

All the latest news, user tips, new product updates and special promotions from Apple and Power Mac Pac

The President's Desk: Welcome to Mac Pac's PowerNews

If you've ever visited our showroom, you already know that Power Mac Pac is different. We are not a mail-order house, a chain store or a manufacturer. We're a down-to-earth "Mac Only Store" built on the belief that Apple has the greatest, easiest-to-use products made. We back up that belief by running our entire business – bookkeeping to service – on Macs. As an Authorized Dealer and Service Provider, we can provide solutions for everyone, from iMac neophytes to corporate IT professionals. Our pricing is as good or better than mail-order and we have more software on our shelves than any other showroom in the Northwest. We provide support before, during and after the sale. However, what's much better than mail-order is that you can actually come in and talk face-to-face with a real, live person. And our system designers are much more than order-takers: they are Apple Specialists who have over a century of cumulative experience using Macs professionally. In other words, Power Mac Pac can provide you with the most important resource you can have as a consumer of high tech products: expert knowledge.

With knowledge you can steer clear of the predatory salespeople at superstores. With knowledge you can choose the right products for your needs instead of relying on the "advice" of a telemarketer who also sells Windows boxes and car stereos. With knowledge you can use your Mac more productively; you might even find ways to use your Mac you never thought of.

That's what PowerNews is all about: educating, informing and making your computing more enjoyable. In each issue you'll find articles explaining all aspects of Mac computing – hardware to software, novice to expert. We'll cover diverse topics from file management to digital photography. You'll find hints, tips and tricks to help you better use your Mac while having more fun. You'll discover some of the strange and wonderful things other people in the Northwest are doing with their Macs. In other words, this newsletter is another way to help you find the right Mac products for your needs and get them working compliantly and enjoyably for you. And wasn't that the point to begin with?

Welcome to PowerNews. Enjoy.

FROM THE BENCH:

By Randy Feldman

The Top Ten Ways To Keep Your iMac Happy & Healthy

As the service manager here at PMP, I get to talk with lots of people who are new to personal computers. And, more often than not, these people have just bought an iMac. Now the iMac is an insanely great little machine; it brings unparalleled ease of use and power to users for a very reasonable price. But, like anything (e.g. the cat, houseplants), your iMac needs good care and an informed owner. So, based on the umpteen conversations I've had with new iMac owners, I've compiled this list of tips and hints to keep your little blue (or lime or orange) box happy and healthy.

1 First time users or people who haven't upgraded in a long time should know that older applications are often incompatible with the new systems. So before you install your trusty copy of MacWrite 1.0, check with the manufacturer to see if it's compatible. Often you can purchase an inexpensive upgrade or, better yet, use another program (e.g., Appleworks) to access your old data.

2 After installing a new program (or at the very least monthly) you should rebuild your desktop. To do so, hold down the Command and Option keys while restarting your Mac. If you want to know what "rebuilding the desktop" does, use that most undervalued of resources: the Help menu right on your iMac's desktop.

3 Purchase Norton Utilities and run Disk Doctor and Speed Disk at least once a month. Your hard drive will thank you. By the way, although Norton is great (I couldn't run the service department without it), avoid installing the "Crashguard" module; the current version causes more problems than it fixes.

4 Always maintain a back-up copy of important documents. The best way to do this is to buy a back-up utility such as Dantz' Retrospect. A utility will automate the back-up process making it easier and, most importantly, regular. You can even set up the program to do back-ups while you're asleep. Remember to keep a copy of your back-ups off-site too.

5 Check frequently with third-party manufacturers to make sure you have the latest drivers for your peripherals (i.e. printers, scanners, external disc drives, etc.). The best place to do this is the internet, where manufacturers will post (usually) free downloads of their latest drivers.

6 Keep your iMac's environment clean. As far as your iMac is concerned, clean doesn't just mean bringing all the half-full coffee cups to the kitchen, it also means electrically clean. Use a good quality surge protector, discharge static by touching something grounded before you touch your iMac, and keep big magnets away (including those inside loudspeakers).

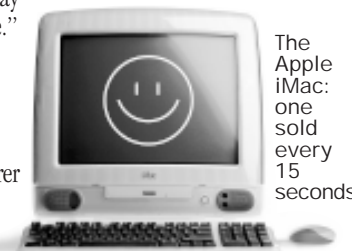
7 Read the manufacturer's documentation to familiarize yourself with common issues and usage tips. What? Computer manuals are boring and badly written? You're right, so try this: keep the manuals in the bathroom or by your bedside. That way you'll be forced to read them while you're a "captive audience." An added bonus: most manuals work better than Nyquil.

8 To make troubleshooting easier, keep a log of common problems: record the actions which cause the problem and the steps you take to fix it. Use the database module of Appleworks to create a list of names and numbers of manufacturer technical support representatives. Keep that list by your iMac and you'll always know who to call.

9 The internet is a great resource for technical information and help. There are all sorts of user groups and bulletin boards, from the general to the unbelievably specific. Fire up Sherlock and surf around some. You'll be surprised at what you will learn.

10 When dealing with the internet, you've got to have patience! Your iMac makes it easy to get online, but the internet is still the wild and woolly frontier of computer technology. There are bound to be frustrations and confusion as you learn this new way of communicating and exploring. Get yourself a copy of *The Internet for Dummies* and put it in the bathroom (see #7 above). Just knowing what the Net is and how it works can help make those times when it doesn't work more palatable.

Quicklinks:
www.imacintouch.com
www.apple.com/imac



The Apple iMac: one sold every 15 seconds.

Inside This Issue

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PARDON MY JARGON

Computer terms suffuse our language. However, as our patient tech-support people can attest, many people don't have a very good grasp on what these terms mean. This column is here to bridge that gap. Now you can communicate better with tech-support and impress your friends with your geek-credentials.

Byte: A byte is a unit of measurement, like a gallon or an inch. It's used to describe the capacity of computer components such as RAM and hard-drives (which might explain why people often confuse these two). As a rule of thumb, a single byte is equivalent to a single character or letter. So a thousand bytes (or one kilobyte) allows for a thousand characters worth of information storage. A megabyte, then, is a million bytes or about a thousand kilobytes. A gigabyte (GB) is a thousand megabytes, and so forth. To give you a sense of scale, the text of a six-hundred page paperback novel requires about one megabyte. That means you could store six thousand such novels on the 6GB hard drive of a new iMac allowing you to keep a small bookstore on your desktop. If you stacked 6,000 novels end-to-end in the Grand Canyon they would reach... Well, you get the idea.

Hard drive or hard disk: A hard drive is a device your computer uses to store information. Think of it as somewhat like a cassette tape. Like cassettes, hard drives let you record and playback information many times. Like cassettes, they come in different sizes. Instead of minutes, however, the capacity of a hard drive is measured in "bytes" (see above). Physically, a hard drive is about the size of a thick paperback. It lives inside your computer's case, safely ensconced in its "drive bay." Inside the hard drive itself is a stack of "platters" coated with magnetic material not unlike, surprise, a cassette tape. A column of "read-write heads" shuttle back and forth over the platters, reading old information and writing new information. That's what happens when you choose "Save" in an application: the heads write the information onto the platters where it safely stays until you decide to erase it.

RAM: stands for Random Access Memory. However, that doesn't mean much to most of us. One of the salespeople here (his initials are Bill Cantrell) has a good metaphor that's more useful for describing what RAM does. He says, think of the processor in your computer as a juggler. RAM is the room in which your processor juggles. The more room the juggler has, the more things he can keep in the air at once without dropping anything.

So, that's what RAM does; what it is, however, is a different question. Physically, RAM consists of a small circuit board that plugs into a slot inside your computer. These chips serve as a holding tank where the processor can store data gotten from the hard disk. The processor can access RAM much faster than it can the hard drive, so it puts currently used information into the RAM. When it's done with that information (e.g., when you close a window) it replaces it with other information. So, more RAM equals fewer trips to the hard disk for the processor thus helping it work faster and better.

Quicklinks: www.whatis.com

FRONT WINDOW By Fred Lifton

FileMaker Pro®

Front Window will take an in-depth look at one of our favorite pieces of hardware or software. Sometimes we'll focus on a new, gee-whiz product, other times we'll revisit old friends. This time out we're going to look at one of the most powerful tools available to businesses: FileMaker Pro.

Like it or not, lists are a ubiquitous feature of modern life. Everywhere we look, there are lists: TV schedules, phonebooks, to-do lists. If you're in business, these lists multiply ten-fold: lists of customers, orders, invoices, inventory, contacts. To make matters worse, all of these lists are related. There are invoices associated with customers and inventory items associated with invoices and orders associated with inventory items. How do you make sense of this tangle? Two words: FileMaker Pro. Quite simply, FileMaker is an unbelievably powerful tool for managing large amounts of inter-related data. What's really cool about FileMaker is that you can create very sophisticated forms to interact with your data. And you can create these forms with only a little bit of FileMaker expertise. In other words, FileMaker gives you simple, intuitive access to complex, sophisticated tools. However, perhaps the best way to show you what you can do with FileMaker is to show you what *we* do with FileMaker.

FileMaker basically runs Power Mac Pac. We use it for invoicing, quoting, inventory, trade-ins and repairs. How does it work? It works beautifully. Follow along now as I show you how much FileMaker does for us. Let's say a customer comes in to price a new Mac system. I start by opening up a new "quote worksheet" and typing the customer's contact info in to the appropriate fields. Then on to the good stuff: picking out the new system. For this I'm going to need part numbers and prices. No problem. I just click on the button labeled "parts" at the top of the quote and, as if by magic, FileMaker Pro opens up another database, the parts database. Now I get to use FileMaker's powerful search features. I hit the find button and type "iMac strawberry" into the "description" field. After I hit return, FileMaker lists all of the entries in the database that have those two words—strawberry and iMac—in the description field. Now I can simply click on the part number, drag it over to the quote and drop it in the

appropriate field. Hitting return makes FileMaker automatically fill the rest of the information for that part number (the price, description, cost and so forth). FileMaker's ability to have one database link to another this way is what makes it a "relational" database program as opposed to only a "flat file" database. In fact, FileMaker doesn't even have to open the second database to bring its information into the first one. Once the "link" between the files is established, FileMaker will go get the information automatically. For example, if I already knew the part number, I could type it in to my quotes database and FileMaker would go and get the rest of the info from the parts database without having to be asked. Now that's good service.

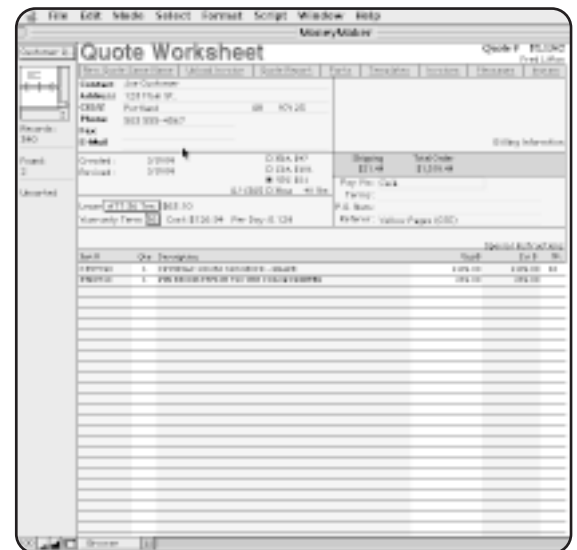
FileMaker also gives you all sorts of ways to process and organize the information you gather. You can create summary reports, daily reports, any report you want. FileMaker does all the math and sorting behind the scenes. To top it all off, you can assign buttons to the reports so that they're just a click away.

Building a sophisticated form like our quote worksheet is almost as easy as entering data. You can drag and drop objects like buttons or drop-down lists. You can write scripts that make a button function like a macro so that it will perform a string of tasks. For example, our database will compute lease terms based on system price and the length of terms desired. You can also make any word into a hyperlink which can perform an action or get data. We have such links at the top of our quote sheet as shortcuts to other forms and databases. In layout mode, you can move all of these objects around on the page, change fonts, colors, line-weights and sizes. You can add simple graphic elements to improve the usability of your form. In fact, you can even add photos, Quicktime movies or 3D objects to create a live catalog. To make your life easier, FileMaker comes with lots of ready-to-use templates so you don't have create forms from scratch. With all that going for you, there's no excuse for not getting organized.

In short, FileMaker can do just about anything a business needs to get business done. It's one of those programs that reminds us why we love the Mac. It puts a truly impressive amount of computing power at users' fingertips, packaged in an intuitive, easy-to-use interface. Publisher: FileMaker, Inc. (formerly Claris)

Mac Pac Price: \$195

Quicklinks: www.FileMaker.com



Our FileMaker Pro miracle worksheet.

Corporate Translation Services

by Fred Lifton

We all know the Mac is the computer for the rest of us, but did you ever wonder what the rest of us are doing with their Macs? That's what this column is all about. We're going to show and tell you interesting ways our customers are using their computers, some of which you'd have to see to believe. Perhaps you'll get some new ideas for your own business. Or you can just marvel at the things Macs do.

Based in Vancouver, Washington, Corporate Translation Services (CTS) is one of those companies that does something that seems obvious once it's been explained to you. They help other companies "go global" by providing translations of everything a company does or sells. CTS creates documents, localizes software, and translates manuals, web-sites, packaging, multimedia projects, catalogs, speeches, and advertisements into literally dozens of different languages. A glance at the monitors

scattered around their well-lit,

large Vancouver office might reveal a

Nike garment tag in Ukrainian or a voting pamphlet in Korean. As you can imagine, this takes a lot of computing horsepower; it also calls for a computer that handles foreign languages

(and therefore foreign alphabets) with ease. Their platform of choice? The Macintosh. I asked CTS Art Director Luke Duran why the Macintosh? He rolled his eyes and tells me, "I can't imagine trying to run this place with PCs. I don't think we could."

Luke says that foreign language solutions on the PC are too scattered and inconsistent. The Mac's tight software/system/hardware integration ensures that language packages will run consistently and reliably across applications. Luke further points out that the Mac's ease of set-up shortens and simplifies the process of switching a system from, say, Hindi to Vietnamese. CTS maintains a server with disc-images of various systems which translators simply download and run to reconfigure their whole machine. The Mac OS has even allowed CTS to build systems which can work in multiple languages at once, meaning that Russian, Korean and Arabic can all co-exist on one machine. If only all foreign affairs were so agreeable. Finally, the Mac's simple networking helps CTS staff stay mobile and allows them to rapidly and easily reconfigure a workgroup for a new project.

I was curious to know if compatibility was ever a problem, since so many of CTS's clients are large corporations with Wintel-based systems. According to Luke, the processing power of the new G3s coupled with lots of RAM allows users to run

Virtual PC even on machines running processor intensive double-byte Asian languages whose alphabets can contain thousands of different characters. Virtual PC, the Mac's file translating abilities and the fact that the major apps CTS relies on (Word, FrameMaker) have PC versions help ensure that clients' PC files make it into CTS's Macs without a hiccup. That's probably why CTS has found the iMac to be such a compelling machine: the combination of low price and power persuaded them to buy sixteen of them for workstations.

For bigger jobs, CTS relies on G3 towers. The company prides itself on being a one-stop shop for its clients, so along with a staff that includes graphic designers and illustrators, they maintain a sophisticated imagesetting system to produce camera-ready art-work.

a new G3 tower equipped with 250MB of RAM and RIP software, a 60MB

Asian language file can be rendered into PostScript and printed to film in under two minutes. The previous hardware RIP imagesetter would take over forty-five minutes to render the same file. Luke is pleased to point out that this helps him go home at a reasonable time instead of staying up into the wee hours nursing an imagesetter.

CTS's office is a pleasant, open place. I found it fascinating to walk by the different work groups and look at all the languages on the screens. The international feeling is reinforced by large flags hanging from the ceiling and lots of artwork from Pacific rim countries. It was gratifying to see the Mac playing such a key role in the literal building of the new global economy. Hopefully, the openness and friendliness of the Mac platform prefigures an open and friendly global village in the next millennium. But, if nothing else, CTS is ready for the new age; since their office will soon be all Macintosh, they won't have any Y2K worries.

Quicklinks: CTS: www.ctsv.com

Apple Language Kits: www.apple.com/mac/multilingual/languagekits.html

Russian linguist Olga Demonnim loves her iMac, hates the paparazzi.



Sprechen ze Korean? A CTS G3 handles 2-byte foreign characters with ease.

Tech Watch: FireWire

by Dan Heinig

This column stands with one foot in the present and one in the future. Each time out, Tech Watch will review new, cutting-edge technology so that you'll have a clear picture of things to come.

If you've seen any of the information on the new blue G3 towers, you've probably run across something called "FireWire." What is it? In short, FireWire is a high-speed serial input/output (I/O) technology for connecting peripherals to a computer. It was first developed by Apple in the early nineties and was officially adopted as an industry standard (labeled IEEE 1394) in 1995. Since then, many other companies have adopted the FireWire standard, often giving it their own trade-names (e.g., Sony calls it "i.Link"). Simply put, FireWire is another way to hook up stuff like scanners, digital cameras, and hard drives to computers. FireWire will also eventually be used to network up to G3 computers and

peripherals at a time. However, FireWire has characteristics that set it leagues apart from other standard serial I/O buses.

> The first major difference is speed. At 400 megabits per second, FireWire is ten times faster than standard SCSI and close to a whopping 2000 times faster than a regular serial port. The only thing faster is the expensive new Ultra 2 SCSI interface at 640 megabits per second (which still has all the disadvantages of SCSI). And it was recently announced that next generation FireWire will run up to 3.2 Gigabits. Phew.

> The second major difference means major changes in convenience and usability. Namely, unlike SCSI, the FireWire bus needs no termination. This means no more SCSI ID numbers, no more termination blocks, no more hassles with SCSI "voodoo." It also means that FireWire devices will be "hot-swappable." In other words, you can plug and unplug a FireWire device at will and whether the computer is on or off, it will simply work.

> The third difference also means added convenience: FireWire is a powered bus. This means low-power devices, such as hard drives and digital cameras, can be run without a tangle of annoying power cables and bulky AC adapters. Despite this, FireWire cables are thin and easy to handle (they're about the same dimensions as ethernet cables). Better yet, compared to SCSI's limit of three feet, FireWire cables can be up to fourteen feet long.

These differences will bring about a fundamental change in computer peripheral design, making portable computing an inexpensive, powerful reality. Apple has again led the industry by making FireWire a standard I/O interface on the new G3s, pushing 3rd party manufacturers to develop faster, less expensive hardware. FireWire products like cameras and camcorders are already on the market. Other peripherals (scanners, hard-drives, etc.) should be widely available by the end

of March 1999. Hopefully sales will drive SCSI products out of the market and lift the curse of SCSI voodoo once and for all.

Quicklinks: www.1394ta.org; www.dvcentral.org



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POWERNews

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How can you get a second computer for half-price?

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Virtual PC. Why is Virtual PC so

cool? Read "Macs in Action" inside

to find out how one company uses

Virtual PC to run an all-Mac office

and beat the Y2K bug!

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