect person to explain his generation to those of us who actually remember the Soviet Union and East Germany (see Beloit College’s Class of 2010 Mindset List for other facts about today’s college freshmen <www.beloit.edu/%7Epubaff/mindset/2010.htm>). To kick things off, I’ve asked Dan to explain instant messaging to his grandmother, but I’d like to open this sporadic column up to suggestions from you. If

there’s something about how young people (we’re talking 15 to 25 here) use technology, send me or Dan a note and we’ll see what we can do.]

“Hi, Danny dear...”

Hey, Grandma!

“What are you doing there?”

Oh, nothing, Grandma. Just talking to my friends online.

“Hi, Danny’s friend! I’m his grandmother!”

No, no, Grandma. I’m instant messaging them. We’re not on the phone.

“Oh, you’re typing to him? Like the emails. Who are you talking to? That girl you introduced me to yesterday? She was nice.”

Yeah, Grandma. Her, and my friend Mike, and Kim, and Jennifer.

“You’re talking to all of them? Right now?”

Yep, we’re all having separate conversations. See,

this is my buddy list on the left. That shows all of my friends who are at their computers right now. I can send messages to anyone I want, and they can respond and we can have a conversation right here in this window—it's free and there's no telephone or anything special needed. And I can talk to as many people as I want.

“That is amazing. But it seems kind of complicated.”

It's a pretty great tool, really, once you get the hang of it. Imagine being able to talk to multiple people at once, while going about your other business. The more you IM, the better your typing becomes, and eventually typing messages becomes second nature — holding a conversation online feels nearly as natural as speaking on the phone.

“That's crazy.”

Crazy, Grandma?

“Crazy. What if you want to show yourself as sad or happy? How can you know what the other person is thinking if you can't see or hear them?”

Well, I'm sure that was first said about the telephone — how can you gauge emotion if you can't see his or her face? Simple: contextual clues and talk patterns. If you upset someone on the phone, they're

likely to pause a few seconds before answering. Once you're a phone-speaking veteran, understanding the tone of the conversation is simple.

The same applies to text-based instant messaging. When I'm talking to my friends, we use various techniques to relay feeling and tone through the conversation. Ellipsis can mean confusion or uncertainty; a fast typist who's responding unusually slowly is probably unhappy; italics emphasize words or phrases; capital letters typically denote yelling or excitement. There are also the smiley faces that help broadcast a particular feeling.

“But how do you know they're not lying? Someone could be lying about how they feel.”

Very true, Grandma, very true. And that happens a lot. But the more you talk to certain people, the better you're able to understand their real tone. It's hard to hide emotion, in any medium.

For example, I have a friend who unknowingly adds a period at the end of every message when she's upset. Most folks I know don't really use periods in instant messages (sentences are typically separated and sent in separate messages) — so when periods are used, they tend to have a special meaning.

Everything is manipulatable online. Take laughter:

if you're trying to show that you're amused by something, you'll typically type "lol" (short for "laugh out loud"). If something is funnier, you might type "hahaha." The funnier it is, the more "ha"s you add. If something is freakin' hilarious, you might go all out with a bold "HAHAHAHA." Capital letters add emphasis, see?

Strategic use of speed, pauses, capital letters and italics, emoticons, punctuation, abbreviations, even word choice—an IM veteran reads and understands all of that to mean something, and that makes IM conversations as natural to them as anything else.

"Um, Danny..."

Yes, Grandma?

"Your friend sent something to you. Why aren't you answering?"

See, that's another great aspect of this whole thing: If you're talking face-to-face or on the phone, you're forced to answer right away. An IM conversation is completely controllable. You can pause a few seconds to think of an answer, type "brb" (be right back) and take a few minute break, or just a simple "g2g" (got to go) to high-tail it outta there. You tailor the conversation to your liking.

"That's terrible!"

Why's that, Grandma?

"It's rude! Leaving someone like that, in the middle of a conversation. Imagine!"

Grandma, what's rude on the phone or in person isn't necessarily rude online.

IM vets tend to follow certain etiquette rules that make conversations manageable for both sides. You shouldn't leave a conversation, for instance, without first saying "brb" or "g2g"; if you're not at your computer or if you don't want to respond to IMs, you put up an "Away" message—something that's sent automatically when you receive a message, like "I'm away from my computer." so your buddies know not to expect an answer.

When everyone follows those rules— which honestly are pretty common-sense— then rudeness is all but eliminated.

"That's not so bad I guess. So what do you talk about?"

Gossip.

"Oh."

I'm kidding, Grandma. We talk about anything and

everything. School work, work work, regular friend stuff. As odd as it sounds, I tend to be more open talking online than I am in person. Sure, doctors may say “that’s not healthy,” to which I’d respond “YOU’RE not healthy!”, but really, instant messaging is a lot easier for people like me. You have those extra seconds to analyze what’s being said and to plan your response; you can still convey and judge emotion; you can scroll up to re-read what’s been said; there are no awkward silences or odd looks or funny noises accidentally coming from your mouth.

Looking at it from a conventional, face-to-face-talking-is-the-best perspective, it may seem insincere and fake — a tailored, analyzed conversation — and it probably is, a little. But it reduces the risk of mis-speaking and miscommunication, and it promotes honesty by making a conversation a lot more comfortable.

“You’ve thought about this a lot, haven’t you?”

I have, Grandma.

“So you’re talking to four people right now?”

I am.

“Doesn’t that get confusing? Saying all those different things to different people?”

You’d think so, wouldn’t you? It’s a habitual thing, like driving. When a newbie driver gets behind the wheel, he’s blown away by all the different tasks he’s supposed to accomplish at once — keeping his eye on the road, measuring his speed, watching for signs and anticipating other cars’ behaviors. It seems impossible to the poor sap.

But the more you drive, the more each task becomes habit, the easier it all becomes. The very same concept applies to instant messaging: At first, managing even one discussion is a hassle. But the more you do it, the more you’re able to compartmentalize the conversations; you learn to take clues from context and previous messages to know where you left off. Before you know it, you’re having conversations with ten or more people at once without batting an eye.

There is always the case of the mis-sent Message, though. Happens all the time: someone clicks the wrong conversation and sends a message that was supposed to go to someone else. It’s not necessarily a result of confusion: just acting before thinking.

“I’d never be able to do so many things at once. How in the world do you get anything done?”

Well, that’s when the Away message comes in

handy. If I have work to do or TV to watch (both of which share a spot on the priority List), I'll put up an Away message, hinting that I'm busy, unable, or even just unwilling to talk. I might talk with one or two people, but the Away message keeps other people from IMing me and helps to prevent distraction. It all has to do with willpower: if IM gets distracting, you shut it off. It's not really a new concept — you probably thought that Mom talking on the phone got in the way of her homework. The solution — shutting down the distraction — is the same.

“Yes, she spent way too much time on the phone when she should have been doing her homework. But this all seems pretty neat to me.”

It really is. And there are all sorts of other cool features of IMing that make it an addictive form of communication: you can send pictures and files to your buddies; you can have IM chat-room conversations with two or more people; you can stay connected with people all over the world for free; it takes very little effort to initiate or participate in a conversation, which is great for lazies like me; there's always the comfort of privacy; and it has

what I call the ‘iPod Appeal’: you can enjoy it without making it the center of your focus. It's entirely possible to have a serious meaningful conversation in the background while doing other things.

Case in point: I'm talking to you right now, Grandma, while writing a paper and talking to four of my friends. I'm obviously focusing on our conversation the most, then the paper, and then I'm answering my friends whenever they send me something. It works amazingly well. Try doing that on the phone, or even in person. I bet you couldn't.

“Nope. You kids and your ‘younger than thou’ attitudes.”

Wow, Grandma. That'd make a great name for a column.

“I'm sure. So what about that paper you claimed you were working on?”

Sorry Grandma, g2g.

“What?”

Auto-Response: I'm away from my computer right now. 

Humour...

'Your computer's setting should reflect your panache and style'



How to buy and set up a computer

John Collins

Buying a new computer is one of the biggies of life. For a lot of people it's right up there with getting a house, purchasing a car or going to Victor Harbor for a holiday. It needs careful thought and consideration and much mental preparation. To help you come to terms with this difficult process I am going to give you some invaluable pointers.

First of all: Overcoming your fear of the salesman. Now we all like to avoid embarrassment and humiliation in life if possible — the gaping fly; the twang of snapping knicker elastic; falling over drunk on top of the cake at weddings — so it is only natural to feel a tremor when you stand in front of a gleaming row of machines and a suit comes towards you at a rate of knots, straightening his tie and fixing you with a big toothy smile. (There probably are women who sell computers: but they won't be there when you go. They are all out the back fixing them up.) Now, to overcome your fear go to any of the stores that specialize in PCs only and practise the following.

Remember: the most important thing to have today, the acme of style, is Attitude with a capital A. Here we come to a key buzz term, emotional memory. This is going to be something to draw on to help you in this trying time. What you do is remember the time when you were a kid visiting family friends and your mother turned on you and snapped, 'I don't like your attitude young lady'. Of course you feigned total ignorance of what she meant and, if you were a boy, you felt confused and traumatized. Well, recall that moment and summon up all the feelings that you had at the time, then turn to the salesman and think 'It's all his fault that I got told off'. Now you have the right mind set: a modern attitude. You are out to show the world you are not someone to mess with.

Explain to the hovering salesman that you are thinking of buying one of those thingies that look like a television, that have a rat attached to them. And you only have ten thousand dollars to spend, is that enough?

See, your fear of the salesman is based upon not knowing what he is talking about and feeling like a moron when he asks you if you are looking for quintuple, yellow cake, homogenized technology with dual RAM or whether you prefer strudel with plankton.

Now he thinks he knows that you are a moron and will explain everything simply and s-l-o-w-l-y. He relaxes, assumes a patronizing and smug look and you are ready to strike. Watch as he twiddles the knobs and yaks away in hieroglyphics, then say 'Has it got a Spotlight?' He will look at you blankly. 'I want go on Safari as well' you add. 'Also, I want a band for my garage.' Gritting his teeth, the salesman will say in a tight, strangled voice, 'You need a Mac.' Turn around and peer out of the window. 'Why?' you ask, 'Is it raining?'


After you have played variations on this theme in half a dozen stores you buy the latest Mac from your usual seller. Now, of course, we come to another important aspect of the whole process: why are you buying a new computer anyway? Well, of course there is only one real reason: to gain status, make your relatives and friends envious and to feel superior. (OK, that's three reasons.) The thing is, your

computer's setting should reflect your panache and style.

So, having got the box home we come to the next key moment: setting up your computer. Now this can be achieved in several ways, but I find the ropeway used in post offices to control queues quite useful. When visitors come through the door they have to walk into the ropeway, follow it down the hall, round the corner and into the study where your new computer is set up. Make sure the computer is displayed with lights shining on it, suitable music playing and a red carpet leading up to it. 'Oh' you say in a surprised voice, 'I see you are looking at my gold-plated, widget enhanced, airline synchronized, satellite supporting, cross platform at Melbourne Central Mac, personally inscribed by Steve Jobs. Actually I'm thinking of getting a new one: this one has some dust on it.'

Fixing the computer above the toilet, so that it swings out in front of a visitor every time they put the seat down can also be a good option but doesn't work so well with untrained males. The most important thing to consider when setting up is to display it somewhere so that it looks natural in its environment. For example when Leopard came out I put

spotted wall paper all over the house and my wife created a jungle theme by bringing all the pot plants in, putting a thatched roof on the computer and television, knitting rush matting for the floor and keeping the heating turned on full.

So there you are. Now, take that wad of notes from under the mattress and go and spend. But realize that if you want to keep up with the rest of the world you must be prepared to trade your computer in for a new one every six weeks or so. After all, you wouldn't wear the same socks for more than six weeks at a time would you? An old computer is a magnet for germs: why put your health at risk? 

Links...



URLs, URLs, and more URLs

The Web page

Think of a mineral, and you'll almost certainly be able to find it somewhere in Australia. The Queensland University of Technology now has a mineral atlas at www.mineralatlas.com/. It's a bit of an angry fruit salad (made with Microsoft FrontPage), but it's a geological treasure trove.

Digging in the ground is one way to discover what happened in the past. One group that's very good at it is Time Team (ABC TV, Tuesdays at 6:00 pm), whose site is at www.channel4.com/history/microsites/T/timeteam//.

For a less serious look at the remote past, see *Deep time made simple* at adamant.typepad.com/seitz/2007/01/what_in_creatio.html, and do note the reference to 1983.

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New Horizons is now one year into its journey to Pluto, and approaching Jupiter: pluto.jhuapl.edu/.

Looking for image editing software? Try Image Well at XtraLean: xtralean.com/.

Darwin Day is 12 February: www.darwinday.org/. There's a project to build replica Beagle: www.thebeagleproject.com/.



Computing at Entropy House



What a fuss there was when the December issue was announced, with everything from old passwords cached, through confusion with Google Groups archive, to people thinking it wasn't available when it was...

Couple of unreadable Word files turned up recently (quite apart from the Word attachment that hadn't been attached (and needn't have been, because it turned out to be only a dozen lines or so of text)). One was unreadable by Word (or Pages) and was obviously corrupt. The other was RTF, which opened as a blank page in Word, but looked OK in TextEdit. Strange.

If there's a moral, it's to send small amounts of text in the body of the message rather than as attachments.

One wonders how long it will be before a file from the latest (PC) version of Word arrives. Totally new format, based on XML A .docx file is,

in fact, a ZIP archive, which can be opened to reveal the XML file with the text, together with any images or other resources. Depending on your XML expertise and software available you can then use the text.

Microsoft has file converters coming, but in the meantime Office Open XML files will be closed. (And of course others in the XML community are annoyed that Microsoft didn't use the XML schema already in use by OpenOffice, NeoOffice, and so on.) In the meantime you can practice with samples from OpenXMLDeveloper.org

Apple has already moved to XML file formats for Pages and Keynote. One has not seen the schema for Pages, but the Keynote schema is available from Apple. Based on it, one can prepare Keynote presentations without having Keynote.

The October – December issue of *IEEE Annals of the History of Computing* was devoted to a review of the history of word processing. There's a timeline available from the magazine's Web site at

www.computer.org/portal/pages/annals/content/webextras.html.

The first word processors were not computers, but typewriters with some means of recording; paper tape, or later, magnetic tape. One such was a version of the IBM Selectric, released in 1964. The term ‘word processing’, comparable to ‘data processing’ is a translation of ‘textverarbeitung’, coined in the late 1950s by Ulrich Steinhilper, an IBM engineer in Germany.

Steinhilper had an interesting history. He had been a Luftwaffe pilot, shot down in his Bf109 over the UK in the Battle of Britain. Interned in Canada, he managed to escape several times, before returning to Germany after the war.

As for that word processor we love to hate, Word began as Bravo at Xerox PARC before its writer, Charles Simonyi, moved to Microsoft. And yes, styles were part of Word from Bravo days.


Sat through a PowerPoint presentation a few weeks ago, one that was more painful than most. Presenter apparently didn’t realise that there was a Slide Show mode: everything was in edit mode, complete with red AutoCorrect squiggles.

To make matters worse, the PC laptop kept going to sleep, and at one stage crashed out to Windows XP.

Alas, not very inspiring...

So, it’s Apple Computer, Inc. no longer, but simply Apple, Inc.

Which leads one to ask when a computer is not a computer. If it has some kind of processor, some form of input (e.g. a keypad), and some kind of output (e.g. a display, or control of some device), and follows some kind of algorithm, it’s a computer. It may be an MP3 player, a mobile telephone, an automatic TV recorder, a digital camera, a washing machine..., but it’s a computer.

Latest computer at Entropy House is a MacBook, replacing the iBook G4. Does everything it’s supposed to, and is currently the only machine in the place capable of running Google Earth 4. 

'The fine print...'

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Deadline is the third Friday of the preceding month.

Submissions must be spell checked, in ASCII text format (.txt, not Word .doc or AppleWorks .cwk), with graphics as separate files. Text and images may be combined in a Stuffit or ZIP archive. (If in doubt, please ask.)

The Editor reserves the right to edit as required: authors will be contacted if major surgery is necessary.

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