



January 2006

Apple Bytes

A publication of San Leandro Macintosh User Group



It's MacWorld time again...

Once again we will make our annual pilgrimage to Moscone Center to pay homage to the Exalted Leader of the Mighty Macintosh Cult. Surely this forthcoming saga will be like those of yesteryear and we will all be cleansed and purified for the coming year.

To my knowledge we have only rumors to rely on until the fabled Keynote address takes place. No announcements from Apple dare be made until "he" speaks. I think I can forego the privilege of attending the on-high briefing and save the \$200 for other ventures during the week. After all, said keynote will surely be chronicled and discussed thoroughly during the week. For the moment all we have is conjecture at best.

Will any new products really contain the new and glorious Intel chip? Will they really be faster than a speeding bullet and solid as the Rock of Gibraltar?

Say what you will and we can discuss your thoughts at the main meeting on Thursday. Like all of you, I plan to enjoy myself, pay my dues, and probably spend way too much money like we always do.

Happy New Year to all.

Club Calendar for January

Jan 2006

5.. SLMUG General Meeting 7:30 pm
San Leandro High School
Room 507 (Shop 7 Graphics Lab)
2200 Bancroft Ave.
San Leandro (Info: 510 828-9314)
SLMUG Board Meeting. Normally held after the general meeting at a nearby eating establishment.

19... SLMUG Mac SIG
The Mac SIG meets on the third Thursday in Room 507, the Shop 7 Graphics Lab. Items for discussion are brought by you, the attendees. Discussions are specific to your problems and requests.
(Info: 510 828-9314)

Feb 2006

2... SLMUG General Meeting 7:30 pm
San Leandro High School
Room 507 (Shop 7 Graphics Lab)
2200 Bancroft Ave.
San Leandro (Info: 510 828-9314)

The Fine Print

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January 5th meeting features...

The annual review of all the things we need to see at MacWorld. Everyone surely has something to suggest. eSteve will have an exhilarating demo and review of iListen and Pages. Steve has recently had a real need to become proficient in the “no-hands” guiding of his Mac. Bob Shayler will discuss “Saving money with Skype” and “Stan’s List.” As a reminder, your annual dues are due and payable. See you Thursday.



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Main Meeting - January 5th

“Hey son, phone...”

When I was just a kid, telephones were these black things with a rotary dial and heavy handsets. To call Nana from across the country was a major event requiring time planning and some serious funds. In college, we had one pay phone (took dimes as I recall) for our entire dormitory hall. Sharing that phone with nearby hall-mates who were in lust or love could be a big pain. Of course, there were advantages like being able to call the information operator in Houston, Texas (for free) just so I could hear a real “southern” accent on the line.

After my college days, phones went through many changes, both in the appearance of the device (remember the Princess phone) and the nature of the network (tone dialing, area codes, the loss of word prefixes – mine in Hayward was TUrner ...). When we took my son John to a summer job in Brno, Czech Republic, in 2001, I was amazed at how advanced the phone system was there. It was all “cellular” and the phones used “sims” to provide the necessary account and network info to the phone. I could talk to him from home by direct dial to his dorm room, no landline required. Finally, in 2003, I went completely cellular, dropping my old PacBell (oh, it was SBC) number; I had no landline myself. Of course the company name changed (frequently) starting as Cellular One, then AT&T and finally I jumped to Verizon.

In 2005, my stepson Jordan went to England to college, so we bought him a phone card that he could use to phone home (however unlikely that might be) for only 35 cents per minute. That sure beat the over \$1 per minute on my cell phone. In London, Jordan met a young woman, and when she decided to move to Japan, he did need to call her (often). Since her Windows laptop threw up connecting to Jordan’s iChat account, he installed something called “Skype.” Little did I know...

On New Years Eve (actually New Years Day for Jordan as he is now in India), Jordan called his Mom to wish her a “Happy Birthday.” Her SBC (soon to be AT&T again) phone rang and she talked with him with a clear “in the room” connection. While I was chatting with him, I asked if he was using the phone card. “Oh, no. That would cost too much. I am using Skype.” Then the connection went dead for about five seconds. Recalling I had Skype installed somewhere on my iMac, I asked him to call me there.

I didn’t recall how to use Skype, but I didn’t need to know how. I just opened the Skype application and just then Jordan had his computer “call home” to my computer (actually his Skype account connected to my Skype account). When he called, my computer rang like a phone and we just started talking. With his recommendation I used a some cheap earphones and the computer’s built-in microphone. We had a crystal clear, solid (no noise, no interruptions) conversation for over 20 minutes, for free. There was no satellite delay either, although that may vary for other calls; I suppose I will find that out over time.

Skype is found at <http://www.skype.com> and is OS X and Windows compatible with free downloadable applications. I had set up an account (free) for myself and configured Skype on my iMac. The newest Mac version comes with a Dashboard widget as well. Right now as I type this article, there are 2.2 million Skype accounts actively online. Quoting from the Skype web site: “You can call anyone else on Skype, anywhere in the world for free. And you’ll always be able to do that. There are some other useful things you can do on Skype that aren’t free (but they’re pretty cheap, actually).” Among the extra stuff is a Skype phone number for yourself and voicemail.

How is Skype different from iChat or AOL/Yahoo/MSN Instant message? The biggie right now is that you can call voice to any phone number in the world (or the Space Station – the Moon and Mars will be more challenging due to that speed-of-light-delay thing). Video Skype is in beta right now and I have not tried it. Skype is a computer-to-phone or computer-to-computer application. Skype won't replace my cell phone just yet, as Skype does still require a computer to work and computers are not yet as portable as my cell phone. But if the iPod morphs just a little bit more...

In the meantime (for however long that may be), if you want to “phone home” or anywhere else for that matter, and you have a computer with a good Internet connection, the call is free and of excellent quality using Skype.

Stan's List

Stan Kline, a Mac resource par-excellance, maintains an email list that provides insightful news and important information to serious Mac users and owners. For some, mail lists are a bit too much to handle as the number of messages can get overwhelming (or so I am told as I am not bothered by hundreds per day). For those folks, Stan has a wonderful companion website at <http://stanslist.net> with “News you need for computers that just work.” All his emails are there in a blog format plus links to the many resources he finds useful.

I recommend a visit the Stan's List for gems such as this one:

“NetSpeedometer 1.0”

This utility measures and reports, via a speedometer-like window, the download and upload speeds of packets as you surf the Web. NetSpeedometer 1.0 is donaware from SubRosaSoft and available for download.

If you like the app, SubRosaSoft requests a donation to the American Foundation for the Blind.”

I actually didn't care for the interface of NetSpeedomoter on my 14 inch iBook but at the referenced website for Subrosasoft.com,

<http://www.subrosasoft.com/OSXSoftware/index.php>

I found another application (listed under “Free Software”) called GlobalTraceRoute that is quite interesting. It will show you on a world map the links followed by your browser to get to a specific URL. I found that the web site I have created for my classes at my school, hosted by Comcast.net, is actually physically located in Australia! A very cool nerd-thing application and I would never have known about it let alone found it without Stanslist.net.

Try it, you'll like it!

-Bob Shayler-

 GETTING STARTED

Installing the software is no big deal—double-click the installer, wait a minute or two, then fill out the registration information. Download and briefly review the User Manuals. Drink a glass of water and have water available, then begin the 15 minute training tutorial. This will help you get the feel of the process of dictation, which is quite distinct from typing. I recommend that you do not immediately continue to any other training exercises. Rather, try to create a small sample memo or email.

If you are able to use your hands or a stick, you have probably already turned on some of the built-in accessibility options. I recommend enabling: sticky keys and mouse keys. See following section (Useful OS X Accessibility Settings) for instructions.

Be patient. It has been a long time since I first learned to use a word processor, but I definitely recall frustration and using a pen and paper for longer than necessary, because I couldn't think while looking at the screen. To this day it is easier to edit from a printed page. However, today, I rarely print pages simply to edit them.



The iListen user manuals are quite well written and complete. The Essentials sidebar (pg. 1) includes some of my favorite websites and commands. A few last bits of advice: use good posture; be careful not to speak too loudly nor to over enunciate; take frequent breaks; have water handy; and, be patient. Anything worthwhile carries a certain level of difficulty.

 USEFUL OS X ACCESSIBILITY SETTINGS


While it is entirely possible to control the Mac by using iListen; I still find that I am faster by occasionally using my hands. Plus, the use of my hands has increased since my initial injury. The key-

board is definitely my comfort zone and preferred input device. *Sticky keys* allow for one handed typing. For example, with sticky keys enabled, one can use the shift key, option key function keys or use multiple key combinations with one hand or a stick.

To enable sticky keys: open System Preferences; click Universal Access; click Keyboard; choose Sticky Keys ON. I also tick the box that says "Display pressed keys on screen".

I tried to use a stick (eraser end of a pencil) to move my trackpad but to no avail. Then I discovered *Mouse Keys*.

To enable mouse keys: open System Preferences; click Universal Access; click Mouse & Trackpad; choose Mouse Keys ON. Try the additional settings. I liked a short initial delay and maximum speed. I did not choose to press the option key five times to enable the mouse keys. These settings allowed me to use my keypad and a pencil to move my mouse.

 I'M STILL WAITING FOR MY FLYING CAR, TOO


While iListen is not quite the same as speaking to the computer on Star Trek, neither is any other speech recognition program. If you are an OS 10.3 or 10.4 Mac user, and cannot use your hands, this may be your only option. After I heal, I anticipate that I will continue to use iListen and sticky keys, because they give me additional control of my Mac.